



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

Nevada

Red Rock Canyon

National Conservation Area

Annual Manager's Report—Fiscal Year 2014

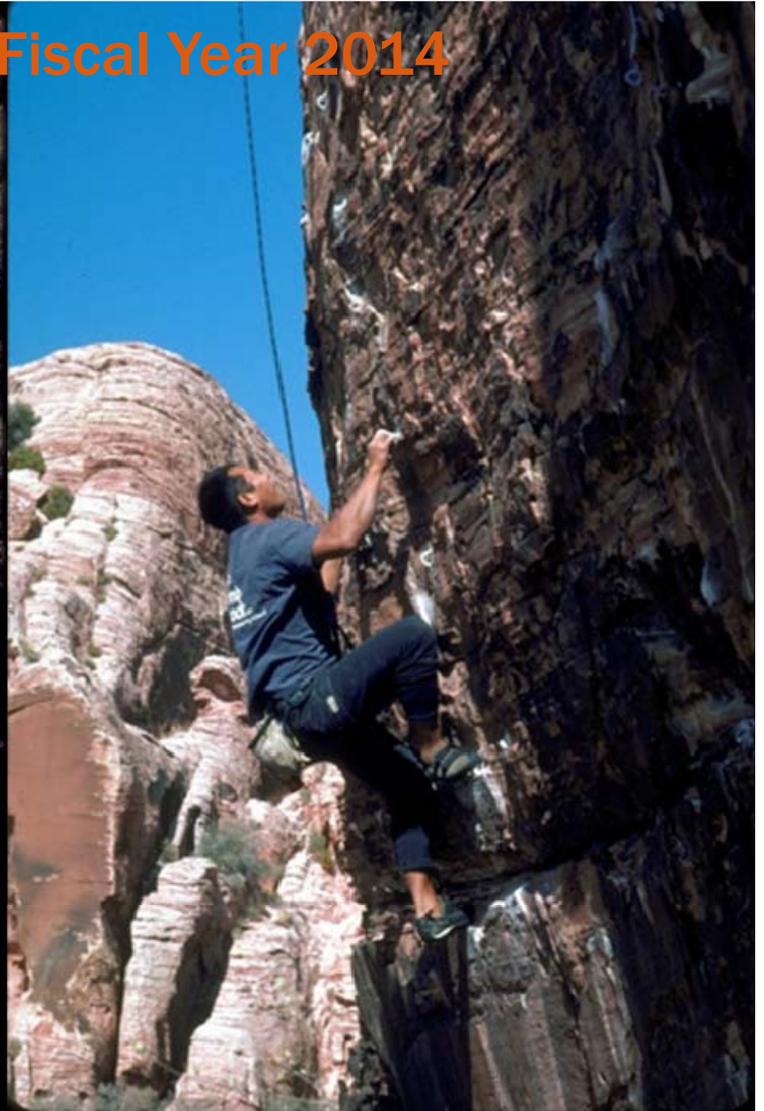


Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Red Rock Canyon Profile | 1 |
| Planning and NEPA | 4 |
| Year's Projects and Accomplishments | 6 |
| Science..... | 10 |
| Resources, Objects, Values, and Stressors | 11 |
| Summary of Performance Measure | 15 |
| Manager's Letter | 16 |

1 Red Rock Canyon Profile

Designating Authority

Designating Authority: Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (RRRCNCA) Establishment Act, 1990 (Public Law 101-621).

