



Back Roads

Sourland Planning Council

www.sourland.org


Winter 2008

Sourland Planning Council Celebrates its 20th Anniversary

Steven Bales New Trustee

SPC celebrated our twentieth anniversary on December 16 by hosting a holiday party for our members. Exquisite invitations created by Liz Westergaard generated several hundred responses and nearly one hundred members attended.

Really fine music was provided by The Upper Princeton Swing Collective, for whom trustee Cliff Wilson sings and plays bass. They were joined at times by vocalist Amy Raditz and our executive director John Brunner on trumpet. The Pauleys brought some wonderful enlargements of century-old postcards of Sourland rock formations. Dr. Jim Heidere recorded the event with photos and video. Best of all, we had a wonderful time getting to know each other.

We have so many people to thank: Trustee Tom Kilbourne cleared snow and cooked; other trustees brought more food. Thanks also to Bill Shaffer of Hillsborough Volunteer Fire Company #2 for a mountain of ice, to Bradley Wilson for help with the parking, and to all the people who helped with cleanup. We are seriously considering doing this again next year for our Twenty-First! 



Guest singer Amy Raditz with the band

The SPC is proud to introduce Steven Bales, the newest addition to our enormously diverse and talented Board of Trustees. Steven is an architect who graduated from Bucknell University and went on to get a Masters in Architecture from NJIT. He has worked on large projects for a number of Fortune 500 companies, and brings with him considerable expertise in “Green Building” approaches, including experience with passive solar energy design and environmentally sensitive design. A Hillsborough resident, he has been involved with the Township Sustainable Steering Committee and the Environmental Commission. Steven and his wife Judy are currently installing a rainwater harvesting system on their own house as well as planning a “rain garden” for spring 2008. We welcome his enthusiasm and the considerable skills he contributes to SPC and we encourage you to read his article on Wind Energy in the Sourlands on page 7. 

Thank you!

The Board of Trustees thanks everyone who generously responded to our first annual End-of-Year Giving Campaign. Your contributions totaled more than \$11,700! The SPC Trustees have instituted the End-of-year Campaign as an annual opportunity for SPC supporters to make a contribution that is above and beyond the yearly membership dues.

The Sourland Planning Council is a non-profit organization working to protect the ecological integrity, historic resources and special character of the Sourland Mountain region.

Meeting information

Please come!

The Sourland Planning Council trustees hold meetings on the first Monday of even-numbered months at the historic Hopewell Railroad Station on Railroad Avenue, just off North Greenwood Avenue in Hopewell Borough, at 7:30 p.m. You are warmly invited to join us.

Feb 4 Apr 7 Jun 2 Aug 4 Oct 6 Dec 1

Officers and Trustees – 2008

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John Brunner, Lambertville
director@sourland.org
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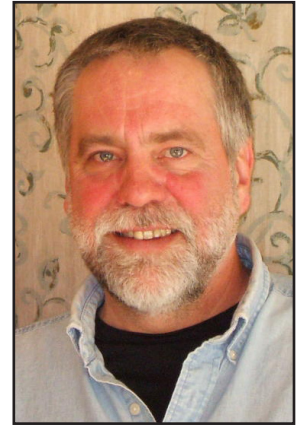
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Sourland Journal

by John P. Brunner

Executive Director



Two years ago Sharon and I moved across the Delaware River to the City of Lambertville and shortly thereafter received a nice gift from the Sourland Planning Council. It was the information-packed ‘Save the Sourlands’ map, which was our first introduction to Sourland Mountain.

The first thing I noticed on the map was that Lambertville is situated along the westernmost reach of the Sourland region. The premier stretch of whitewater just below the Lambertville-New Hope Wing Dam is precisely where the Delaware River cuts through the Sourland Mountain. It was the setting for my first whitewater canoe training and many subsequent paddling adventures. I also learned that the Sourland Mountain doesn’t just run from Montgomery Township and abruptly end at the Delaware River. This ridge of basaltic intrusions and Triassic shale continues across the Delaware River for a few miles into Bucks County, where it is known locally as Jericho Mountain and Buckingham Mountain.

