



1967-2012  
**Shawnee Resource Conservation  
& Development Area**  
**2011 Annual Report**

March 27, 2012  
The Field of Dreams, DeSoto, IL

**Chairman's Message**  
**Glenn Seeber**



The 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Shawnee RC & D has been a year of change. At this time last year a revised set of by-laws was ratified. We also saw discontinued federal funding for RC & Ds nationwide. Thanks to the prior successes this organization has had, we were one of the RC & Ds that was able to move forward without the benefit of the federal funds.

Our transition year was successful with a great deal of help from Jim Kirkland, Cathy Poshard and Stephanie Brown. Jim found us office space at DSAC, Cathy agreed to help as half time Program Coordinator and Stephanie continued on as half-time Executive Director and took the lead role in the very successful Sustainable Living Expo. I sincerely appreciate the assistance of these three individuals with key parts of our transition to a stand-alone 501 C 3 not-for-profit organization that will be here to serve the 16 county area for another 45 years!

As we move forward we are fortunate that Cathy Poshard has agreed to continue as the Program Coordinator and Tabitha Ayres has joined us as the Executive Director. Stephanie Brown will continue to facilitate the Sustainable Living Expo. Attendance at Council meetings has been excellent and we will continue to solidify Council representation and consider ad hoc committees to carry out the development and implementation of RC & D initiatives. The new web site will be launched soon and we will continue to work on having an excellent web presence.

With many agencies suffering fiscal challenges our role in securing and managing grant resources will continue to become more important so that efforts in natural resources protection, enhancement and education do not stall. We must also consider how we can grow our financial base so that we can cash flow projects while we wait on both state and grant fund reimbursement. Many projects that we do must be financed in advance and/or have a source of matching funds.

At the end of Rudy Rice's annual report last year, he noted the importance of becoming a self-sustaining council. We have now made that transition. It is now very important that we solidify this position in this next year!



**RIVER TO RIVER**  
Cooperative Weed Management Area

**2011 Annual Report**  
**Submitted by Chris Evans, Coordinator**  
**River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area**



The River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) is a partnership between 12 federal and state agencies, organizations, and universities aimed at coordinating efforts and programs for addressing the threat of invasive plants in Southern Illinois.

2011 was another productive year for the CWMA. We continued existing projects and started several new initiatives including developing techniques for aerial survey of invasive plants and native community restoration in power line rights-of-way.



**Garlic Mustard Strike Team Hunt**

In 2011, the CWMA gave 25 educational programs with over 1300 people in attendance. We also participated in 12 workdays, with over 560 volunteer hours being donated towards controlling invasive plants. The CWMA Coordinator gave presentations at regional and national conferences in Wisconsin, Kentucky, Indiana, and Florida.



**Internship Programs**

The CWMA also continued its involvement with the internship program conducted by Southern Illinois University and the Illinois DNR. For 9 weeks this summer, the CWMA hosted two interns, Lindsay Shupert and Jordan Kiefer. Both interns are undergraduate students at SIU and, worked on a myriad of invasive plant projects with the CWMA and our partners. As part of their internship, both students conducted research with the CWMA. Both students presented their results as posters at this year's Natural Areas Association annual meeting in Florida. Jordan's poster on curly pondweed control evaluation won second place in the student poster presentation category at the meeting, competing with undergraduate and graduate students across the nation.

The Southern Illinois Invasive Species Strike Team, a very successful partnership between the CWMA, The Nature Conservancy, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, completed its third year of work. The strike team, made up of Bruce Henry and Kevin Rohling, were able to treat nearly 1,700 acres of invasive plants, including 25 different species in 32 natural areas. This year, we're incorporating a new strike team website to help us organize and manage all of the sites and species scheduled for treatment.

