

# Notice of Proposed Action

## Waterfall Fire Salvage and Revegetation Project



Carson Ranger District, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Carson City, Nevada

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

October 21, 2004



### COMMENTS WELCOME

The Humboldt -Toiyabe National Forest, Carson Ranger District welcomes your comments on the proposal to remove some dead trees from within the Waterfall fire burned area West of Carson City, Nevada and to restore the burned area by planting tree seedlings, bitterbrush and sagebrush. The project area is located in Carson City; the legal description is T.15N., R.19E., sections 2, 3, 10, 11, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24; T.16N., R.19E., section 35 and T.15N., R.20E., section 19, Mount Diablo Meridian. Figure 1 on page 4 is a vicinity map of the project area.

### BACKGROUND/PURPOSE AND NEED

The Waterfall Fire of July 2004 burned a total of 8,800 acres. Before the fire, approximately 1,500 acres of National Forest System lands were forested and 1000 acres were bitterbrush or sagebrush. The Waterfall Fire burned under extreme conditions, with high winds and erratic fire behavior; approximately 50% of the area burned at moderate to high intensity. Some areas



burned at lower intensities, creating an underburn with minor tree mortality. Wood boring insects (*Melanophila species*) are currently extensive within the burned areas. Bark beetle and carpenter ant activity is being monitored, but is currently not widespread. Insects also bring in blue or brown staining fungi that invade the dead wood and quickly reduce the value of lumber, this is already occurring within the burned area. This project is located within the wildland urban interface (WUI).

The purpose of this project is to remove dead trees to recover their economic value, reduce future fuel loadings in the project area and restore habitat and stabilize soils by re-introducing tree and shrub species. Removal of the dead trees will reduce the susceptibility of future re-burns by removing fuels. Seedling survival rates will also be improved because the number of seedlings damaged or killed from dead trees once they start to fall will be reduced. Removing the majority of hazardous trees and reducing the possibility of a future re-burn will also enhance public safety.

## THE PROPOSED ACTION

Of the approximate 1,500 acres of conifer areas that burned, 490 acres contained more scattered trees with lower densities and 1010 acres contained higher tree densities. Most of the areas with scattered trees and low densities will not be salvage harvested, the exception is approximately 40 acres in section 2 located between the Lakeview and Timberline housing developments. Of the 1010 acres that contained higher tree densities, approximately 150 acres burned at lower intensities, resulting in an underburn with minor tree mortality. These underburned areas will be monitored, if additional extensive mortality occurs, these areas will be treated., however; if extensive additional mortality does not occur, they won't be treated. The proposed action is to remove dead trees on 900 to 1050 acres in areas with mostly higher tree densities within the Waterfall Fire burned area. Figure 2 on page 6 illustrates the proposed salvage harvest areas. On slopes greater than 30%, a helicopter will be utilized and on slopes less than 30%, a ground based logging system (tractor) will be utilized to remove the dead trees. Over 90% of the area will be logged using a helicopter. Some smaller material may also be removed for fuelwood, wood chips or biomass purposes. Approximately 4 million board feet will be removed, activities will most likely occur in the winter/spring of 2005. Any surviving trees will be retained; no harvesting will occur in contiguous areas where forest vegetation has not burned, such as the low fire intensity underburn areas, as long as no additional extensive mortality occurs. Three of the largest snags per acre will be retained to provide cavity-nesting habitat. Any existing down woody material will be retained, in addition, dead trees not removed will eventually fall down, providing additional down woody material. To facilitate removal of the dead trees, log landings will need to be constructed; these landings will be closed and re-vegetated after project activities are completed. Carson City and private landowners may salvage harvest and plant portions of their lands. Some of the constructed log landings and Forest Service roads may be used to complete their project activities. A Forest Service landing and road use agreement will be completed prior to this use occurring. Some roads that access the project area occur on Carson City and private lands; legal rights-of-way will be obtained by the Forest Service prior to project activities.



Approximately 410 acres will be planted in the spring of 2006 with Jeffrey and ponderosa pine seedlings. The areas to be planted with tree seedlings are generally located on north and east facing slopes that aren't excessively steep and where the fire burned more intensely, killing the mature trees and removing any potential seed sources. If suitable micro sites are found on South or west facing slopes, seedlings may be cluster planted. North and east facing slopes are generally more desirable planting areas because they have higher soil moisture content and lower temperatures. Where mature trees survived the fire, natural regeneration will occur; however this will be a slow process and may not occur until after the trees produce an abundant cone crop. Any natural regeneration will be favored and not be disturbed by tree planting activities. Figure 3 on page 7 depicts the areas proposed for planting. The seedlings will be approximately one year old and one foot tall when they are planted. Approximately 100 to 300 seedlings per acre will be planted; this will vary depending on natural regeneration, slope and rock content. Before a seedling is planted, site preparation will be done by grubbing out any competing vegetation two feet around the planting spot, so that competition for water is not a limiting factor.