The initial Sourland Mountain learning curve only went as far as the map could take me, until six months ago when I was appointed SPC Executive Director. Thus began the total immersion into all things having to do with the Sourland region.

The learning curve spiked with the help of a few books and several Sourland tours. T.J. Luce’s book *New Jersey’s Sourland Mountain* and the *Sourland Smart Growth Project Report* provided a thorough introduction to the cultural and natural features that abound in the Sourland region.

I typed “Sourland Mountain” into the Google search engine and came up with 10,200 results—that’s a hundred pages of information that I am still sifting through (Sourland Planning Council was a respectable number five listing).

I’ve served as an executive director for most of the past twenty-two years, all of it on behalf of nonprofit watershed associations and river advocacy groups in southeastern Pennsylvania and western New Jersey. A watershed group focuses on a particular body of water while paying attention to its tributaries and watershed area.

The Sourland experience is somewhat different in that the focus is a particular topographic region defined by its geological characteristics—a mountain and its surrounding slopes. This is a headwater region of deep woods, vernal pools, wetlands, ponds and brooks—not a place I’ll be exploring in my canoe.

One aspect of this topographic-based focus that is similar to a river or watershed-based approach is that both tend to transcend multiple municipal and county boundaries, presenting similar challenges

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Reforming Forest Management in the Sourlands

by Jared Rosenbaum

I was walking through an old and majestic Sourlands forest recently, when I happened upon a grim scene. The cut trunks of nine tupelo trees lay scattered on the ground. There was a gaping hole in the tree canopy, and an infestation of invasive thornbushes had taken advantage of the sudden absence of shade. Nine bald stumps were barely visible in the bramble of multiflora rose and Japanese barberry. As I looked more closely, I found the remains of several rare shade-loving woodland herbs which once thrived in this grove.

These trees had been cut and then left to rot in order to comply with New Jersey's outdated forest management policies. These policies harken back to a bygone era of timber management and fail to address today's pressing ecological concerns: global warming, endangered species, invasive plants, and clean water.

Nevertheless, many well-intentioned landowners who love their land are forced to adopt forest management plans in order to lower high property taxes.

A New Jersey state-approved forest management plan qualifies a landowner for farmland tax assessment on their woodland acres. The landowner is required to hire a forester, mark trees for culling, and sell a certain dollar value of firewood or timber per acre per year. On the face of it, this makes a certain amount of sense. Property owners who "farm" their forests for profit qualify for farmland assessment. Yet it is long past time that we value the more important and sustainable forest resources: clean water, fresh air, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity. Yet landowners who value these forest resources are still stuck selling firewood and cutting

ecologically valuable trees for "stand improvement". In an "improved" stand, only monetarily valuable trees remain—the ramrod-straight specimens of a few timber species.

The eventual goal of forest management is producing a high value timber farm and then logging it. The Sourlands, however, are too ecologically important, too fragile, too subject to fragmentation, development pressure, and invasive species to sustain logging.

Why was the grove of nine tupelos I stumbled across cut? The uses of tupelo wood are too specialized, so a state-approved forester marked them for culling, on the assumption that more valuable timber species would receive more light and space. Thus far, the main beneficiaries have been invasive plants.

Rich in Ecological Value

Tupelos are not the only species which are being eradicated piecemeal from our forests in the name of "forest management". If you are considering adopting a forest management plan, make sure your forester isn't removing the following species from your forest:

Black Birch, aka Sweet Birch (*Betula lenta*). Few sights are more quintessentially Sourlands than the silver-purple-barked black birch, perched improbably atop a diabase boulder, exposed roots artfully anchored into the earth below. A tree of mature upland forests, black birch is often removed because it is not a valuable timber tree. However, it is ecologically valuable: its seeds provide an important winter food source for birds, and its many medicinal compounds, including xylitol and methylsalicylic acid, are valuable for people and wildlife alike.

American Elm (*Ulmus americana*).

Not long ago, majestic colonnades of American elm lined many of our town and city streets. The imported Dutch Elm disease has brought that era to a close, yet American elms still survive as smaller, short-lived trees of wetlands. These hardy survivors may eventually develop resistance to the blight, rising to the canopy once more. The elm's recovery is not aided by their culling under current forest management practices.

