Swimming Upstream:  
Working for Environmental Justice

Bunyan Bryant 
University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment 
Ann Arbor, Michigan

October 20, 2003

Of the 2.2 billion acres of land in the United States, the federal government owns about one third of it, most of it in the West. Over the years, this land has been exploited and the soil, air and water polluted by national and munici-
pal corporations. The exploitation of much of our national resources is made possible by the 1872 General Mining Law, which allows companies to lease land from the federal government for mining and timbering por-
tuses at $2.50 an acre. For over 130 years, this law has allowed companies to exploit our national treasures at fire-sale prices, an entitlement that should have ended years ago. What we see here is not free enterprise capital-
ism at work, but rather a state-supported corporate wel-
fare or federal income maintenance program to allow companies to make unprecedented profits at taxpayers’ expense. Although these subsidies are huge, taxpayers have a tendency to look away or deny or rationalize such large government expenditures. Yet when it comes to families in need, we put a different spin on our story to frame it in such away that individuals are blamed for their economic predicament, even though the system of accumulation has failed to provide enough jobs for ev-
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Continued on page 3
The monthly newsletter of the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club.

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Small Mail: Rachel Floyd, Tennes-Sierran Chief Editor
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ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:
Submission DEADLINE is the 5th of the month preceding the new month’s issue.
1. Email and email attached files are preferred. Send to TennesSierran@aol.com either with embedded text messages, or attached files in PC-based formats. Mac users should embed text in body of an email message only.
2. Photographs should be scanned in a .jpg or .tif file format, whenever possible, then either attached to email or mailed via US Postal Service (USPS) on a 3 ½ diskette or CD Rom. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you would like your diskette or photo prints returned.
3. Hard-copy handwritten, or typewritten, articles may be accepted; however, pre-approval from the Editor is required.
4. Any materials submitted via USPS mail can not be accepted; however, pre-approval from the Editor is required.
5. The opinions expressed in the Tennes-Sierran are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Tennessee Chapter, or the Sierra Club.

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Please notify the Editor when changes are needed

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EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET
hundred in Montana), 26,000 miles of new roads and 52,000 miles of new pipelines (Scurlock, 2003). As en-
giney companies acquire more leases to government land at
fire-sale prices, the catastrophes are big game, upland
birds, cold- and warm-water fisheries and communities
whose livelihoods are based upon outdoor recreation and
ranching.

When the coal reaches its final destination to be burned
in factories and coal-fired generating power plants in the
East or West, it is not without a social cost. The burning of
cold or other fossil fuels releases lead, cadmium, mercury,
sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon
dioxide, particulate matter, and carbon monoxide
into the atmosphere. Studies have shown that low-in-
come people and people of color live in proximity to
coal-fired generating power plants and factories or point
source pollutants and are disproportionately exposed to
environmental toxins. Too often people suffer from burn-
ing eyes, itchy skin, wheezing, difficulty in breathing,
and decreased lung function in general. Asthma
tacks send African Americans to the emergency room
at a rate (174.3 visits per 10,000 population) three times
that for whites (59.4 visits per 10,000 population). Re-
searchers, in comparing 86 cities in America, found
that infants who lived in a highly polluted city during their
first two months of life had a higher mortality rate than
infants living in the city with the cleanest air. Too often
people living in proximity to point source pollutants are
the least protected against environmental harm and at
the same time suffer the most in terms of health care.
To protect the health and environmental condi-
tions of people of color and low-income persons will re-
quire a major commitment of environmental protection
and the eradication of poverty.

