

Commissioner's Column

Celebrate our lakes! **They're among the best**

Here in New Hampshire, we love our lakes. Whether it's swimming, boating or fishing, we all have our own way of enjoying these great natural resources. But with over 950 lakes and ponds in the state, we sometimes take them for granted. This is why the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) has dedicated the entire month of July to appreciating all facets of our lakes and the role they play in our daily lives.

Despite the recent cyanobacteria reports, our lakes excel. New Hampshire lakes are reputedly clean compared to other lakes nationwide. According to results from the National Secchi Dip-In, our lakes consistently rank in the top five for states with the best water clarity.

A large portion of thanks is owed to those who dedicate their time to making sure that we continue to top the list, and keep our lakes sparkling. So in honor of Lakes Appreciation Month, I'd like to take the opportunity to personally express my appreciation to all of the volunteers who help DES keep our lakes clean, including the DES Volunteer Lake Assessment Program (VLAP) monitors, the DES Weed Watchers, the New Hampshire Lake Association Lake Hosts, and the UNH Lakes Lay Monitoring Program.

These groups, in their own unique ways, consistently go above and beyond to help our lakes.

Protecting the health of our lakes through water quality monitoring, VLAP volunteers collect samples from nearly 200 bodies of water in New Hampshire throughout the summer months.



Winona Lake, Center Harbor.

These samples help DES evaluate water quality and lake health. During the off-season, DES biologists use this information to put together an annual

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Addressing concerns raised by new cyanobacteria studies

The recent news about cyanobacteria and the on-going study being conducted by Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center regarding the potential link of degenerative neurological diseases and cyanobacteria has understandably raised concerns about quality of our lakes and ponds. DES has taken a proactive approach to water quality and public safety in New Hampshire.

Cyanobacteria are among the oldest known oxygen-evolving photosynthetic organisms, having existed over 3 billion years – they are NOT new or exotic. They have likely survived in our lakes since their formation some 10,000 years ago, and may be observed in nearly all of our lakes and ponds. Some cyanobacteria contain Cyanotoxins, but when present in low numbers are not harmful to public health. An increase in phosphorus to the lake may result



Cyanobacteria on Showell Pond, Sandown.

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report for each lake. Some volunteers take the additional step of relaying this information to their communities to keep them up-to-date on the health of lakes in their area. The annual DES reports include information on improving or declining trends in water quality over time that can help signal problems within the lake or its watershed, alerting biologists when action may be needed to head off problems.

Coinciding with Lakes Appreciation Month is the National Secchi Dip-In. According to the Biological Science Department at Kent State University, more than 6,000 volunteers across North America survey 27,000 data points to check water transparency in lakes and reservoirs using a simple device called a Secchi disk.

In addition to water quality monitors, a group of volunteers known as Weed Watchers are on alert for any invasive aquatic species in our lakes, including plant and animal pests. Formed in 1988, the Weed Watcher program trains volunteers to monitor their water body of choice for species of exotic aquatic plants, such as milfoil or fanwort. These plants can displace beneficial plants and wildlife, become tangled in outboard motorboat propellers, or litter beaches with plant fragments. They can also make swimming difficult and dangerous, and can be expensive to manage. Because of the limited number of DES aquatic biologists, these exotic plant infestations often go unnoticed until it's too late. Once an infestation is fully established, it is virtually impossible to eliminate. Weed Watchers helps DES detect these plants early on so they can be removed before they become a serious problem. Once a month during the summer, volunteers search the lakes for signs of exotic aquatic plants by circling the perimeter of the waterbody and any islands within it. If a



Get up-to-date, air quality messages through EnviroFlash – a nationwide notification system that provides instant information, customized for your area of New Hampshire.

EnviroFlash is a personalized delivery system that provides air quality forecasts and alerts via email, text or pager messages. This is especially helpful for people who are at greater risk from air pollution. EnviroFlash alerts people to unhealthy air quality conditions allowing them to make safe decisions about their day's activities.

Sign up today at www.enviroflash.info/. For information on air quality forecasts and current levels in New Hampshire, visit www.airquality.nh.gov. EnviroFlash is a free service of DES and the US Environmental Protection Agency.

plant is suspected, volunteers send a specimen to DES for identification.

