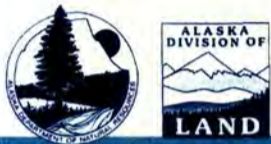


Susitna Basin RECREATION RIVERS

Management Plan SUMMARY

Background

In 1988, the Alaska Legislature passed the Recreation Rivers Act (AS 41.23.400-.510). The Act established mile-wide river corridors along the Little Susitna River, the Deshka River (including Moose and Krotok creeks), Talkeetna River, Talachulitna River, Lake Creek, and Alexander Creek. The Act keeps the Recreation Rivers in public ownership, identifies purposes, provides general management intent, and establishes an advisory board. The Act also requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a management plan for the Recreation Rivers. This brochure summarizes the contents of the plan.



What is the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers



The plan describes how the Alaska Department of Natural Resources will manage approximately 243,000 acres of state-owned land along 460 river miles in the Susitna Basin. The plan does not make decisions on borough, private, or Native lands.

The plan addresses key issues of concern along the rivers and provides a blueprint for long-term management. The planning process provided the means for deciding whether some river reaches should be left in a relatively undeveloped state or whether certain types of development are consistent with management intent for the river segment. The plan also establishes guidelines to reduce conflicts between users, provides opportunities for public use of the rivers, and protects the fish, wildlife, water, and other resources that attract people to the rivers.

How was the Plan Developed?

A planning team and the Recreation Rivers Advisory Board worked closely together to develop the management plan. The planning team included representatives from state agencies, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and the City of Houston. The advisory board included representatives from interest groups, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and different users of the Recreation Rivers. Designated advisors from towns and community councils near the corridors also received information on the planning process and relayed community concerns to the planning team and advisory board.

The team and board began working on this plan in 1988. In that year, public meetings were held in order to identify issues along the rivers. Next, information was gathered on the resources in the corridors, and on how people use the rivers. From this information, the planning team and advisory board developed alternatives for managing the rivers. The public reviewed the alternatives at meetings in December 1989. The team and board considered the public comments and developed a draft plan that was presented at public meetings in September, 1990. Changes were made to the plan and distributed for written public comment in December 1990. In response to public comments, additional changes were made and a final plan was developed and transmitted to the legislature for their review (as required by the Recreation Rivers Act). The legislature completed its review in May 1991 and the commissioner adopted the plan as department policy.

How will the Plan be Implemented?

The plan provides management intent for the rivers. This intent will apply to land use activities that currently require written authorization from DNR. Restrictions on other activities will require promulgation of regulations. Implementation of non-regulatory actions such as placing signs, collecting litter, and improving campsites will depend on budget and staffing.

What Does the Plan Include?

The following section summarizes policies and guidelines that are included in the plan. These only apply to state land and water.

General Management Intent. Each of the 31 river segments will be managed to reflect desired future conditions. Management intent ranges along a spectrum from areas that will be managed for more primitive settings (shown as Class I areas on the map) to areas that can accommodate high use and improvements (Class III areas on the map).

Public Use Sites. Numerous public use sites have been identified. These sites are places on state lands that are important for access, fishing, camping, or other recreation or public uses. Sites will be managed to protect access and public values.

Special Management Areas. Special management areas are small areas of state land that either include clusters of private land or are areas where roads have been proposed by the borough and public improvements may be needed. State lands in special management areas will be managed to accommodate access to public and private land. Seasonal motor restrictions on aircraft landings and land vehicles will not apply in these areas (also see the General Access section later in this brochure).

Riparian Management Areas. These areas include lakes, rivers, beds of waterbodies, floodplains, wetlands, and buffers along waterways. They provide important recreation opportunities, fish and wildlife habitat, and water resources. Guidelines in the plan ensure that potential harmful effects from overuse and development are mitigated.

Recreation. To ensure that there are an adequate number of camp sites, the length of stays at any one site will be 4 days during the fishing season. Permits are not required for this type of camping. A limited number of longer-term camps may be offered under permit on the lower Deshka River and Alexander Creek. Guidelines for longer-term camps are designed to reduce conflicts with other resources and uses and to generate revenue to help manage the rivers. No new campgrounds are proposed on state lands. Primitive facilities such as privies may be established on state lands at some sites where there is high public use. Regulations on littering, dumping waste, and vandalism are also recommended.