Tupelo, aka Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*). The tupelo is one of our most beautiful native trees. Its fall color is a fiery red, its mature bark an intricate snakeskin of irregular checkered plates. Its large purple fruits are prized by birds ranging from pileated woodpeckers to wild turkeys. Its nectar produces one of the most prized of all honeys. Yet even on the woodlots of honeybee farms, tupelo is cut because of its low timber value.

Understory Trees: Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), **Hornbeam** (*Carpinus caroliniana*), **Hop Hornbeam** (*Ostrya virginiana*), **Witch Hazel** (*Hammamelis virginiana*). Understory trees are adapted to life in the shade beneath the canopy trees in a mature forest. Growing little over 30' tall, they provide little competition to oaks, hickories and maples. Their ecological values are many. They maximize the food output of a forest, protect canopy trees from blowdown during storms, and add an important layer of structural diversity to the forest. Among these trees are the stunning (and disease-stressed) flowering dogwood, the lithe and charismatic hornbeams, and the November-flowering with hazel. Despite their ecological value

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On the Mountain

Profiles of the Creatures & Features We Protect

Salamanders Sally Forth

by Pat Sziber



Northern red salamander

As winter days lengthen and snowmelt trickles down the hillsides, one of our most secretive forms of wildlife begins to stir. More numerous than one might imagine, they spend most of their lives hidden beneath decaying logs or in small, damp crevices beneath rocks. But as the first frost-free nights approach, salamanders are waking from their long winter's nap and looking for love.

The forested wetlands, the many streams and tributaries, the springs and seepages and the ephemeral vernal pools that dot the Sourlands provide exceptional opportunities to observe these scale-less, four-legged amphibians. *Salamanders* are ectotherms, a type of animal whose body temperature is controlled by its surroundings and not by its own metabolism. They are tolerant of a wide range of temperatures and can ward off freezing by converting liver glycogen to glucose. However, they are defenseless against extreme high temperatures.

Like many other animals of the class that includes frogs and toads, most salamanders divide their life cycle between water and land. Longer days and slowly rising temperatures trigger a hormonal response in salamanders well before winter's end, which tells them to seek mating opportunity. Fertilization is internal. The specifics vary but, generally speaking, the male presents the female with a packet of sperm which she inserts into her body. Some species lay their eggs on land in a damp place, others seek sheltered water such

as a pond or vernal pool. People who seek out amphibians delight in finding these gelatinous egg masses and hope that gentle spring rains will sustain the pools until the larvae hatch and mature. Terrestrial larvae emerge fully developed, but aquatic ones are born with gills. They will live their entire lives within a very small home range, perhaps under the same log, where they are the primary vertebrate predators of invertebrates in moist environments. They are skittish and defensive, capable of emitting a noxious secretion and cleverly regenerating a limb, toe or tail lost to a predator.

Seven salamander species have been documented in the Sourlands in recent years. They include the fairly common northern two-lined and the redback salamanders. These two species are small, up to about five inches in length, including the tail. The northern slimy, northern red and northern dusky salamanders are a bit larger and the spotted salamander tops out at around nine inches. The Jefferson salamander, usually a more northerly species, is listed by the NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Program as a species of special concern.

Perhaps because their habitat requirements are complex, needing both land and water to complete their life cycle, and also because they exchange gases and moisture through their skin, salamanders like all amphibians are

very vulnerable to environmental disturbance. Increasing UV exposure due to thinning of the ozone layer, acid rain and global warming take a toll. Local threats, which we can influence as stewards of the Sourlands, include habitat fragmentation due to development, deforestation, wetland drainage, pesticide usage, and the insidious damage to vernal pools caused by off-road and all-terrain vehicles. It goes without saying that, though they fit easily in the palm of a hand, we must always leave the wild things to live out their lives in the wild.