Bitterbrush and sagebrush areas provided deer winter range habitat prior to the fire, this type of brush generally re-sprouts after lower intensity fires. To ensure this habitat recovers, the area will be monitored, and drill seeded or planted with bitterbrush and sagebrush if re-sprouting does not occur. This habitat is mostly located outside of the previously timbered areas at the lower elevations of the fire. Figure 4 on page 8 illustrates the possible brush drill seeding and planting areas. Approximately 1000 acres are included in this proposed treatment, however, some re-sprouting is anticipated, therefore treatment on the entire area is unlikely.

The existing road systems will be used to access the majority of the project area; no new permanent roads will be constructed. Access to the project area is via the Waterfall Road and its tributaries; the Ash Canyon Road and its tributaries; and the Hobart Lake Road. The Ash Canyon and Waterfall roads will need some minor repair in the form of spot gravelling and minor re-alignment. Two of the tributary roads off of the Waterfall and the Ash Canyon roads will require some reconstruction. Two temporary roads may be completed to access some of the tractor based project areas. These roads total approximately one mile in length and will be closed, re-contoured and re-vegetated after project activity completion.

## **COMMENT PROCESS**

The Forest Service encourages your substantive comments on this proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the responsible official should consider in reaching a decision. Your comments will help us prepare an environmental assessment on the proposed action. The assessment will be used to determine whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact. If there is no potential for significant impacts, that finding along with the environmental assessment and a proposed decision will be sent to those who commented. If the environmental assessment concludes that there is the potential for significant impacts then an environmental impact statement would be prepared.



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Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the legal notice for this project in the Reno Gazette Journal.

Comments must be submitted to: Gary Schiff, District Ranger, 1536 S. Carson St. Carson City, NV 89701; Phone 775 882-2766; fax 775 884-8199. The office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-carson@fs.fed.us. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Those who provide substantive comments during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under the regulations. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the information identified in 36 CFR 215, including:

- Name and Address;
- Title of the proposed action;
- Specific substantive comments (36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision;
- Signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility;
- For multiple names or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization, or for each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility, and
- Individual members of organizations must submit their own substantive comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual, comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

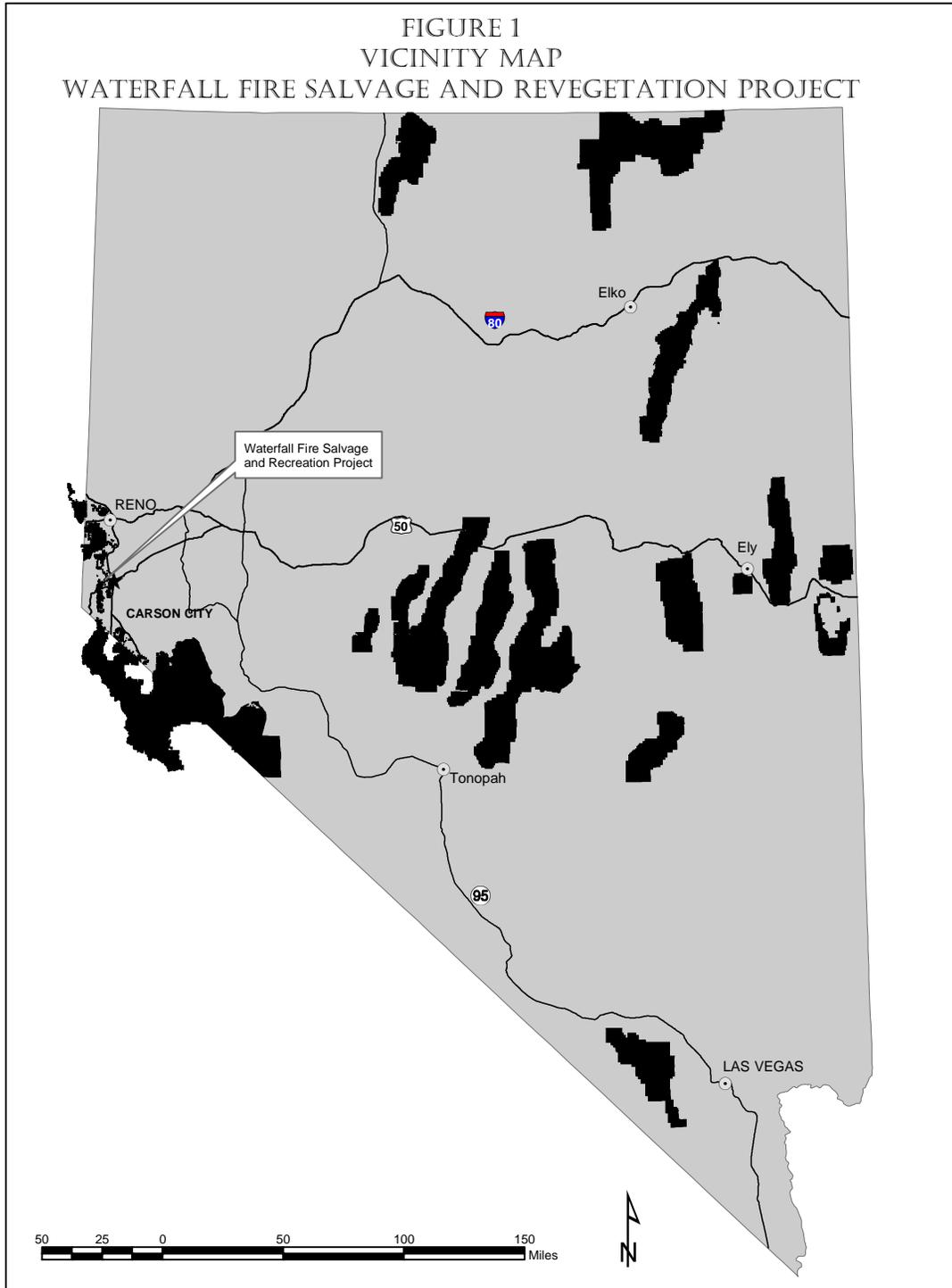
You are invited to attend a public meeting on November 1, 2004 at 6:00 pm in the Sierra Room at the Carson City Community Center, 851 E. Williams St., Carson City, NV.



