

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL

POST OAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 5

JUNE 2005

**NOTE:
Special
Meeting
Place**

June Meeting

Topic: Arlington Parks & Recreation
Department and Environmental
Initiatives

Speaker: Pete Jamieson, Director,
Arlington Parks & Recreation
Department

When: Wednesday, June 8, 7:00 pm

Where: Parks Building, 717 W. Main
(NW corner of Main and Cooper
Streets)

A Green Animal Shelter? John Darling

Arlington officials say they are committed to the idea of a sustainable future. That's easy to say; after all, who would advocate the opposite, a city that works toward its death? Details, it's always the details. For instance, a sustainable building design may cost more money up front, and that poses problems. Sure, we save money every minute a green building operates, but that doesn't help us pay the initial cost of a new building.

While many of us have been thinking hard about how we can influence the Cowboys to build a green stadium, dedicated animal lovers have been working to raise money for our new animal shelter. The PAWS 2005 campaign received \$140,000 from the landfill lease, and that must have helped toward the goal. But they need more money, and they're having a fundraising dinner and live auction on June 6 to try to raise it.

Is our shelter building committee starting with the idea of a sustainable facility? Right next door, Grand Prairie's animal shelter has some prominent green features. Their \$3.5 million facility was helped greatly by a \$1.5 million donation from Lone Star Park. It features lots of natural light, low-maintenance native landscaping, and rain-water collection into an 80,000-gallon cistern for watering that landscape. Grand Prairie started with the idea of building the best possible shelter first, with some green features included.

Could we take the next step and begin our plan with an integrated package: the best possible green shelter? We know it will pay off in the long run.

Lots of buffalo grass surrounds the Grand Prairie shelter and windows high on the right bring in natural light.



Big gutters lead to the cistern where landscape water is stored.



Participants in the city's native landscaping classes can walk outside to see examples of low-maintenance, water-saving plants.

From the President

Candy Halliburton



"Who would be against parks?" That simple question was posed by a park patron during the recent bond election. Who indeed?

I couldn't imagine how anyone could vote against the Parks Bond, and initially I was ambivalent about the need for a bond campaign. With little political acumen, I asked myself, "Where is the urgency?" The answer is in the way a person envisions her cup.

Most mornings after my first sips of coffee, and before I hear or read any news of the day, I peer into my cup and believe it to be half full. As the day progresses and I am reminded of the assaults on our environment from governmental and private entities and begin dwelling on the battles waged by individuals trying to preserve our natural habitats, my cup begins to appear half empty. I moan about all the gas-guzzling SUVs on the road, bellyache about the lack of public transportation in Arlington, decry the denuding of our forests, grumble about the shrinking polar ice

cap and wring my hands over naysayers who seemingly vote against *everything*!

Oops! Maybe I am not that different from the Arlington citizens who voted against the Parks Bond. They live in a world where (almost) any tax represents a hardship or the perception that they are being stripped of their hard-earned money for something they neither need nor want. Maybe they aren't negative but have just become overwhelmed by the plethora of outstretched hands. If it isn't money for one thing, it's money for another and every plea carries the implication that "you can't get something for nothing".

We are bombarded and assaulted daily. Every issue seems to have lobbyists, endorsements and lists. Every environmental mailing list on the planet seems to have my name on it. I get stuff from Robert Redford, Senator Clinton, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and just today, Maria Cantwell. In case you didn't recognize her name, she is a U.S. senator from *nearby* Washington state. What should I support? There just is not enough money in my bank account to enhance the budgets of all the causes that convey my world view. Is it possible that too many choices can lead to

confusion, manifested as ambivalence or even negativity?

Seeing the cup half empty and voting no on everything, however, is taking the easy way out. I think it is more difficult, certainly more time consuming, to research the issues and open your mind to all sides. But I would argue that ultimately it is more rewarding to question and to try to find a balance. What course of action do we have to take to save our trees, and thus the air we breathe, or to develop a mass transit system? What will it take to make Arlington a better city for all its citizens? What sacrifice is needed to pay a little more in taxes? Is a dollar or two, or even \$10 a month, really asking too much? I don't think so.