Fish & Wildlife Habitat. One of the main purposes of the Recreation Rivers is to manage, protect, and maintain fish and wildlife populations and habitat on a sustained-yield basis. Areas that are important for fish and wildlife are identified and specific guidelines are designed to protect these important areas. The plan also sets guidelines for reducing bear conflicts, protecting eagle and swan nesting sites, and enhancing habitat. The plan does not affect fish and game regulations.

Enforcement. Throughout the planning process the public has been concerned about enforcement of fish and game regulations and laws applying to state lands. The plan recommends additional enforcement and that DNR seek citation authority. There are also stipulations on commercial permits that discourage commercial operators from transporting clients with illegally harvested fish and wildlife. The production and distribution of education materials to help reduce violations is also recommended.

Commercial. There are over one-hundred businesses operating within the Recreation River corridors. To ensure that commercial businesses operate safely, provide quality service to the public, and protect resources along the rivers, all recreation-oriented commercial businesses operating on state land or water within the planning area will be required to have a commercial-use permit. Standards require that all commercial operators have first aid training, applicable licenses, appropriate safety gear, and liability insurance. These requirements will vary depending on the type of business. To help cover the cost of managing the rivers, each business must also pay a fee.

The commercial-permit program will be phased in. During the first year of the program, only a basic fee is recommended. The fee for out-of-state applicants will be higher than for Alaska residents. During the second and succeeding years of the program, the plan recommends fees for dropoffs and pickups for unaccompanied clients or a per-day fee for clients accompanied by a guide. Revenue generated from permit fees will assist in covering the expense of managing the rivers. To be implemented, this program requires developing regulations. No limits on the number of private or commercial operations are proposed at this time.

Shoreline Development. The plan includes guidelines for erosion control structures, boat ramps, diversion channels, docks, anchor buoys, bridges, culverts, dams, and river crossings. These guidelines will ensure that projects are sited, designed, and constructed in a manner that minimizes degradation of water, the quality of recreation, navigation, and fish and wildlife habitats.

Upland Development. Because of the availability of private land for commercial development and concerns about overcrowding, new leases for lodges are prohibited on state lands. To reduce impacts on recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and potential safety hazards, the plan includes guidelines for construction of improvements such as powerlines, pipelines, and airstrips.

How does the Plan Address Access?

BOATING & GENERAL ACCESS

General Access. In order to provide a non-motorized experience on parts of some rivers, the plan proposes limits on motorized forms of transportation during the fishing season. Restrictions apply to boats, ground vehicles, and aircraft during time periods listed below. For small ground vehicles such as snowmachines, access in winter when there is adequate snow cover is not restricted. Methods of access are generally not restricted in Special Management Areas where private lands are concentrated. The plan allows for reasonable access to private lands and mine claims, for resource or recreation management, search and rescue, and law enforcement.

Boat Access. To provide for a range of recreation experiences on the rivers, non-motorized and motorized zones are identified. To protect public safety, voluntary no-wake zones are established. Finally to reduce safety concerns, safety signs are proposed for two sections of Alexander Creek and the Deshka River.

NON-MOTORIZED AREAS & VOLUNTARY NO-WAKE AREAS

RIVER	SEGMENT	BY REGULATION OR VOLUNTARY
Little Susitna River	Parks Highway	Voluntary no-wake ¹
Little Susitna River	Middle Little Susitna River	Non-motorized (alternating weekends) ¹
Deshka River	River Mouth	Voluntary no-wake ¹
Deshka River	Lower Moose and Krotok Creeks	Non-motorized ¹
Lake Creek	Whitewater sections	Non-motorized ¹
Lake Creek	River mouth	Voluntary no-wake ¹
Talachulitna Creek	Judd Lake to Forks	Non-motorized ²
Talachulitna River	Canyon	Non-motorized ²
Alexander Creek	Alexander Lake to Sucker Creek	Non-motorized ¹

¹ May 15 - August 20

² June 15 - August 20



Upland Access. Accommodating access to natural and recreation resources in and adjacent to the planning area is a primary purpose of the Recreation Rivers Act. The plan allows for access to most upland areas adjacent to the rivers. New roads and trails will also be allowed within the Recreation River corridors. However, the plan includes guidelines in non-motorized areas, riparian management areas, and Class I areas to minimize detrimental effects on recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat. The public has expressed concern that unrestricted use of off-road vehicles is causing long-lasting environmental damage. During the snow-free season, off-road vehicle use will be limited to existing trails.

