

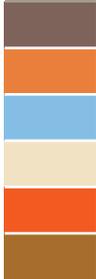
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Helping People Help the Land



November 2010



Activity *report*



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Soils

Last Acre Mapped in Texas >>>

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is proud to announce the completion of its initial survey that identifies soil conditions of the 172 millions acres in Texas.

“This is a tremendous milestone, not only for the NRCS but also for the state,” says Dennis Williamson, NRCS Texas State Soil Scientist. “Texas’ soil survey efforts began with a Reconnaissance Soil Survey in 1899. Since then, soil scientists have walked Texas landscapes digging holes and collecting information on nearly 1,300 different soil types in the state.”

High quality, productive soils are the foundation upon which a healthy environment and enhanced natural resources are built. The surveying and monitoring of soils ensure an accurate account of those conditions. The availability of this information affords the opportunity to make sound educated decisions regarding land-use planning for everyone’s benefit. Soil surveys are used by city planners, farmers, ranchers, developers, construction companies, teachers, realtors, and numerous other professionals.

A “Last Acre” ceremony to commemorate this historic milestone was held on November 10 at the USDA-ARS Grassland, Soil and Water Resrach Laboratory in Temple, Texas.



Programs

Fiscal Year 2010 was an exciting year for program application and conservation implementation. Texas NRCS saw its largest number of applications received, contracts funded, and funding obligations. Below is a table that indicates the amount of each program obligated over the past year.



PROGRAM	Applications Received	Application Acres	\$s Requested	Contracts Funded	Acres Funded	Total \$ Funded
EQIP	7,390	2,978,391.22	\$113,294,364	3,941	1,767,419.04	\$76,104,094
AWEP	230	39,322.28	\$5,847,270	150	28,111.40	\$4,380,895
WHIP	421	268,856.43	\$9,584,445	246	225,160.20	\$7,485,166
CStP(fb08)	2,110	2,662,628.60	16,383,383	973	2,007,458.60	14,529,636
WRP	37	28,795.80	\$47,194,123	28	22,546.80	\$36,258,373
FRPP	2	664.00	\$2,075,000	2	664.00	\$2,075,000
GRP	170	232,174.28	\$55,321,997	82	114,464.55	\$22,667,570
GRAND TOTAL	10,360	6,210,832.61	\$249,700,582	5,422	4,165,824.59	\$163,500,734

New Hires & Vacancies

NRCS Currently has 28 Vacancies:

- 4 Civil Engineers
- 2 Construction Control Inspectors
- 4 District Conservationists – (Selection Pending)
- 1 Engineering Technicians (Civil)
- 1 Engineering Technicians (Civil) (Selection Pending)
- 1 Forester
- 1 Public Affairs Specialist
- 1 Rangeland Management Specialists (GLCI Coordinator) (Selection Pending)
- 1 Soil Conservationist
- 3 Soil Conservationists (Selections Pending)
- 5 Soil Conservation Technicians
- 1 Soil Conservation Technician (Selection Pending)
- 2 Soil Scientists
- 1 Voucher Examiners (Selections Pending)

NRCS has made the following 9 selections resulting in accessions since our July 2010 report:

- 1 Clerk
- 1 Contract Specialist
- 2 Purchasing Agents
- 1 Rangeland Management Specialist (Return to Duty from Active Duty Military Service)
- 2 Soil Scientists
- 2 Voucher Examiners



Watershed Program

American Reinvestment and Recovery Act

- \$19.7 million of ARRA funds obligated for repair, rehabilitation, and mitigation of dams in Texas
- ARRA projects in Texas provide \$2.2 million in annual benefits
- Dry weather has allowed construction to proceed at a rapid pace during the summer months.
- The following projects have been completed:
 - Caney Creek Site 3A Mitigation (Fannin County)
 - Chambers Creek Site 32 Repair (Johnson County)
 - Pilot Grove Site 28 Repair (Collin County)
 - Little Elm and Laterals Site 16 Repair (Collin County)
 - East Fork Above Lavon Site 38 Repair (Grayson County)
 - Big Sandy Creek Site 24C Mitigation (Wise County)
 - Plum Creek Site 8 Repair (Caldwell County)
 - Hickory Creek Site 13 (Denton County)
 - Chambers Creek Site 38 (Johnson County)



East Fork above Lavon Site 1A Rehabilitation, McKinney, Texas.

