

ALLEGHENY SIERRAN

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALLEGHENY GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB

Volume 28, Issue 1

Spring/Summer 2009

Sierra Club Kicks Off Local "Beyond Coal" Campaign

by Peter Wray

As part of its national "Beyond Coal" Campaign, the Sierra Club is fighting to stop the construction of new dirty coal plants across the country and to direct the proposed investments into energy efficiency, renewable resources and other clean alternatives.

On May 2, Sierra Club members as well as representatives from several environmental organizations gathered in Point State Park to call attention to how burning and mining coal impacts Pennsylvania residents. Participants rode their bikes from the offices of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on Washington's Landing to the Point. Once there they called on Governor Ed Rendell and DEP Secretary John Hanger to move Pennsylvania beyond the use of dirty coal.

"Pollution created by generating electricity from coal does not start or stop at the power plant. It stretches all the way from the coal mine to long after coal is burned and the electricity has been used in our homes and businesses. Mining and burning coal scars lungs, tears up the land, pollutes water, devastates communities, and makes global warming worse," said Mary Anne Hitt, the Sierra Club's



Rolling out the local 'Beyond Coal' campaign on May 2 at Point State Park are Sierra Club members and staffers plus representatives of GASP and the Center for Coalfield Justice.

Beyond Coal Campaign national deputy director. "We owe it to our children to consider smarter, cleaner, healthier options for meeting our energy needs rather than locking ourselves into using this polluting, backward technology for the next 50 years that harms people, damages our environment, and makes global warming much worse."

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The Sierra Club's members are 700,000 of your friends and neighbors. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet. The Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.

The Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club was organized in the early 1970s. It is one of 11 groups comprising the Pennsylvania Chapter.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

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All parties are encouraged to respond to the articles we publish and submit any material they feel may be appropriate. Submissions and questions regarding newsletter content should be addressed to the editor, Marla Ferrency, at sierran@alleghenysc.org.

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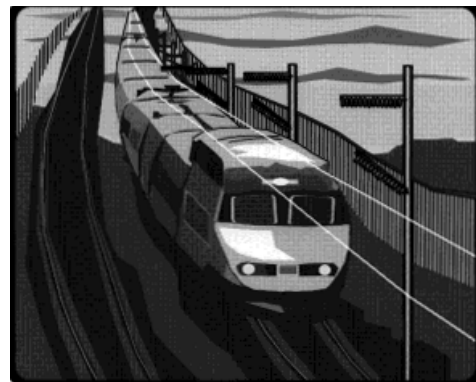
NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor, photos, stories from outings and any other submissions can be sent to sierran@alleghenysc.org or brought to an Allegheny Group meeting.

Is There a Maglev in Our Future?

by Marilyn Skolnick, *Transportation Chair*

Congress approved \$445 million for *state-of-the-art* means of travel for a project “east of the Mississippi River.” State Transportation Secretary Allan Biehler has an application for the money with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). It is this administration that is in charge of the grants. The Pennsylvania Maglev project is a proposed 54-mile corridor that would, as a pilot project, link Pittsburgh International Airport with downtown Pittsburgh and eventually go to Monroeville and Greensburg. Maglev, Inc. has been working on this project for many years and is reported to be ahead of any other proposal in the country.



Maglev has been working on the development of precision metal fabrication and manufacturing capability essential to the building of the steel guideway on which the Maglev trains would run. They are looking to the future when, if they are able to build the system, there would be a need for experienced workers. With this in mind, its McKeesport Industrial Plant serves as a training ground for students learning the new occupation of precision fabricator. There is an associates degree program in conjunction with the Community College of Allegheny County, Penn State Greater Allegheny and the Institute for Career Development. Trained workers will be needed in building this \$3.7 billion project.

In order to get the federal dollars, the state would have to match it with 20% or \$11.25 million. Right now the backers of the project are looking for a \$2 million line item in the state budget to keep the project going until the fall, when federal money is expected.

At one time we would shrink in horror at the thought of a cost of \$3.7 billion dollars. It still is a lot of money, but in view of the huge amounts being spent on saving our banks, the amount is not as shocking.