We are not only disproportionately exposed to environ-
mental toxins, but we are also left at a significant
advantage in the greenhouse gases that trigger global warming, mainly water vapor and carbon dioxide, with devastating conse-
quences for the earth's entire population. If the planet
continues to cook, we can expect the melting solar ice
caps to cause floods, droughts, and mass migrations of people in search of dry land, food, employment, and shelter. As people migrate across geopolitical boundaries for food and water, those who have been abandoned to the
variables of that migration, particularly as people compete over the scarcity of re-
sources. As the West Nile virus, Dengue fever and other tropical diseases move north, people without health care
or money will suffer dire consequences. Although
global warming will affect everyone and every species
on the planet, it will differentially affect people without
financial resources to protect themselves. Global
warming may perhaps be the greatest environmental
injustice of all because poor people and people of color
are the least able to protect themselves against climate
change as compared to their more affluent white coun-
terparts. Therefore, if we continue to use fossil fuels, people of color and low-income groups will not only ex-
perience the adverse health effects based upon their proxim-
ity to power plants and industry, but they also will be
disproportionately impacted by the long-term effects of
greenhouse gases and ultimately by global warming.

While burning of fossil fuels has been viewed to be an
asset in the past, it has now become a national security
problem. Therefore, if we continue to use fossil fuels,
we must redeter our priorities to allocate more of our
financial resources to invent and make more efficient
forms of alternative fuels and technologies. The Paley
Commission of President Truman in its 1952 report stated
that if an agency was in charge, it would make possible 30
percent of the country's energy needs by 1975. In 1974, an Atomic Energy Commis-
sion study concluded that by the year 2000, solar energy
could provide 30 percent of this country's energy needs
(Jobs and Energy, 1977). If we had followed through on
these ideas, we would have perhaps diverted ourselves from the fossil fuels and an
energy crisis. Also, in 1976, Lovins reported that the
country had basically two choices: it could decide to travel the soft energy path of alternative and environmentally
beautifying energy or the hard energy path of nuclear
energy. Guaranteed annual income along with a single
payer health insurance program are two ways of eradi-
cating poverty. Poverty is perhaps the worst form of pol-
lution because with it comes environmental degradation and the whole alphabet soup of social, health, and eco-
nomic problems. With insurance coverage that is trans-
portable people will no longer have to worry about taking business or investment risks and be to creative.

By divorcing ourselves from the fossil fuel economy, we not
only decentralize our energy structures but we can also
centralize political power. Over the years, energy com-
panies have not only accumulated a considerable amount
of economic power, but they have accumulated a con-
siderable amount of political power. By divorcing our-
elves from the fossil fuel economy for a more resilient, flexible and sustainable energy, we simultaneously return
the control over the economic structure to powerful
democracy to prevail in this society we must have dis-
tributive energy sources and distributive sources of po-
litical power.

The environmental movement and the environmental
justice movement have a common enemy—the mining and burning of fossil fuels. The envi-
ronmental movement is still downstream our West or downstream in our inner
cities, is not enough. Struggling separately with separate agendas means the best we can do is to fight a rear-guard
action. Together we must swing upstream to change the
decision-makers that determine the character of the battle
downstream. We call upon environmentalists everywhere
to form coalitions in order to defeat an administration that has not only failed to do their share in the history of this country and has given away much of our
natural treasure in the process. Our downstream problems will have a better chance of being solved if we can
organize an energetic coalition that just-Homeland
President. Highower (2003:xii) has a statement in his
book that I think is appropriate: “Never have so few done so much for so many.” We never knew the
character of the battle of the 21st century and the sad-
ter that would read: “Never have so many done so much for so many.” This would truly be in the spirit of a new
America. If we fail to organize politically and vote, then
dinosaur give-a-ways and the destruction and pollution
of our land, water, and air is nobody's fault but our own.

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Archives/Commentary, 1993.
http://www.zinnolibrary/stories/archives/commentary/pb993173.htm


The Tenneco-Sierran

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Working for Environmental Justice

By Bunyan Bryant

Continued from page 1

The Tennessee-Sierra
PROGRAM MEETING: Tuesday, January 13, 2004, Tennessee Valley Unitarian Church, 2931 Kingston Pike, Knoxville. The Executive Committee is open also to all members of the group’s conservation initiatives and community activities. Additions to the conservation agenda should be sent to Cary Butcher at JCBLUTCH@comcast.net. For additions to the administrative agenda or for more information regarding the meetings, send a message to Rachel Floyd at rfloyd557@aol.com, or call 792-2590.