- Final inspections were in October for Richland Creek Site 26 and Upper Brushy Creek Site 29.
- Work continues on 13 additional mitigation and repair projects, with most of them expected to be complete by December 31.
- Construction is underway for rehabilitation of Calaveras Creek Site 6 (Bexar County). On October 14, Under Secretary of Agriculture Ann Mills visited the site and was impressed by the construction and the strong local partnership between sponsors and the NRCS.

Watershed Rehabilitation Program >>>

- Construction has been completed for rehabilitation of East Fork Above Lavon Site 1A.
- Mountain Creek 10 (Ellis County) rehab plan has been authorized by the NRCS Chief for funding; funding for construction in 2011 has been requested.
- East Fork above Lavon 2A (Collin County) has been authorized by the NRCS Chief for funding.
- It has been determined that Plum Creek 1 (Hays County) meets current high hazard criteria and will not need to be rehabilitated. Rehab planning has been terminated.
- Rehab planning for Plum Creek 6 (Hays County) is underway.
- Rehab planning for Olmitos-Garcias 7 (Starr

County) will begin in the near future.

- Assessments of high hazard dams: 34 assessments and reports have been completed; the remaining 140 assessments will be completed by September 30, 2011.



Watershed Program (cont'd)

Watershed Operations Program >>>

- Agreements are in place with the TSSWCB for engineering design and construction inspection of dam repair projects funded by the TSSWCB Dam Repair program.
- Construction is underway on recreations facilities (Phase II) at Attoyac Bayou Site 23A (Nacogdoches County)
- Work is underway to obtain the 404 permit for construction of Elm Creek (1250) Site 1A Rev. in Taylor County

Funding For Watershed Projects in FY 2011 >>>

- Initial allocations have been received for on-going projects
- Funding for new projects unknown at this time (continuing resolution)

Ecological Sciences

- Ecological sciences staff has been assisting the NRCS Programs staff and Farm Services Agency in providing CRP training to NRCS and FSA field staff in Lubbock, Amarillo and San Angelo.
- John Lloyd-Reilley, Manager of the E. “Kika” de la Garza PMC, presented at the Soil and Water Conservation Society Sustainable Biofuels Meeting in Atlanta, GA. John presented technical information relative to the production biodiesel utilizing native plant material.

Wetlands Work >>>

Dan Keesee, NRCS Texas State Wetlands specialist has been helping NRCS national headquarters with Deepwater Horizon clean-up efforts along the Gulf Coast through a process called Shoreline Clean-up Assessment Technique (SCAT). SCAT used by oil spill responders to survey and document affected areas and determine the appropriate clean-up method. NRCS-Texas has supported the by providing federal representation on SCAT teams. The clean-up effort has focused on the marshes and barrier islands along the U.S. Gulf Coast.

“This experience has demonstrated how important and valuable wetlands are to our nation,” Keesee says.

“They have multiple functions -- they provide habitat for wildlife and provide a buffer-type function for society, which is especially important during these types of events.”



Coastal wetlands act as a buffer for inland resources.



Barrier islands, such as this one off the coast of Louisiana, are not wetlands, but they are part of the coastal wetland ecosystem.

Water in Texas – Resources, Rules and Recourses

Texas Dispute Resolution System-Lubbock office, West-Texas RC&D and USDA-NRCS hosted the meeting at the USDA-ARS in Lubbock on September 1, 2010. Landowners, individuals from private sector businesses, agencies and the general public attended the program to listen to specific topics on Texas water law issues and trends; mediation for both USDA and Texas; playa lake and wetland determinations; surface water regulations and permits; and groundwater resources.

Playa Lake Festival – A series of playa festival education days were presented over three weeks in September in the Playa region. Swisher County/Swinburn Elementary was one of 12 schools in the Playa region participating in the educational events. NRCS is one of the partners collaborating with the Ogallala Commons group. District Conservationists and others help educate the youth about the significance of these unique lakes in the High Plains and South Plains regions of the state. The festivals educated over 700 students and teachers during the month of Sept.

