

# University of California 4-H Youth Development Program

## On the Wild Side 2008

### PROJECT EVALUATION



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### **Background**

Now in its ninth year, the On the Wild Side Project continues to enthuse and educate elementary school children about nature and the outdoors. It provides an opportunity for community involvement by adults and service learning for teens. These young people have a central role in planning and delivering environmental education to school children. As teen teachers, they work in partnership with adult volunteers to provide a weekend camp experience to 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students from low-income neighborhoods. On the Wild Side is as much about self-discovery as it is about discovery of the natural world. The program is exiting for children with opportunities for many firsts – first time paddling a canoe, sleeping under the stars, or swimming in a lake in the early morning. It is also exiting for teens as they collaborate with peers and adults and take on the roles of leader, teacher, friend and role model.

### **Project Objectives**

The On the Wild Side Project has the following goals for teens and young participants:

By the end of the project, most teens will have:

- Improved skill and confidence in program planning and delivery
- Enhanced awareness of the importance of civic engagement
- Increased ability to interact with people of various ages and backgrounds
- Experienced a sense of satisfaction and pride in successful project completion

And young participants will have:

- Expanded their knowledge of the natural world
- Developed an enthusiasm for nature and outdoor experiences
- Increased appreciation of the importance of conservation and environmental stewardship
- Participated in a fun, positive experience with peers and staff in an outdoor setting

### **Project Implementation**

The On the Wild Side project cycle begins in October when teens and adults meet to create a project plan. Team members secure funding, recruit teen teachers and adult coaches, organize training, and develop outreach strategies. Team meetings are held approximately once a month and new team members are added as recruitment and team-building continues. In March, once a core team of teens and coaches are recruited, a training session is held and the process of selecting curricula for camp activities begins. By this year's April retreat, teens had selected their teaching partners and had started working with their coaches. Time is set aside during monthly meetings for teens and coaches to develop their teaching activity together. Coaches and teens also meet at other times to prepare for camp. On the Wild Side is introduced to the participating schools in April and May and campers and chaperones register for camp.

This year, two camp sessions were offered. Students from four schools and one after school program attended. Campers and their adult chaperones arrived on Saturday morning, were divided into groups and rotated through six teen-led experiential learning activities. Each of the six activities engages the children's mind, senses, and body. Imagination was a significant component of the pollinators, stormy weather, and salmon life cycle activities. The canoeing activity included an introduction to paddling and water safety. Under the watchful eye of the lifeguard, the children were allowed to paddle on their own. A campfire, group games, crafts and reflection time keep the children busy outside of the structured learning activities. The two-day program ended on Sunday with a sack lunch and a closing ceremony. The project cycle ended with a debriefing session and ice cream social for volunteers, and a presentation to funders by teen teachers.



**Evaluation Approach:** For the first time since the inception of On the Wild Side, this year's evaluation was coordinated by an evaluator from the 4-H Center for Youth Development at UC Davis. Observation of pre-camp and camp activities and post-camp interviews with six volunteers supplemented the methods used in past year. Also new this year was video recording at the April retreat and at both camp weekends, with several teens involved in shooting video clips. In sum, the following tools were used to assess the impact of the 2008 On the Wild Side Program:

- Pre- and Post-Tests to measure learning
- Evaluation forms completed by campers, chaperones, and volunteers to gather impressions on this year's program and obtain feedback and suggestions for improvement
- Journaling to encourage children to reflect on their camp experience
- Observation of pre-camp meetings, the April retreat and camp Session 1 to inform the planning and delivery process
- Review of audio-visual materials to further document impact
- Debriefing meeting with teens, coaches and volunteers three weeks after the camp Session 2
- Interviews with teens and adult volunteers to explore deeper program impact and process

**Community Served:** A total of 114 school children participated in this year's On the Wild Side. There were 68<sup>1</sup> and 46 children respectively at the first and second camp session. The program's capacity is 75 campers each session.. Twenty-four adult chaperones were responsible for monitoring behavior and ensuring their group attended each activity. Twenty-one teen teachers planned and delivered the educational modules. Adult staff included a new intern and a new 4-H staff member. The intern conducted outreach activities to recruit campers and conduct the pre-

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<sup>1</sup> One child, counted here, was sent home within a few hours of arriving due to health concerns.

tests at Rio Linda, F.C. Joyce, Sol Aureus, Tahoe and Brete Hart – all schools in low-income neighborhoods. Working along side other staff, volunteers and teens, the new 4-H staff member was responsible for the overall co-ordination of the camp sessions, group meetings and retreat.