UPPER CUMBERLAND GROUP (Cookeville)

PROGRAM MEETING: 4th Thursday, Jan. 22nd, 7:00 p.m. in the lower level meeting room of the Pur enam County Library. Large format, CTC Program Coordinator, will do a presentation on the Cumberland Trail. Contact Peggy Evans at 931-432-6680 or mazeun@vtlanes.net for more information on program meeting dates and times.

STATE OF FRANKLIN GROUP (Tri-Cities)

STRATEGY MEETING: Please contact Linda Modica at <clmodica@aol.com> or 753-9697.

CHICKASAW GROUP (Memphis)

MONTHLY MEMBERS GATHERING: Thursday, January 1, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. - Otherlands, 641 South Cooper, Memphis, Tennessee. Join us for Chickasaw Group’s “FIRST THURSDAY” monthly gathering where Sierra Club members, activists and friends can meet in a casual setting to talk about issues and interests. Contact Membership Chair Jill Johnston <jdhnastr@memphis.edu> at (901) 278-2713 for more information.

STRATEGY MEETING: Monday, January 12, 6:30 p.m. - St. Louis Catholic Church, 203 South White Station, Memphis, Tennessee. This meeting of the Executive Committee is open also to all members of the Sierra Club. Contact Charlie Rond <chatson@bellouth.net> (by January 8 to place items on the agenda) at (901) 452-8150 for more information.

PROGRAM MEETING: The next program meeting will be in February. Program Meetings are scheduled every other month. Contact Clark Buchner at (901) 327-2545 or cuytom@uist.net for more information.

TELEVISION PROGRAM: Every Tuesday at 4:00 p.m. and Wednesday at 11:30 a.m., CST, The Library Channel, Memphis Cable 18, WVPL, “The Nature of Conservation” is sponsored by the Sierra Club. A different program is aired, usually each month, with the program repeating every Tuesday and Wednesday throughout the month. For January, Conservation Chair Allan Lummus will continue his discussion, with Program Director Judith Rutschman, of why there is widespread opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement. If any groups or individuals in the community have a special program or concern, or would like to see a program on a special issue or subject, please contact Judith Rutschman <RUTSchman@rhodes.edu> at (901) 767-5916.
A tradition at the Chickasaw Group's Holiday Party is to award individuals that have gone that "extra mile" in their efforts to insure that our air, water and land is protected from the efforts of polluters and destroyers. The 2003 award winners were:

1) Ej and Community Action Award: Ernestine Carpenter

Ms. Carpenter has served for the past few years as State Representative Barbara Cooper's District 86 Advisory Committee Chair. Fulfilling her duties as Chair, she has been dealing with air pollution problems associated with the former Williams Refinery, which is now owned and operated by Premcor. Working closely with Representative Cooper, Ms. Carpenter has been to Air Quality Board meetings, chaired community meetings and led discussions about strengthening community effectiveness in dealing with the big industries that loom over the French Fort, Riverview and Kansas neighborhoods in southwest Memphis. Additionally, her interest in environmental justice has led her to participate in the 2003 Sierra Club In-Gathering which examined the issues of "Dismantling Racism" and making our Sierra Club a professional product that enables the community to understand its power to change the world.

2) Smart Growth Award: Steve Sondheim

Mr. Sondheim is a member of the Friends of Shelby Farms as well as Citizens for TDO T reform. Along with other members of Friends of Shelby Farms, Steve is trying to get local government officials to look at routes that will not adversely impact the 4,000+ acre Shelby Farms area and to involve the public in all phases of the planning process. As was recently reported in the November 2003 Tennessee-Sierran Commissioner Gerald Nicely of TDOT referred this project back to local government for additional study at the local level.

3) Unsung Hero Award: David Carter

Mr. Carter is the Video Program Coordinator for the Memphis & Shelby County Public Library. He insures that all aspects of the show's production results in a professional product that enables the Chickasaw Group to place the myriad of environmental issues in front of a potential viewing audience of 200,000+ cable television subscribers in Memphis and Shelby County.