Date of Designation: November 16, 1990

Acreage

Total Acres in Unit 198,065

BLM Acres 198,065

Other Federal Acres 0

State and Private Acres* 0

*State and Private acres are not part of the total of the unit acres

Contact Information

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Field Office Name Red Rock/Sloan
District Office Name Southern Nevada
State Office Name Nevada

Budget

Total Fiscal Year 2014 Budget \$2,087,000

Subactivity 1711 \$386,200

Other Subactivities' Contributions \$1,258,500

Other Funding \$0

Staffing

Red Rock Canyon is unique to the BLM because of its highly developed infrastructure and related visitor services. It also has the highest annual visitation of any BLM Conservation Lands unit. The NCA's core area has a 13-mile paved Scenic Drive, associated parking lots, restrooms, and trailheads. There is a Gold LEED certified visitor center with outdoor exhibits and Elements, a gift shop, and two heavily used non-fee areas: Red Spring, a popular recreation and picnic area and Cottonwood. Operation of these facilities, in combination with the tremendous outdoor recreational demand and high visitation, consume the majority of staff time, resources, and budget. This includes providing visitor services, conducting innovative interpretive and educational on-site and outreach programs, ensuring facility management and maintenance, monitoring recreational and user activities and impacts to resources, and managing special recreation permits.

The Red Rock/Sloan Field Office is responsible for the management of RRCNCA and Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area (SCNCA) with oversight provided by a Field Manager and Assistant Field Manager. The Field Office's management assistant, maintenance coordinator, and archaeologist help support both NCAs. Staff at Red Rock include three outdoor recreation planners and four park rangers who support recreation, visitor services, volunteer coordination, and interpretation. One park ranger vacancy will soon be advertised and filled. Staff who are assigned to either NCA also share some co-lateral duties due to workload and the need to maximize staff and resource efficiencies. The Field Office is also responsible for the management of Walking Box Ranch, a site listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A Project Manager is partially responsible for Walking Box with other assigned duties.

The Southern Nevada District Office also supports the Red Rock/Sloan Field Office's operations, resource programs and projects. Operations include routine administrative, human resource, acquisition, and budgetary functions. Assigned district resource staff (e.g. wildlife biologist, planning and environmental coordinator, botanist) help support the Field Office's on-going research and consultation activities, programs, and environmental review of projects, however they also must address district-wide priorities with the available budget. Depending on the season, three to four law enforcement rangers from the District Office are rotated to the Field Office with the majority of coverage occurring at Red Rock due to public land-urban interface issues and related high visitation.

For additional staff support and operational information, refer to the Partnership section.

2 Planning and NEPA

Status of the Resource Management Plan

The 2005 Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) was completed consistent with the mandate of its founding legislation. Management objectives in the RMP are designed to provide recreational opportunities for the public to enjoy and appreciate the unique natural setting with an emphasis on resource protection and conservation. Plan decisions address biodiversity and preservation, ecosystem management, wild horses and burros, interpretation/education, cultural resources and recreation. The RMP was last evaluated in 2010 and is scheduled for another five-year evaluation in 2015.



Westward view of the red mountains of RRCNCA

If additional funding, staffing and resources were available, the RMP needs to be amended to better address lands and realty decisions including proposed rights-of-way and evolving recreational uses and demand. A related plan objective that still needs to be addressed is limits of acceptable change (LOAC) to address visitor carrying capacity in the core area. The majority of the RRCNCA's one million plus visitors occurs in the Visitor Center/Scenic Drive environs and visitation is increasing with commensurate competing recreational uses and impacts to resources.

Status of Activity Plans

A completed Travel Management Plan (TMP) is also needed at RRCNCA and a strategy to initiate an inventory of existing trails will commence in 2015. Developing a TMP on a more timely basis is hindered by a limited budget and on-going priorities in the Field Office.

Status of the RMP Implementation Strategy

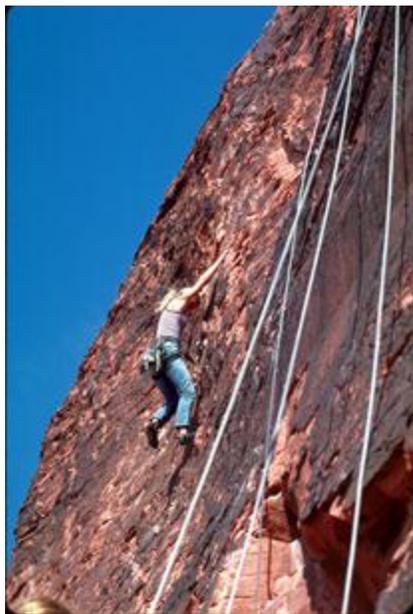
The 2013 Nevada Three Year NLCS Strategy, Unit Level Action Plan and subsequent 2013 and 2014 Annual Partner Work Plans serve as the revised RMP implementation strategy for RRCNCA. For related additional information, refer to Section 3, Year's Projects and Accomplishments.