The CWMA again served a leadership role in Illinois Invasive Species Awareness Month (ISAM). In 2011, Governor Quinn officially proclaimed May as ISAM Awareness month and nearly 70 events were held across the state to raise awareness about the threat of invasive species. For ISAM this year, the CWMA partnered with IDNR, The Nature Conservancy and Green Earth, Inc. to host a Garlic Mustard Challenge event involving two local schools. Classes from Carbondale and Murphysboro competed to see who could pull the most garlic mustard, an exotic plant invading our woodlands

The winning class received a \$500 award to be spent on supplies for the classroom and all students participated in a pizza party for the event. Also, the first ISAM awards were given out this year to recognize excellence in invasive species work across the state. This year's recipients were Karen Tharp from the Nature Conservancy for Professional of the year, Illinois DOT Region 1 for professional organization of the year, and Greg White for volunteer of the year. The CWMA congratulates these award winners and thanks them for their efforts across the state.

The CWMA continues to implement the ROW restoration project and is working with the Shawnee National Forest, Crab Orchard NWR, Ameren, Southern Illinois Power, and Southeastern Illinois Power Coop to restore over 60 acres of utility right-of-way into native warm season grasses.

With funding from the USFS State and Private Forestry, the CWMA is partnering with Advanced Ecological Services to conduct aerial surveys for bush honeysuckle in northern Union County. This region has steep, remote areas that are difficult to survey for invasive species and aerial surveying is a promising method to quickly and cheaply assess the invasion status of bush honeysuckle. The survey has been completed and we are currently working through the data. Look for maps of the results in next year's annual report!

The CWMA continues to work from a variety of grant sources. Grants active during 2011 came from the following sources: Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund Program, USDA NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant, Illinois State Wildlife Grant Program, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Pulling Together Initiative, and USFS State and Private Forestry Redesign grants.

In 2011, the CWMA was the recipient of another award for the multi-state CHIP-N project to survey for aquatic and terrestrial invasive species along the Ohio River. The USFS Eastern Region selected the CWMA and its project partners for an Honor Award for Protecting Ecosystems Across Boundaries.

Next year looks to be promising as we continue to work on invasive species issues in southern Illinois. The CWMA looks forward to working with the RC&D on these and future projects.

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### *Upcoming Events*

**Stewardship Week** -- The 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Stewardship Week will be held April 24-27 this year. We are hopeful for sunny skies and great weather this spring. Our presenters are ready and scheduled for our students in Grades K-6<sup>th</sup>. We will be hosting grade school children conservation education from 9 counties in southern Illinois this spring. Schools planning to attend will come from all over southern Illinois. From the northern region in Jackson & White county all the way to the southern counties of Hardin & Alexander. If anyone wants to volunteer, please let me know.



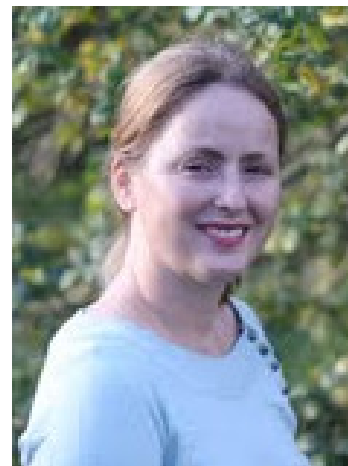
**Forestry Steak Fry** -- Everyone is invited to participate in this popular annual tradition, planned for Thursday, May 24th at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. Steaks go on the grill at 6 p.m. Watch for an invitation with program information and a registration form. A modest fee includes a T-bone steak - cooked to perfection by each person attending - and all of the trimmings. Great food, fellowship, and fun!



# Featured Speaker: Tracy Boutelle Fidler

From Shedd Aquarium to Nature Conservancy's Great Rivers Program, Tracy Boutelle Fidler has spent her career focusing on water issues and their affects. With projects ranging from restoring health to altered watersheds to the promotion of sustainable practices.

While with The Nature Conservancy, Tracy supported teams working on China's Yangtze River, Brazil's Pantanal and, closer to home, the Mississippi River. Her work also encompassed the Conservancy's freshwater initiative, an international program focused on bringing nature back into the equation when making water management decisions. Today, Fidler is excited about her work on the Cache River and the effort to restore a more natural hydrology to it. If achieved, this new balance will help ensure the long-term viability of the Cache River Wetlands.