4) Outstanding Volunteer Service Award: James H. Baker

For service to the local Chickasaw group and community, Mr. Baker led the efforts that resulted in the national Sierra Club awarding the Chickasaw Group a Water Sentinels grant. This grant enables the Chickasaw Group to conduct river clean-ups as was recently reported in the November 2003 Tennessee-Sierran. These clean-ups help forge and strengthen coalitions that can only benefit all Memphians. Another aspect of the grant is to conduct research, take water samples, and write investigative reports on several targeted watersheds. These reports are submitted to state environmental regulators so that they may take action on any violators of the Tennessee Water Quality Control Act. Mr. Baker was the vice-Chair of the Chickasaw Group in 2003 as well as being on the Environmental Justice Steering Committee. He has written several articles for the Tennessee-Sierran.

In addition to recognizing the efforts of those who are working so hard to improve Earth's environment, the Chickasaw Group also recognizes those whose efforts are resulting in large scale environmental destruction. The 2003 winner of the Paving Paradise Award went to, Mr Wayne Todd of WATCO, for the Brunswick Farms I.D. Phases 2 & 3. This 47 acre site is in the process of being completely stripped of all vegetation in preparation for construction of a classic sprawl subdivision. The Water Sentinels have already notified the state environmental regulators that the site appears to be out of compliance for applicable erosion and sediment controls and the mud and silt are washing into a nearby creek already listed by the state for being adversely affected by mud and silt.

The Trail Home: Along the Pacific Crest by Alfred Wohlfarth, with A. James Wohlfart ISBN: 1581125674

The Trail Home describes a 2,650 mile trek on the Pacific Crest Trail and the internal transformation that occurred along the way. Starting in southern California and heading northward, the author spends six months journeying through some of the most spectacular landscapes in America, from the arid deserts of the southwest to the High Sierras and the Cascade Mountains. Ultimately, the author arrives at the Canadian border in mid-October, but is no longer the same person as when he began. The Trail Home describes the intertwined, dual journey undertaken—the external journey exploring the physical landscape and the internal journey exploring the landscape of the soul.

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Your help would be greatly appreciated!

The Tennes-Sierran

Compiled by various members

January, 2004 - Page 5
Ten Essentials for Hiking

Sierra Club Outings offer a variety of wilderness and near-wilderness experiences. It is important to realize that while all trips are guided by a leader, it is ultimately the responsibility of the individual to operate in a safe manner. To this end, the following is a list of essential items, which should be modified according to the particular type of outing. These are:

1. Adequate map
2. First aid kit
3. Compass
4. Rain gear
5. Extra clothing (it is a good idea to always have a wool hat)
6. Matches
7. Knife
8. Flashlight
9. Extra food, water
10. The tenth essential. You decide what is the most important thing to bring!

Join the Nashville Recycling Team!

Any good friend of the earth who can donate 2 or 3 hours any Saturday morning can join the fun at our Kroger Elyssian Fields Recycling Site. We need you! AND, your efforts directly contribute to the environmental campaigns of your local Middle Tennessee Group.

To volunteer call
David Bordenkircher at 633-3377 or email dbordenkircher@ mindspring.com

Thank You!!

For details & to sign up contact John Arwood 423-936-9766.
To be informed of upcoming outings via email send a brief note to:
Trail_Work_Play@hotmail.com

CHICKASAW GROUP (Memphis)

First Aid Class/CPR Class for Chickasaw Group Sierra Club Members in January, date and time to be announced, at the American Red Cross Headquarters, 1400 Central Avenue, Memphis, Tennessee. You will learn Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and some first aid. Time is 8:30 to 3:30 with an hour for lunch. Space is limited. If you lead two outings, the Chickasaw Group will reimburse you. Your check made out to the Chickasaw Group Sierra Club is your reservation. Send your checks to Judith Hammond, 481 No. McLean Blvd., Memphis, Tennessee 38112. Your check is your reservation.