Key National Environmental Policy Act Actions and/or Project Authorizations

Prepared by the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service, The Final La Madre Mountain Wilderness (LMMW) and Rainbow Mountain Wilderness (RMW) Wilderness Management Plan (WMP) and Associated Environmental Assessment (EA) was approved in December 2013. The Wilderness Management Plan (WMP) provides management direction for both wilderness areas.



Rainbow Mountain Wilderness, courtesy of Friends of Nevada Wilderness



Rock climbing at RRCNCA

Rock climbing is a major recreational activity at Red Rock. In 2013 public scoping was conducted and completed for the Resource Management Plan Amendment and Associated Environmental Assessment (RMPA/EA) to Address Use of Permanent Fixed Anchors for BLM Wilderness in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Clark County, NV. The purpose of the RMPA/EA is to consider whether permanent fixed anchors should be allowed in the LMMW and RMW. The Draft RMPA/EA should be released for public comment in 2015. Other NEPA actions during the year focused on long needed infrastructural improvements at RRCNCA , working with the Nevada Department of Transportation on a proposed widening of State Route 160, and addressing extensive resource damage caused by the Carpenter Fire 1 in 2013—over 27,000 acres of RRCNCA and adjoining U.S. Forest Service public lands were burned.

The major NEPA actions for the year are summarized below:

- Environmental Assessment, Geotech for Scenic Drive Road Improvements Project, February 2014
- Environmental Assessment, Carpenter Fire 1, Fire and Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation, March 2014
- Environmental Assessment, Red Rock Campground and Fire Station Improvements and Utility Upgrades, March 2014
- Environmental Assessment, Red Rock Low Water Crossing Road Improvement, August 2014

3 Year's Projects and Accomplishments

General Accomplishments

- **Visitor Services:** Paid visitation to RRCNCA included 1,065,360 visitors who enjoyed hiking trails, rock climbing, horseback riding, mountain and road biking, picnic areas, interpretive programs, and nature observing. The visitor center had 339,761 visitors.
- Three major public land day events were held with the support of our volunteers: Make a Difference Day, Red Rock Day and National Public Lands Day. (Refer to the volunteer section, page 8.)
- **U.S. Naturalization Ceremony:** In March, the BLM and the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association (RRCIA) hosted the second annual Naturalization Ceremony to swear in 100 candidates as citizens.
- **Completion of the Restoration of La Madre and Rainbow Springs:** the project involved weed control, including treatment of highly invasive giant cane and the removal of a small dam to increase natural flow.
- **Completion of the Red Rock Canyon Fuels Reduction Project:** A major contributor to the wildfire problem in the Scenic Drive area is the spread of two invasive brome species. Over 4,400 acres were hand sprayed with herbicides to help eradicate the invasives and create fuel breaks.
- Staff managed 25 commercial, 21 special events, and 12 guest climbing special recreation permits and 134 special use permits in 2014.
- **Cultural Resources:** The BLM archaeologist, staff and volunteers completed fieldwork for a 13,800 acre archaeological survey in FY 2013 and are finalizing a report with a predictive model in 2014. RRCNCA staff also sponsored the first graffiti removal training for local, state and federal agency staff dealing with cultural sites.
- **Scenic Drive:** Federal Land Highways (DOT) has provided a multi-million dollar grant for Scenic Drive improvements to address public safety, reduce user conflicts and make for a better visitor experience. Phase I of the project includes the installation of two low water crossing bridges in highly flood prone washes beginning in early 2015. Phase 2, the 30% design for proposed improvements for the entire Scenic Drive, was completed this year.