*Table 1: Demographic profile of On the Wild Side project participants*

<b>Ethnicity</b>	Elementary Students (n=114 )		Teen Teachers (n=21)		Adult staff and chaperones (n=34)	
African American	19	17%	2	10%	6	17%
Asian/Pacific Islander	10	9%	2	10%	3	5%
American Indian						
Caucasian	52	45%	15	70%	21	61%
Hispanic	33	29%	2	10%	6	17%
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	72	63%	14	67%	22	65%
Male	42	37%	7	33%	12	35%

**Program Impact:** The impact of the On the Wild Side Project is far reaching. Teens, coaches and volunteer staff described the community service function of the project as:

- Camping and hands-on experiences for students
- Teens can earn community service hours
- Positive interactions between teens and younger students
- Adults can see youth in a positive light
- Highlighting and raising awareness of environmental issues
- NOT teaching to a test

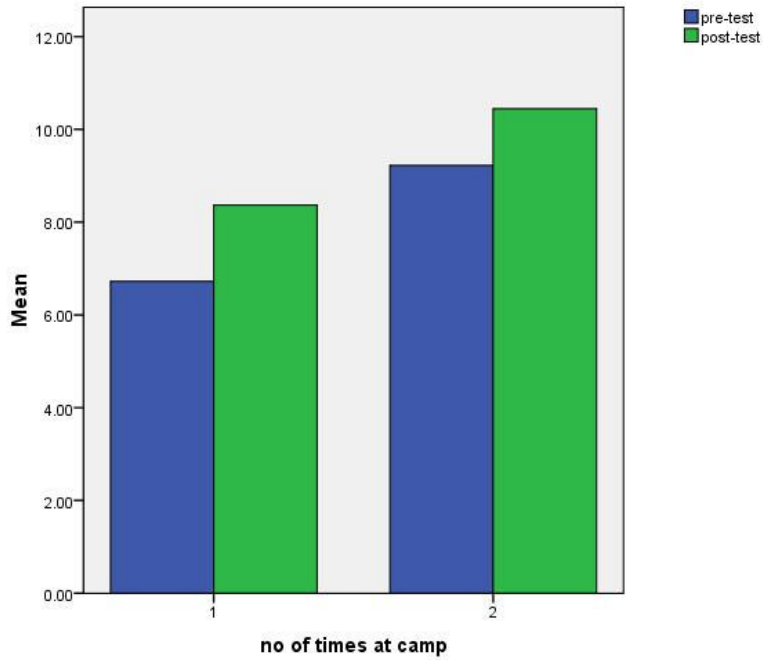
The project also had an impact on individual participants and their interaction with each other:

*Impact on Campers*

The impact on young participants was measured quantitatively and qualitatively using pre- and post-tests to measure acquisition of new knowledge, an evaluation form completed towards the end of the second day of camp, and review of the children’s journal. As in prior years, the data suggests that 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are learning about the environment while having fun and experiencing new things outdoors. The learning activities change each year, such that campers returning for a second time have the opportunity to learn something new, as illustrated in the following chart.

