

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Intermountain and  
Northern Regions



# Frankly Speaking

Report of the Frank Church — River of No Return Wilderness August, 2003

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## Final EIS Is Finally Out

Dear Reader

This issue of Frankly Speaking is a summary of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the revision of the Frank Church – River of No Return Management Plan. The FEIS provides the basis for our decisions to revise the management plan that will provide programmatic direction for day-to-day management decisions in the 2.4 million acre Wilderness. This analysis began with a Notice of Intent in December 1994. Since that time we published a Draft EIS (DEIS) in January 1998, and a Supplemental Draft EIS (SDEIS) in September 1999.

As the FEIS was completed we reviewed the decisions to be made that rely on this analysis. The decisions that are programmatic in nature have been identified and will be reflected in the revised management plan. Some decisions that were identified in the DEIS or SDEIS involve site-specific actions that are not appropriately addressed in the management plan revision. Still other decisions are administrative in nature, are decided under different authorities and will not be based upon this EIS.

The result of our review is the alternatives previously presented in the DEIS and SDEIS have been restructured to better integrate the management decisions. All components of the restructured alternatives were presented in the DEIS or SDEIS but are formatted differently in the Final EIS.

We would like your comments on the analysis we have disclosed in this FEIS. Specifically, we want your thoughts about issues we should consider before we make our decision. You may request more information, receive a copy of the FEIS, or provide comment by contacting Ken Wotring, FC-RONR Wilderness Coordinator at the Forest Supervisor's Office, Salmon-Challis National Forest, 50 Highway 93 South, Salmon, Idaho 83467, by phone at (208) 756-5131, or by email at [comments-intermtn-salmon-challis@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-salmon-challis@fs.fed.us). Please state that your comments are for the FC-RONR Wilderness Management Plan FEIS. The FEIS is also available online at [www.fs.fed.us/r4/sc/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/sc/). Your comments must be received no later than October 27, 2003 to be considered.

The Record of Decision (ROD) and Revised Management Plan are expected to be available in early December.

Sincerely,

/s/

STEPHEN SOLEM

Acting Forest Supervisor, Salmon—Challis National Forest.

# Background

## DECISIONS, DECISIONS

The planning process for revision of the management plans for the FC-RONR Wilderness officially began in December 1994. Since then your interests and those of others have caused us to consider and evaluate a number of possible changes to the management plans that govern activities within the Wilderness. The resulting Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Supplement to the Draft (SDEIS) were, as some reviewers said, confusing at best. Therefore, we have taken a hard look at our original objectives in proposing revision and have made some changes in the Final EIS designed to simplify and clarify our proposed action and alternatives examined.

### FEIS Decisions

The July 30 issue of Frankly Speaking explained how we narrowed the decisions to be made in the FEIS down to the following programmatic points:

- ◆ Management of Dewey Moore, Mile-Hi, Simonds, and Vines landing strips in the Big Creek Drainage,
- ◆ Management of commercial and noncommercial float boat use on the Middle Fork and Salmon rivers,
- ◆ Management of noncommercial jetboat use on the Salmon River; and
- ◆ Management of the Painter Bar Road.

### Other Decisions

Decisions and actions discussed in the DEIS and SDEIS that will not be based on the FEIS are discussed on page 11.

## RESTRUCTURED ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives 1 through 11 from the DEIS and SDEIS have been consolidated into Alternatives A through E in the FEIS. These alternatives display and analyze the full range of actions displayed in the DEIS and SDEIS. Alternatives considered have been renamed to reduce confusion.

### Alternative A, No Action

Continues current management, and provides a baseline for comparisons of effects.

### Alternative B, Primitive Emphasis

Emphasizes opportunities for solitude by greatly reducing float boat use levels, and maximum party sizes, and keeping current jetboat limits. No maintenance of the 4 landing strips. Painter Bar road closed.

### Alternative C, Private User Emphasis

Emphasizes private access by increasing float boat launches on the Middle Fork and by greatly increasing noncommercial summer jetboat use. 4 landing strips maintained for public use. Painter Bar road open.

### Alternative D, Preferred Alternative

Reduces potential for growth in float boat use while maintaining current use levels. Increases noncommercial jetboat use. 4 landing strips maintained for emergency use only. Painter Bar road closed during summer season.