Mule teams with the Back Country Horsemen remove concrete from La Madre Dam.



View of Calico Hills off the Scenic Drive

Current Areas of Focus

Annual operational priorities for RRCNCA include providing the highest standard for visitor services, managing and monitoring recreational, cultural and natural resources, holding major public land day events, conducting interpretive and educational programs, and implementing stewardship projects. Due to increasing visitation and use at RRCNCA, major capitol improvements will continue on the Scenic Drive through 2018. These areas of focus are consistent with the



Students at Red Rock NCA.

Annual Partner Work Plan and objectives in the 2005 RRCNCA RMP Record of Decision dealing with: biodiversity, ecosystem management, recreation, fuels reduction, visitor education and environmental awareness and riparian/habitat restoration.

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Education, Outreach, and Interpretation

Education, outreach, and interpretation is a major emphasis at RRCNCA. The RRCIA and the BLM conduct programs for the public and students, outreach for Clark County such as the Mojave Max Program, and programs for children at risk. The All Stars, a non-for-profit, has partnered with RRCIA and the BLM to expose urban students to the outdoors through special programs.



BLM Park Ranger and interpreter, Kate Sorom, with students— beats a class room!

Red Rock Canyon is an official Hands on the Land (HOL) site. HOL gives students an opportunity to learn in America's largest classroom—Federally managed public land. Student lessons at RRCNCA use the scientific inquiry approach and meet Nevada State Department of



Education guidelines. RRCNCA also hosted its first Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) program for students and this year, the BLM and RRCIA conducted 1,009 interpretive programs reaching 93,000 participants. Park Rangers and certified teachers also held 199 educational programs for 10,688 participants. The Friends of Red Rock Canyon provided \$4,700 in transportation scholarships to bring students to RRCNCA. Without that funding, these students would not have experienced the great outdoors of RRCNCA.

Partnerships

RRCIA and the Friends of Red Rock Canyon (FORRC) are two key partners. RRCIA has interpretive and store operations staff with an Executive Director. Their interpretive staff support the BLM by conducting interpretive and educational programs.

FORRC has part-time staff at RRCNCA who assist with coordinating the volunteer program, events and stewardship projects. Friends of Nevada Wilderness, the Back Country Horsemen, University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the Las Vegas Climbers Liaison Council are our other major partners who assist with stewardship activities.

Volunteers



Volunteers at Willow Springs, RRCNCA

grounds look spectacular. The Cultural Resources Team just completed the first oral history research project documenting Red Rock's more recent history. The Site Steward Program and its volunteers documented three cultural sites, identified high risk sites and put together a final list for the State Historic Preservation Office. Last, our volunteers staffed the information desk in the visitor center 7 days a week, 365 days a year and answered thousands of questions from our visitors.

1,087 FORRC and other volunteers such as the Boy Scouts and corporate groups donated 29,810 hours at RRCNCA. 40 youth volunteers contributed 191 hours during the year. At \$22.14 per hour this equates to \$660,000 in donated labor!

Volunteers played a key role in RRCNCA's public land events, including Make a Difference Day, Red Rock Day and National Public Lands Day. Trees were planted to restore a riparian area, trails restored, and signs and fencing were installed at Willow Springs. The popular Pine Creek Trail was refurbished with water bars to control erosion and the tread-way was regraded by hand.

Volunteer teams at RRCNCA focus on different resource and program priorities. Our desert tortoise team cared for and interpreted the desert tortoises in the outdoor exhibit habitat area. Two Graffiti Teams continued to remove graffiti and the Landscape Team contributed hundreds of hours making the Visitor Center



Future Farmers of America learn how to pack mules to restore a trail. Photo courtesy of Keith Wheeler and The Back Country Horseman



Volunteering and education go hand-in-hand: some West Career Technical Academy high school students, who are members of the Future Farmers of America (FAA), helped the Back Country Horseman and other volunteers to complete the restoration of the Ice Box Canyon Trail—the FAA students learned how to drive and load mules to move gravel for the project. (For related BLM and volunteer activities, refer to Year's Projects and Accomplishments.)