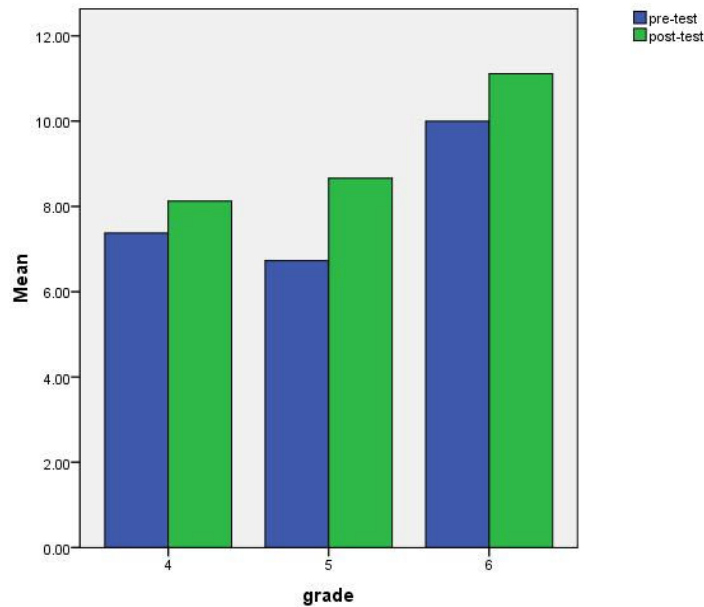


*Chart 1: Pre- and post-test scores for participants by number of times at On the Wild Side camp*




Students took the same test that was administered the week before camp at the close of camp. The test was based on the five learning activities the teens had selected to teach. Once again, campers scored better on their post-test than on their pre-test for all grades (total difference in means of 1.55) as illustrated in the chart on the next page.

*Chart 2: Mean pre- and post-test scores by grade*



There was something at camp of interest for each camper. When asked about “the best part of camp” responses ranged from “signing new songs,” “sleeping outside,” “canoeing,” “the campfire,” and “spending time with friends.” Several campers also stated one or more of the learning activities as their favorite part of camp. Prior to the closing ceremony, campers had the opportunity to rate their own learning as they answered the questions “How much did you know about nature before you came to camp?” and “How much did you learn about nature at camp?” on the camp evaluation forms. (See results in Chart 3 on page 7.) Campers were also asked to list three new things they did and three that they learned while at camp. The responses varied greatly depending on the individual. Participants made no suggestions for changes in the learning activities. Suggested changes were mostly circumstantial: better bathrooms, warmer water and nighttime temperatures. Many children wanted to stay at camp longer and truly enjoyed the food.

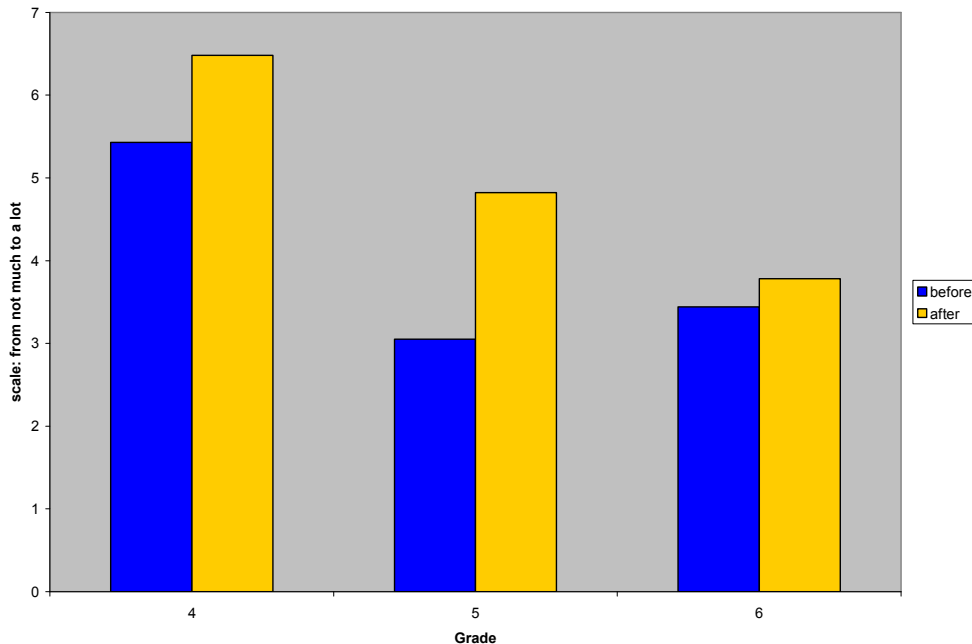
1. I found moss, sea snails, and frog egg sacks.