I have empathy for the cup-half-empty earthlings, but I have admiration for the cup-half-full folks. Through a positive attitude and the search for answers, not rhetoric, we are more likely to move forward for the betterment of our earth. My desire is to behave as a cup-half-full woman, on the trail to progress with sustainability. And yes, it usually takes money.

THE POST OAK

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Cable news

Bonnie Bowman

From May 30 - June 12, the Facts and Issues program on Arlington cable channel 16 will be a program on Metroplex clean air issues. The guest is Wendi Hammond, Executive Director of Blue Skies Alliance. The show time is 7:30 pm almost every night.

I'm working on a show regarding Johnson Creek and the Cowboys stadium development that will show during the following two weeks.

Comcast is also committed to get copies of all the Facts and Issues programs for the past year to the League of Women Voters. Since we don't yet have all the tapes, I will try to get a listing of all the available environmentally connected shows by the next newsletter. Anyone who is interested in viewing one of the programs will be able to borrow the tape or set up a showing for a small group.

Watch Your Watering

From June 1 through September 30, no watering is permitted from 10:00 am-6:00 pm except for hand watering and soaker hoses. It's a good thing we like native plants.

New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller



A milestone was achieved at the May 14 workday: The majority of the 10-acre site is now cleared of brush and small trees! Arlington Parks & Recreation employees Paul and Patrick launched a committed offensive against the last of the trees on the north side of the park and didn't stop until they were down. A super group of volunteers (Anne Alderfer, Julia Burgen, Jo Ann Duman, Marian Hiler, Molly Hollar, Margaret Santarelli and Dan von Bose) clipped, toted and staged the brush in areas where it can be mulched by the Parks Department's brush hog crew. The park looks a lot more like a prairie now and most of it can be maintained with an annual mowing.

The workday was just between spring and summer. A few early spring prairie celestials were still in bloom, and it was a great year for larkspur. Summer rosinweed was just starting to bloom. We even had refreshments to celebrate: blackberries were ripe for the picking (yum!). And NO chiggers this year...truly

prime time. We'll take the summer months off, then resume workdays in September after the summer heat wanes and park staff's summer workload lessens. There is still a section of trees clustered along the south boundary. Large, mature trees will be left, but pockets of prairie grasses can still be found around the trees, awaiting their release.

Many thanks to Arlington Parks & Recreation Department's Scott DeGrant and his staff, who have really been dedicated to this project. Thanks also to all the volunteers from Arlington Conservation Council, Master Naturalists and Native Plant Society of Texas! See you in September!

For more information on this project, contact jgmiller@gbronline.com. If you're interested in learning more about prairie or riparian restoration, two workshops are coming up soon:

June 10-11 "Riparian and Wetland Restoration", Society for Ecological Restoration, University of North Texas, Denton, www.cep.unt.edu/ser/

June 17-19 "Prairies and Savannahs Conference, Native Grasslands and Water Resources – A Natural Partnership", Native Prairies Association of Texas, Baylor University, Waco, www.texasprairie.org.



University Parking Lot Delayed Monica Drake



The decision to construct UTA Parking Lot 54 at the corner of West and Bessel Streets was made by a small number of UTA administrators and six UTA students but without the knowledge of homeowners in the affected area. This spot is surrounded by six homes and two other parking lots. Nearby parking lots are rarely used except during the first two weeks of the spring and fall semesters—and never filled. I found out about the proposed construction by chance at the beginning of March 2005, although the construction had been approved by the UTA Parking Lot Committee in November of 2004. It was then that I began to scramble to find others who would support me in my opposition to the destruction of this unique place, and I was fortunate enough to discover the Arlington Conservation Council.

The small area in question is home to seventeen trees, birds, squirrels, and a multitude of smaller organisms that make up this suburban ecosystem. I did not

want it to become home to 60 parking spaces, especially one that would cost \$60,000 and place the parking lot funds account into arrears by over \$100,000. My husband and I had multiple e-mails, meetings, and telephone conversations with UTA officials, but construction plans moved forward up to the proposed start date of May 16 without a hint of compromise. Workers began to cut the limbs from a tree and started notching it when UTA President Spaniolo's office was flooded with telephone calls from concerned Arlington citizens and ACC members. The workers milled about until 11:00 that day and I was notified that the project had been halted indefinitely because enrollment numbers for fall were lower than predicted.