Air Access. Aircraft provide important access to the Recreation Rivers. Areas where additional public air access is needed are identified. Because many boats and floatplanes compete for use of the mouth of the Deshka River during peak fishing season, a floatplane landing area is proposed. The need for a public wheelplane airstrip at the mouth is also addressed. Construction of new private or public airstrips within the planning area may be authorized in some areas. Landings by aircraft are restricted in non-motorized areas. However, there are exceptions described under "General Access" in the previous section.

What Other Issues are Addressed by the Plan?

Subsurface. Most of the corridors will remain closed to new mineral entry. However, a four-mile stretch of upper Lake Creek will be reopened to new mineral entry under lease. This area is located between Camp and Sunflower creeks. Staking will not be allowed within 300 feet of creeks. Leases will also include requirements for reclamation, clearing vegetation, siting structures, and discharging water into the river.

Solid Waste. The plan proposes an education program to encourage users to pack-out what they pack-in. It also supports agency and volunteer litter patrols and the placement and maintenance of dumpsters and trash cans at boat launches. Regulations will be developed that prohibit littering or bringing solid waste into the area for disposal. Land fills, dumps, and solid waste disposal will not be authorized in the corridor.

Water. The plan calls for filing an instream flow application in order to reserve adequate stream flows for recreation and fish habitat. Consistent with the act's requirement that the free-flowing nature of the rivers be maintained, dams are prohibited on the main stems of the six rivers and their major tributaries. Discharge from mining operations into the rivers is prohibited. Measures are also prescribed for protecting water quality in rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

Forestry. The Recreation Rivers Act allows timber sales only for personal use, including houselogs and firewood, use incidental to construction of access, or for habitat enhancement. To prevent damage to areas used for camping, the plan proposes regulations that limit harvest to dead and down wood for campfires. Individuals may still receive personal-use firewood and houselog permits for homes or other uses. Revegetation is required in most cases.

Additions to the Recreation Rivers. Four additions to the Recreation Rivers are recommended: the mouth of Alexander Creek, Upper Moose Creek, Upper Nancy Lake Creek, and the Upper Talkeetna River. If the legislature acts on these proposals, consistent management along longer segments of these rivers will be assured.

Education. Throughout the planning process, the public emphasized the need for education to enhance recreation opportunities, reduce resource damage, and minimize user conflicts. The plan recommends agencies cooperatively develop educational materials; distribute brochures; erect signs, kiosks, and bulletin boards; and work with user groups. Topics recommended to be addressed by educational materials include minimum impact camping, safety, and river etiquette.

How can the Plan be Changed?

The plan must be flexible in order to address changing uses along the rivers, economies, and access. The plan will periodically be reviewed to see if it needs to be updated. DNR may also amend the plan at shorter intervals as necessary. Under the Recreation Rivers Act, public review, and consultation with affected agencies and the advisory board is required before revising the plan.



Where can I get a Copy of the Plan?

This brochure is a summary of the plan. Copies of the full plan may be purchased at DNR offices listed below. Public libraries in the Anchorage and Mat-Su areas also have copies of the plan.

Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Public Information Office
3601 C St. (Frontier Bldg.) Suite 200
Anchorage, AK 99510-7005
Phone 762-2261