### Alternative E, Proposed Action

Reduces potential for growth in float boat use while maintaining current use levels. Slightly increases noncommercial jetboat use. 4 landing strips maintained for public use. Painter Bar road closed during summer season.

# Background

## The Toolbox

The tool box contains brief explanations of the measurements or factors used to describe and compare the alternatives.

### ***Maintenance of Landing Strips***

The levels of maintenance are described in a range from no maintenance, to maintenance for emergency use only, to maintenance for use as public landing strips.

### ***Painter Bar Road***

Use of the road is described as open, restricted or closed to motorized use. The alternatives range from closed to motorized use (trail access maintained) to closed to motorized use during the summer, to open to motorized use yearlong.

### ***River Use***

Float boat and Jet boat use levels are described in terms of people at-one-time (PAOT). The **PAOT** number represents the maximum potential number of people that could be in the river corridor at-one-time if all the limiting factors were at the maximums for the alternative. The maximum potential PAOT is used to compare the alternatives, not to predict actual or anticipated numbers of people at one time.

### ***Float Boat Use***

1 permit allows 1 party to launch, with a set number of people and length of stay / launch.

**Float boat PAOT** = Launches X People / Party X Length of Stay.

### ***Jetboat Use***

1 permit allows 1 person to launch 1 jetboat in the river corridor.

**BUDs** (Boat Use Days) / week, one BUD = one jetboat on the river for one day or part of one day. BUDs / week is the limiting factor in Alternatives A, B, E. The BUDs / week value ties the number of launches and length of stay together so that as one number increases the other decreases. Maximum launches = minimum length of stay while maximum length of stay = minimum launches. Because of this maximum vs. minimum factor most noncommercial jet boat numbers for length of stay, launches / week, trips / season, BAOT and PAOT appear in paired sets.

**BAOT** is the maximum number of boats-at-one-time, that can be in the river corridor. In Alternatives A, B, D, and E the maximum BAOT could only occur on 1 day per week, with no use or much lower levels of use on other days of the week.

**Jetboat PAOT** is BOAT X maximum party size. The maximum party sizes used in the calculations are based on campsite capacities and/or maximum party sizes for all corridor users, not on jet boat capacity.

# *The Alternatives*

## **Alternative A: No Action**

Alternative A is the No Action Alternative which would continue management as directed by the existing management plans for the FC-RONRW. Alternative A provides the baseline by which to compare the other action alternatives.

The current management strategy would continue to manage Dewy Moore, Mile-Hi, Simmonds and Vines landing strips as emergency use only.

On the Middle Fork commercial float boat use would generally remain 3 launches per day, 30 people per party, 8 days length of stay during the summer. Noncommercial use would generally remain 4 launches per day, 24 people per party and 8 days length of stay. Outside the summer season there could be 7 launches per day, first come first served. (See Tables 2 & 3 for details.)

On the Salmon River commercial and non-commercial use would remain at 4 launches (each) per day, 30 people per party, and 10 days length of stay. Outside the summer season float boat numbers would continue to be unlimited. (See Tables 4 & 5 for details.)

Noncommercial Jetboats on the Salmon River would continue to be limited to 15 boat use days (BUDs) per week during the summer. Outside the summer season use would continue to be unlimited. (See Tables 6 & 7 for details.)

The Painter Bar Road would remain open yearlong.

## **Alternative B: Primitive Emphasis**

Alternative B provides for a more primitive wilderness experience by strongly emphasizing opportunities for solitude.

Dewey Moore Mile-Hi, Simmonds, and Vines landing strips would not be maintained for public aviation use. Over time these emergency-only landing strips would be naturally restored.

On the Middle Fork during the summer there would be 3 launches per day (commercial and noncommercial combined), people per party and lengths of stay would vary based on a maximum PAOT of 290. A party of 19 could stay 5 days, - a party of 9 or less could stay 10 days. Outside the summer season launches per day vary from 0 winter, to 4 spring, to 2 fall. (See Tables 2 & 3 for details.)