A **Border Patrol Safety Training** for over 70 NRCS Zone 2 employees was held in Del Rio, Texas on September 14.

The Rio Grande Nueces RC&D hosted the **Olive Oil Field Day** in Asherton. Production, processing, management, irrigation and closing remarks by Todd Staples, Texas Commissioner of Agriculture, were all part of this year's agenda.

The annual **Food and Fiber Day** was held in Abilene, Texas on September 14. The event was attended by over 400 area elementary students. NRCS covered water conservation and erosion using both the rainfall simulator and a series of photographs.

Coastal Bend Farm and Ranch Show was Oct. 7-9 in Robstown. The South Texas Association of SWCDs held their meeting in conjunction with this event. NRCS had a booth and visited with producers from Nueces and surrounding counties.



Soil Scientist Ken Attebury gives a presentation at the Water in Texas meeting in Lubbock.



NRCS Employees served as instructors at the Playa Lake Festivals in September.



"After" Images of Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative waterfowl and habitat were provided to NHQ and are featured on the MBHI national website. These will be utilized by Chief White for presentations, as well as media outlets.

Information & Outreach, (cont'd)

On October 12-15th NRCS was part of the **Texas Section Society of Range Management Annual Meeting** held in Odessa, Texas. NRCS was one of the 16 exhibits offered to the 200 attendees. The Agency also held several spots on the program which focused on careers/recruitment, brush management, plant identification and other resource conservation topics.

Cultural Resource classroom and field training sessions were conducted in Amarillo and Lubbock for NRCS employees in September. Participants completed classroom and field training was scheduled for two days in each location at the National Park Service in Amarillo and at the Lubbock Lake Landmark in Lubbock for employees to learn more about the importance of recognizing and understanding cultural resources.

NRCS was a co-sponsor and exhibitor at the **Bastrop County Land Stewardship Expo** on October 1-2 with about 143 attendees who learned about opportunities available from our agency, SWCDs, partner groups and private businesses (which some even promoted Web Soil Survey).

The Coastal Prairies GLCI, South Texas GLCI, Texas Coalition Grazinglands Conservation Initiative and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service partnered to host a **Ranch Management Clinic** on September 28, 2010 in Beeville. More than 200 livestock operators, landowners and managers attended the workshop with Curt Pate and Kit Pharo, focusing on effective stockmanship, including, low-stress livestock handling methods and ranch sustainability and profitability through management and input eliminating strategies.



World renowned clinician Curt Pate, held the audiences' attention for 2 ½ hrs demonstrating his tried and true techniques at the Ranch Management Clinic in Beeville.

CRP Update from the Field

Joint agency **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** meetings were held in Amarillo, Lubbock and San Angelo on October 4, 5 and 6th, respectively. CRP Field Evaluations and Contracting Underway in Zone 1 on October 7. NRCS in Zone 1 will be working through 4,350 approved CRP applications for contracting. NRCS employees from across the state have been detailed for CRP work assignments in Zone 1 until the workload is completed on Dec. 31, 2010. CRP in this region accounts for 84 percent of the total accepted acres in the state.

NRCS had a booth at **Blanco County Conservation Day** for the 220 people that attended the event on September 11.

Brackettville NRCS office participated in the local **Ag Day** on October 22. Over 300 students, K-6th, passed through the rainfall simulator station offered by our staff.

State Conservationist, Don Gohmert presented an NRCS programs update and talked about the delivery of conservation programs at the South **Texas Commodity Symposium**. An educational track on how to use the Web Soil Survey was presented by Lori Ziehr and Chance Walker and the NRCS booth featured live demonstrations of the Web Soil Survey. An estimated 8,000 attended this year's show.

The 70th Annual Meeting of Texas Soil and Water Conservation District Directors was held on October 25-27 at the Overton Hotel and Conference Center. Approximately 550 people were in attendance for sessions and tours scheduled throughout the conference.