This project would have fewer environmental effects than a highway. (i.e. Mon/Fayette) because it has such a narrow “footprint”. More information to come.

Pittsburgh Hopes to Have the Greenest Sports Arena

On Earth Day the Penguins and the Sports & Exhibition Authority announced that they will seek a LEED Gold certification for the new Consol Energy Center that will replace the old Mellon Arena. This will be the first Gold designation for any major sports arena in the nation. The name of the center might be unfortunate from an environmentalist's point of view, but if this certification is approved it will add considerably to Pittsburgh's stock of Green Buildings.

For its size, Pittsburgh is doing remarkably well as a Green Building city. According to the Green Building Alliance's report 'Shades of Green 2008', the city ranks sixth nationally with 30 LEED-certified projects along with Atlanta and Washington DC.

Other Green Building first's for Pittsburgh include First Green University Dormitory, at CMU; First Green Children's Museum; First Green Convention Center; First Green Radio Station, at WYEP; and First Green Welcome Center at Phipps Conservatory.

Obama Admin Puts Science Back into Protection of Endangered Species

On April 28 the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar revoked one of the most notorious last-minute actions of the Bush Administration: the imposition of a midnight rule that effectively gutted the Endangered Species Act. The Bush rule ended the so-called scientific consultation procedures that required projects to be reviewed by the professional scientists of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service. The Bush rule would have let agencies decide for themselves whether or not their projects were harmful to protected species and their habitat. The Department of Transportation, for instance, could have decided on its own whether a highway project should move forward.

From a local perspective, Kathleen Smith of the Allegheny Group's Endangered Species Action Team writes:

"The ESA Team is elated with the news that the Obama administration has just revoked the Bush administration rule that greatly limited Endangered Species Act protections. We wish to thank all who signed our petitions, called Secretary Salazar, urged friends to take action, and in general made a fine grassroots effort. It worked!

"Now we have to get busy and work here in Pittsburgh to save some local Allegheny River mussels from extinction. The fate of five local river mussels was just determined on April 20th by the PA Fish and Boat Commission. The Board of Commissioners decided in favor of a few dredging companies and Sen. Don White, instead of biologists, and determined that the Salamander mussel and the Rayed Bean mussel don't need to be protected."

If you are interested in joining the ESA Team, please contact Bett Beeson at thebeesonfamily at gmail dot com.

Interior Secretary Keeps Polar Bear Classified as Threatened but Not Endangered

On May 8 Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced that a special rule to protect the polar bear would be retained. Conservationists were disappointed for they had hoped that the polar bear would be placed on the Endangered Species list.

In his announcement Salazar said. "We must do all we can to help the polar bear recover, recognizing that the greatest threat to the polar bear is the melting of Arctic sea ice caused by climate change. However, the Endangered Species Act is not the proper mechanism for controlling

our nation's carbon emissions. Instead, we need a comprehensive energy and climate strategy that curbs climate change and its impacts - including the loss of sea ice. Both President Obama and I are committed to achieving that goal."

To help the polar bear, contact your representative in Congress and urge them to support the climate change legislation titled American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, as proposed by Reps. Waxman and Markey.



Outings

Summer 2009

- * Suggested carpool fee: 7 cents/passenger-mile + a share of any tolls. Unless stated, car-miles are one-way from Monroeville. Carpooling is your choice; not part of the trip.
- * All trips begin and end at the trailhead.
- * For more up-to-date listings, visit <http://www.alleghenysc.org>
- * E-mail subscriptions are free. Contact Dianne Ciccarelli at Dianne.ciccarelli@hotmail.com
- * All participants on Sierra Club outings must sign a standard liability waiver. If you wish to read it well before you are asked to sign the form at the trailhead, go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms> or contact the Outings Department at 415-977-5528 for a copy.
- * Allegheny Group's Compliance Number is CST 2087766-40.