While this was a victory for all citizens concerned with protecting the environment, the battle is not over. UTA must begin to show concern for the impact it has on the surrounding community. Many campuses have similar concerns about expansion and providing adequate parking. However, solutions nearly always involve making use of shuttle buses or parking garages. The current philosophy of building parking lots indefinitely benefits neither UTA nor the citizens of Arlington, especially in light of the pollution we face daily. Please continue to express your opinions and suggestions to UTA administrators and urge them to form a coalition that involves UTA, the community, and city council. If that goal could be achieved, both UTA and Arlington would benefit from a relationship that is truly cooperative.

Wildscape Update John Dycus



"April showers bring May weeds" lacks a certain climatological euphony, but alas, it's as true as that old flowers line. Faced with this fact of park, determined wildscapers Louise

Engel, Kay Sekio, Jo Poppelreiter, Margaret Collins, Connie Anderson and Sharon Clark cleared weeds from the native evergreen groundcover area in May. Meanwhile, Alexia Strout-Dapaz, Anne Alderfer, Ann Trenton and Mary Turner banished mountains of wild carrot (they stick to your socks and shoestrings) and other noxious nuisances before they set a trillion seeds for next year.

Pulling the clingy rascals revealed surprises. Baby plants put in the ground last year apparently had been overtaken, but no, after the weeds were gone the baby plants were still there, had grown to adolescent size and were determinedly occupying their territory. In another year, they'll be much more able to cover the ground, leaving little bare dirt for nature's root-miscreants. To help the little plants even more, Devanie Fergus loaded countless wheelbarrows of compost and mulch to cover the ground around the plants, insulating them from the heat and discouraging weed growth.

Out on the trails, Mike Warren and his Tarrant County Juvenile Services crew are still mulching like mad. Wood-chip mulch loaded, wheelbarrowed and spread by Mike's kids keeps the trails mudless for visitors and volunteers alike. This valuable work, done often and well, is greatly appreciated as it saves the volunteers for weeding, planting and other garden chores.

Chores like birdbath maintenance. Thanks to Anne Alderfer, the two wildscape water features are being fine-tuned to attract thirsty wildlife. Now visitors will have more opportunities to observe birds, frogs and turtles as they drink and carry on in the boulder

birdbath in front of the pavilion. To enhance the area, more plants have been added, including native ferns, wild iris and moisture-loving evergreen native groundcovers. In back of the pavilion, the butterfly garden is growing and will soon be blooming to attract nectaring and egg-laying butterflies.

Wildscape visitor Nora Green spotted a pair of bluebirds in the wildscape, so we may install some bluebird houses to encourage them. Nora joined the propagation volunteers at the greenhouse recently to pot the many butterfly weed and baby trees she had dug up. Jean Hiler, Mary McCoy and Taylor Stevens-Parker have been "bumping up" plants in



It's not all work—sometimes when they finish, they party. Celebrating Taylor Stevens-Parker's birthday...39 again!

preparation for the fall sale Saturday, Oct. 1. Glenn Troutman, Harry Arber and Pat Lovejoy had mixed the countless bins of soil needed for this operation. Deb Manley and Donna Morris moved the newly potted plants to their preferred locations in sun or shade. John Bridges is installing sprinklers with timers in the lath house and sunny areas where the plants are growing during the summer.

Inland sea oats and Canada wild rye are still being planted in the new erosion control area of nearly an acre, with coralberry soon to be added along a trail. Parks & Rec's Jay Falgout and Martin Sanchez are managing this area, working with volunteers and other park personnel to transform eroded land. The wildscape has made much greater

progress this year than would have been possible without their help.

And there's progress at the heap. Inspired by a COG grant obtained by the city's Recycling Coordinator, Lorrie Anderle, Master Composters are upgrading the compost area with a storage vault for wheelbarrows, hoses and tools and numerous new compost bins between cedar arbor-like structures. Attractive signs, wide paths and native plantings will complete the picture. Compost is truly the gardener's best friend, and the wildscape workers especially appreciate the wonderful material produced by the compost volunteers. The project starts in June.

