

# Call of the Wild

Keeping Nevada Wild Since 1984

Masthead photo by Steve Wolfe

## Blazes sweep eastern Nevada wilderness

# Fires fueled by invasive species

By John Hiatt

On June 28, lightning started a series of wildfires that affected newly designated wilderness areas in Lincoln County. Over several weeks, fires burned about 75 percent of the Meadow Valley Mountains, 35 percent of the Delamar Mountains, 50 percent of the Mormon Mountains and about 10 percent of the Clover Mountains wilderness areas. What is left could be an irreversibly changed landscape.

Although fire is common in the West, it has been a stranger in the Mojave until recently. For millennia, Mojave Desert plant communities have used slow growth and resistance to heat and drought as survival strategies. Their sparse placement has not allowed wildfires to carry. Recently, faster-growing, non-native exotic grasses, such as cheat grass and red brome, as well as exotic mustards, have become established, creating carpets of flammable fuel that carry fire across the landscape, destroying native plants in its path.

see *Fires*, page 3



Moapa Peak, Mormon Mountains with Mojave vegetation in foreground.

A  
new  
kind of  
fire  
for the  
Mojave

Yerington  
residents  
praise  
Lyon County  
wilderness  
values

## Lyon Co. wilderness

by Shaaron Netherton

Protecting wild places is all about the caring people who love them and are willing to speak out and share their passion with anyone who will listen. Wild lands in Lyon County are blessed with some exceptionally special people who are doing just that. Steve Pellegrini fell in love with the Bald Mountain proposed wilderness area long ago. This third generation Yerington resident was one of the most popular teachers at Yerington High, creating a genetics lab that other schools would die for. He has hiked and camped on nearly every acre and wants to see his mountain stay like it is for his sons. His sons, Evan and Julien, now students at UNR, grew-up

see *Lyon County*, page 4

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## Our Mission is to

# Keep Nevada Wild!

*Friends of Nevada Wilderness* is dedicated to preserving all qualified Nevada public lands as wilderness, protecting all present and potential wilderness from ongoing threats, educating the public on the values of – and need for – Wilderness, and improving the management and restoration of these public wild lands.

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### Staff

#### **Northern**

Shaaron Netherton  
Brian Beffort  
Richard Knox  
Paige Thie  
PO Box 9754  
Reno, NV 89507  
(775) 324-7667

#### **Eastern**

Pam White  
PO Box 150374  
Ely, NV 89315  
(775)289-8898

#### **Southern**

Susan Potts  
1700 E. Desert Inn #406  
Las Vegas, NV 89109  
(702) 650-6542  
Susan@fnw.lvcoxmail.com

www.nevadawilderness.org  
fnw@nevadawilderness.org

Newsletter published quarterly

## *From the front lines*

# White Pine and Lyon County residents actively working for wilderness

I'm putting July 26<sup>th</sup> in my calendar as a good day to remember this year. Four wilderness bills (for Washington, New Mexico, California and Puerto Rico) unanimously passed the Senate. On the same night, far across the country, residents of White Pine County publicly argued for wilderness protection in their county. The stars must have been aligned. Public lands legislation for White Pine County still seems to be on track for introduction in Congress later this year.

As locals supported wilderness in White Pine County, residents of Lyon County are proudly showing off their Bald Mountain and Sweetwater Mountains proposed wilderness. Yerington natives, Steve Pellegrini and Art Shipley, have developed a great PowerPoint presentation about their backyard wilderness areas. These lovers of the land are talking to local civic groups, leading tours, and reaching out to others in their community about the need to protect wilderness in Lyon County. Several tours and meetings with local ranchers, county commissioners and Congressional staff have taken place this summer.

Public lands legislative efforts are also continuing in Washoe, Nye and Pershing Counties. More on these as they progress.

Wilderness stewardship moves ahead and Friends of Nevada Wilderness is looking at hiring a full time volunteer coordinator to better engage volunteers and get more restoration work done on the ground.