DISCLAIMER. The following activities are not sponsored or administered by the Sierra Club. They are published only as a service to our members. The Sierra Club makes no representation or warranties about the quality, safety, supervision or management of these activities. Transportation to the outing, including carpooling, ride sharing or anything similar, is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel.

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Any good friend of the earth who can donate 2 or 3 hours any Saturday morning can join the fun at our Kroger Elyssian Fields Recycling Site. We need you! AND, your efforts directly contribute to the environmental campaigns of your local Middle Tennessee Group.

To volunteer call
David Bordenkircher at 333-3377 or email dabordenkircher@ mindspring.com

Thank You!!
A Wet Walk in the Woods
A True Tennessee Adventure

By Beth Powis, Group Outing Chair
Los Angeles, CA

Every since I’d read A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson I’d been curious about backpacking the Appalachian Trail, as he had done and chronicled hilariously in his book. When this past October I discovered a Sierra Club chapter in Tennessee preparing to hike the trail at the peak of fall colors, I was off.

And so two weeks before Halloween I found myself soaking wet, slip-sliding up and down the AT in pouring rain, and yelling at a tree limb when for the third time one tricked me into thinking it was our much-longed-for trail shelter, only to turn back into a tree as I got closer. A walk in the woods indeed.

Of course unlike Bryson I wasn’t hiking the whole 2,100+ mile Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia. We were traversing just half of the approximately 800 miles that straddle Tennessee and North Carolina, in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

But the 12 miles we hiked that day were the longest miles I’d ever hiked.

“This was what one of my friends would call a ‘character-building’ day,” said trip leader Katherine Pendleton in her friendly southern drawl after we were finally ensconced in Siler’s Bald trail shelter (Siler being one of the Southern Appalachia mountain folk who lived here before the Park Service kicked them out in the early 1930’s to create the park, and “bald” being an open mountain perch on a mountain). It was the third day of our six-day trip. With us were three friends of Katherine’s from Nashville: Nancy J., a kindergarten teacher, Nancy’s beau Jerry, a firefighter and emergency medical technician, and Nancy F., a recreational therapist in a long-term-care facility.

All of us were soaked to one degree or another, despite raingear. Damp clothes and gear decorated the rafters underfoot hid our heads and made the steep trail slippery, sometimes treacherous. It wasn’t until the fourth day of our trip that we climbed high enough to escape the deep forest and have any sort of real view. Always we followed the ridgeline straight up – and down – the rolling hills until we reached our goal, that day’s shelter.

Made of stone with a tin roof, the shelters are completely open on one side (except for the fence). Despite this, it’s dark and dank inside most of them. Two large wooden sleeping platforms, one several feet above the other, stretch the width of the shelter, forming in essence a huge bunk bed with a roof. Each shelter sleeps 12, and ours were almost always full. However, one hiker we met said they packed 25 people into a shelter during one particularly nasty storm several years ago.

Each night we’d clip our food sacks to the bear cables strung up in the nearby trees and use a pulley to haul them safely aloft. Water came from natural springs, most with a lead pipe funneling the water into a shallow puddle. Not so nice were the “toilet areas” at shelters that didn’t have an outdoor privy. Basically a designated patch of woods, these areas were littered with toilet paper and sometimes unburied human waste. With more than 10 million people traveling through the Smokies each year, many of them on the Appalachian Trail such impact is perhaps inevitable, but still deplorable.

The only person in our group not from Nashville, I’d been treated with warm Southern hospitality. Officially I was co-leader of the trip, filling in at the last minute. But this trip was more relaxed than official, and my trip-mates were quickly becoming friends. We traded stories of hikes and adventures, and they taught me the words to “Rocky Top,” the fight song for the University of Tennessee. Named after a peak we’d hiked across on day two, it echoed perfectly the history and character of these mountains: “Ain’t no smoggy smoke on Rocky Top, ain’t no telephone bills...”