Financial Report 2007

We are happy to report that the Sourland Planning Council is in good financial health at the end of 2007, due to the generous support of our members and successful grant writing. Here's a more detailed breakdown:

Beginning balance	\$81,448.75
<i>Income</i>	
Grants	\$5,000.00
Membership dues & contributions	\$25,273.38
Music festival	\$8,744.00
<u>Sales</u>	<u>\$92.00</u>
Total income	\$39,109.38
<i>Expense</i>	
Fundraising (incl. music festival)	\$4,299.54
Executive director	\$8,330.00
Printing & postage (incl. newsletter)	\$3,507.09
Admin & misc.	\$2,220.88
Consultants (earmarked grant)	<u>\$15,000.00</u>
Total expense	\$33,357.51
Net income	\$5,751.87
Ending balance	\$87,200.62

All hikes
are free
of charge.

Sourland Slow Hikes

A New Program of the Sourland Planning Council

The Sourland Planning Council invites you to join us in exploring Sourlands trails. These hikes are “slow” because we will take the time to immerse ourselves in local habitats—observing birds, woodland wildflowers, animal tracks, and the growth cycles of the forest. We will share lore, insights and appreciation of central New Jersey’s last great wilderness...the Sourland Mountain.

March 9 Stream Ecology 101

Alexauken Creek John Brunner

Join SPC Executive Director John Brunner for a headwater hike through the Alexauken Creek Wildlife Management Area. This outstandingly scenic stretch of the Alexauken Creek headwaters features classic diabase terrain in a mature woodlands. We’ll follow the plunging falls, deep pools and riffles of the creek looking for skunk cabbage, sensitive fern and signs of aquatic life along the way. This slow hike ranges from easy to moderately difficult. Sturdy and preferably waterproof shoes recommended. To register for this hike please email John at director@sourland.org. Group size will be limited to 15 adults and/or children above age 10.

April 19 Heralds of Spring

Northern Stony Brook Preserve Jared Rosenbaum

Before the leaves of trees emerge in spring, wildflowers like bloodroot, trout lily, spring beauty, and rue anemone carpet the forest floor. They take advantage of the abundant spring sunshine,

and many disappear when trees leaf out. Jared Rosenbaum will lead this walk in search of these intricate but ephemeral forest denizens and other signs of the reawakening land. Hike length: approximately 2 hours. For registration and details please email jared@palaceofculture.org

May 17 Birds of Baldpate

Baldpate Mtn. Pat Sziber

June 28 Children’s Hike

Hunterdon Preserve Rachel Mackow

July 19 Roaring Rocks Walk & Picnic

Somerset Co. Preserve Jerry Haimowitz

Sept. 21 Sourlands Stewards: Wildflower Meadows & Native Shrubs

TBD Jared Rosenbaum

To ensure the quality of the programs, we have set some guidelines. Pre-registration is required, at which time specific details such as meeting place will be provided. The number of participants will be limited at the discretion of each program presenter. Participants will be required to sign a waiver.

Please dress appropriately with sturdy shoes or boots, etc. Please don’t hesitate to ask for more information about trail conditions and difficulty.

Unless otherwise noted, these programs are designed for adults and older children. Dogs are not allowed.

SPC Awarded Grants

The Sourland Planning Council was recently awarded grants totaling \$10,000 from two local funding sources. The Watershed Institute awarded a \$5000 grant to SPC in September 2007 towards the development of a Strategic Plan and a Fundraising Plan. SPC also received a \$5000 grant from the Washington Crossing Audubon Society’s Holden Grants Program to produce a Sourland Stewardship Brochure for property owners.

The Watershed Institute grant provides support for SPC’s organizational development needs. The most important step is the development of a Strategic Plan that will serve as SPC’s capacity building blueprint for at least the next three years. SPC will also produce its first formal Fundraising Plan, which will provide direction to the Board of Trustees and staff in establishing a diverse and stable funding base.

The WCAS Holden Grant will be used to design, print and mail a *Sourland Stewardship Brochure* that will be distributed to property owners throughout the Sourland Mountain region. SPC’s Education and Outreach Committee has identified the Stewardship Brochure as a high priority project for the coming year.

The Sourland Planning Council is extremely grateful to these organizations for supporting the Council’s work.



**We still have
maps!**

(They’re free.)

Look for the racks in public places around the region or contact SPC.