Future Farmers of America learn how to pack mules to restore a trail. Photo courtesy of Keith Wheeler and The Back Country Horseman

Land (or Interests in Land) Acquisitions

There have been no land or easement acquisitions at RRCNCA in FY 2014.

4 Science

Science

- **Science Grant—Dinosaur Track/Fossil Study:** In cooperation with the University of Las Vegas, Nevada’s Geosciences Department, BLM Washington provided \$25,000 to fund an inventory, conduct photogrammetry, and produce a report on discovered fossils to-date at Red Rock. The study will be completed in 2016.
- **Science and Youth:** RRCIA has continued the partnership with the West Career Technical Academy (Magnet School) to teach high school students how to collect, catalogue and identify insects at RRCNCA. This year as part of a construction mitigation project on the Scenic Drive, students will also learn how to germinate and grow a listed plant species for replanting on-site.
- **Hummingbird Banding:** Red Rock Canyon’s District biologist and volunteers have continued to catch and band hummingbirds. Population monitoring helps identify geographical areas that are integral to the survival and reproduction of hummingbirds and potential threats to their populations. The Red Rock Canyon hummingbird monitoring program generates knowledge about hummingbird diversity, abundance, productivity, and survivorship. It is a systematic banding study so more can be learned about hummingbird population dynamics. Data is also given to the Hummingbird Monitoring Network so that our information will help define important areas for sustaining hummingbird diversity and abundance.
- **Springsnail Monitoring:** There are numerous fresh water springs within RRCNCA and five of these springs are known to have springsnails. The wildlife biologist is continuing to conduct monitoring of the five springs for both species of springsnails. La Madre, Lost Creek, Red, and Willow Springs have had consistent healthy populations of springsnails since monitoring began in 2010. Since Rainbow Spring was restored this year, it is expected that more springsnails should be found there in subsequent years.



Capturing a hummingbird for banding.



Banded hummingbird

5 Resources, Objects, Values, and Stressors

Archaeological and Cultural

Prehistoric occupation in Red Rock Canyon varied from 5,000 B.P. to Ancestral Puebloans (Anasazi, 2000–850 B.P). Cultural resources have been well inventoried in parts of RRCNCA including Brownstone Canyon, Sandstone Quarry, Lost Creek, Willow Springs, Calico Spring and Ice Box Canyon with Willow Springs and Brownstone representing the more significant archeological values. A 13,000 acre random and nonrandom archaeological survey



Documented point from recent survey.

recently examined most of Red Rock. One of the more significant historic resources at RRCNCA is the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Trail. (Refer to Chapter 3 of the RRCNCA Proposed General Management Plan and Final EIS for a complete assessment and description of resources, objects, or values.)

Archaeological and Cultural Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Good | Stable |

Archaeological and Cultural Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 198,065 | 13,130 | 392 sites | 90 acres/20 sites |

Stressors Affecting Archaeological and Cultural

Increasing visitation has generated more interest in cultural sites at RRCNCA—with the exception of one ARPA incident on a significant site several years ago, the sites that are readily accessible to the public are signed and/or have barriers. Site stewards monitor known sites for potential vandalism.

Water Resources and -Riparian Areas

RRCNCA contains two hydrographic basins: the Central Region and the Colorado River Basins. Over 85% of RRCNCA drains eventually to the Colorado River. As with the rest of southern Nevada, all surface waters in RRCNCA are essential for wildlife and some special status species. Surface waters at Red Rock are rare and usually ephemeral including

streams such as Pine Creek, First Creek, Oak Creek, and Lost Creek.

Major springs include ones at Willow, Rainbow, Red Springs and La Madre. (Refer to Chapter 3 of the RRCNCA Proposed General Management Plan and Final EIS for a complete assessment and description of resources, objects, or values.)