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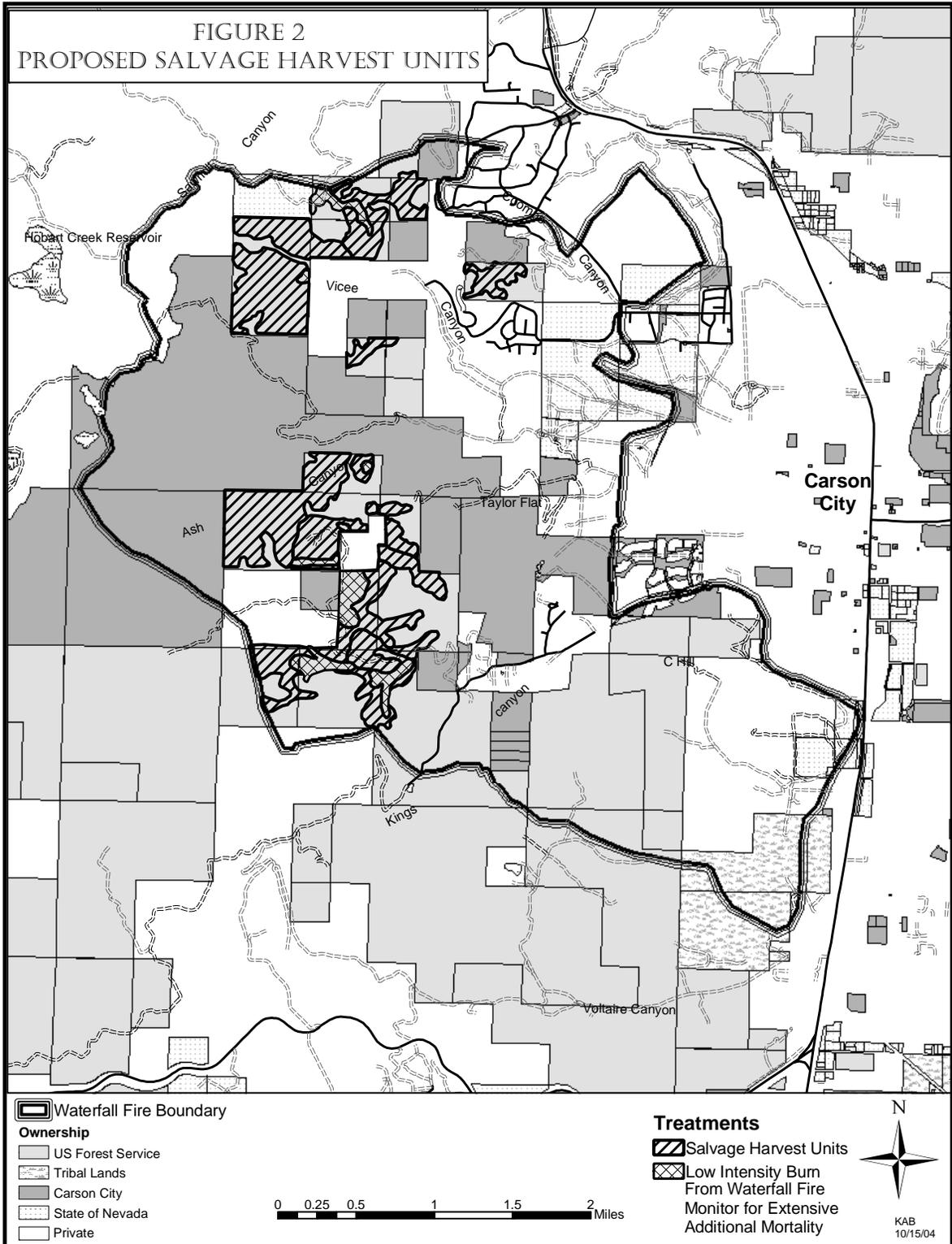