The three-part "Landscaping with Native Plants" workshop, sponsored by the North Central Chapter of the Native Plant Society, concludes with a walking tour June 9. The workshop, for which more than 100 people reserved places, is being taught by Rosa Finsley, the wildscape's landscape architect since its beginning more than 10 years ago. Rosa is an award-winning native plant guru of great talent who often has saved the day with ingenious solutions to impossible problems. Much of the wildscape's success is due to her guidance and to the dedicated wildscape volunteers who turn her suggestions into reality.

WILDSCAPE SUMMER SCHEDULE

Beginning June 1, workdays will begin at 8:00 am instead of 9:00 am.

The schedule:

First and third Saturdays: 8-noon
Tuesday mornings: 8-noon
Wednesday mornings: 8-noon at the shady patio by the greenhouse
Friday mornings: 8-noon at the shady patio by the greenhouse

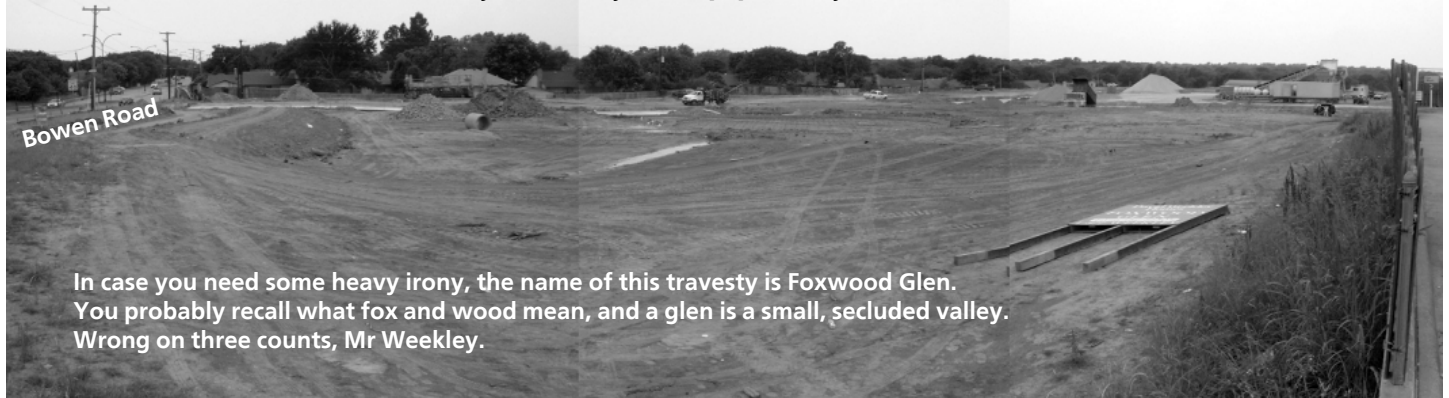
Saturday workdays in July will be the second and fourth Saturdays due to the Fourth of July holiday.

Saturday workdays in September will be the second and fourth Saturdays due to the Labor Day weekend.

Water and snacks will be provided. For more info call Molly Hollar at (817) 860-5580 or (817) 319-6924.

Thank you, David Weekley John Darling

We thought that Mr Weekley was going to develop land on the southwest corner of Bowen and I-20 with some sensitivity, but apparently we were misinformed. At least Mr Weekley isn't some nasty carpetbagger; here's some insight from one of his Web sites: Founded in the Lone Star State in 1976, the company was built on southern hospitality and integrity. David Weekley...tells us that the state of Texas is as rich in beauty and history as it is [in] diversity.



Blue Skies? Joanne Stewart and Marianne Herrmann

Joanne: The speaker at the last Blue Skies Alliance Arlington meeting was Carol Bierdrzycki, Director of Texas Ratepayers' Organization to Save Energy (TexasROSE), who discussed the Web site that rates the environmental impact of electricity servers. If you want to compare the various services, go to www.powerscorecard.org. This Web site rates the effect on the environment of the various power servers. You can also go to the Public Utility Commission's Web site to compare prices, switching costs, deposit, etc. That Web site is www.powertochoose.com/.