## Science Guides: Restoration of Cache River 2011 Annual Report: Tracy Boutelle Fidler *Restoration Coordinator*



A current goal in Illinois' Wildlife Action Plan is to restore a more natural hydrology in the lower segment of the Cache River. In support of this aspiration, Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development Area, with funding from a State Wildlife Grant, is guiding much-needed research and overseeing water studies. With this funding in place, and with the help of the local research community, we have been able to learn more about the health of the Cache River than ever before.

Current research projects include an assessment of the Cache River fishery, once a source of pride for the local community, and as a study conducted by a team of Southern Illinois University – Carbondale researchers on river water flow and how it affects the web of life in the lower Cache River. When these research projects are combined, they will help land managers to better design projects to support the many varied species that depend on the Cache ,and its connected wetland, for long-term sustainability.

Clockwise from left: Heidi Rantala and Allison Kennington collect bugs © SIUC; Cache River Fish Assessment © INHS; and fish researcher Kristen Pitts in Buttonland Swamp © SIUC



Additionally, area conservation organizations and local scientists are working together right now to develop a science-based conservation plan that will provide detail on the Cache River watershed. The final goal will be to document our conservation efforts and support them with sound scientific data. The final plan will be completed, and available for presentation, by June 2012, when this grant ends.



All of these efforts are designed to ensure that the Cache River Wetlands remain healthy for now, and for future generations, as the wetlands remain an important natural place in Southern Illinois.

### A Plan is Developed

Through this grant, the Illinois State Water Survey expanded prior work completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. And, as reported last year, the survey completed the second of two reports. Together, these reports provided the knowledge and information needed to make science-based decisions about how to restore a more natural hydrology to the Cache River. For example, they provided critical information about how water flows through the region, how that flow could be restored and how it could be better managed to provide improved flood protection to local citizens.

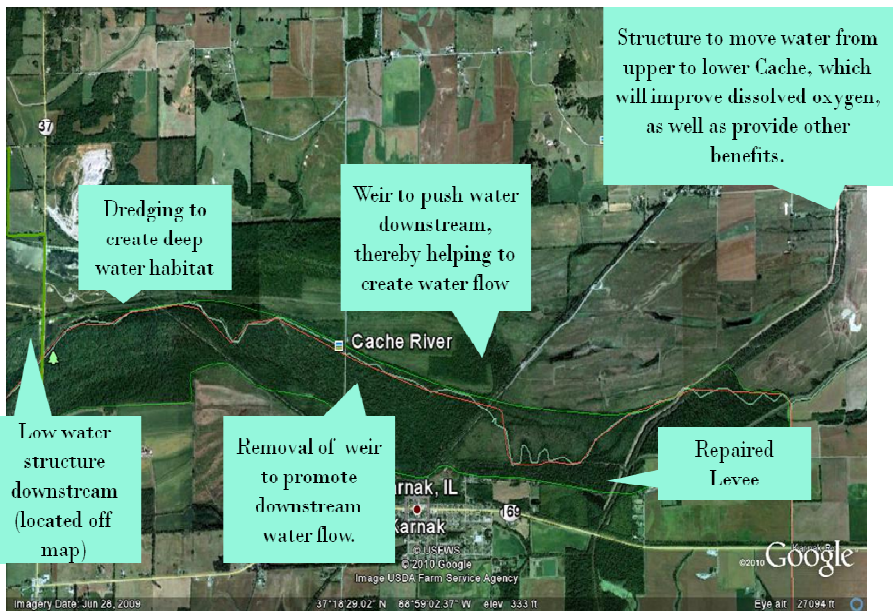


Using these studies, the Cache River Wetlands Joint Venture Partnership—which includes Ducks Unlimited Inc., Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resource Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service— developed a plan that while beneficial for natural resource management, also includes components that are important to other stakeholders in the wa-

tershed. The partners hope to advance this plan into formal planning and design.

### Making this Vision a Reality

Because the Cache is such a complex river with a rich web of people and interests, it's important to collaborate with a coalition of stakeholders to develop a water management plan that will address the challenges that face us. Therefore, it is important that structures be easily adapted, as we learn together about the river and develop a system for collectively addressing concerns. To request a copy of this plan for proposed study, please contact: Tracy Boutelle Fidler at [tboutellefidler@gmail.com](mailto:tboutellefidler@gmail.com) or 618-457-4183.