The **55th Annual Terry County Farm Tour** was hosted by Terry Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA-NRCS, Terry County AgriLife Extension Service and other local sponsors on September 16 in Brownfield. Known as one of the oldest and largest community farm tours in the state, Terry County celebrated with an informative tour and luncheon. Stew-

ardship awards were presented to local conservation farmers for their outstanding commitment and work in natural resources conservation. The Terry County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) recognized the farmers they selected by presenting a video and presenting them with a plaque.



People of all ages enjoyed the tour.



The tour showcased some of Terry County's best conservation efforts.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees from Beaumont, Anahuac and Liberty field offices, along with the Coastal Soil & Water Conservation District #432, participated in the **41st Winnie Rice Festival** on Sept. 29-Oct. 3 with educational exhibit. NRCS provided information on Farm Bill programs and educational materials to more than a thousand festival attendees. The Winnie Rice Festival has a long history of recognizing area rice farmers and leaders in the agriculture community.

On October 5th the Edwards Plateau Prescribed Burn Association Cinco Chapter, NRCS and AgriLife Extension hosted a **Prescribed Burn Field Tour** in Sonora, Texas. The event was attended by over 40 producers and



Liberty District Conservationist Phillip Stewart and Soil Conservationist Gary Barnett visit with area landowner about Farm Bill programs at the Winnie Rice Festival.

included both classroom education/presentations and outdoor site visits.

October 7th there was a McCulloch Watershed Tour held in Brady, Texas. Tour offered on-site visits to select floodwater retarding structures.

Albany FO assisted and attended the

Shackelford and Throckmorton County **Range and Wildlife Management Association annual meeting** at Fort Griffin state Historical Site on October 12.

NRCS personnel from Brown, Comanche, Erath, Hamilton, and Mills counties assisted Ricky Linex with a **spotlight survey training** exercise in Mills County. The information collected will be utilized by the landowner in his wildlife management program, along with training in wildlife management for NRCS personnel.

On October 13th **5th graders** from Winters, Miles, Ballinger, Olfen, Paint Rock and Eden attended a **field day** on hosted by the NRCS and Runnels and Concho SWCD. It was an outdoor classroom setting at the pictographs in Paint Rock, Texas.

Deep East Texas Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts meeting and tour, Orange, Texas on September 30. A quality product and exceptional customer service are keys to success at Saxon Bechel and Sons citrus tree nursery, where the DETASWCD held a tour before its recent business meeting. Upwards of twenty people toured greenhouses that can hold 100,000 plants each. The family expects to sell more than 200,000 trees this fall through May of next year. Their customers include Home Depot, Lowe's and many small, privately owned nurseries.



Ricky Bechel (front, left) leads the tour group through an insect free screened greenhouse.

Gaines County NRCS and the local Soil and Water Conservation District participated in the local Ag day and trade show. Producers from Gaines County and the surrounding counties attend the local farm tour and trade show in Seminole. Wes-Tex RC&D represented the NRCS at the exhibit.



Honors & Awards



Tim Dybala, (right) Water Resources Assessment Team, Blackland Research Center, was selected as the **Agricultural Engineer of the Year** for the Texas Section, American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers at the annual meeting in October. Brian Wenberg (left), Chair of the Texas Section of American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers, presented the award.

Ogallala Commons Youth Engagement Day was held on Sept. 15. The NRCS and the Resources Conservation and Development Areas (RC&Ds) assisted the Ogallala Commons with education presentations about Natural Resources business opportunities for students. Approx. 75 youth attended the activity. NRCS representative presented program on careers in the NRCS.



Riparian-Wetland Function/Proper Function Condition Nat'l training for employees, landowners and agency partners was held Sept. 22-23 in Matador. Trainees learned about riparian function concepts used in the Proper Functioning Condition assessment methods, and observed the visual indicators present in riparian-wetland areas to determine current condition.





Dignitaries, speakers and event organizers gathered for a group photo.

Landowners of Texas Association Annual Conference was held in Humble October 7-8. It was a strong lineup of speakers that conference attendees had the opportunity to hear. Dr. Joe Leonard, assistant secretary for civil rights with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C., gave the conference address. Claude Ross, NRCS state program manager, provided highlights of the farm bill programs administered through NRCS. The landowners association works with community leaders, local, state and national government entities, along with farm and ranch organizations, to help provide information to underserved or nontraditional farmers and ranchers. Upwards of sixty attendees were able to visit with representatives from USDA agencies which included NRCS, FSA and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), who had booths at the event.