The Blue Skies Alliance is involved in a contested case hearing regarding TCEQ wanting to ease up on restrictions of emissions of the TXI cement kilns. There will be a meeting on Tuesday, June 7, at 10am in Waxahachie at 401 S Rogers St. Several environmental groups are involved in this case. They are hoping for individuals as well as city and county governments to join in party status for this suit. So far, only a few local Midlothian citizens, Blue Skies Alliance and Downwinders At Risk have requested a contested case proceeding. On June 9, Erin Brockovich will meet with the people of Midlothian who feel that they have been adversely affected by the cement kilns. Our understanding is that the meeting room will be small, but we hope to know more about this soon.

Marianne: We have sent letters to the city council and the county government. Ulrich went last week to speak to our city council. They just nodded their heads, but did not respond otherwise. Councilman Ron Wright has answered the e-mail and said the he has referred the matter to the city attorney. I called Kathryn Wilemon, our city council person, to get an update on what the city is doing, but got no response! In regard to the permit application for the new proposed coal-burning power plant near Waco (Riesel): A contested case hearing will be held by the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) on June 27 in Austin, but the location might be changed to Waco. Let's plan to go to the hearing in Waxahachie on June 7. Please let me know if you would like to go (ulmar@airmail.net); it starts at 10:00 am.

Thanks To Shane Goetz for supporting our efforts. If you'd like to help ACC and publicize your business, call any board member for details.

METRO 817/265-2902
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THE LAW OFFICE OF SHANE GOETZ

715 WEST ABRAM ST. ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76013

Save Recyclables for the Float

This is the last newsletter before the 4th of July parade—our last chance to ask you to keep saving your plastic and aluminum recyclables for our float. If you can, bring what you've got so far to the June meeting so we can see how we're doing. In particular we need a very large number of clear plastic bottles. And we promise to recycle everything you bring after the parade.



Texas Odds and Green Ends Grace Darling

First, the bad news. We've been asleep at the switch—or rather, daydreaming about a green Cowboys stadium, animal shelter and subcourthouse; a residential tree ordinance; and a new spirit of cooperation with city officials to get serious about sustainable growth in Arlington. Meanwhile, the Texas Legislature has been busy writing very bad bills that have been signed by Governor Perry and will become very bad laws on September 1, 2005. A short list follows.

Senate Bill 574. This measure allows developers to avoid city restrictions such as tree preservation if they owned the property when the city requirements were put into effect. Developers can now claim they are grandfathered from zoning, open space, and tree preservation ordinances. The law could also be interpreted to exempt developers' projects from water conservation, landscaping requirements, or any other ordinance designed to conserve natural resources. SB 574 also restricts a city's ability to set expiration dates for projects that sit dormant for years without any progress yet retain their "vested rights." In addition, SB 574 allows developers to sue cities over disagreements about the enforcement of the vested rights law.

SB 848. Cities cannot change requirements for a developer once a builder files an application. The measure freezes municipal development requirements to allow construction to proceed under existing laws. SB 848 allows developers to submit incomplete or defective development applications by mail and lock in the city ordinances that are in effect on the postmark date of the application even if the project will not be constructed for decades. Also allows ordinances to be locked in when a developer merely acquires a promise that utilities will be provided to the site—a decision that doesn't have anything to do with project density or design.

Currently in committee are the following acts that amend existing state codes. They are also expected to become law in September if the governor calls for a special session.

House Bill 3461 and its companion, SB 1406. A city's ability to call for a moratorium on commercial development would be severely constrained. The bill's author states: "In most cases, the moratoria have been targeted at large-scale retail developments. Communities using moratoria in this way have used them to call a "time-out" on development in order to amend their city codes to addresses perceived problems associated with such development, including environmental, planning, and aesthetics issues."

SB 1362. This act is an amendment to the Local Government Code that would greatly restrict land use by municipalities, including compliance with local ordinances, planning and zoning issues such as density, number of lots or buildings on a certain tract, etc.

SB 1363. An amendment to the Water Code, this act reads: "A city may enforce a water pollution control and abatement program adopted before June 1, 2005, only to ensure compliance with [water] commission rules. The city does not have the authority . . . to regulate water quality, issue permits or establish standards and practices for water quality."

