

FOREST LANDOWNERS  
OF  
CALIFORNIA



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**Vice President's Message**

Our 2009 Capitol Day event was bursting with members eager to learn more about the legislative process and how best for FLC to engage. They were professional, articulate and passionate in conveying our ideas and concerns. We were at capacity and would like to thank the members who attended for taking the time to travel to Sacramento.

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A membership drive and fundraising request will be considered by the board in January targeting landowners with NTMP's who are not currently members of our organization. Our ongoing efforts to challenge the North Coast Regional Water Boards actions affecting their management plans is worthy of promoting with those who benefit. Our own membership renewals are coming in nicely, but we continually seek new members to keep our organization growing and allow us to do more to meet our goals.

Please visit our website ([www.forestlandowners.org](http://www.forestlandowners.org)) to see the new online videos on forest management. The first production by the Western Shasta Resource Conservation District in cooperation with the Natural Resource Conservation Service is titled *Managing for Healthy Forest Landscapes* was filmed during one of our field days. The video is posted on You Tube, the popular online site where we hope to expose more people to

ideas of proper forest management. The other videos from Forests for the Next Century, a North American alliance for forest management communication and education, present topics such as climate change, Pacific Northwest perspectives, forest products and more.

The Strategic Plan is well underway and will be presented to the entire board of directors meeting on Friday, January 15, 2010 in Williams, CA. We welcome participation from the membership as we discuss the proposal including a new legislative action plan. We are about to reinvigorate the various committees and really need the help of all members to step up, volunteer and participate. This is key to our success. Let us hear from you if you would like to volunteer or attend the upcoming board meeting.

**Sincerely,**

**Nan Deniston, Vice President Forest Landowners of California**

### **The 2010 FLC Annual Meeting By George Belden**

It is that time to start planning to attend the Forest Landowners Annual Meeting to be held in Redding on April 29 through May 1, 2010.

The first day, the 29<sup>th</sup>, is our Field Day. We will board buses and head east out of Redding to Shingletown. Our first stop will be at the Tree Farm of the Year (Bill Beaty). Then on to the Jim Denny tree farm to view various silvicultural methods and see the workings of a small tractor. Lunch will be served by the Volunteer Firemen. Then we'll travel north to Whitmore and look at Beaty managed land where silvicultural prescriptions stopped a wildfire several years ago. We will make a road side stop at a ranch and discuss land trusts and conservation easements.

We will be back at the Holiday Inn by 5 PM so that folks can get ready for the traditional barbeque at 6:30 PM. The barbeque will be held at a local ranch and feature catering by the San Francisco Deli here in Redding Friday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, will be the daylong conference at the Holiday Inn on Hilltop Drive. Our theme "Forest Management Options for the Future" will prove to be most interesting to the forest landowners. The evening dinner program will feature US Congressman Wally Herger as our speaker and will conclude with recognition of past FLC Presidents and presentation of the Tree Farmer of the Year Award.

Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, is the Membership meeting. Presentation of the history of FLC be given and a summary of the FLC Strategic Plan. Wrap up by 11:00 AM. We look forward to seeing you all there!

(Editors note: Complete program, accommodation information, and registration forms will be in the next (March) issue of Family Forest News.)

## A FOREST LANDOWNERS SAGA OF FIRE PROTECTION AND THE AUGUST 2009 YUBA FIRE

John Middlebrook - November 2009

**A short history.** The Middlebrook ranch just east of Dobbins, Yuba County, has been in the family since 1941. The earliest fire I recall occurred on the property in the early 1940's and the more recently, the Williams (Oregon House –Dobbins) 5,000 + acre wildfire of 1997, and the Pendola 5,000 + acre wildfire of 1999. The first fire probably did more good than damage in removing young brush. The two wildfires came within approximately 2 air miles of the property and did no damage – except get the adrenalin pumping as to what might have happened due to my complete lack of fire protection planning. It took the 1997 & 1999 fires to give me my wake up call. It didn't take a genius to determine that some big time fire prevention steps were required in order to put the monumental task of protecting my family forest and reducing the fire risk into action. Since my "retirement" in 1996, I had done some preliminary planning work with my forester - but following the fires that got priority action!

In 2003, I started attending the Yuba Watershed Protection and Fire Safe Council (YWPFSC) meetings. At that time the Council was involved with several urban/wildland-interfacing projects that consisted of coordinated brush removal and shaded firebreaks. In addition, they work with the County in clearing brush from along the edges of major county roads, and helped the fire districts install "pre-positioned" water tanks at selected strategic sites for fire fighting purposes. My attendance at the YWPFSC started about the same time the Plumas National Forest (PNF) in Oroville was developing the Slap Jack Fire Plan project. The PNF staff strongly supported a Middlebrook shaded fuel break that would be a link toward the Yuba River.