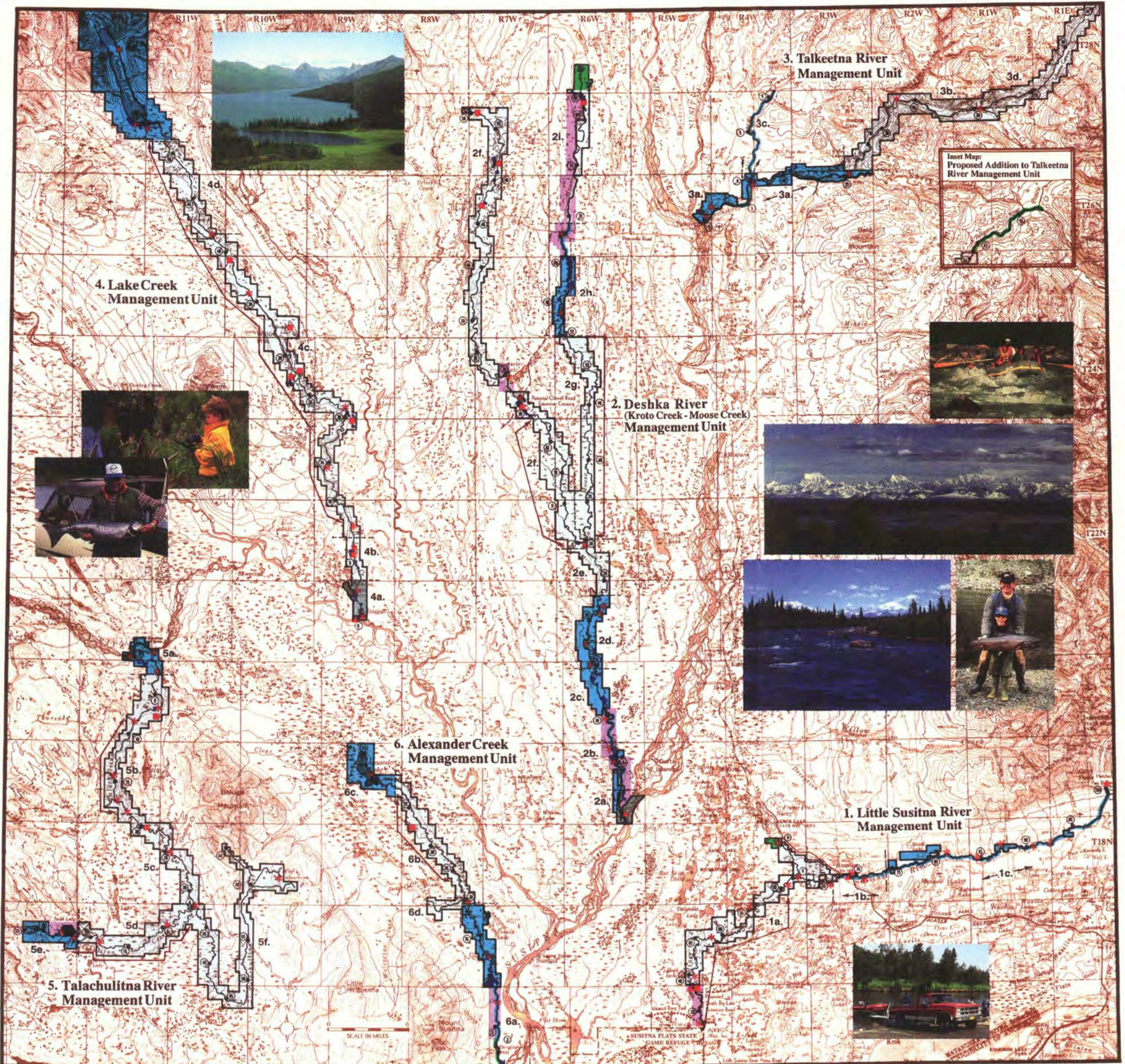
Copies can also be purchased from the
DNR Division of Land offices in
Juneau (400 Willoughby Ave., Suite 400)
& Fairbanks (3700 Airport Way).



This brochure was released by the State Department of Natural Resources, printed in Anchorage, Alaska at a cost of 98 cents per copy, for the purpose of providing the public an opportunity to review a summary of the Recreation Rivers Management Plan.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan

The Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan includes corridors approximately one-mile wide along six rivers. The corridors exclude private and borough lands. This map shows land ownership within the corridors, however some small parcels are not shown due to the limitations of this map scale. For more detailed land ownership information, see the official status plats at the Department of Natural Resources or the Matanuska-Susitna Borough office.



STATE OWNED LAND - MANAGEMENT INTENT

- | | |
|---|---|
| CLASS I AREA | BOROUGH LAND (within RR Corridor) |
| CLASS II AREA | PRIVATE LAND (within RR Corridor) |
| CLASS III AREA | RIVER MILE |
| PUBLIC USE SITE | MANAGEMENT UNIT BOUNDARY |
| SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA
(motor restrictions do not apply if in non-motorized area) | SUBUNIT BOUNDARY |
| BOATING | |
| SEASONAL NON-MOTORIZED AREAS | PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO THE RECREATION RIVERS |
| VOLUNTARY NO-WAKE AREAS | |

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