### Benefits of Restoration

The importance of this work cannot be understated. In brief, restoring water flow to the Cache River is expected to: boost the number of fish, particularly those favored by anglers, such as bass, crappie, bluegill and catfish; make paddling a more enjoyable experience; ensure that duck hunting and other sporting opportunities continue; improve bird watching; and create a overall healthier river and wetlands.



## **New Beginnings for the Shawnee RC&D Stephanie Brown**

**Wow.** What a difference a year makes! Who knew that the perennial threats of reduced or eliminated funding for direct federal support of the RC&D program would come to pass? It has certainly been a jarring turn of events for the 375 RC&D Areas across the country. Some were better prepared than others, and I'm proud to say that the Shawnee RC&D Area is soundly "among the livin'!" There are several reasons why this program has survived, and more reasons to believe that the Shawnee RC&D will be thriving for many years to come.

**A solid track record of success brings momentum** – you just can't stop good work in its tracks. There is so much good work left to be done with your support, so let's keep movin'!

**Plans were already set in motion to secure a brighter future for the Shawnee RC&D.** In a way, you might say that we saw this coming – at least the possibility and the need for the program to be on solid footing. I certainly felt compelled to coach the Council toward self-reliance, if for no other reason than the increasing restrictions on what a Coordinator could and could not do for the Council. I'm pleased that the advice helped the Council embrace its independence, responsibility, and most of all – the possibilities of greatness, with or without a Coordinator. The latest revisions to the Bylaws, and two key hires in the past year were strategic in positioning the RC&D for success.

**Good leadership speaks for itself.** We are fortunate to have the right people in place for this critical time in the history of the Shawnee RC&D Area. An active and engaged Chairman is a must, and we have had excellent leadership from Glenn Seeber, the Executive Committee, and Council throughout the transition.

**Independence has its benefits.** The Shawnee RC&D Area, Inc., has been a separate 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization for many years, but often under the shadow of the more visible federal partner. Over the years there have been some fine Coordinators and Program Assistants, who put the everyday face and wind in the sails of the program – they are largely responsible for the partnerships and track record of progress that was laid down. But in recent years, we lost more and more of the federal investment - and gained more and more requirements necessary to retain that assistance. By the time Congress cut the cord, there was less to lose, and some burdens relieved that had been taking time and attention away from the business at hand. Now the only bureaucracy that the RC&D has to deal with is in managing state and federal grants for worthwhile projects.

**I'm still here, and so are you!** While it is sad that Congress eliminated funding for my position, that doesn't change the VALUE that the Shawnee RC&D program brings to Southern Illinois. It doesn't take away the reasons that I've been involved with the program in one way or another for the past 25 years. Our partners are still on board, too. As long as the Shawnee RC&D Area remains uniquely positioned to address natural resources conservation issues, provides sound leadership, coordination and management of funded projects – and works toward other ways to do good works and be financially sustainable – we are golden. If everyone stays behind the program, there will be a lot to celebrate in just a few years – the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Shawnee RC&D! Until then, I'll be seeing you around...



## **Creating Opportunities to Improve the Future** **Tabitha L. Ayres, Executive Director**

There is an idea in business planning that all problems are actually just opportunities that haven't been identified yet. When Shawnee RC&D, along with other RC&D programs nationwide, lost federal funding, the agency faced a major problem in terms of finances and program purpose. However, with the excellent care of the board and staff, Shawnee RC&D identified the opportunity hidden within the loss and was able to create a stronger, and more self-sufficient, agency.

As we begin 2012, there are new opportunities waiting to be identified and acted upon. The growing public interest in environmental and restoration based projects is a valuable asset as we forge forward and seek to find projects and initiatives that not only benefit the environment, but also the Southern Illinois community. As an agency, we are perfectly poised to act as the liaisons between the wants and needs of the towns and communities that we serve and the higher governing bodies who want to help those communities.

As long as we remember to listen to our communities, and to be inclusive of the various groups, professions, and mindsets that want to be involved in the ongoing projects in our area, our agency will be limitless and able to make real and valuable change.