Reforming Forestry Management (cont'd)

► and great beauty, these trees are frequently eliminated in the mistaken belief that they stand in the way of more valuable species.

Forest Stewardship

The bitter irony of New Jersey's outdated forestry practices is the very real need for stewardship of our forests. If you are considering or have hired a forester, here is what you can have your forester do to maintain or restore a healthy forest on your land.

Invasive Species Removal

New Jersey's deer overpopulation crisis has decimated the regenerative capabilities of our forests. Many of our native tree saplings are being stunted by browsing deer, while exotic species unfamiliar or unpalatable to deer are taking over our wild and residential landscapes. The following are some of the most aggressive invasive plants which are rapidly taking over. Have your forester mark these and advise you on their removal.

Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastris orbiculatis*). An Asiatic vine with poisonous berries. As it climbs a tree it coils tightly around the trunk, eventually killing even mature canopy trees.

Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*). Deer avoid the multitude of thorns and the bitter taste of this imported ornamental shrub. As it spreads prolifically through our forests, it alters soil chemistry and displaces saplings, native shrubs and woodland wildflowers.

Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*). The barbed canes of this Asiatic thornbush form a living fence in many of our woodlands, deterring humans and wildlife alike and dominating the forest floor to the exclusion of native plant species.


Native Plantings and Deer Protection

Many foresters, despite being shackled by outdated timber-management dictates, are expert observers of local forests. Have your forester identify saplings which need protection from deer in order to survive, or have them suggest plantings of native trees or shrubs which will benefit the ecology of your woodland acres.

A Hope For Legislative Reform

Proposed legislation is pending which would alter the criteria needed to qualify for differential tax assessment. The new bill would shift the emphasis in forest management from tree harvesting to the sustainable stewardship of forests for products like clean water, fresh air and wildlife/plant diversity. Introduced to the State Senate in 2004 by Senator Robert W. Singer as Bill No. 1648, and to the Assembly by Assemblyman Ronald Dancer as Bill No. A-3446, it has subsequently languished in both houses. Both bills have been reintroduced in 2008, and need a show of public support: contact the representatives above for more information.

Farmland tax assessment is an important tool for landowners with large forested tracts. It protects them from having to cave to developers because property taxes become unaffordable. Furthermore, owners of ecologically important forest land deserve tax incentives for taking good care of their woodlands. Our foresters deserve the freedom to implement plans which will save our forests from invasive species, tree diseases, and the traumas of climate change.

The future of New Jersey's forest management practices is uncertain. Whether or not legislative reform eventually succeeds, we need to be aware of the consequences of our management practices and push the foresters we hire towards doing the best work they can. 

Sourland Journal

John P. Brunner


► continued from p. 2

to a small nonprofit that endeavors to keep the attention of elected and appointed officials within said political subdivisions.

I'm slowly but surely learning the political landscape of the Sourland region, primarily through the Smart Growth Project, and for the most part have been favorably impressed by the degree of attention paid to Sourland Mountain by the local municipalities, as well as by the three counties and the State of New Jersey. This tells me that the Sourland Planning Council has done a great job of raising awareness about the Sourland region.

And that brings me to the most rewarding aspect of the executive director's job—meeting and working with the SPC's Trustees and members. Over the past several months I have witnessed first hand the degree of care and commitment this small but powerful nonprofit has shown for the Sourland region.

A strong sense-of-place is what really motivates the people who support the Sourland Planning Council. It is truly a privilege to serve as your Executive Director.

Over the coming months I hope to meet many more of SPC's supporters. Do get in touch and introduce me to your favorite piece of Sourland Mountain. 



Smart Growth Project Update

The Visioning Sessions

John Brunner

Over the past several months the Sourland Planning Council and its project partners, including Banisch Associates, Inc., Conservation Resources, Inc. and Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association – Watershed Institute completed a series of five Community Visioning Sessions for the Sourland Mountain region as part of the Phase II Smart Growth Project, which is funded by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs – Office of Smart Growth.

Each Visioning Session provided a public forum for people to share their aspirations and concerns for the Sourland Mountain region. A summary of comments collected from the meetings contains a common theme: local residents are concerned about protecting water quality, preserving critical forests and wildlife habitat, protecting farmland, and maintaining the unique rural character of the Sourland Region.