Day and Weekend Trips

Saturday, May 30 - Hike an 8-mile loop hike on the cross-country ski trails at Laurel Mountain, starting near the warming hut on Laurel Summit Road. We'll see the Spruce Run Trail, Beams Rocks, and cross the road to follow an assortment of ski trails near Laurel Mountain State Park. This is a modestly-paced hike with frequent one-minute stops, not a race; we intend to be one with nature, not conquer it. Plan to stay together as a group, no hikers left behind. Intermediate difficulty, not too hilly, pleasant temperatures, not too muddy. We will meet at 9 AM; call Jim for further details at 412.576.0849.

Sunday, May 31 - Fourth of four conditioning hikes on the Rachel Carson Trail in preparation for the annual June 20 hike to cover the entire 34 miles of trail in one day. This fast-paced 7-mile walk will go from Bull Creek Road near Tarentum along the tops of bluffs overlooking the Allegheny River to Bobwhite Shelter in Harrison Hills County Park (one of the easier hikes). Meet at 11:30 AM. Call Don Ziegler about meeting spot, 412-956-2660 (Cell).

Saturday, June 6 - Try a moderate 10 mile loop hike from Connellsville to Dawson. The return trip will be partly on the Youghiogheny River Gorge Bike Trail. Meet at Gateway Middle School

in Monroeville. \$6.50 carpool - 40 miles. Call Ed Divers, 412-828-5154.

Sunday, June 14 - Hike a moderate - intermediate 9 miles in the Bear Run Nature Reserve north of Ohiopyle. We'll do the Perimeter Trail with its view of the Youghiogheny River Gorge, and then do Laurel Run Trail to see the last of the spring wildflowers. \$10. carpool - 60 miles. Call John Dern, 412-856-4642.

Saturday, June 20 - Visit Coon Cave on Chestnut Ridge. Spend about 3 hours in the cave. Intermediate. \$6. carpool - 42 miles from Edgewood. Call Norm Snyder, 412-351-4068.

Saturday, June 20 - Hike - moderately strenuous and somewhat exploratory - shuttle hike on Chestnut Ridge, from South Connellsville to Mill Run Reservoir, over Chestnut Ridge, past Casparis Cave and the extensive underground quarries, and down to Indian Creek. \$7.50 carpool - 48 miles from Shadyside. Call Dick Pratt, 412-362-5567.

Saturday, June 27 - Tour Westmoreland County's historic Bear Cave with the owner. Learn about the local history, geology and wildlife. Weather permitting, after exiting the cave, we'll hike over to Casey Quarry on our way back down to our vehicles. A limited number of spare helmets and headlamps are available. Bring a snack or a lunch. The cave is 55 degrees year-around, so you

will need to dress appropriately. Bring a change of clothes. Assemble at the Bear Cave parking lot at 9:30 AM or inquire about other trippers interested informing a Monroeville carpool. Call for directions and details about what to bring along, and what to expect if you have never been underground in Pennsylvania. \$5.00 carpool - 35 miles from Monroeville. Call Tom Metzgar at 724-433-5752 (cell) or Kim Metzgar at 724-433-0854 (cell) or 724-325-2985 (H).

Sunday, June 28 - Hike a fast-paced 7-8 miles on a loop trail in Deer Lake County Park. This Allegheny County Park has loads of foot trails that are great for walking, so we can vary the route in any number of ways. Carpools will form at Bob Evans Restaurant in Harmarville. \$1.75 carpool - 13 miles. Call Judy or Don Ziegler, 412-826-0519.

Saturday, July 18 - Visit Casparis Cave near Connellsville. Spend about 3 hours in the cave. Intermediate. \$7.50 carpool - 48 miles from Edgewood. Call Norm Snyder, 412-351-4068

Saturday, August 1 - Tour Westmoreland County's historic Bear Cave with the cave owner. Learn about the local history, geology and wildlife. Weather permitting, after exiting the cave, we'll hike over to Casey Quarry on our way back down to our vehicles. A limited number of spare helmets and headlamps

are available. Bring a snack or a lunch. The cave is 55 degrees year-around, so you will need to dress appropriately. Bring a change of clothes. Assemble at the Bear Cave parking lot at 9:30 AM or inquire about other trippers interested in forming a Monroeville carpool. Call for directions and details about what to bring along, and what to expect if you have never been underground in Pennsylvania. \$5.00 carpool - 35 miles from Monroeville. Call Tom Metzgar at 724-433-5752 (cell) or Kim Metzgar at 724-433-0854 (cell) or 724-325-2985 (H).