My philosophy is "the only one that will care for my property is me". Being included in a fire plan area is great, but applying and obtaining state or federal funding assistance for fire prevention is a very "iffy" proposition – particularly when you see the total needs and compare that to the funding available. It is my responsibility to take care of my forest and if someone offers financial assistance – fine. It is liable to be a long wait under most conditions for help and the need for protection is now – not some undetermined date in the future

**What's a Shaded Fuel Break (SFB)? – What's it supposed to do?** The purpose of the SFB is to aid in slowing down an advancing forest fire to allow time for mobilizing fire fighting forces. This is done by clearing out the fuel ladder and opening crown space between trees to stop the fire from going through the treetops, or ladder up through the limbs to the tree crown. It helps keep the fire restricted to the ground cover and provides space for fire fighters to access and more easily mount a firefight.

The width of a SFB is variable. It is just a statistical guess based on experience, slope, wind, and fuel. A good minimum width is 300 feet. It is recommended that crown space of the trees should not exceed 40% of the SFB area. Ladder fuels and tree limbs should be cleared a minimum from ground level up to 12 feet above the ground. There should be vehicular access within or next to the SFB.

The SFB must be maintained. This means implementing a vegetation management program designed to controlling re-sprouting and unwanted “undergrowth”. Additionally, the road through the SFB, used for access and maintenance purposes, must be maintained – particularly before each fire season begins!

During a fire, the SFB augments fire crews by providing access and staging, and a line of defense, to be used along with all the other elements fire fighters use – bulldozers, tanker trucks, and aircraft to maximize firefighting effectiveness.

**Implementing the plan.** I constructed a shaded fuel break in the fall of 2003, 300 feet in width and paralleling Marysville Rd right of way, ¼ mile along the north boundary area of Middlebrook property. In 2004, the shaded fuel break was continued southerly along the eastern boundary a distance of ½ mile. At this point the topography changed to the point where it was beyond my capability to continue on my own.

The Yuba Watershed Protection and Fire Safe Council, with assistance from Plumas National Forest, Cal Fire, and various Yuba County department staffs, assisted me in applying and obtaining a Proposition 40 grant from Cal Fire to complete an additional 1.1 miles of SFB along the easterly boundary and southerly end of Middlebrook property. Work performed under contract was mastication, hand clearing, and construction of a maintenance/access road within the limits of the SFB. The project was started in 2007 and was completed early in 2008.

**Yuba Fire** Friday, August 14, 2009, was a beautiful, sunny, summer day in the Yuba River Canyon near Colgate Powerhouse. High voltage transmission lines radiate from the powerhouse – several of them heading across the foothills westerly toward the Sacramento Valley.

About noon, a red tailed hawk flew into zone of high voltage wires, shorted two conductors, which instantly turned the hawk into a fireball falling into the dry tinder below starting what became known as the Yuba Fire – 3,891 acres.

A neighbor called me about 3 PM at home in Chico (60 miles away) and said the fire was moving toward the property fast and I should be there. I left immediately from Chico wondering what was happening. Driving through Oroville, the smoke from the fire (about 22 air miles away) had created a huge plume – many thousands of feet high. It was a scary sight! What was happening to the property? I had been contacted by Greg Royat, retired Cal Fire captain and neighbor, on the cell phone that he was ahead of me and would meet me at the southerly end of my property to assess the fire status.