2. Instead of finding fish or tadpoles, I found sea snails.

Drawing from Wet ‘n Wild Wetlands Activity

*Chart 3: School children’s retrospective self-assessment of learning*



### *Impact on Teens*

Based on comments from evaluation forms, most teens were pleased and sometimes surprised at how much the children learned from them. Teens were able to form close relationships with the campers they were assigned to, and as one teen put it, were able to “*get one-on-one with the kids.*” A returning teen indicated “*[I] felt that the kids are my responsibility – [I] was unable to sleep/be comfortable until [they were].*” A first year teen was surprised that most of the campers enjoyed all the activities equally – “*I expected them to like one [activity] or the other. But they were fun? for all of them.*” Teens experience a variety of benefits from participating in On the Wild Side including: working with new people, learning to adapt to change when things did not go as planned, giving clear instructions, presenting to an audience, relating to younger children, and (for some teens) earning community service credits for school.



*“I have watched the teens that have stuck with it year after year, I’ve watched them grow in their leadership, in their confidence, in their communication skills. You know, it’s amazing to me, when I watch them when they’re a freshman, and then if they stay with the program and they’re a senior, how much more confident they are in their skills, and their teaching, and... everything, their communication, their tone, the projection of their voice.” – Co- director*

### *Impact on Adult Coaches*

The volunteer adult coaches know their role is to support the teens as they prepare and deliver their session. The coach needs to know the curriculum and be able to develop a trusting relationship with the teens that will teach it. Both teens and adult coaches have opportunities to prepare and practice prior to the camp sessions, particularly at the April retreat and the last two group meetings. The coaches interviewed felt the teens did very well at verifying that the kids were learning by asking open ended questions and clarifying concepts. For example, the teens asked “What is this? What did you see during the activity? Why is this important?” to ensure the children had a clear understanding of the concepts presented.

#### **Recruitment of Adults:**

Initially, staff was concerned about the need for more adult for the first camp session. The issue was addressed just prior to camp. Three college aged adults saw an On the Wild Side volunteer opportunity posting at CSU, Sacramento. They called the Sacramento County 4-H office and were able to join the staff just in time for camp.

### *Impact on Partnerships*

The teen-adult partnerships were overwhelmingly positive. Most teens worked well with their adult coach and appreciated the feedback they received from their coach. One teen writes *“my coach gave good advice, was a good motivator and made me a friendship bracelet.”* Only two teens felt the adult coach was overbearing. The coaches interviewed were impressed by the teens’ abilities. One coach said of the teens, *“They were very patient with [the children], very nurturing towards them. I did not notice anything but good behavior on both [sides].”* One coach stated she learned *“that just doing a little goes a long way: listening to the teens...and letting them really take charge of their activity – even though I think it should be done a different way...the response I got was very rewarding, [the teens] were very appreciative.”* Another coach was proud to deliver a service to the community, to children who *“otherwise would never have the opportunity to participate in a summer camp.”*



As in prior years, it was a challenge for busy teens to commit to meeting with their coach outside of monthly staff meetings. New teens in particular may have benefited from greater adult interaction. A third year teen observed, *“some of new teens were kind of lost and a little more preparation on some of the activities would have been helpful.”*

### *Impact on 4-H Staff*

Overall, adults, teens, and volunteer directors were very satisfied with the support they received from the Sacramento County Cooperative Extension staff. Staff were described as approachable, responsive, and very committed to creating a fun, hands-on environmental education program for kids. All those interviewed felt the camp sessions were well organized. A few of those who completed evaluation forms noted camp did not *“flow as well as in past years”* and suggested there should have been more activities for children during transition times.



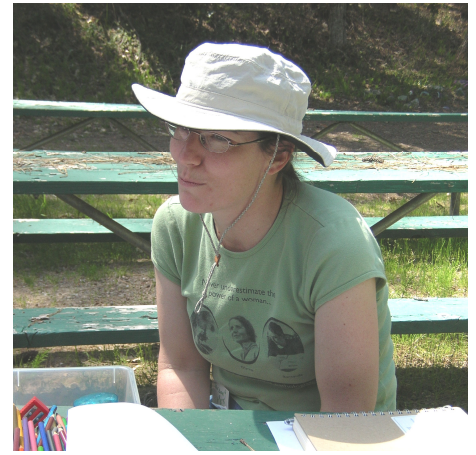
### **Strengthening the Project**

Participants, volunteers and the evaluator suggest the following to improve the project:

- Intensify recruitment efforts, particularly to attract teens of all ages – this year most teens were juniors in high school.