Saturday, August 15 - Visit Lemon Hole Cave on Chestnut Ridge. Spend about 3 hours in the cave. Intermediate. \$6.00 carpool - 42 miles from Edgewood. Call Norm Snyder, 412-351-4068.

Saturday, Sept. 19 - Visit Lower Beaver Hole Cave in Cheat River Canyon. Spend about 3 hours in the cave. Intermediate. \$12.00 carpool - 80 miles from Edgewood. Call Norm Snyder, 412-351-4068.

Non-Sierra Club Outings

Trips listed below are in no way connected with the Sierra Club. Sierra Club takes no responsibility, and makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety, supervision or management of these trips. They are published here purely as a service to our members.

Raccoon Creek State Park - W.H.O. Hiking Series 2009

To showcase the park and its trails, the "Friends of Raccoon Creek State Park" group is sponsoring the W.H.O. Hiking Series. Featuring hikes from Section 2 of the Walks, Hikes and Overnights in Raccoon Creek State Park guidebook, these hikes were chosen to introduce the hiker to most of the trails in the park. From now through September, they'll hike the second Sunday of each month. W.H.O. hikes are free and no reservations are necessary. Just show up at the trailhead at 7:45am.

Sunday, June 14 - Hike #2.5 - Palomino-Buckskin-Camp Loop - 4.59 miles.

Notes

Ask the leader for names and phone numbers of trippers for you to arrange a car pool. Reserve at least 36 hours in advance. If you leave your phone number on the leader's answering machine, give it slowly and clearly. Notify leader to cancel your reservation. Bring lunch, rain gear, water, first-aid kit, small flashlight and extra clothes for changes in weather. If you have a cell phone, bring it along. Cell phones have saved the day on several trips when accidents have required evacuation of trippers. Sierra Clubbers planning to lead future outings should contact Bruce Sundquist at 724-327-8737 or bsundquist1@alltel.net.

Sunday, July 12 - Hike #2.6 - Wetlands-Buckskin-Heritage Loop - 5.53 miles.

Sunday, August 9 - Hike #2.9 - Camp-Appaloosa-Wetlands Loop - 7.45 miles.

Sunday, September 13 - Hike #2.11 - Forest-Heritage Loop - 9.78 miles.

For directions to the trailhead and other information, checkout the Activities / Events date for each hike on the "Friends" website at www.friendsofraccoon.com.

Outdoor Extravaganza

Saturday, May 23 - Monday, May 25 - Butler Outdoor Club is holding its annual Outdoor Extravaganza over Memorial Day Weekend near McConnells Mill State Park and Moraine State Park. It is full of outdoor activities: hiking, biking, canoeing, kayaking, rafting, horseback riding, sailing, caving, rock climbing, pontoon boat tour of Lake Arthur, workshops, historic tour of Old Stone House. Leaders and Instructors provide the activity of your choice. Meet them each morning at Breakneck Campground 9 AM to go to where the trip or workshop takes place. There will also be children's activities and a gear exchange/ flea market during the weekend. On Friday night is a Weiner Roast/ Picnic. On Saturday, night is a Pig Roast. Every night brings evening entertainment. Camping and Food at Breakneck Campground is optional. One of the evening highlights will be a reenactment of what really took place at Murdering Town with George Washington, Christopher Grist and the local Indians! Come join us for a day or a fun-filled weekend of things to do. Early bird discount by April 20 is 10%. A late fee will be charged after May 10. Contact Joyce Appel 724-526-5407 or joyceappel@windstream.net.

Solo Trip to Allegheny NF Discovers Goshawk and Leads to its Protection

by Jim Kleissler, Public Lands Committee Chair

For my first backpacking trip of 2009 I chose to visit the Millstone Creek watershed area in the southwest corner of the Allegheny National Forest. This medium-sized watershed lies just south of Marienville in Forest County. It was a perfect place for my first solo trip in a couple of years, being both beautiful and of exceptional conservation value.