6666 Quail Tech Alliance Field Day

was held on October 23. Participants gathered at the Guthrie High School for a morning of presentations on research being conducted by the Texas Tech University Quail-Tech Alliance. This was just the beginning of the 1st annual field day sponsored by many organizations including the NRCS GLCI. Later that day after a chuck wagon meal participants were treated to a field excursion on the famed 6666 Ranch where participants learned about their on-site research which included supplemental feeding, disking, brush treatment, grazing management, and quail monitoring through telemetry. The goal of Quail-Tech Alliance is to provide Anchor Ranches in each of the 38 counties (predominantly in the Rolling Plains) to serve as a stronghold and base from which the line of quail decline will be pushed eastward until sustainable populations are returned to all of northwest and north-central Texas. Additionally, the goal of the Anchor Ranch Program is to enlist ranches throughout west Texas to enable wildlife research of selected quail species.

The De-Go-La RC&D co-sponsored a **Household Hazardous Waste** event in Karnes County. – First HHW ever in Karnes County – provided county residents opportunity to dispose of hazardous chemicals as well as scrap tires and automotive batteries.

The San Antonio International Farm and Ranch Show, Oct. 14-16, kicked off with Regional Conservationist for NRCS, Tom Christensen, and USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Ann Mills, speaking to attendees in the opening session. Mills touring the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and locally-funded project to rehabilitate Calaveras Creek Dam No. 6. While at the show, Mills was interviewed by Larry Marble with Down on the Farm radio show, and also conducted a phone interview with Texas Department of Agriculture broadcaster, Bill McLean.

On October 15th the TSSWCB, NRCS and the Llano SWCD held a **Congressional Conservation Tour** on the Slator Ranch located outside of Llano, Texas. Producers, agency officials and local residents participated in the tour which was attended by Congressman Michael Conaway.

Alamo RC&D hosted a **Teen Grant Writing Workshop** in Floresville, Texas on October 16. In this after-hours workshop series, teens between the ages of 13-19 years old, designed beautification projects for Wilson County. Then after development they managed the entire project to completion.

A **Feral Hog Workshop** was presented to landowners in the Goliad area on October 21. The workshop, presented by the De-Go-La RC&D provided information on methods to control local populations. The Hill Country RC&D offered a similar Feral Hog Workshop for residents of Mason and surrounding counties on October 23.

Information & Outreach (cont'd)

'AG In The Bag' Education Outreach was held for 4th – 6th grade students in Lubbock on October 26-28. This year marked the 11th event for the 'Ag in the Bag' Program. NRCS has been involved with this event each year presenting the 'Soil and Water' program. Ag in the Bag brings together a large group of Ag industry partners with a common interest in educating children about the importance of agriculture, which is a billion-dollar industry in Lubbock and the South Plains region. This year 2,000 students participated.

Showcasing People's Gardens –



Channing and Plains NRCS and SWCD assisted in planning and organizing people's gardens in the Plains and Channing communities. NRCS provided in-kind service and technical assistance in both locations at the USDA Service Centers.

NRCS State Conservationist, Don Gohmert, spoke to producers, irrigation districts, local, state and federal entities regarding how to produce food and fiber with less land and water at the **Texas Irrigation Expo**, Oct. 21-22 in Mercedes. NRCS staff visited with attendees at the booth about ways our technical and financial assistance programs could help them improve their irrigation systems.

Career Fairs

NRCS attended the **Texas Tech University Career Fair** at United Spirit Area in Lubbock and exhibited the recruitment display on September 14. This event combined private sector businesses and state and private colleges and universities from across the country; open to all TTU students and alumni.

NRCS participated in the Fall recruitment opportunity at **West Texas A&M University Career Fair** on September 30 to get acquainted with many WTAMU students who will soon be entering the job market or seeking internships.