- Consider scheduling camp sessions a few weeks earlier, especially to allow teens to obtain signatures and submit community service credit paperwork.
- Find ways to engage teens in order to foster commitment to all aspects of the project.
- To the extent possible, minimize reassignment of teens to activities due to unexpected absences.
- Enhance the orientation of, and support to, adult coaches: based on the comments made by the coaches and volunteer directors interviewed, more information on the role of the On The Wild Side coach and more frequent meetings for just adults (as an integral part of regularly scheduled planning meetings with teens and adults) would be beneficial, especially for new coaches.
- Clearly inform coaches that they are free to share their concerns with staff at any time during the project cycle.
- Provide access to a meeting space at the Sacramento 4-H office where coaches can meet their assigned teens in the evenings and have access to curriculum resources. Adults commented that it is a challenge to schedule meetings with busy teens, particularly those who have participated in On the Wild Side before, and having a pre-determined meeting place on certain days and times may help.
- Affirm the importance the coach's at the first recruitment meeting– one person felt the role of coach was downplayed at the first group meeting which may have discourage potential coaches.
- Identify and provide access to resources for adults with limited prior experience parenting or working with teens as a support to young adult coaches.
- Demonstrate what is expected of campers as far as journaling and reflection: campers tend to underutilize the journals as a tool for reflection. It is possible that most campers have never had to use a camp journal before and are unsure of how to use them or know what to write in them. In addition to demonstrating the process of journaling and providing examples of the types of notes and drawings found in a good journal, teens and chaperones should encourage the use of the journals during educational sessions and during reflection time.
- If possible, offer food alternatives for those campers, chaperones and volunteers that have special dietary preferences. A day and a half of activity can be a long time for those who can only eat certain foods. Options to address this issue may include adding a line to the registration forms on dietary preference, asking for a show of hands on this subject during pre-camp meetings, or when everyone first gathers at camp.





## 2008 Gallery



“(The bus ride) was a long drive. I already miss my family. But I am going to have fun. I can’t wait to get there. I saw cows and their babies too. I don’t know when we get there but I know it will be long. We are finally here I am so excited.”

“I saw a lizard and I learned not to mess or touch them or they will jump.”

“You can find a lot of snails in the water. You can find dead skin, snails, frogs, and worms and even fry which is baby fish that just was born.”



“The food was very, very good. I can’t wait ‘til tomorrow.”

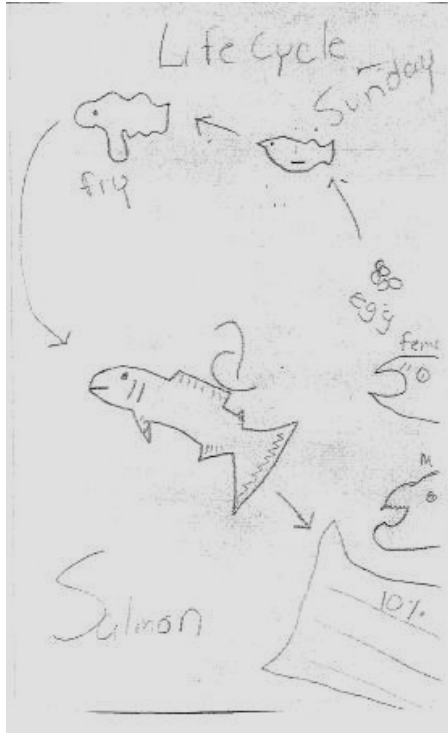
“A madrone tree is smooth and cold.”



“Everything was awesome and totally fun, especially canoeing. I hope this isn’t my last time here. I hope I can stay here more times.”

“The campfire was so fun. I loved the skits and songs, but the best part was the wish rag. They tied all these rags with wishes together and put them in the fire.”

“My favorite thing about Wild Side is eating. The chili was good. I also like how you have to serve family style.”



“A salmon lays eggs and an alvin is hatched. Then the alvin loses its food sack and becomes a fry. It gets a little older, and then it lays eggs of its own.”

“I learned how hard it is for salmon to stay alive. The salmon get eaten by bears and fishermen. If the fishermen would stop fishing maybe more fish would be alive. People pollute the water and more fish die. Stop polluting!”