I am so pleased to be a part of Shawnee RC&D, and appreciate the opportunity that I have to work with this organization to make a real difference, right here in Southern Illinois.



### **Dixon Springs Ag Center Friends Group to Form**

A grass roots effort is underway to form a support organization for the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. The Shawnee RC&D Area is playing a key role in administering a \$20,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Development (DCEO) to cover start-up expenses for the group.

Stephanie Brown is leading a steering committee made up of diverse stakeholders who value the University of Illinois facility and its programs for a variety of reasons. The initial vision for the group is that it will be a dues-free volunteer service organization. Activities will include a supporting role with events and publicity, an organized voice that can influence state appropriations, and a mechanism for directing financial contributions to ensure they are used at Dixon Springs for the purposes intended by donors.

Many decisions are yet to be made, but according to Stephanie, the group is off to a good start. "We're all about celebrating the Ag Center's heritage, keeping people better informed about what's going on there today, helping out where we can along the way, and planning for how we can make it a better place in the future." The aim of the group is to build an organized community of people who are willing to contribute their time, talents, and/or financial resources to the aspects of the Dixon Springs Ag Center that they value the most.

For more information, contact Stephanie at 618/949-3698, or by email at [sbrown63@shawneelink.net](mailto:sbrown63@shawneelink.net).



## Sustainable Living Expo Attendance Doubles in Second Year!



Good Choices. Smart Living. *Help Yourself.* That was the theme of the 2011 Sustainable Living Expo held October 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center (DSAC) in Pope County. The Expo attracted participants from 28 Illinois counties and 7 other states, with attendance more than doubling to 1200+ in the event's second year.

The program included informative sessions and ongoing demonstrations in tents and outdoor learning stations scattered across the grounds of DSAC – an outlying field research and education center of the University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES).

The Main Tent was filled with 30 booths hosted by agencies, organizations and local businesses providing products, services and programs consistent with the event theme. A popular addition to this year's Expo was the adjacent Artisan Tent showcasing local creativity and ingenuity, with 20 different artisans demonstrating talents in pottery, basket weaving, wood lathing, wool and alpaca spinning, gourd art, jewelry making, landscape painting and more.

The Expo leveraged the strengths and limited staff capacity at Dixon Springs with the overlapping interests of partner organizations sharing similar challenges. Together in this united effort, the necessary financial, physical, and intellectual resources were brought to bear on a timely set of needs in the region.

Major sponsors of the Expo included the Shawnee RC&D Area, Connect SI Foundation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Illinois ACES Office of Research, Shawnee Communications, WSIU Public Broadcasting, John A. Logan College, Southeastern Illinois College, and the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education program. The Illinois Forestry Association sponsored the Expo at the Bronze level (\$500), as did the Illinois Tree Farm Committee.

Program tracks included Conservation, Local Foods, Energy, and Survival. Some of the topics covered at the Expo were: shade tree care and removal; invasive weed identification and control; beekeeping; chainsaw maintenance and safety; forest management and organic incentive programs; prescribed burning; hunting leases; growing and selling Christmas trees; landscaping with natives; best species for firewood; starting an outdoor recreation business, basics of freshly planted trees (just say no to mulch volcanoes!); cover crops; high tunnels for season extension; saving seeds; basic gardening; container gardening; cooking with in-season produce; mushroom hunting; solar energy; home energy conservation; energy saving audits; earthquake preparedness; basic first aid; water purification; and more!

For a complete listing of sessions visit the Expo's official website: [www.SLEexpo.org](http://www.SLEexpo.org) and download the 2011 program. The date for the **2012 Sustainable Living Expo is Saturday, October 27!**









# Financial Report

As of September 30, 2011

## Assets

Cash in Checking.....	\$121,705.02
Committed Funds.....	\$ 47,000.00
Grant Fund Reimbursements Outstanding.....	<u>..\$ 46,506.27</u>
Total Assets.....	\$121,211.29

- Fiscal Year 2011 Audit is currently underway with Cindy A. Bobell, CPA. A full 2010 audit report will be available upon request after audit is completed.. A copy of the completed FY 2010 audit is available upon request.