Friends of Nevada Wilderness continues to be active in the fight against water pipelines in eastern Nevada and the Sempra coal-fired power plant proposal near the Black Rock Desert. This summer we filed 70 protests with the State Water Engineer's office on Sempra's new water applications. In May we testified at multiple scoping hearings on the Pipeline EIS and this summer we provided official comments on this ill-advised project.

With so much happening around the state on the wilderness front, it is more and more critical that members like you take the time to get

even more involved. Have you been out on a stewardship trip? Written a letter? Written a check? Make a pledge to do just a little more — you can and do make a difference.

I would like to close by welcoming Paige Thie to our staff and Sarah Perrault to our board. By handling data entry and day-to-day member communications on a part-time basis, Paige keeps the Reno office running smoothly. Sarah, a Ph. D. student in UNR's Literature and Environment program, brings great new energy and perspective to Friends.

For the Wild,



Shaaron Netherton  
Executive Director



Shaaron Netherton

## Breaking legal news

In a ruling on August 8<sup>th</sup>, Judge Benson in Utah District Court unsettled the BLM's anti-wilderness campaign. Friends of Nevada Wilderness and other conservation groups represented by Earthjustice won two rounds in our ongoing legal battle to protect citizens' ability to work with the BLM to designate and protect future

wilderness study areas. It appeared the judge was disturbed that the Bush administration was using the court in a backhanded way to tie the BLM's hands and further its anti-wilderness agenda. The next step of the lawsuit will likely take place in October when the full merits of our case will be addressed.

# Take a hike on Bald Mountain

By Brian Beffort

Bald Mountain, in the Pine Grove South inventoried roadless area, is a gem of wild lands in an otherwise heavily-roaded region. At 88,936 acres, it is one of Nevada's largest roadless areas, and its 9,544-foot summit offers a view that stretches from the Sweetwater Mountains to the west, south to Sawtooth Ridge, then east to Mt. Grant. This easy-to-moderate hike is a perfect way to acquaint yourself with this proposed wilderness area.

The scale of Bald Mountain is deceiving. But once you reach the summit following Forest Road 141 from the south (see below), you'll see what a tremendous and large area it is. The summit area is complex, with 4 distinct summits spread over thousands of acres of alpine terrain, all sitting on the treeless table high above the pinyon-juniper forests and sage steppes below. To the east and south, the terrain drops steeply through forest and shrubs to the East Walker River, nearly 4,000 feet below the peak.

With road densities in surrounding areas so high, Bald Mountain deserves protection. It offers people solitude and respite from crowded Sierra trails nearby, and it offers wildlife pristine habitat (the area has been designated critical deer habitat by the Nevada Division of Wildlife).

## Getting to Bald Mountain

From Reno/Carson, drive south on U.S. 395 toward Topaz Lake and Bridgeport. At Holbrook Junction (a few miles north of Topaz), turn left/east onto highway 208, and follow it over Jack Wright Summit to Wellington. From Wellington, continue south-east on highway 338 for about 16 miles. Turn left/east onto the unpaved Nye Canyon Road (Forest Rd 031) and follow it for about 7 miles (ignoring side roads that fork off) east, then south up above treeline, where Forest roads 141 and 141A will fork. Follow the left/easterly fork (141) for about 1 mile to a good parking spot before the road gets too rough. From the car, follow 141 south about 3 miles to the summit.



*Several miles of the East Walker River flow wild and free through the Bald Mountain Proposed Wilderness.*

**Agency:** Forest Service, Bridgeport: (760) 932-7070

**Map:** Humboldt-Toiyabe Bridgeport Ranger District, available from USFS.

## Action you can take

Please invest a few moments to contact our Congressional delegation and voice your support for protecting Bald Mountain as wilderness.

Delegation addresses and phone numbers are shown on page 4.

## Fires

*continued from page 1*

These fires pose **challenges to the wilderness community.**

One purpose of wilderness designation is to allow natural processes to work unimpeded. But it's difficult to argue that the recent Mojave fires are natural, because they were caused by an invasion of non-native plants.

Because very little Mojave Desert flora can withstand (i.e. regenerate after) fire, post-fire vegetation will likely be made up mostly of non-natives, which are aggressive and well adapted to Mojave soils and climate.