“When you cut down trees, you are cutting down an animal’s shelter.”

“In the wetland I found larva and little fish.”

“The more predators, the less salmon.”

“If I could be a tree I would be a:

- ♦ Pine tree because they are really big. Because they have more sunlight.
- ♦ Redwood tree because they are tall and live for a long time.”

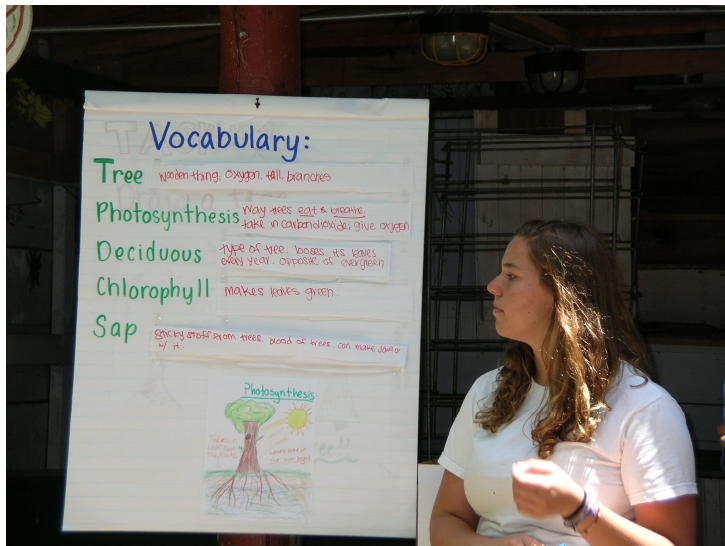
“Today I was riding in a canoe for the first time. It was very fun even though I thought it was scary but it was very fun.”



“My favorite thing about Wild Side was the sleeping because it was beautiful when I looked up at the sky. I saw a million stars and I saw a shooting star. And then in the morning it was nice to hear the birds sing their songs, see the clear blue sky, and feel the fresh, cold air blowing on my face.”

“The food tasted good and yummy. We all got to share and pass the bowl.”

“I would like to come back to Camp Gold Hollow because it’s the best camp ever!!”



“A deciduous tree is a type of tree that loses its leaves once every year. Chlorophyll makes leaves green.”

“The lines in the tree tell how old it is. The heartwood supports the tree. The phloem keeps the tree alive. Finally, the bark protects it from bugs, insects, and birds.”

“I think it was more fun than I expected.”

“Some last comments about the camp were: I’m going to miss it, I like the teen staff, the food was awesome, I didn’t sleep well though, the water was freezing, and finally I had fun.”

“This weekend will be with me for the many years to come. Thank you for a great time.”



“Today at 6:45 a.m. I went Polar Bear swimming. I was in for about 5 minutes. I was so cold. When I got out, my hands and feet were numb. I still am cold and it’s about 7:15 a.m. It was an experience to remember.”

“In the storm I was a raccoon and I hid in a trash can.”

“Thank you everyone for me to go to this fantastic place.”

### On the Wild Side 2008 Financial Report

Category	Description	Budgeted	Actual
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Grants	4-H Service Learning Grant	1850	2000
	Grant Advisory Board for Youth	2500	2500
Fees	School Sites (3 @ \$600; 2 @ \$300)	2400	2400
	Retreat (21 @\$20)		420
Donations	Serendipity	0	1500
	4-H County Council Outreach Funds	500	0
2007 Overage		1240	600
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>\$8,490</b>	<b>\$9,420</b>

<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Personnel	Training	150	120
	California Camping Conference		
Program Supplies	Program Materials	350	100
Facility	Facility Rentals	2490	2200
	(Retreat \$300, Camp \$1900)		
Food	Retreat	300	308
	Camp Sessions	1500	1501
	Leader's Council Refreshments	0	15
Transportation	2 Busses for each camp session	2600	2482
	Vehicle Mileage (2 per weekend and retreat)	400	274
Recognition		200	50
Program Evaluation	Both summaritive and formulative	500	291
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$8,490</b>	<b>\$7,341</b>

<b>Total</b>		<b>\$2,079</b>
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