FIGURE 1  
VICINITY MAP  
WATERFALL FIRE SALVAGE AND REVEGETATION PROJECT



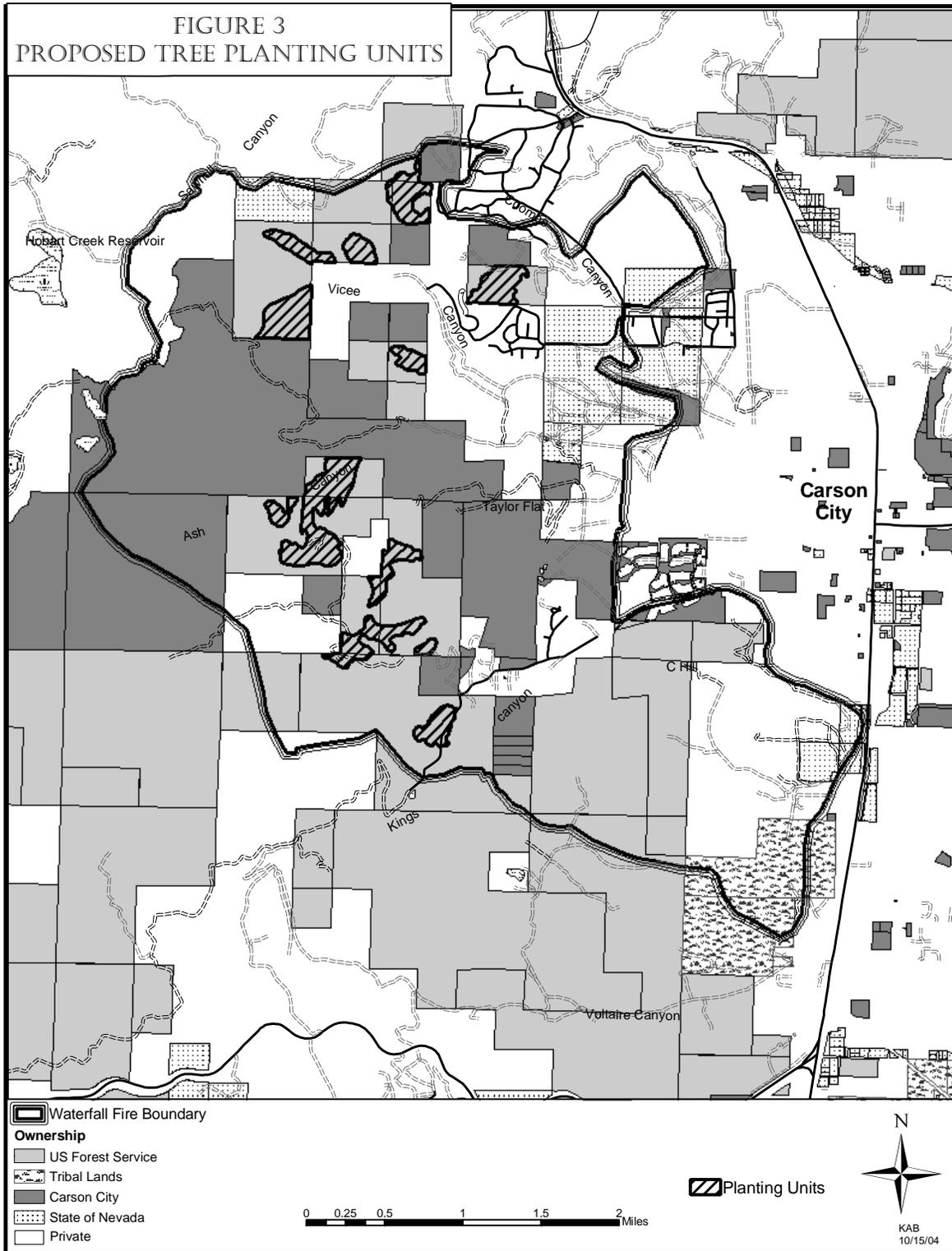


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