On the Salmon River during the summer there would be 2 float boat launches per day (commercial and noncommercial combined), people per party and lengths of stay would vary based on a maximum PAOT of 130. A party of 13 could stay 5 days, - a party of 4 or less could stay 14 days. Outside the summer season launches per day vary from 1 winter, to 2 spring, to 1 fall. (See Tables 4 & 5 for details.)

Noncommercial recreational jetboat numbers using the 1978 motorboat level would be the same as Alt. A, with a maximum party size limit of 15 people per party. (See Tables 6 & 7 for details.)

The Painter Bar Road would be closed to motorized use and rehabilitated to a trail.

# *The Alternatives*

## **Alternative C: Private User Emphasis**

This alternative provides maximum access to the wilderness by partitioning use within the Wilderness. Daily noncommercial float boat launches would increase on the Middle Fork during the summer. The number of noncommercial jetboat launches would increase significantly on the Salmon River during the summer.

Dewey Moore Mile-Hi, Simonds, and Vines landing strips would be maintained as public landing strips.

On the Middle Fork commercial float boat use would be the same as Alt. A.

Noncommercial use would include 4 launches per day with 15 people per party, plus 3 launches per day with 8 people per party. All parties could stay up to 8 days. These numbers would be in effect year round.(See Tables 2 & 3 for details.)

On the Salmon River the float boat use numbers would be the same as Alt. A. (See Tables 4 & 5 for details.)

Noncommercial recreational jetboat use during the summer would include 24 launches per day, 12 people per party, and 10 days length of stay. Outside the summer season the noncommercial jetboat use would be the same as Alt. A. (See Tables 6 & 7 for details.)

The Painter Bar Road would remain open yearlong.

## **Alternative D: Preferred Alternative**

This is the Preferred Alternative and is a modification of SDEIS Alternative 6, which incorporates public comment on the SDEIS.

Dewey Moore, Mile-Hi, Simmonds and Vines landing strips would be maintained for emergency use only.

On the Middle Fork commercial float boat use would generally remain 3 launches per day. Noncommercial use would generally remain 4 launches per day. A variable trip length option would allow small groups (10 or fewer people) to stay 8 days; medium groups (11-20 people) to stay 7 days; and large groups (21-24 noncommercial or 21-30 commercial) to stay 6 days.

Outside the summer season there could be 7 launches per day, first come first served during spring and fall. There would be no float boat use during the winter. (See Tables 2 & 3 for details.)

On the Salmon River the commercial and noncommercial float boat use would generally remain 4 launches per day each. A variable trip length option would allow small groups (10 or fewer people) to stay 8 days; medium groups (11-20 people) to stay 7 days; and large groups (21-30 people) to stay 6 days.

There are approximately 100 currently unused commercial launches each year. Half of these would be made available to non-commercial floaters through the annual lottery.

*(Continued on next page)*

# The Alternatives

*(Alt. D continued from previous page)*

Outside the summer season there could be unlimited launches per day. (See Tables 4 & 5 for details.)

Noncommercial Recreational Jetboat use would be limited by BAOT not BUDs per week during the summer. Jetboat users would be limited to 5 overnight boats on the water at one time. The overnight boats could stay in the river corridor for 2-7 days. When any of these boats ends a trip another can take its place the following day. In addition noncommercial recreational jetboat-ers are allocated 5 single-day trips per week, with no overnight stay. If all single day trips occur on the same day and all 5 overnight slots are filled the maximum BAOT would be 10. Outside the control season the launches per day would be unlimited. (See Tables 6 & 7)

The Painter Bar Road would be closed to mechanized or motorized transport from June 20 to September 7.

## Alternative E: Proposed Action

Alternative E is SDEIS Alternative 6 which reflects public comment received on the DEIS.

Dewy More, Mile-Hi, Simonds and Vines landing strips would be maintained for use as public landing strips.

On the Middle Fork float boat use would be the same as Alt. D. However, these factors would be in effect throughout the year. (See Tables 3 & 4 for details.)

On the Salmon River float boat use would be the same as Alt. D. Outside the summer season the number of launches would be unlimited. (See Tables 4 & 5 for details.)

Noncommercial Jetboats on the Salmon River would be limited to 20 boat use days (BUDs) per week during the summer. Outside the summer season use would be unlimited. (See Tables 6 & 7 for details.)