The NH Lakes Lake Host program also aims to prevent the spread of exotic aquatic plants by working to prevent the transfer of these plants from lake to lake. Exotic aquatic plants are usually spread by transient boat traffic, so the program offers courtesy boat inspections to prevent the introduction of exotic plants into uninfected waters. According to the NH Lakes website, nearly 56,000 boats were inspected by Lake Host members last summer and a record-breaking 224 exotic aquatic plant fragments were detected on boats that were either about to enter or had just left a lake. This proactive program has surely prevented numerous infestations from occurring.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to the University of New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program and the Center for Freshwater Biology. DES appreciates the opportunity to partner with the UNH staff and the LLMP volunteers, and we value their contributions toward monitoring, protecting and improving the water quality of our lakes and ponds.

Regardless of how you choose to celebrate Lakes Appreciation Month, don't forget to take a moment to say thanks to volunteers in your community. Their continuous dedication to New Hampshire lakes keeps our water quality among the best in the United States.

Tom Burack, *Commissioner*

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

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Towns vote for innovation while planning growth

Even in these challenging times, New Hampshire voters and elected officials looked to the future as they approved 33 innovative land use ordinances through the 2009 town meeting season.

Planning boards throughout the state received assistance from their regional planning commissions through the Regional Environmental Planning Program, funded by the Department of Environmental Services.

The planning work follows on the heels of the October 2008 publication of *Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques: A Handbook for Sustainable Development*, a joint effort among DES, the NH Association of Regional Planning Commissions, the NH Office of Energy and Planning, and the NH Municipal Association. The guide includes 23 model ordinances for use and adaptation by local planning boards.

Toastmasters' Karner Blue chapter continues to grow

The NH Bureau of Education and Training has put its seal of approval on the educational activities of Toastmasters International by sponsoring the Karner Blue Chapter of Toastmasters held at DES.

Toastmasters is an international non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the speaking, listening and leadership skills of its members. Toastmasters also helps members with time management, evaluation skills, motivating people, mentoring, team building, listening, meeting organization, impromptu or extemporaneous speaking as well as all aspects of public speaking. Started in 1929, the program helps to develop leadership and communication skills at the members' own pace and at their own level of involvement. The Toastmaster environment is friendly and supportive, allowing members to build self-confidence within and in front of groups.

Many DES and other state employees have attended the state's Certified Public Managers program, and the education bureau recognizes and recommends Toastmasters as a way to reinforce the leadership and communication skills learned through the public managers certification process. While the self-paced program is excellent training for public managers, the Karner Blue Chapter is open to anyone – state employee or not.

The club meets every Thursday from 4:45 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. at DES, 29 Hazen Drive, Concord. If you are interested in joining or would like more information, please contact one of the group's officers: Alicia Carlson, alicia.carlson@des.nh.gov, (603) 271-4071; Kerry Barnsley, (603) 271-7509; Molly Stark, (603) 271-2890; or Sue Francesco, (603) 271-2967. ■

Thirteen towns adopted ordinances protecting water resources, including drinking water, floodplains, wetlands, and riparian corridors. Another eight towns adopted conservation subdivision ordinances, a technique that provides for higher density development in concert with greater protection of open space and valuable natural resources.

In Hanover, the planning board is using the ILU handbook as a study guide, holding monthly education nights where a member presents on one of the 23 chapters and moderates discussion about the chapter's potential for use in Hanover. According to Vicki Smith, the town's senior planner, innovative land use techniques are needed to fully implement many of the goals established in the town's 2003 master plan, such as protecting agricultural lands and ridgelines and achieving open space protection commensurate with higher density in the town center.

DES is building a database to track innovative land use planning activity throughout the state to facilitate dialogue among communities facing similar issues. ■

Claremont's brownfields project reaches milestone

Two of the massive Monadnock Mills in Claremont reopened in June after being dormant for more than 50 years. A 200-seat Common Man restaurant, featuring an outdoor terrace with views of the Sugar River falls, just opened for business in the former Woven Label Mill building. The upper level of the building will have six to eight hotel rooms.