We are witnessing the transformation of the Mojave Desert, from slow-growing native shrubs to aggressive exotic grasses and mustards, and it may be difficult for native plants to return.

Such a transformation of plant communities could have long-lasting effects on local wildlife populations, such as desert big-horn sheep and desert tortoise.

Taking a "hands-off" approach may not help native plants recover. Those concerned with the future of our Mojave Desert wilderness areas will have to decide whether to work aggressively to help natives recover or stand aside and watch these areas change. The decision is not an easy one, because people have no experience in restoring Mojave Desert ecosystems at this large scale. Research is needed, but because BLM regulations regarding post-fire rehabilitation actually prohibit any money from being spent on research, the best we can hope for is a good monitoring program.

Friends of Nevada Wilderness will continue working with the BLM and other parties to do what we can to help these areas regenerate after fire.

# Lyon County

*Continued from page 1*

hiking in the Bald Mountain area with their dad. Inspired by this wild country, they are studying anthropology and wildlife biology. Steve and his friend Art Shipley started exploring Bald Mountain in the Pine Grove Hills together in 1988. Art is another local hero who spent a lot of time exploring the Bald Mountain area. After retiring as a teacher, Art drove a school bus through this vast rural area logging in more than a million miles on his bus as his route took him by his beloved Bald Mountain.

Steve and Art have formed a Friends of Bald Mountain group, designed and given programs to local civic groups about how special Bald Mountain is to them, and attended numerous meetings and tours with county commissioners, Congressional staff, ranchers and others. Their passion for protection of their wild places is as deep as their passion for teaching kids.

Living in harmony with the land is what wilderness volunteers Marcia and Steve Litsinger do on their organic farm in Dayton (northern Lyon County). Steve and Marcia are active politically and help spread the wilderness word as they deliver their delicious organic vegetables to customers, at farmers markets and other events they attend.

## Help designate wilderness in Lyon Co.

Write Senators Ensign and Reid (addresses below) and urge them to include the strongest possible wilderness protection for Bald Mountain and The Sisters proposed wilderness areas, as well as, the Burbank Canyons WSA in Lyon County. For details about these proposals, call (775) 324-7667 or log onto [www.nevadawilderness.org](http://www.nevadawilderness.org).



## Lyon County Wilderness Proposal Facts

Friends of Nevada Wilderness and the Nevada Wilderness Coalition have long-standing wilderness proposals on Forest Service land in southern Lyon County.

- ▶ The Bald Mountain Proposed Wilderness is in an inventoried roadless area that covers over 80,000 acres in the South Pine Grove Hills between Yerington and Bridgeport, California. Rising to over 9,500 feet, this little known area offers sweeping views, amazing archaeology, critical habitat for mule deer, a small black bear population and at least six miles of roadless East Walker River. See our hike to Bald Mountain on page 3.
- ▶ The Sisters Proposed Wilderness comprises an 11,000-acre roadless area just to the north of the California state line in the northern Sweetwater Range. Its high, snow-covered peaks and deep canyons offers beauty, solitude and traditional recreation opportunities.

## Burbank Canyons WSA needs you

Burbank Canyons Wilderness Study Area seems to be falling through the cracks in the legislative process. For now it has been ignored in potential legislation for both of the counties where it is located (Lyon and Douglas). Adding insult to injury, someone has recently been bulldozing the riparian area within the WSA up Burbank Canyon itself. People using off road vehicles have been pioneering new routes in the WSA. This Wilderness Study Area truly needs restoration work. Friends of Nevada Wilderness has

formally adopted the area with the BLM, and volunteer Kurt Kuznicki is taking the lead.

## What you can do to help

- ▶ Call Kurt Kuznicki at (775) 745-3119 to volunteer.
- ▶ Write your Congressional delegation. Ask them to support this deserving wild place for wilderness.

## Nevada's Congressional Leaders

Mail to DC may face serious delays. Use Nevada addresses or fax instead.