The Painter Bar Road would be closed to mechanized or motorized transport from June 20 to September 7.

<b>Table 1: Comparisons of Alternatives Landing Strips &amp; Painter Bar Road</b>					
<b>Management of Dewey Moore, Mile-Hi, Simonds, and Vines Landing Strips</b>					
	Alt. A	Alt. B	Alt. C	Alt. D	Alt. E
<b>Landing Strip Maintenance</b>	No maintenance would occur, strips allowed to recover.	No maintenance would occur, strips allowed to recover	Landing strips maintained for use as public landing strips.	Landing strips maintained for emergency-only use.	Landing strips maintained for use as public landing strips.
<b>Painter Bar Road</b>					
<b>Painter Bar Road open / closed</b>	Open to motorized use.	Close road. Maintained tread for trail access.	Open to motorized use.	Close road to motorized use during Summer.	Close road to motorized use during Summer.

<b>Table 2: Comparisons of Alternatives Middle Fork Float Boats – Summer Season</b>					
<b>Commercial Float Boats</b>	Alt. A	Alt. B	Alt. C	Alt. D	Alt. E
Launches / Day	3	3	3	3	3
Party Size	30	1-19*	30	30	30
Length of Stay	8	1-10*	8	6 – 8**	6 – 8**
Max. PAOT	720	290	720	540	540
<b>Noncommercial Float Boats</b>					
Launches / Day	4	Alt. B combines commercial and noncommercial users. For table purposes comm. & noncom. uses are shown together above.	4 & 3***	4	4
Party Size	24		15 & 8***	24	24
Length of Stay	8		8	6 – 8**	6 – 8**
Max. PAOT	768		714	576	576
Total Max. PAOT	1488		290	1,434	1,116

\* Variable, based on 290 PAOT as the limiting factor. Party of 19 could stay 5 days – party of 9 or less could stay 10 days.  
 \*\* Variable Trip Length Option larger party size = shorter stay. Max. PAOT would be with 30 people / party comm. and 24 people noncom. Each party would have a max. 6-day stay. Other combinations would provide lower max PAOT numbers.  
 \*\*\* 4 launches allocated through the initial lottery, party size 15; 3 additional launches through a second lottery, party size 8.

<b>Table 2: Comparisons of Alternatives Middle Fork Float Boats – Outside the Summer Season</b>								
<b>Commercial Float Boats</b>	Alt. A	Alt. B			Alt. C	Alt. D		Alt. E
		W,	Sp,	F		W,	Sp & F	
Launches / Day	0 - 7*	0	4	2	3	0	0 - 7*	3
Party Size	30	0	1-14	1-10	30	0	30	30
Length of Stay	8	0	1-8	1-14	8	0	6 – 8	6 – 8
Max. PAOT	1680**	0	170	170	720	0	1260***	540
<b>Noncommercial Float Boats</b>								
Launches / Day	0 - 7*	Alt. B combines commercial and noncommercial users. For table comm. & noncom. uses are shown together above.			4 & 3	0	0 - 7	4
Party Size	24				15 & 8	0	24	24
Length of Stay	8				8	0	6 - 8	6 – 8
Max. PAOT	1344**				714	0	1008***	576
Total Max. PAOT	1344 - 1680		0	170	170	1,434	0	1008 -1260

\* There are only 7 launches available / day. Tables show results of either all commercial or all noncommercial launches. The PAOT totals are mutually exclusive.

\*\*Alt. A; If all 7 launches were commercial the max. PAOT = 1680 - If all 7 were noncommercial the max. PAOT = 1344.

<b>Table 2: Comparisons of Alternatives Salmon River Float Boats – Summer Season</b>					
<b>Commercial Float Boats</b>	Alt. A	Alt. B	Alt. C	Alt. D	Alt. E
Launches / Day	4	2	4	4	4
Party Size	30	1 - 13*	30	30	30
Length of Stay	10	5 - 14*	10	6 – 8**	6 – 8**
Max. PAOT	1200	130	1200	720	720
<b>Noncommercial Float Boats</b>					
Launches / Day	4	Alt. B combines commercial and noncommercial users. For table purposes comm. & noncom. uses are shown together above.	4	4	4
Party Size	30		30	30	30
Length of Stay	10		10	6 – 8**	6 – 8**
Max. PAOT	1200		1200	720	720
Total Max. PAOT	2400	130	2400	1440	1440

\* Variable, based on 130 PAOT as the limiting factor. Party of 13 could stay 5 days – party of 4 or less could stay 14 days.