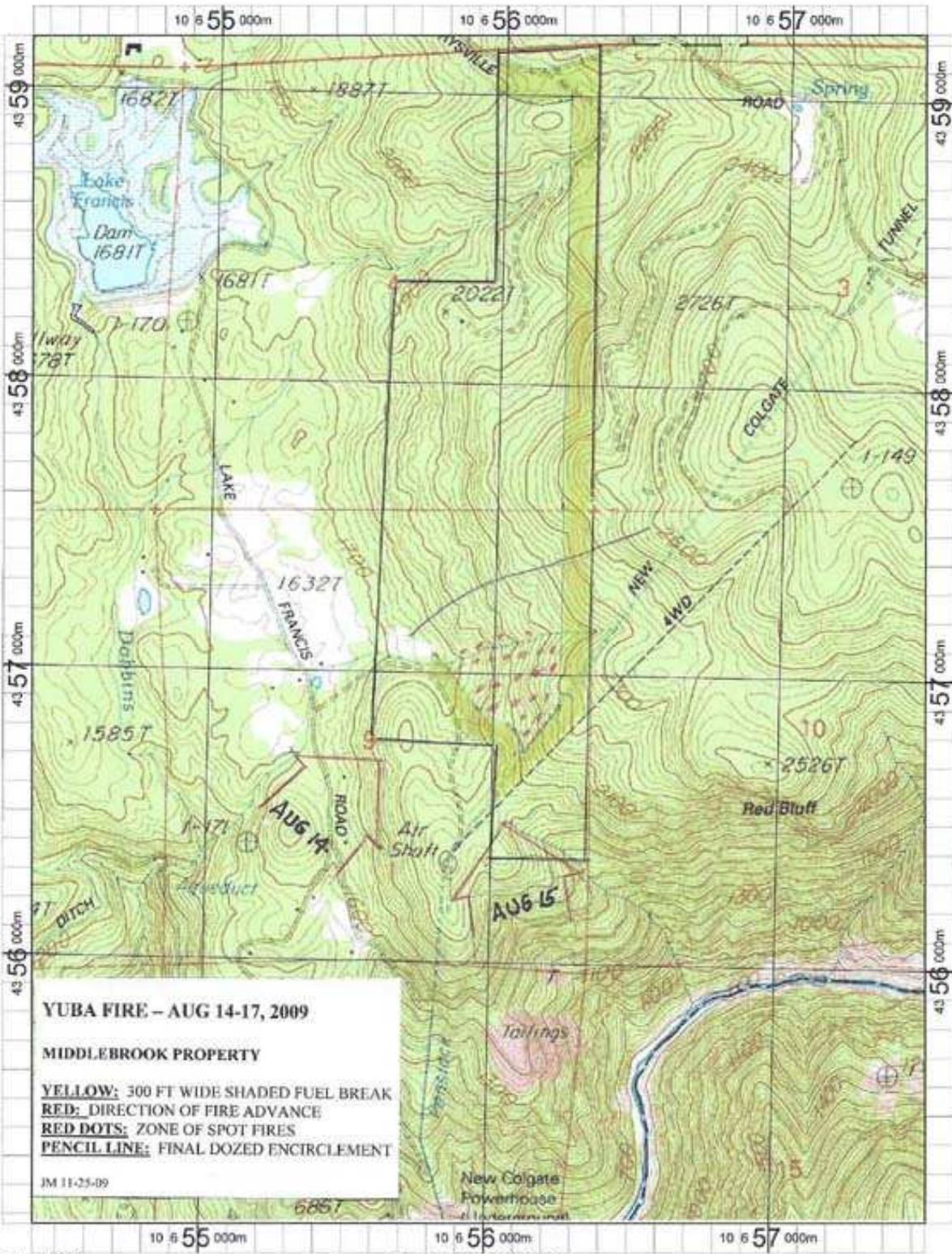
On Marysville Road arriving at the main driveway at the north end of Middlebrook property thick smoke was coming in from the south. I could see fire-fighting aircraft coming and going. Heading toward the southerly end of the property, I could see the fire was on the lower 40 acres and spotting in a northerly direction. It was just short of reaching the shaded fuel break. As I drove down the road separating the Shaded Fuel Break on the left (northerly side) from the mixture of brush field and scattered trees on the right (southerly side), I could see fires developing from embers in the thick brush and more red hot embers just rained down like red snow into the shaded fuel break area.

There was very little wind. The smoke was moderately thick. I would return to this area a few days later and witness the complete devastation that had occurred in the zone on the right hand side of the road outside of the Shaded Fuel break. The fire had burned across the Shaded Fuel Break consuming the debris that had been scattered during the clearing operations. Here it appeared that the scattered trees had been scorched on the trunks with most of the tops still in tact. I finally located Greg at the southerly end of the property where he had made contact with both the USFS and Cal Fire crew leaders.

Hand crews placed fire trails around fire zones that were caused by flying embers and had laid out multiple numbers of fire hoses to douse the hot spots. Bulldozer trails were used to isolate some of the larger spot fires in favorable terrain. A 50 ft or wider firebreak was constructed about 500 feet uphill and outside the zone of spot fires to provide a secondary perimeter for the fire crews constructing fire trails. No fire reached this “final” dozed perimeter line.

**What actually happened.** Looking at the following map the broad red arrows shows the advancing axis of the fire onto Middlebrook property. The SFB is shown in yellow. The southerly end of the SFB is in the shape of the letter “J”. Fire I saw and described earlier was advancing axis of the right hand arrow to the southerly edge of the SFB and the roadway. Later that night of Aug 14<sup>th</sup> the fire was advancing along the axis of the left hand arrow. Spot fires developed in the shaded fuel break and later on spotted in the zone depicted by red dots on the map. Fire crews and equipment spent most of their time on Aug 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> dealing with the zone of spot fires. Just a limited number of airdrops were used. Later on Aug 15<sup>th</sup> the final dozed encirclement was constructed. The next 2 or 3 days was spent with crews patrolling and putting out hot spots.