### Senator Harry Reid

#### Las Vegas

Lloyd D. George Building  
333 Las Vegas Boulevard South, # 8016  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101  
Phone: 702-388-5020

#### Reno

400 So. Virginia Street, # 902  
Reno, Nevada 89501  
Phone: 775-686-5750  
Fax: 775-686-5757

#### Rural Nevada Mobile Office

Phone: 775-772-3905  
DC fax: 202-224-7327

### Senator John Ensign

#### Carson City

600 East William St., # 304  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

#### Las Vegas

333 Las Vegas Blvd. South, # 8203  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101  
Phone: 702-388-6605  
DC fax: 202-228-2193

### Representative Jim Gibbons

#### Reno

400 South Virginia Street, # 502  
Reno, Nevada 89501  
Phone: 775-686-5760  
DC fax: 202-225-5679

# INTERVIEW with Steve Pellegrini

*Lyon County Wilderness Activist*

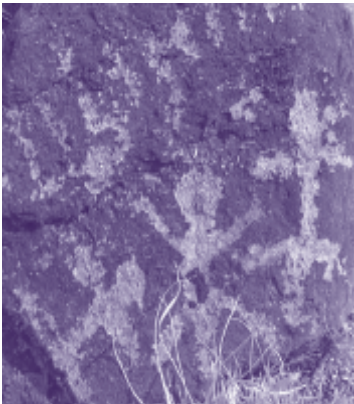
Steve Pellegrini is a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Nevadan, born and raised in Lyon County's Mason Valley, where his family was involved with ranching, mining and farming. With degrees in wildlife biology and zoology he has been teaching Yerington students their science and math for over 31 years. Steve is returning to his roots now in "retirement" with a newly planted vineyard.

Steve and Art Shipley share many things in common. Both have taught in Yerington schools for over 30 years, both have three sons, both enjoy writing and have published articles in various publications and most importantly both have an unshakable commitment and passion for the wildlands they grew up near.

*Steve Pellegrini was interviewed by Friends of Nevada Wilderness' Executive Director, Shaaron Netherton, in early August.*

**FNW:** *What did you think when you first explored Bald Mountain?*

**Steve:** "Bald Mountain in the South Pine Grove Hills is a place of subtle beauty with many signs of Native American use. I felt a kinship with people who lived there. Days spent there touch the soul. Every night after I visit that mountain range I can't get images out of my mind. The canyons, the ridges, the artifacts, and the vistas are truly moving."



*Petroglyphs in the Pine Grove Hills*

**FNW:** *Why do you believe Bald Mountain deserves to be wilderness?*

**Steve:** "I believe it should be a wilderness because of what is happening in Western Nevada. We have been discovered! Hordes of people are moving into our area. It has been my experience that it takes a good deal of time for most people to develop any empathy for the desert and for our environment in this desert state. Some people see it as having value only for destructive activities such as dirt biking. As an educator, I believe people can change their minds, but they'll have no chance to do so if we overrun our wild places in pursuit of these destructive pastimes. We owe it to future generations to set aside places such as the Pine Grove Range so they, too, can find the spiritual growth I have found there."

"I also believe the Pinyon-Juniper Ecosystem is special. Not usually regarded as a true forest, this woodland is, nevertheless, a place of stories and cultural lore. Even long before John Fremont

carried the type specimen out of the Pine Grove Mountains it was this environment that birthed Indian legends and that provided badly needed resources for early settlers. It is home to many species of animals and to fabulous species of plants — some of which I hope to discover for the first time!"

**FNW:** *Tell us about your friendship with Art Shipley.*

**Steve:** "Art was my 8th grade teacher. He gave me my love for the history of our state and for science and his influence has been tremendous — many of his former students would tell you the same thing. I am fortunate in that later in life I also became his close friend."

**"We both see salvation for the future of our species in wild places. Man is less than human when he becomes isolated from them, and we have watched that happen more and more each year. We believe a wilderness area does not have to be set in the breathtaking scenery of Alaska. We both believe wilderness should be everywhere. Those places in our own backyards that sustained us through our lives must also be set aside so our children and their children can learn from them as well. Designating a place as wilderness is a way to dignify the land. Not much of that is going on nowadays. There's spirits in those hills — Art and I have spoken with them!"**



*Art Shipley (left) and Steve Pellegrini on the road, heading out to the wild lands they seek to protect. Photo by Evan Pellegrini.*

There's  
spirits in  
those  
hills...