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recruitment team at **Texas A&M Kingsville (TAMUK) Career Fair** on Oct. 4-6 conducted more than 50 interviews with potential candidates for NRCS employment. This is more interviews than in the last five years that the agency has been participating in the career fair. In years past, the number of interviews has ranged from 30 to 39. Estimated attendance for the career fair was 1,250.

Each year, the Outreach and Advocacy Division's National Hispanic Emphasis Program, in partnership with Talent Management, sponsor an exhibit booth and coordinate NRCS' participation at career fairs to recruit qualified students for the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), Career Intern Positions (CIP) and full-time employment. In addition to other career fairs and events, NRCS participated at the **New Mexico State University**, Las Cruces, NM - Sept. 21-22; **University of Texas, El Paso**, TX - Sept. 23-24; **University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez**, PR - Oct. 1-2; and **Texas A&M University, Kingsville**, TX - Oct. 4-6, career fairs.

NRCS had a recruitment booth at the 2010 Careers in Government and Public Sector Career Fair at **Texas State University** on Oct. 13 and visited with almost half of the 735 students in attendance.

NRCS exhibited at the **Top of Texas Career Expo** in Canyon at the First United Bank Center on Oct. 20, 2010.

South Plains Tech Prep Career Fair at the Lubbock Memorial Civic Center on October 26. Career recruitment for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors. The event provided NRCS the opportunity to exhibit to approx. 4,000 high school students. NRCS demonstrated toolkit, ArcMap and other technology applications to interest students and inform them of employment possibilities for the future.

Ballinger High School Career Day was held on October 27. Over 150 students learn about the career opportunities available with the NRCS.

NRCS Ecological Sciences Staff participated in the **Native Plant Society of Texas annual symposium** held at Texas Women's University in Denton, TX. Plant Materials Center staff from Kingsville, Nacogdoches and Knox City gave presentations regarding plant material activities. PMC staff, Russell Castro and Ricky Linex ran an NRCS exhibit to interact with NPSOT members.



USDA presented three community forums on **Expanding the U.S. Biofuels Market in Texas**. Approximately 30 people attended the meeting in Lubbock on October 21 to learn how USDA has outlined a plan for developing a successful Biofuels market capable of achieving the U.S. Renewable Fuels Standards. NRCS Assistant State Conservationist Salvador Salinas, NRCS Texas Program Manager Mark Habiger and Plant Materials Specialist Rob Ziehr spoke on behalf of the NRCS, providing a program update and information on plants as biofuels. Farmers, Ag Industry partners, researchers and others attended the meeting at the USDA-Agricultural Research

Service (ARS). Two additional meetings were held in Victoria on Oct. 18 and Waco on Oct. 19.

Ecological Sciences staff conference was held in San Antonio to coordinate staff effort to assist NRCS field office needs and collaborate on current technical issues.



Upcoming Events

Nov. 11 – 14, 2010

15th Annual World Championship Ranch Rodeo's Ranch Expo Working Ranch Cowboy Association (WRCA) – Amarillo NRCS will be exhibiting at the Ranch Expo that is a ranch-based business trade show featuring a diverse group of offerings, including trailers, cattle chutes, handling equipment, animal health products, feeds, ag investment firms, natural resources and environmental conservation information, chemicals and much more.

November 13-17, 2010

Restore America's Estuaries conference in Galveston

Nov. 30 – Dec. 2, 2010

Amarillo Farm and Ranch Show – Amarillo NRCS will exhibit technologies to showcase technical applications used by NRCS in conservation planning and contracting. Farmers, ranchers and the public will have the opportunity to learn more about Web Soil Survey and the internet application known as customer self-service web portal.

Nov. 30, 2010

Community Internship Training – Clarendon North Rolling Plains RC&D assisting Ogallala Commons to promote educational opportunities for leaders. Ogallala Commons and other community and institutional partners have created more than 50 internships in 24 communities and six states.

Dec. 2, 2010

Community Internship Training – Abernathy Wes-Tex RC&D assisting and continuing sponsorship for the internship and training for the project. Ogallala Commons and other community and institutional partners have created more than 50 internships in 24 communities and in six states.

December 6-9

Rehab training for Texas Water Resources in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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