\*\* Variable Trip Length Option larger party size = shorter stay. Max. PAOT would occur with 8 launches / day and 30 people / party (comm. & noncom.) Each max. party would have a max. 6 day-stay. Other combinations would provide lower maximum PAOT numbers.

<b>Table 2: Comparisons of Alternatives Middle Fork Float Boats – Outside the Summer Season</b>								
<b>Commercial Float Boats</b>	Alt. A	Alt. B*			Alt. C	Alt. D	Alt. E	
		<u>W</u> ,	<u>Sp</u> ,	<u>F</u>			<u>W &amp; Sp</u> ,	<u>F</u>
Launches / Day	unlimited	1	2	1	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited	
Party Size	unlimited	1-8	1-16	1-14	30	30	30	20
Length of Stay	10	5-14	3-14	5-14	10	6 - 8	10	14
Max. PAOT	unlimited	40	100	70	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited	
<b>Noncommercial Float Boats</b>								
Launches / Day	unlimited	Alt. B combines commercial and noncommercial users. For table comm. & noncom. uses are shown together above.			unlimited	unlimited	unlimited	
Party Size	unlimited				30	30	30	20
Length of Stay	10				10	6 - 8	10	14
Max. PAOT	unlimited				unlimited	unlimited	unlimited	
Total Max. PAOT	unlimited	40	100	70	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited	

\* In Alt. B Party size and Length of stay are variable, based on various PAOT numbers as the limiting factors.



<b>Table 6: Comparisons of Alternatives Jetboat Use — Summer Season</b>									
<b>Noncommercial Rec. Jetboats</b>	Alt. A		Alt. B		Alt. C	Alt. D		Alt. E	
BUDs / week*	15		15		1680	40			
Length of Stay (days) **	Max. Stay 10	Min. Stay 1	Max. Stay 10	Min. Stay 1	10	Max. Stay 1 & 7	Min. Stay 1 & 2	Max. Stay 10	Min. Stay 1
Launches/week	3	15	3	15	168* (24/day)	10	22	4	20
Trips/season	34	171	34	171	1920	114	257	46	228
BAOT	3	15	3	15	240	10*		4	20
People/party	30		15		12	30		30	
PAOT***	90	450	45	225	2880	300		120	600
Max. Jetboats (traveling together)	3		unlimited		unlimited	3		unlimited	
<b>Commercial Jetboats (18 permits)</b>									
PAOT	540		270		540	540		540	

\* Alternative A, B, and E are limited by BUDs / week. Alt. C is limited by 24 launches/day. Alt. D is limited by 10 BAOT.

\*\* Length of stay- if all users chose the maximum or minimum. Rows below show launches/ week, max. trips / season, and max. BAOT that would result from the choice of all max. or all min. lengths of stay.

\*\*\* For jetboats PAOT= BAOT X maximum people per party.

<b>Table 6: Comparisons of Alternatives Jetboat Use — Summer Season</b>					
<b>Noncommercial Rec. Jetboats</b>	Alt. A	Alt. B*	Alt. C	Alt. D	Alt. E
BUDs / week*	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited
Length of Stay (days)**	10	10	10	14	14 F 10 W & Sp
Launches/week	unlimited	49	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited
Trips/season	unlimited	900	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited
BAOT	unlimited	70	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited
People/party	unlimited	15	20	30	20 F 30 W & Sp
PAOT***	unlimited	700	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited
Permit required	no	yes	self-issued	self-issued	self-issued
<b>Commercial Uetboats (18 permits)</b>					
PAOT	unlimited	(see above)*	unlimited	unlimited	unlimited

\* Alt. B. numbers included comm. & noncomm.