Millstone Creek Watershed is known for its exceptional aquatic biodiversity. This, in my opinion, is due in large part to its high concentration of roadless forest habitat.

To read full article, go to <http://alleghenysc.org/?p=1137>



Allegheny Group Monthly Meetings

On the second Wednesday of every month there is a public meeting on matters of special interest to Sierra Club members. In the recent past we've had programs on trails and the Pittsburgh Riverfronts, the problems of protecting the developing world's natural assets, spring peepers, a stunning festival of environmental films... the list is almost endless. We have one coming up on primitive trekking in Borneo!

Since we share interests with many other groups, we often have co-sponsors for the meetings. And because we publish so few newsletters, we can't always alert the membership to the meeting topics far in advance. So you're encouraged to check the Group's web site (www.alleghenysc.org) and click on meetings/monthly meetings to see what's coming up. If you have an area of particular interest or expertise, you're encouraged to contact Donald Gibbon, program chair, (dongibbon@earthlink.net) and discuss how you might participate.

Are You Taking a Sierra Club Trip? Share It With Us at the September Monthly Meeting

Each year the September meeting (this year on September 9th) is devoted to sharing member travel adventures. The National Club has a phenomenal program of outings, both all over the country and all over the world, and many Allegheny Group members participate in those trips. If you have done so in the past or will do so this year, we'd love to hear from you. We usually choose three trips and ask those who went to describe how they prepared, what it cost, exactly what went on during the trip... in general give those who haven't done this sort of thing an idea of how they themselves might take that big leap. Contact Donald Gibbon to discuss how you might do this (dongibbon@earthlink.net).

Western Pennsylvania Hiking Guides

	Cost	Quantity	Total
Allegheny National Forest Hiking Guide	\$9.95	_____	_____
Laurel Highlands: a Hiking Guide	\$8.95	_____	_____
Hiker's Guide to Laurel Highlands Trail	\$7.00	_____	_____

**Make checks payable to
Allegheny Group, Sierra Club.
Send check and order form to:
Harry Back, 180 Thornberry
Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15235.**

	Subtotal	_____
7% Sales Tax (PA residents)		_____
	Shipping*	_____
	Total	_____

* Shipping: add \$2.50 for the first item plus \$0.50 for each additional item

Ship to

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Allegheny National Forest Hiking Guide

The 800-square mile Allegheny National Forest contains over 250 miles of foot trails for hiking, backpacking and ski-touring. Edition 4 of this guide describes hiking and ski-touring opportunities and points of scenic interest. 192 pages. \$9.95

The Laurel Highlands: A Hiking Guide

This guide to the foot trails of Chestnut Ridge, Laurel Ridge and Allegheny Front covers 446 miles of foot trails, mainly in state forests and state parks. Features: directions to trailheads, ski-touring and backpacking info, difficulty ratings and more. Does not cover Laurel Highlands Trail (see separate guide). 288 pages. \$8.95

Hiker's Guide to Laurel Highlands Trail

The 6th edition of this guide to the 70-mile Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail features: the geology, climate, vegetation and wildlife of Laurel Hill; tree identification; elevation profile; directions to the trailheads; backpacking info and shelter reservations; a list of hiking organizations in the area and more! 128 pages. \$7.00



These trail guides and others can be ordered online at www.alleghenysc.org using a credit card.

Pittsburgh's Fine Particle Pollution Worst in the Nation

Although Pittsburgh may be getting a good share of Green Buildings, the air in our region is still unhealthy.

In its annual State of the Air report the American Lung Association looked at the two harmful components of air pollution; ozone and fine particles 2.5 microns in diameter or smaller. As in past years, the report separates fine particles on the basis of daily and yearly exposure.

Although improving over past years, the Pittsburgh/Newcastle Metropolitan Area is the worst area in the country for short-term fine particle pollution, with Fresno, Bakersfield, and Los Angeles following. Philadelphia is No. 20. For year-long exposure, Bakersfield is first, and Pittsburgh is second. For ozone, we are fortunately not even in the top 25.

In terms of counties, Allegheny County has ranked consistently worst in Pennsylvania for particle pollution since the American Lung Association first included it in its State of the Air report in 2004.