Opportunities for public comment continued with the creation of a Public Participation Geographic Information System (PPGIS) website that was developed by the Watershed Institute and Vertices LLC. (www.thewatershed.org/sourlands). To visit the Sourland on-

line mapping tools visit (www.mappler.com/sourlands).

During the month of February the Smart Growth Project Team will be presenting results of the Visioning Sessions and PPGIS comments to each of the Sourland township planning

boards, and solicit input from elected and appointed municipal officials.

After the five township presentations are completed the Project Team will begin writing the Sourland Comprehensive Management Plan. Municipal officials and members of the Sourland Task Force will be called upon to provide input during the plan development, with presentations of the first draft planned for early spring.

Wind Energy in the Sourlands

Steven Bales

Wind energy is expected to play a vital role in meeting New Jersey's renewable energy requirements. Over the next decade the state's electricity demand is expected to grow by at least 14 percent. As part of addressing future energy needs, New Jersey has adopted a goal of having 20% of its future electric needs supplied by renewable and clean resources. Wind and solar energy have been identified as having a great potential to provide the clean electric power that New Jersey will need.

On December 26, 2007, the last meeting of the year, the Hillsborough Township Committee unanimously approved Ordinance No. 2007-42, which provides "A Definition of Small Wind Energy System and to Allow a Small Wind Energy System as a Conditional Use." In doing so, Hillsborough Township is among the first municipalities in the state to adopt an ordinance to allow the use of small wind energy systems on specifically dedicated tracts of land. The areas for permitted use include the Mountain, Agricultural, Corporate Development and Cultural Landscape zoning districts. The minimum lot size would be ten acres, preventing them from being built in residential neighborhoods. The ordinance also provides for setback and height limitations, noise and finish criteria, lighting limitations and code compliance requirements. In addition, a Wildlife Habitat Assessment Report shall be prepared that specifically addresses the habitat considerations that could be affected by the installation of a small wind energy system. This report shall specifically address the potential impacts

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Visioning results: local residents are concerned about

- protecting water quality,
- preserving critical forests and wildlife habitat,
- protecting farmland, and
- maintaining the unique rural character of the Sourland Region.

Jack in the Pulpit • Photograph by Rachel Mackow



Poets Corner

Mockingbird

Steven Davison


The gentleman in tails, cream-colored vest and bars of white and black on sleeves sings.

All the air's songs plus one he sings and dances from the wire in flair-feather leaps of love.

In all tongues from his high places he shares his attunements, a David in his temple.

Wind Energy in the Sourlands (cont'd)

► to existing bird and bat populations as well as the impact on the environmental resources of the proposed Sourland Mountain Special Resources Area. The report will have to address the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Landscape Project and impacts to habitats ranked 3, 4 or 5, which generally indicate the presence of threatened or endangered species. The ordinance also includes language to promote special construction techniques to reduce or eliminate forest fragmentation. In all applications, the Planning Board shall give due consideration to the concerns raised by the public, the Environmental Commission and the SPC when deciding on the application for a small wind energy system.

The Sourland Mountain region is the largest contiguous forest in central New Jersey and is home to a number of threatened and endangered species of plants and animals. At the same time New Jersey moves to achieve its renewable energy commitments, it must also maintain and protect the state's wildlife resources. Specifically, wind energy development projects in New Jersey must avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential impacts to bird and bat populations. The membership of the Sourland Planning Council seeks to address these coexisting and sometimes conflicting objectives; to encourage the development of wind energy in the state while minimizing and mitigating the harm to birds and bats. The long-term health of the region will depend on the stewardship exercised by those who own, manage or use these lands. 

Sourlands Store

New Jersey's Sourland Mountain Softcover, 162 pages, by T.J. Luce **\$20.00**

Plush Red-breasted grosbeak with green Save the Sourlands sash Squeeze it and it sings! **\$8.00**

Save the Sourlands.org bumper sticker **\$1.00**

To order, call or email
Andrea Bonette at
(609) 466-0641
abonette@patmedia.net.

Sourland Planning Council



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