# *Other Sections of the FEIS*

## ***Affected Environment***

Chapter 3 of this Final EIS describes current human uses and biophysical resource conditions within the planning area relative to the environmental issues. This information provides the baseline for assessing and comparing the potential effects of the alternatives.

This section is subdivided into 13 areas/disciplines, which allows readers to target those resources or disciplines of greatest interest to them. It also allows readers to compare information presented in the Environmental Consequences of the Alternatives section with corresponding current conditions presented in this Existing Condition section.

The disciplines discussed in Chapter 3 for human uses include aviation, recreation, the Middle Fork and Salmon Rivers and associated use levels, non commercial jetboat use, jetboat use for private land access, Painter Bar Road, economics and cultural resources.

The biological resources addressed in this chapter include river campsite conditions and capacity, water quality, fisheries, wildlife and plants, including Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive species for these three resources, and air quality.

**Send Comments to Ken Wotring,  
FC-RONR Wilderness Coordinator  
Forest Supervisor's Office,  
Salmon-Challis National Forest,  
50 Highway 93 South, Salmon,  
Idaho 83467  
or email at  
comments-intermtn-salmon-challis@fs.fed.**

## ***Environmental Consequences***

Chapter 4 of the Final EIS provides a comprehensive scientific and analytical comparison of the potential environmental consequences for Alternatives A through E. To facilitate comparison of information provided in Chapters 3 and 4, the Environmental Consequences section is subdivided into the similar resource area/disciplines as Chapter 3.

Using the baseline established in the Existing Condition section, each subsection in Chapter 4 details the possible direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of each alternative. At the end of the resource subsections, an assessment of unavoidable impacts that arise from implementing each alternative is disclosed.

### ***The Preferred Alternative?***

***The Forest Service has identified Alternative D as the Preferred Alternative. However, the final Forest Service decision document will be the Record of Decision (ROD). Public comments received on the FEIS will assist the Forest Service in its decision making.***

***Comments on the FEIS must be received by October 27, 2003.***

***The ROD and the revised FC-RONRW Management Plan FEIS are planned for release in December.***

# *Decisions Not Being Made in the FEIS*

## *Types of Decisions*

The principle objective in revising the FC-RONRW Management Plan and amending the six Forest Plans is focused on programmatic management direction. Many comments that were received and some of the actions presented in the Drafts included site specific actions and suggestions to take actions that are beyond the authority of the Forest Service. Some actions could be made under existing authorities or under the terms and conditions of special use permits, or are contrary to the provisions of the CIWA. These actions are not appropriately decided in a programmatic amendment to the Forest Plans or revision of the Wilderness Management Plan.

Decisions and actions discussed in the DEIS and SDEIS that will not be made in the FEIS include:

- Site specific decisions that are beyond the scope of this programmatic EIS
- Decision made within existing management authority
- Decisions on issues not identified in the purpose and need for this EIS
- Decisions that are the within the purview of, or shared with, other governmental agencies

For more information on specific decisions that will not be based on the FEIS see the August 31 issue of Frankly Speaking.

## *Noxious Weeds Decisions*

The ROD for the FC-RONRW Noxious Weed Treatment EIS selected an alternative that was to be applied until the FW-RONRW Management Plan revision is implemented. The Forest Service also committed to the development of coordination, education, inventory, and prevention practices that would proceed in conjunction with noxious weed treatments.

A Noxious Weed Prevention Plan for the FC-RONRW has been developed. The Weed Prevention Plan utilizes existing authorities which provides guidance on actions to reduce the spread of weeds within the FC-RONRW.

The Noxious Weed Treatment EIS was written as an interim plan until the completion of the FC-RONRW Management Plan EIS. As the Forest Service has implemented noxious weed treatments, additional analysis needs have been identified that were not considered in the original analysis. These include:

- A new herbicide (Weed-R) has become available which should be analyzed for use within the wilderness.
- The fires of 2000 created many more acres of susceptible habitat than was predicted in the EIS. This is a changed condition that should be analyzed.

A Supplemental EIS to the noxious Weed Treatment EIS will be initiated. Therefore, decisions regarding noxious weeds are beyond the scope of this FEIS.

**Frankly Speaking  
FC-RONR Wilderness  
Coordinator  
50 Highway 93 So.  
Salmon, ID 83467**

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