The Wainshal building, which includes the Monadnock Mills No.2 and No.6, was built in 1884 for weaving and spinning of cotton cloth. Current plans include about two dozen hospitality suites on its first two floors, the fast growing Red River Computer Company on its third and fourth floors and commercial space on the fifth and sixth floors.



Monadnock Mills and new pedestrian bridge in Claremont.

With an infusion of more than \$25 million in private investment, the city stands to see four of its well-preserved mill buildings come back to life from near destruction in the 1960s. DES continues to provide technical assistance to the environmental cleanup and restoration of the Monadnock Mills historic district. For more on DES's Brownfields Program, please see www.des.nh.gov and search "brownfields." ■

Coastal invasive plant a growing threat

Perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*) is an aggressive non-native plant of the mustard family that has recently been discovered on New Hampshire's Seacoast. By pushing out native plants, pepperweed creates dense stands that make poor habitat for local wildlife. To make matters worse, its adaptable nature enables it to thrive in many environments, including salt marshes.

Throughout the last few decades, pepperweed has infested the Great Marsh in the Parker River National Wildlife Reserve in northeastern Massachusetts at over 70 locations. Only two areas of pepperweed have been found in New Hampshire so far, and it has not been found in Maine. New Hampshire's salt marshes are on the frontline of preventing this plant from spreading further north. But how?

Last year the Coastal Program started the "pepperweed patrol" program. Realizing that more eyes in the field meant a better chance of catching it before it becomes rooted in our fragile coastline habitats, NHCP got the word out about pepperweed through media releases and community access TV, and asked people to report any sightings.

Additionally, trained pepperweed patrol volunteers and



Pepperweed creates dense, single species stands that outcompete other native plants. The mature plant can reach up to four feet in height. Photo by Jennifer Forman, Mass.



Pepperweed's leaves alternate sides; one leaf grows from each point along the stem, alternating the side of the stem it grows from. Its extensive root system helps it spread quickly. Photo by Rob Stevenson, UMass-Boston.

Coastal Program staff hand pulled the two known locations in New Hampshire at Odiorne State Park in Rye and at the Hampton Transfer Station in Hampton. The location in Rye was confirmed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006, and the pepperweed patrol found the one in Hampton last July.

Kevin Lucey, Coastal Program restoration coordinator, emphasized that New Hampshire has the unique opportunity to strike back before pepperweed becomes a problem. As coordinator of the Coastal Watershed Invasive

Plant Partnership, a group formed last year to combat invasive plants in the Seacoast area, Lucey and the other 11 organizations that are part of the group can share resources and work together to address the havoc on native habitats caused by invasive plants, including pepperweed.

"Pepperweed is one of the few examples where an invasive plant invasion has been identified early. With only two known populations in New Hampshire, if we are vigilant, it won't get out of control. Unlike past invasions, we have the past lessons learned and the regional capacity to address this," said Lucey.

To help avoid misidentifications, the Coastal Program put together a detailed slideshow on how to identify the plant. Key features include flowers with four spoon shaped white petals that usually appear in July. Its leaves are alternate – they alternate each side they grow from up the stem, which is always smooth.

Once pepperweed is discovered, hand-pulling can be used to control growth, but only if it is done before it goes to seed in August. Pulling afterward only makes the problem worse by helping the seeds to spread in the wind. The plant also proliferates itself through creeping root systems, and since new plants can even sprout from mere root fragments, disposal of pulled pepperweed requires specific techniques, making it essential that only trained volunteers remove the plant.

For more on the pepperweed patrol, go to www.des.nh.gov and search "Pepperweed" in the A to Z List. ■

Criminal convictions for asbestos violators

Violating state or federal asbestos laws is serious business, as two people recently learned.

On May 13, 2009, Paul Davis of Winchester, N.H., pled guilty to three indictments alleging felony-level violations of New Hampshire's Asbestos Control and Management laws. The indictments related to Davis's unlicensed and improper performance of an asbestos abatement project in Keene. The Cheshire County Superior Court sentenced Davis to 12 months in the Cheshire County House of Corrections, with all but six days suspended, conditioned on future compliance with all asbestos statutes and regulations, payment of a \$3,000 fine, and good behavior.