# Congratulations, Howard Booth!

a  
lifetime  
of  
dedication

Hiker, trip leader, photographer and tireless activist for southern Nevada wilderness, Howard Booth is this year's recipient of the Sierra Club's highest honor, the John Muir Award. For more than 40 years, Howard has worked to protect Nevada's wild places and her environment. He played the pivotal role in several successful campaigns to protect wilderness.

Howard, a long-time member of Friends of Nevada Wilderness, has mapped and

surveyed wild country and has contributed photos that have appeared in our newsletter, on our website and in our Wild Nevada calendars.

Friends' board member, John Hiatt, notes that "Howard Booth is living proof that a lifetime of dedication to a cause pays big dividends."

Congratulations, Howard, and thank you for your years of service and accomplishment.

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## 'Why I love wilderness' - Writing Contest

get those  
creative  
juices  
flowing

We are looking for a few good stories from our members telling of your love affairs with wilderness. Here's your chance to inspire others with your experiences in the wild — and to send a message about how important these lands are to Nevada and our country.

So unlimber your word processor and send us a story of up to 200 words. Each one we use in the newsletter or on the website wins a free, 100% organic cotton, Friends of Nevada Wilderness T-shirt. The most

awesomely inspiring will win a *Wild Nevada: Testimonies on Behalf of the Desert* book.

Send your stories to:  
Writing Contest,  
Friends of Nevada Wilderness,  
P. O. Box 9754, Reno, Nevada 89507 or email to richard@nevadawilderness.org with subject line: "Why I Love Wilderness."

Be sure to include your phone, mail and email information.

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## Wilderness restoration trips

a  
great  
season  
healing  
our wild  
lands

Friends of Nevada Wilderness and the Bureau of Land Management have enjoyed a successful season, getting out on the ground to help wild areas heal from impacts.

Invasive, exotic plants have been removed from the Jackson Mountains in the Black Rock Desert, and illegal vehicle routes have been rehabilitated everywhere from the Mormon Mountains Wilderness to the Mount Grafton Wilderness Study Area to Soldier Meadows. There are still a few trips left this year, and we'd love to have you join us on one of them. Check in with our website regularly, because a couple trips could be added to this fall's schedule.

**September 24-25: National Public Lands Day, Soldier Meadows, Black Rock Desert**  
Contact Dave Lefevre at Winnemucca BLM for details, at (775) 623-1770.

**September 24-25: Parsnip Peak Wilderness**  
Call Steve Leslie, BLM outdoor recreation planner for details, at (775) 289-1867.

**October 1-2: Boundary Peak Wilderness**  
Contact Jeff Novak at the US Forest Service, at (760) 876-6231.

**October 15-16: Leave No Trace trainer course in Little High Rock Canyon Wilderness, the Black Rock Desert**  
Call Brian Murdock, BLM Wilderness Coordinator for details, at (775) 623-1761.

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## Drink beer, save wilderness

Join Friends of Nevada Wilderness for our Wilderness Happy Hour. Look for the "KEEP IT WILD" sign.

Moose's Beach House, Las Vegas  
4770 S. Maryland Parkway  
First Thursday each month, 5 to 7 PM

# Locals voice support for wilderness

By Shaaron Netherton

A standing-room-only crowd of locals packed the White Pine County library in Ely on July 26<sup>th</sup> to support wilderness at a Public Land Users Advisory Committee (PLUAC) meeting about public lands legislation.

Friends of Nevada Wilderness executive director and former Ely resident, Shaaron Netherton, gave an overview of the Nevada Wilderness Coalition's wilderness proposal for the county. Friends board members, Roger Scholl and John Hiatt, then gave short presentations. After that the locals took control of the meeting.

One after the other, long-time ranchers, community leaders, businessmen, sportsmen and horseback riders got up and testified or had their letters read in support of White Pine County's wild places. Many of them started with something like, "If you would have asked me about this 30 years ago I would have fought wilderness like crazy, but I've

seen too many changes for the worse and now I support wilderness as the way to leave some of my beautiful county for my kids and grandkids."