**Did the SFB work?** Approximately 100 acres (of my 428 acre parcel) consisting mainly of brush with some scattered trees burned. 60 acres lay outside of the SFB. The fire was slowed down by the SFB at the southerly end (the lower end of the “J” shaped location). It was stopped and didn’t cross the easterly (upslope) portion of the SFB. If the fire had extended 500 to 1000 feet northerly it would have entered into young timber stands and done much economic damage en route toward Marysville Road. Time to marshal firefighting resources was gained. Quick access to the fire was also gained from Lake Francis Rd to the south into the fire and through the SFB access road. The \$52,500 SFB grant paid off many times over by slowing and stopping the fire, while at the same time providing access for the successful firefight. As the property owner, I was very grateful the SFB was in place as it was painfully apparent that pre-planning and fuels modification is more valuable than fire fighting equipment when the flames are at your doorstep.



## **Forest Capitol: News from Sacramento**

**By Bill Keye, Registered Professional Forester and FLC Legislative Consultant**

Politics and networking are inseparable. If war is ‘politics by other means’, it can be said that politics is war by other means.

Conflict is embedded in our DNA. Resolving conflict by peaceful means requires networking, tight communication, building and strengthening coalitions. Winning support and gaining votes.

During my tenure with FLC it has been our mutual goal to help small family forestland owners to improve their chops when it comes to entering the public square. Chest pounding and ‘preaching to the choir’ don’t go very far in a nation-state of 38 million souls, stunning diversity and intense urban concentration and power.

Last week, we had our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual “FLC Day in the Capitol.” Another platoon of grassroots citizen activists tromped around downtown Sacramento, visiting with and interacting with legislative staffers, agency officials and coalition allies. My feeling is that FLC is gaining ground when it comes to political effectiveness.

You are California’s small family forest landowners, and you bring a lot to the table. Your moral authority is tremendous. In 2010 and beyond, I challenge you to hold down your rightful place in the public square. After all, ‘the world is run by those that show up.’

And make it fun!

### **Review of 2009:**

- A year of economic depression in the forestry sector. Mill closures, layoffs and abysmal stumpage prices.
- The Board of Forestry passed a far-reaching new Forest Practice Rule package, increasing prescriptive protections for salmon and steelhead. These rules will take effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>.
- The Governor signed AB 1066, which provides an opportunity for some Timber Harvest Plans expiring in 2008 or 2009 to be extended, and for plans approved in 2010 and 2011 to potentially be valid for up to 7 years.
- The Air Resources Board approved new and improved Forest Carbon Accounting Protocols (version 3.0). This is a work in progress, but the hope remains that smaller landowners will one day be paid for the carbon that their stewardship is removing from the atmosphere.

**Crystal Ball 2010:** More state budget woes. This means more proposals to impose regulatory fees upon the remnant timber industry. FLC and coalition partners such as Farm Bureau and the California Forestry Association will have to fight hard to beat back the ‘we’re from the government and we’re here to help’ crowd.

An election year, with the Governor’s seat being the main prize. Both major party candidates will be pledging to fix the state’s economy and to create jobs. Jobs, JOBS! I expect a tight and spirited contest.

The timber depression may ease. There are some hopeful indications that lumbering activity may perk up next summer and that 2011 could be a year of solid recovery.

I'll conclude with one more plug for the Interagency Forest Working Group (IFWG), <http://www.climatechange.ca.gov/forestry/index.html>. Whether you buy global warming or not, California is charging ahead on the issue. There's a lot of interest in forest biomass and/or biofuels as part of the solution. The California Energy Commission (CEC) is involved. Our friends in the deep ecology movement, including the Center for Biological Diversity and the John Muir Project, don't like forest biomass because it means actually touching the forest.

Some believe it's better to let the forest burn down than to do preventative fuel treatments. They are showing up at IFWG meetings and dominating public comment.

In 2010, will FLC be where it needs to be to support good forest management?

### **Ag, Nature and Heritage Tourism** **Deborah Giraud, UC Farm Advisor, Eureka**

For many decades rural Americans have offered tourists services to their urban neighbors, inviting them onto their farms and ranches to share the experiences of rural life. Increasingly **Ag, Nature and Heritage Tourism** is being seen as a way for rural residents to enhance their income while providing fun, relaxation and education to their urban neighbors. Recognize the idiom "pin money"? Pin money used to be money earned to give you a little extra for luxuries and treats. Today, agritourism may be the pin money that pays the taxes!