The shelters, crowded as they were, nevertheless turned out to be a great place to meet and study people. There was “The Jerk” who tried to hog two spaces in a full shelter until Katherine (who is also a biologist) shouted him into giving one to a thru-hiker who needed a spot. Then there were the five men from Pennsylvania, Ohio and Colorado who drank, smoked and held a farting contest after the rest of us went to bed (note to self: bring earplugs!). We met a younger couple, both environmental biologists, who were on a six-month road trip from Virginia to Mexico and who had stopped off to hike in the Smokies. And there was the pack of teenage Boy Scouts who forgot an entire box of honey buns when they left the next morning, much to our delight.

Our last day we met two thru-hikers on the trail, a man and woman. They had just gotten back on the trail after a few days washing up and resupplying in a nearby town. Somehow we never got their names. But we laughed as they told us how they became instant celebrities at their latest trailhead when people found out they were thru-hikers. "Everyone wanted to take their picture with us," the woman said, "even our coldbebbers!" We politely refrained.

I spent the last night on the trail remembering entries people had written in the various shelter registers. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, if it keeps on rainin’ my butt will rust," was one favorite. I drew pictures in the register of people rollerblading under palm trees on the Santa Monica bike path. The sixth day of our trip we emerged, craving beer and pizza, at Newfound Gap, the spot where Teddy Roosevelt had dedicated the park in 1937. And then all too soon I was back on an airplane heading home, my walk in the woods completed, but new friendships just begun.

State of Franklin Group (Tri-Cities) Needs Outing Leaders

SOFG needs volunteers to help with the effort to offer a schedule of year around outings. There are numerous possibilities for fun & informative outings, a great form of outreach to our membership & would-be members, such as:

Day Hikes (leisurely to fast paced)
Overnight/Multi-Day Backpacking
Campground Based Camping
Trips to Points of Interest
Interpretative Walks (flora, fauna, geology, history, etc.)
Family Oriented (with kids, single parents, etc.)
Star/Moon/Meteor Gazing
Development of Wilderness Skills
Trail Work
Tree Planting/Restoration Work
[combinations of the above]

If you have an interest in helping to promote a love & understanding of our natural environment within others, through SOFG Sierra Club outings, please contact:

John Arwood - SOFG Outings Chair
423-926-9876 - Trail_Work_Play@hotmail.com

Where will you be when you need it?

What will you do when someone is injured and you’re the only one there? Watch for details of the upcoming Wilderness First Aid training tentatively scheduled for the weekend of April 24th.

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Defenders of Tennessee
Charge Forward in 2004

For the past 7 years, the Sierra Club has become a serious player in the state Legislature because we have had a contract lobbyist to represent our interests. We have been able to fund this critical program through member contributions, and we are inviting you to become one of our Defenders of Tennessee. In January when the Legislature reconvenes, the struggle to protect our air, water, wetlands, and parks will begin again.

We need a strong presence in the Legislature, and we are happy to announce that, because of the support of our members and friends, we again have been able to retain Mike Murphy to represent our interests with the Legislature. Mike is a long-time environmentalist and a former member of the state House of Representatives. Because he knows the issues and understands the political process, he is an exceptionally effective lobbyist for the Sierra Club, for the environment, and for you. With the election behind us, we need Mike back on Capitol Hill. Please consider donating to the Defenders of Tennessee as a gift to the Sierra Club, to the environment, and to yourself. Your contribution is not tax-deductible, but it is critical in enabling us to continue to have a voice “on the hill”.

Please send the form below and your check, made out to Sierra Club Defenders Fund, c/o Adelle Wood, 4641 Villa Green Drive, Nashville, TN 37215. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Bill Terry, Legislative Co-Chair
Penny Brooks, Legislative Co-Chair

Amount of donation: ( ) $50 ( ) $125 ( ) $250 ( ) $500 ( ) Other __________
Name: ____________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________

May we publish your name in the Sierra Club newsletter as a donor?
Yes _______ No _______

We are very grateful for the support of the following contributors (through December 1)

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Happy New Year!
From the Tennessee Chapter Sierra Club

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