In Massachusetts, a Methuen-based businesswoman skipped a court hearing on March 23, 2009, where she faced sentencing of up to 230 years in prison. From approximately 2001 to 2006, Albania Deleon owned and operated Environmental Compliance Training, a certified asbestos training school. Under federal and state law, in order to work in the asbestos abatement industry, a person must complete a 32-hour introductory training course. Environmental Compliance Training offered those courses on a weekly basis at its Methuen offices. Environmental Compliance Training's employees issued certificates of course completion to several people who did not take the course. Many of the untrained certificate recipients were directed to work for Methuen Staffing, Deleon's temporary services company that specialized in asbestos removal. Six of the charges that Deleon was convicted of carry a sentence of up to 20 years each, and 22 carry a sentence of up to five years each. She also faces a \$250,000 fine.

Personnel from the DES Air Resources Division worked with the NH Department of Justice and the US Environmental Protection Agency's

Criminal Investigation Division to obtain the conviction of Deleon. DES staff noticed several training certificates that did not appear authentic, and several arrests of individual workers were made for certifying false statements in their license applications. As more fraudulent training certificates were discovered, the investigation was broadened to include Environmental Compliance Training and Deleon.

These three agencies also worked

with the Keene Police Department to obtain the conviction of Davis. During a licensed asbestos abatement project in Keene, a worker noticed bags of asbestos waste that had not come from the licensed project. DES was called and, through careful investigative work, enough evidence was found to tie the asbestos waste to Davis and a project he had performed in Keene.

For more on asbestos compliance, contact Steve Cullinane at (603) 271-1373 or steve.cullinane@des.nh.gov. ■

To sort, or not to sort: that is the question

By Donald E. Maurer, DES recycling and solid waste coordinator

“Let’s see, newspaper in that container, cardboard over there. What about this envelope with the little glassy window? Glass in that chute, but this bottle is blue and where does the coffee cup go? This has a number 1 on the bottom, but the sign says only containers with a neck. I need to stop eating yogurt because I can’t recycle the container. I give up! It’s all going in the black bag and I’m out of here.” Thoughts like this go through the heads of many New Hampshire citizens every time trash day comes around. No question, recycling is confusing and difficult. But there is a new day dawning.

DES has just issued a permit for the Concord Cooperative to construct a single stream materials recovery facility (MRF) at Exit 17 in Penacook. Likely to be on-line by April 2010, this facility, coupled with the several existing MRFs in the state, will help change the way we recycle.

The MRF concept has been around for years, but is fairly new in the Northeast. New Hampshire has existing MRFs in Rochester at the Turnkey facility and in Hooksett, among others. There are several in Massachusetts close enough to service the southern tier of New Hampshire.

Basically, an MRF is an industrial plant designed to separate material using a variety of machines. Recyclable materials are brought to the facility in a single container, hence the “single stream” or feedstock name. These are clean recyclables with little to no “classic” trash in the container. (Trash still goes to a disposal facility like a landfill or incinerator.) The equipment sorts the recyclables by using the physical or chemical properties of the materials. Glass usually drops out first, with paper being bounced out of the stream. Steel cans are removed by magnets, aluminum by eddy current separators. Finally, plastics are sorted by optical sorters that can determine which type of plastic is present. All this is then baled and shipped to recyclers, who use the materials as industrial feedstocks.

Because of the ease with which a person can recycle, and because the larger volumes of materials creates markets, MRFs can increase recycling rates by 15 percent to 20 percent with little to no effort. Indeed, coupled with an industrial composting facility, diversion rates of 70 percent to 80 percent are feasible.

MRF – it’s the future of waste management in New Hampshire. ■

Keene High takes 2009 NH Envirothon

Following a day-long competition hosted by the Sargent Center in Hancock, Keene High School emerged as the 2009 N.H. Envirothon winner, besting 23 other teams.

Since 1991, the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts has sponsored Envirothon, the highly successful, secondary school environmental competition. This year's theme was Biodiversity in a Changing World. According to Envirothon officials, "Human activities that affect biodiversity include habitat alteration, introduction of invasive species, pollution production, overharvesting of biotic resources, and anthropogenic climate change. Biodiversity loss at this scale would profoundly affect human well-being."