## Shawnee RC&D Active Grants October 1, 2010-September 30, 2011

### USDA-NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant

Title: *Coordinating Invasive Plant Management on a Regional Scale*  
Award Dates: September 3, 2009-September 3, 2012  
Total Award: \$75,000 (\$25,000/ year for 3 years)

### National Fish and Wildlife Foundation - Pulling Together Initiative

Title: *Controlling Invasive Plants in Right-of-Ways*  
Award Dates: March 1, 2010-February 29, 2012  
Total Award: \$100,000

### U.S Forest Service - State and Private

Title: *Chip-N, multi-state, multi-CWMA effort to standardize protocol, compile records and survey invasive species along the lower Ohio River.*  
Award Dates: August 19, 2009-December 31, 2010  
Total Award: \$30,000

### U.S. Forest Service

Title: *Little Cache Invasive Species Surveys (Dutchman Lake)*  
Award Dates: August 12, 2009- September 30, 2011  
Total Award: \$9,478.69 - Original Amount \$6,199.60; Added with budget revision \$3,279.09

### American Forests

Title: *Tree Planting in the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge*  
Award Dates: April 1, 2010-December 31,2010  
Total Award: \$37,180

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Title: *Ecosystem Restoration Options for Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge.*  
Award Dates: August 1,2010 - July 31, 2011 Extended  
Total Award: \$54,500



**U.S. Forest Service**

Title: *To establish environmental education areas on approximately 5 acres at the Hidden Spring Ranger Station, as well as four picnic/camping sites on the forest.*

Award Dates: August 24,2009-July 31, 2014

Total Award: \$48,000

**U.S. Forest Service**

Title: *Shawnee Recreation Site Improvement Project (Fish Habitat)*

Award Dates: December 3,2009-May 31, 2012

Total Award: \$33,495.70

**IDNR State Wildlife Grant**

Title: *Project Administrator-Cache River Watershed Ecosystem Restoration- Union, Johnson, Alexander and Pulaski counties in Illinois.*

Award Dates: July 1, 2010-July 31, 2012

Total Award: \$188,440 -- \$94,220/ year for 2 years. Project extended 2 years by amendment 4

**IL Department of Commerce & Economic Development (DCEO)**

Title: Friends of the Dixon Springs Ag Center Stakeholder Organization Establishment

Award Dates: June 1, 2011 – May 31, 2013

Total Award: \$20,000

**IDNR Wildlife Preservation Fund**

Title: *Promotion & Coordination of IL Invasive Species Awareness Month*

Award Dates: January 11, 2011 – December 31, 2011

Total Award: \$9,440

**IDNR State Wildlife Grant**

Title: Conservation Actions to Address Invasive Species Threats in the Cache River and Shawnee COA's

Award Date: July 12, 2011 – June 30, 2014

Total Award: \$165,000

**IDNR – State Wildlife Grant**

Title: Printing and Dissemination of Invasive Plant Identification Booklet

July 15, 2011 to December 31, 2012

Total Award: \$2,000

**U.S. Forest Service - State and Private Forestry Grant**

Title: CARP: Survey, Planning and Strategic Control of Bush Honeysuckle

Award Date: Now till September 30, 2013

Total Award: \$42,000

**IDNR – State Wildlife Grant**

Title: Southern Illinois Prescribed Fire Resources for Natural Area Mgmt

Award Date: September 1, 2011 to November 31, 2014

Total Award: \$55,725

**USDA-NRCS – Conservation Technical Assistance Program**

Title: Sustainable Living Expo Contribution Agreement

Award Date: Now till December 15, 2012

Total Award: \$20,000

**U.S. Forest Service – Challenge Cost Share Agreement**

Title: Sustainable Living Expo

Award Date: Now until December 31, 2011

Total Award: \$3,575.00



*Serving  
Southern Illinois for  
45 Years*

**More Information?**

**Visit [www.shawneercd.org](http://www.shawneercd.org)**

**[info@shawneercd.org](mailto:info@shawneercd.org)**

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