Many were concerned with the rampant destruction from vehicles. Other expressed concern about the massive increase in oil and gas exploration and leasing affecting both Forest Service and BLM potential wildlands in eastern Nevada. Others talked about the increasing proposals for ridge-top wind-generation farms. There were comments about the need for quiet places to hunt, hike and ride horseback. Everyone in the room shared a deep abiding love for the land.

This support will help immensely as White Pine County Commissioners and Nevada's Congressional delegation work toward drafting public lands legislation. Friends will continue to be involved as legislation comes together this autumn.

Residents  
share a  
deep  
abiding  
love

for White  
Pine County's  
wild places.

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Recently, Friends received a generous memorial gift from Lucy Meinhardt and David Zumwalt in loving memory of Jean G. Diamond. Lucy and David are long-time Friends of Nevada Wilderness members. When Jean passed on, they were moved to provide a lasting legacy of wilderness in her memory.

One never wants to benefit from another's passing, and yet a memorial gift supports a cause dear to the giver's heart. Every time Friends gets more wilderness designated or damaged lands restored, the significance of that gift expands. Each gift makes a positive difference on the land and in the lives of every Nevadan. The presence of wilderness just makes life better.

Thank you, Lucy and David, for thinking of Friends of Nevada Wilderness when you wished to memorialize your friend.

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## I want to join Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (eve) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\$500 or more Benefactor       \$50 - \$99 Friend

\$250 - \$499 Patron       \$25 - \$49 Supporter

\$100 - \$249 Superfriend       \$15 - \$24 Starter

Payment by:     check     charge    *Visa or Mastercard only*

Card no. \_\_\_\_\_ exp.date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*I want to help! Please contact me, I am interested in:*

*Letter Writing*     *Tabling*     *Outings*     *Other*

Mail to: Friends of Nevada Wilderness, PO Box 9754, Reno, NV 89507

## *A memorial gift of wilderness*

Perhaps the best way to honor the memory of someone who loved Nevada's wild places and beautiful vistas is to make a memorial donation to Friends of Nevada Wilderness. This donation will be used to protect wilderness lands and will support work to designate new wilderness areas. Your gift helps create a legacy that will live on forever.

A note of gratitude will be sent to the donor and to the family of the deceased.

# Wilderness for the disabled

by Marge Sill

Who says wilderness is only for the young and fit? There are many of us—some in wheelchairs, some hobbling slowly on two canes or a walker, some with one leg, some who are legally blind—who love wilderness and who work to see it preserved.

Certainly, we appreciate road access to the edge of our wild areas, but we do not need a vehicle to enter and enjoy the silence, broken only by the call of birds, or the feel of rock and running water against our hands, or the knowledge that we may be watched by an antelope or a mountain lion or a lizard. It is not necessary to climb the highest mountain or backpack 15 miles per day in order to savor the unique experience that wilderness offers.

Those who maintain that wilderness locks out the elderly and the disabled are simply wrong. Only machines are prohibited in these special areas. Many of our new Nevada wilderness areas are accessible for those in wheelchairs or who have difficulty walking long distances on rough terrain. Some are accessible by raft or canoe.

These are some of Nevada's wilderness areas that are at least partially accessible to people with disabilities: Rainbow Mountain, La Madre Mountains, Mt. Charleston, Arrow Canyon Range, Wee Thump, El Dorado, Black Canyon, Jimbilnan, Black Rock Desert, Calico Mountains, North and South Jackson Mountains, High Rock Canyon and Little High Rock Canyon.

If you, as a disabled person, have experienced other wilderness areas in our state, Friends of Nevada Wilderness would like to hear from you.



*Marge Sill, at 80 years of age, eagerly looks forward to many more trips to the wild following recovery from her hip-replacement surgery. She is shown here in the Schell Creek Mountains in this July 2005 photo by Ron Hunter.*

**Mojave Wildfires,  
Lyon & White Pine Co.,  
and a new look...**

Peek inside!

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