The Envirothon provides students with the opportunity to apply their skills to solving real world environmental challenges. Teams of high school students study critical is-

Students walk the talk on "Clean Air Hike"

Approximately 140 eighth graders from Jaffrey Rindge Middle School traveled to Miller State Park in Peterborough in May for a "Clean Air Hike" to the summit of Pack Monadnock. Staff from DES Air Resources Division and BreatheNH set up a number of stations along the 1.4 mile trail and at the summit for the students to learn about air quality and its effects on their health and the environment. For many students, it was their first time hiking up the mountain.

Along the trail, students learned about the geology of the area and how climate change is affecting our environment. Once at the summit, students took a tour of the DES air monitoring station, participated in a discussion on health and air quality, and climbed the fire tower. They also learned about visibility and haze by searching for specific landmarks on the horizon, such as Mount Monadnock,



Boston, and Temple Ski Area.

Everyone – students, teachers, and chaperones – enjoyed the experience and the school hopes to schedule more Clean Air Hikes in the future. To learn more, contact Jessica Morton at (603) 271-3911 or jessica.morton@des.nh.gov. ■

sues related to New Hampshire soils, wildlife, aquatic and forestry resources enroute to the statewide competition held in the spring. Each team must also prepare a formal presentation on the current topic (biodiversity) and present its findings before a panel of judges.

This is the 13th state title for KHS over the 18 years of the program's existence. KHS also won the national competition in 2002. The 2009 Keene team placed first in all but one subject area. The team also ranked fourth in the current issue discussion and first in its presentation. Anna Dorman, co-captain of the



The 2009 Keene High School Envirothon team poses for a picture after taking first place in the state competition.

KHS team, expressed her reaction to winning by noting, "It was just a huge feeling of relief once they announced that we had won three of the stations. We put so much into this over the year that it is just a huge build up of pressure until we were finally positive that we won. We knew that we did pretty well, but we were still incredibly nervous." Anna continued, "In the past, I have been content for a while after winning states, but this year we really held it as an expectation of ourselves to win states and are looking toward nationals."

In August, KHS will represent New Hampshire at the national competition to be held in North Carolina. If your school would be interested in competing at the 2010 Envirothon, please contact Jan Hooper at (603) 253-7068 or envirothon@nhacd.org. ■

Happy Retirement to ...

It's hard to believe that the following friends and colleagues are retiring! Thank you for your many, *many* years of state service. Enjoy your well-earned break!



- Bill Evans, Subsurface Bureau
- Jim Falicon, Subsurface Bureau
- Blaise Heroux, Oil Remediation & Compliance Bureau
- Bernie Lucey, Drinking Water & Groundwater Bureau
- George Neill, Wastewater Engineering Bureau

On the road to a greener yard

Good outcomes to problem situations don't always make the news. This time, it's different. DES is pleased to report that Fitchburg Road Auto Sales and Salvage in Greenville recently made huge strides toward correcting a long list of environmental compliance violations that had been a problem at the facility for several years.

Based on a number of inspections by DES during recent years, multiple violations of environmental requirements were identified, including mismanagement of fluids, tires, batteries, and greasy/oily parts. Petroleum spills and leaks were also evident, triggering the need for the owners to complete a site investigation to determine whether the releases had caused groundwater contamination. As a result, DES issued the facility owners an order in March 2009 compelling them to correct the operating deficiencies and to perform all required site investigation work.

DES revisited the site two months later and a much-improved, better organized, well managed facility was readily apparent. Automotive fluids and greasy, oily parts were now being stored properly in leak-proof, labeled containers inside secondary containment devices protected from precipitation. A roof was being installed over an existing concrete pad to provide a dry, spacious, impervious surface where the facility can safely drain fluids from vehicles.



Above: Site control "issues," April, 2008. Below: Well organized yard, May 2009.

Automotive batteries were neatly stored indoors, tires were being actively managed, the site was tidy and progress had been made toward initiating a site investigation.