Beyond Coal

continued from page 1

Coal-fired power plants account for over 30% of our nation's carbon dioxide emissions which makes them the leading cause of global warming. Right now, six new coal-burning facilities are proposed to be built in Pennsylvania.

"Pennsylvania is doing a great job in moving forward toward our new energy economy by investing in truly renewable energy sources such as wind and solar - there is no need to build any new coal facilities here," said Randy Francisco, Sierra Club Pennsylvania campaign organizer.

Of particular concern is the burning of waste coal for power generation. In Pennsylvania there is a legacy of 8,500 waste-coal piles, often termed "gobs", containing almost 300 million tons of waste coal or spoils. A recent analysis commissioned primarily for Pennsylvania by the Sierra Club found that using coal waste to remediate abandoned mine and coal waste sites resulted in ground water and surface water contamination that far exceeded federal drinking water standards.

"Coal combustion is a massive source of a number of harmful air pollutants, including nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter. These pollutants may cause or worsen asthma, and are also linked to stroke, heart at-

And nationwide, out of only thirty-seven counties failing all three air pollution measures in the report, Pennsylvania claimed six - Allegheny, Beaver, Lancaster, Washington, Westmoreland, and York, accounting for nearly three million people.

Concerned that the report conveys a negative picture for the region, Dennis Yablonsky, chief executive officer of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, suggests that the Lung Association is using data skewed by a monitor location in the Mon valley. In fact, the data are based on the County Health Department's eight monitors in Clairton, Harrison, Lawrenceville, Moon, North Braddock, North Park, South Fayette, and South Park, as reported in the 3,4 Quarter 2007 Report.

Meanwhile, there is discontent with another form of air pollution. In the Ohio valley the boroughs of Avalon and Ben Avon, concerned about toxic pollutants from Neville Island, recently passed resolutions urging the County Health Department to upgrade its air toxic guidelines.

tack and premature death. In addition coal combustion produces a number of carcinogenic air pollutants including mercury, arsenic, and chromium," said Joe Osborne, legal director of the Group Against Smog and Pollution

Coal companies that practice longwall mining in Pennsylvania are devastating local communities. Under current law they are permitted to cause damage to structures, including family homes. They are also allowed to disrupt water supplies. Coal companies are required to fund repairs to homes and to replace water supplies, but frequently residents find themselves embroiled in lengthy legal battles with these companies to have their former living conditions restored.

"On physical, financial, and emotional levels, longwall mining literally undermines people's homes, quality of life, and social and economic security. Southwestern Pennsylvania is essentially being treated as an energy sacrifice zone. We provide "cheap" coal to a nation hungry for energy, while our citizens and communities bear a disproportionate amount of the environmental, health and economic costs," said Raina Rippel, Director of the Center for Coalfield Justice.

Save the Date: Apple Festival on October 24, 2009

The Fourth Annual Apple Festival and Regional Pro-Am Apple Pie-Baking Competition is taking place slightly earlier this year, in October rather than early November, to allow for a broader diversity of apple varieties to be at their peak. To be held again at the Union Project in Highland Park, we hold this Festival to celebrate local apple growers and to encourage grocers to carry local produce instead of apples from China, Chile or even Washington. The Festival is great fun, sort of a local Lake Wobegone Day, with many growers showing their wares, including apples, cider, pies and more... plus music, magic and other crowd-pleasers. Mark your calendars and be there! This program is co-sponsored by the PA Assoc for sustainable Agriculture, Slow Food Pittsburgh, the PA State Ag Extension Service and the East End Food Coop.



Members are Encouraged to Use the Allegheny Group Website

www.alleghenysc.org

Want to know what Outings and Events are coming up NEXT week?

You can do so every week by going to the Allegheny Group's website: www.alleghenysc.org

You can also check on the latest environmental news, like climate change, endangered species, Dirty Coal, oil drilling in Allegheny NF, etc.

If you want an alert on what is new each week, then please send your name to pjwray@verizon.net with 'WEBSITE NOTICE' in the Subject line.

**Stay Informed—
Use Our Website!**

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