The above senate bills were all authored by Ken Armbrister (D-Victoria) and have been decried by environmentalists and municipal officials alike. Officials say the bills limit cities' abilities to control growth and regulate issues of importance to residents. We think they are an all-out assault on conservation values and hijack the rights of citizens to be governed by locally elected councils who are responsive to our concerns. No doubt these laws will be challenged in court. Until then, please note the many environmental initiatives now floating around right here in Arlington:

- **Residential tree ordinance.** Stalled in P&Z because of seemingly endless discussions about the Cowboys stadium signage. We'd like to strengthen the proposal and have reached a consensus with other civic groups on what it should contain. Contact Bonnie Bowman, bfbg@comcast.net, for more info.
- **New animal shelter facility.** The city is about to hire an architect and we don't have any idea whether they are considering sustainable design features. Contact John Darling, 1darling@sbcglobal.net, for info.
- **Green Cowboys stadium.** Our proposal was distributed to the City Council and we are relying on Mayor Cluck's pledge to pass it along (and try to sell it!) to the 'Boys. You can read the text of our proposal in arlingtonconservationcouncil.org or mpacarlington.org.
- **Storm water drainage control.** The city committee studying this issue is just beginning to make recommendations and we need to get up to speed on the subject, fast. Contact person is Glenn Troutman, troutm@swbell.net.
- **Clean air action alert.** On June 7 there will be a public hearing in Waxahachie on whether TXI can shut down its pollution-control technology. If permitted, this will allow TXI to dump 40% more toxic emissions during the summer and 100% more during the rest of the year. Bring your family and neighbors and speak or at least be counted as parents who oppose pollution. More information is available at BlueSkiesAlliance.org. Contact Joanne Stewart, joanne-stewart@comcast.net, or Marianne Herrmann, ulmar@airmail.net.

If you can lend your time and expertise to one or more of these causes, we sure can use the help.

First Community Gardens Workday Stephen Smith

May 30 was a red-letter day in the history of Community Gardens of Arlington. This was the first workday at St. Matthew's Catholic Church—CGA's first community-based effort to network with diverse partners to start an organically based, charity-driven garden in East Arlington. As we take our first step at St Matthew's, we continue to work with Arlington Parks & Recreation Department to develop a much larger garden at nearby Bob Cooke Park.

Monday's effort brought together a number of volunteers to spread newsprint, wet it, and cover the ground with mulch to kill ryegrass and assorted weeds in the future garden area in preparation for starting a fall garden here.

We've reached an agreement with all the participants to donate a portion of the fresh produce to a local food pantry. CGA board members are also pursuing additional sites in Arlington to promote organic gardening techniques.



Cooperation among organizations was another feature of the first Community Gardens workday. Upper left: (from left to right) spreading mulch are ACC Co-President Wayne Halliburton, ACC board member and CGA President Stephen Smith, Arlington Organic Club President Angie Brown, and AOGC/CGA member Maud Huber. Center: ACC board member Jan Miller wandered away from her New York prairie long enough to pitch in. Upper right: AOGC/CGA member Cheryn Barnett hoses down the mulch as she and ACC/CGA board member Jean-Marie Smith discuss all the produce that will be here before we know it.

Thanks to Our May Speaker

Mindy Mize, Senior Transportation Planner at NCTCOG, spoke to us about many features of the the Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Program. Here she answers questions from Ulrich and Marianne Herrmann, who have been following clean air developments closely. There's lots of information on the COG programs at www.dfwcleanair.com/.



Just Another Small Tree Tragedy

Here's a common sight: A large, healthy-looking elm on Park Row near Collins was cut last week, dislodging a robin nest. The cutters stuck the nest with two young robins in a nearby partially cut tree. Although the parents continued to feed their young, the new spot was low and exposed, and the prognosis is poor. Wasn't there some outrage a few years ago about tree cutting along North Cooper during nesting season? Maybe outrage requires lots of dead baby birds.

What about mitigation here? This is a commercial property, so shouldn't the owners be required to replace the tree? The robins are on their own; they can't be mitigated.



Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

Memberships are good for one year, renewable each January. Your dues go directly to our public education efforts.

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June 8

Pete Jamieson, Director
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