Not only DES is pleased with these improvements, the facility owner, Jeff Lashua, is also pleased. During the recent site visit, he told DES inspectors, "Now that I have a more organized and controlled work area, it's so much easier to do my work. I can keep better track of my inventory, I don't have to worry about my drinking water becoming contaminated due to careless handling and storage of fluids, and the working conditions are more comfortable and less hazardous."

This auto salvage yard success story is one of many that DES hopes to see in the future, as it continues to work with auto salvage yards throughout the state to bring compliance and pride to this important industry, one yard at a time. Thank you Fitchburg Road Auto Salvage and Sales.

For more information about green auto recycling, go to www.des.nh.gov and search "Auto Salvage Yards." ■

Two Concord projects awarded for green construction

The Associated General Contractors of New Hampshire recently presented its "Build New Hampshire" awards, during which two new categories offered the opportunity to highlight green construction in New Hampshire.

In the Building category, Gilbane Building Company helped the Concord Hospital become the first hospital in the state to achieve LEED certification through the additions to the east and north wings. The project focused on sustainability, incorporating this concept throughout the building's design and construction. Using regional materials from within a 500-mile radius of Concord, promoted the sustainability theme.

In the Highway/Bridge category, Redimix Company transformed the parking lot of one of the nation's oldest parks into a self-draining lot. In Concord's White Park, the new parking lot utilized state-of-the-art technology to manage run off. Redimix's use of RediDrain, a pervious concrete, allows rain to soak into the ground instead of running off. This eliminated the need to install a conventional drainage system.

These projects provide a small snapshot of the green construction in New Hampshire, but also show how environmental consciousness is playing a larger role in the industry. ■

Cyanobacteria

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in an increase of cell production and the formation of a scum that can be potentially toxic to animals, livestock, waterfowl and humans.

However, there is no need to panic. It is safe to recreate in New Hampshire waters. Generally, the water quality of our lakes and ponds is very good, and we all can enjoy swimming, boating, fishing and other water-related activities.

The cyanobacteria blooms that are making the news in New Hampshire are not unique to us. The increase in cyanobacterial blooms is a global issue; they occur all over the world. Other states and countries have experienced cyanobacteria scums and blooms in their lakes and rivers.

DES posts advisories and warnings because we are proactive. Most other states do not test for cyanobacteria. However, DES routinely monitors the state's public beaches and public waters for cyanobacteria. Then, in an effort to advise the public of potential health risks, DES issues advisories as a precautionary measure, which it began five years ago as the incidence of blooms or scums became more apparent.

Scientists at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical School are actively researching a possible link between BMAA, which is a specific amino acid associated with cyanobacteria, and human health effects, including amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. They are trying to determine if exposure to

cyanobacterial blooms that are known to produce the neurotoxin BMAA and are present in New England lakes relates to a high incidence of surrounding ALS.

Cyanobacteria advisories are issued by DES when a large number of cyanobacteria cells are seen in a lake sample; advisories do not necessarily indicate the presence of the neurotoxin BMAA. The warning is not based on a toxin evaluation and is intended as a precautionary measure for short-term exposure. Lake users should avoid contact with the water in areas experiencing elevated cyanobacteria cell conditions, typically where lake water has a surface scum or blue-green flecks. If a cyanobacteria warning has been issued, DES will continue to monitor public beaches and public waters on a weekly basis until the cyanobacteria standards are again met.

If you suspect a cyanobacteria bloom in a water body and you have access to the web, check the "Beach Inspection" web page at www.des.nh.gov, or contact DES immediately at (603) 271-2457 or beaches@des.nh.gov, and we will conduct a site visit. ■



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We're very proud of you, Steve!

Steve Couture, of the Rivers Program, and the other members of the 238th Air Ambulance Medical Company have been activated for a second deployment to Iraq tentatively scheduled for August 21. The mission of the 238th will be to provide fast response medical treatment and air evacuation/transport for U.S. and Iraqi troops, as well as civilians for a specific region. Steve coordinates the incoming calls for assistance and directs the activities that govern the rescue missions from alerting the flight crews, arranging for communications between air and ground forces, and ensuring that unit response times are met. ■

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