Water Resources and -Riparian Areas Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Good | Stable |

Water Resources and -Riparian Areas Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 198,065 | 198,065 | 5 springs | 5 springs |

Stressors Affecting Water Resources and -Riparian Areas

Some of the riparian areas in RRCNCA may be affected by long-term drought in Southern Nevada. Long-term effects may impact vegetative communities and associated fauna in the riparian habitat. Hiking along Pine Creek is impacting vegetation. Next year RRCIA will initiate a study on the effects of drought and climate change at Pine Creek.



Historical photo of family picnicking at Red Springs.

Wilderness

The Draft LMMW and RMW WMP for the La Madre Mountain Wilderness (47,225 acres) and Rainbow Mountain Wilderness (24,899 acres) was released this year, which included resource assessments of both areas consistent with wilderness requirements.

Wilderness Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Good | Stable |

Wilderness Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 198,065 | 72,124 | 72,124 | 7,000 |



La Madre Wilderness

Stressors Affecting Wilderness

Some of the riparian areas in RRCNCA may be affected by long-term drought in Southern Nevada. Long-term effects may impact vegetative communities and associated fauna in the riparian habitat. Hiking along Pine Creek is impacting vegetation. Next year RRCIA will initiate a study on the effects of drought and climate change at Pine Creek.

Recreation

Recreation resources or opportunities vary from hiking, bicycling, and rock climbing to equestrian use. (Refer to Chapter 3 of the RRCNCA Proposed General Management Plan and Final EIS for a complete assessment and description of resources, objects, or values.).



Turtlehead Peak has one of the most challenging hiking trails at RRCNCA.

Recreation Status and Trend Table

| Status of Resource, Object, or Value | Trend |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Good | Downward |

Recreation Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

| Acres in Unit | Acres Inventoried | Acres Possessing Object | Acres Monitored in FY14 |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 198,065 | 198,065 | To be determined | 54,219 |



Group campground area at Red Rock.



Tour de Summerlin Event

Stressors Affecting Recreation

The annual increase in visitation at RRCNCA is commensurate with the increasing numbers of recreational users and resulting impacts to vegetation and other resources. User conflicts are also increasing in popular areas.

6 Summary of Performance Measure

The ability to identify, inventory and monitor some resources, values, and objects at RRCNCA is constrained by a limited staff and budget. Cultural/archaeological, wilderness and recreation inventories and monitoring have occurred due to available funding, priority setting, and using existing BLM performance measures that are already in place.

| Resources, Objects, and Values Status Summary Table | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|
| Resource, Object, or Value | Status | Trend |
| Archaeological/Cultural | Good | Stable |
| Riparian | Good | Downward |
| Wilderness | Good | Stable |
| Recreation | Good | Downward |

7 Manager's Letter

We are pleased to present the FY 2014 Manager's Report for the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (RRCNCA). With its spectacular recreational opportunities and resources, Red Rock Canyon is a nationally and internationally known destination for visitors who come to Las Vegas, Nevada.

Maintaining and building new partnerships, providing innovative interpretive and educational programs and visitor services, and implementing sound stewardship practices are and will continue to be reoccurring partner goals at RRCNCA.

Next year will be another year full of challenges and opportunities that will be addressed through careful planning and setting priorities with our partners and public. The FY 2015 Annual Partner Work Plan developed by BLM staff and our partners, the Friends of Red Rock Canyon and the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association, has set a high bar for getting things done this year: improving trail signage and restoring trails; co-sponsoring major public land day events, conducting over 1,000 educational and interpretive programs, and beginning long needed improvements on the Scenic Drive with the support of the U.S. Department of Transportation. Dr. Steve Rowland, our new partner with the University of Las Vegas, Nevada, will research and document the fossil track sites at Red Rock.

Many thanks to our volunteers, partners and BLM staff for your hard work, dedication, and accomplishments. It could not be done without you.

Sincerely,
Mark R. Spencer
Field Manager, Red Rock/Sloan Field Office
Southern Nevada District



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February 2015

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