Many activities fall under the umbrella of ag, nature and heritage tourism. Each operator is unique and you can build a tourism service any way you feel most comfortable with. It might be an occasional event such as a tour you arrange, or a bus group stopping at your property. Or it might include a farm stay, a campsite, a ride or hike through the forest, a demonstration of techniques, hosting a bird watching group, or families on mountain bikes. You can act individually, or you can join up with a group of other landowners to plan activities, retreats or community events together. Building a local effort together can enhance marketing and local tourist boards may welcome your ideas with open arms. There are many examples, not only in California, but nationwide. About 36 states have concerted efforts in this area. Tourists are looking for new experiences, and hands-on activities for a short time are popular.

The UC Cooperative Extension workgroup on ag and nature tourism has been active for ten years. We invited many other groups to participate and discuss this unique brand of tourism and the membership of 88 includes agriculturists, planners, tourism board staff, Resource, Conservation and Development Council members, as well as Cooperative Extension advisors. A main activity has been providing workshops around the state, which have been attended by over 1500 people. The UC Davis Small Farm Center has hired a coordinator for Ag and nature tourism, Penny Leff. There is a new list serve, Ag-Tour Connect (see Below). A web site [www.calagtours.org](http://www.calagtours.org) was created to help this effort, and many other groups in California are creating web sites and brochures to market the opportunities in their counties. The group published a research paper on the "Obstacles in the Agritourism Regulatory Process..", and produced a UC ANR manual #3484 "*Agritourism and Nature Tourism in California*" with Ellie Rilla (Sonoma County) and Holly George (Sierra/Plumas County) as lead authors. Over 6,000 copies have been sold.

This manual is the starting place for any new ventures. Starting a side business offering tourism services in addition to your current production schedule and life can be daunting. Starting small, enlisting other family members, engaging the next generation, or finding new business partners are all ideas which have worked. It can be occasional, or continual.

What are some of the concerns or barriers to engaging in these income-producing activities? Insurance and permits are at the top of the list. There are insurance carriers now who are very familiar with agritourism and do not shy away from writing policies. Covering the cost of it is part of your business plan. Permits may be more of a hurdle; depending on what activities you are planning. Some of the Advisors and Tourism groups are working with the planning departments around the state to educate and assist in new ideas, and breaking down barriers. Obviously being safe and legal is very important. Some persistence and planning ahead is necessary. Marketing your tourist activity is easily done with web sites that you can pay into a membership structure. Each chamber of commerce and tourism board has web access for listing lodging and activities. You can print up your own brochures and distribute them. Once you start thinking about how to spread the word, you will find many avenues.

Exposing urban residents to the issues involved in stewardship of rural lands can make a difference. When issues come up concerning water policy, ag land protection, forestry rules and regs, etc. which the urban population vote and comment on, their visits to working rural lands may help them consider the severity and importance of these issues. Meeting the people who work the land, milk the cows, haul the timber, fix the specialized equipment and risk their lives and limbs, will leave an impression on them and give them an appreciation of what it takes to steward our working lands.

### **Ideas:**

- Timberland tours – different age stands, importance of thinning, invasive species, pruning demonstrations, draft horse timber harvests, cloned trees, deer fencing.
- Farm stands (you could partner with a young farmer needing a good location).
- Farm stays (one room in your house) or bed and breakfast.
- Cabin s in the woods = short term vacation rentals.
- Horse or hiking trails. (They can bring their own horses)
- Roundup, roping, and rodeos.
- Private campsites, small group sites, self-contained RV, sell it as a quiet and out of the way.
- Fishing, hunting, wildflowers, photography, artist retreat, bird watching.
- Shearing sheep, pet the pony, feeding calves, hauling hay.
- Events on your place: wine tasting in the barn, catered dinners, weddings, and music.

### **Resources:**

- 1) Agritourism and Nature Tourism in California. (UC ANR publication # 3484 <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/SmallFarms/3484.aspx> or call 800-994-8849
- 2) Article about the Manual: Agritourism Manual Helps California Farmers Grow Economically <http://ucanr.org/delivers/impactview.cfm?impactnum=62>

- 3) Ask your UC Cooperative Extension Advisors, local tourism boards, Resource, Conservation, and Development Councils, and other economic development groups what activities are being seen in your area, and what might be on the horizon for group planning efforts. Example of websites and group activities: Central Coast Agritourism Council <http://www.agadventures.org/> and the Upstate California Adventures <http://www.upstatecaliforniaadventures.com/>.
- 4) Join the list serve: Ag-tour connect. <http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=4015>.

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