



Sound *UPDATE*

Newsletter of the Long Island Sound Study

Fall 2010

EPA supporting community-led efforts on urban waters

By Robin Hughes (adapted from epa.gov/urbanwaters)

“Right now in cities across the nation, urban waters are being threatened like never before. New and different environmental challenges are appearing everywhere from the Anacostia River in Washington, DC to the waterfront in Dubuque, Iowa. The range of challenges we face are going to require both traditional and innovative strategies—and broad partnerships to address the local issues in our communities, and the national issues we all share.” -Lisa P. Jackson, EPA Administrator

Throughout the country, communities are coming together to transform polluted, forgotten waters into treasured centerpieces of urban revival. EPA is seeking to help communities in the U.S.—especially underserved communities—to access, improve, and benefit from their urban waters and the surrounding land. By more effectively using existing programs, EPA plans to work with a variety of federal, state, tribal, and local partners to foster increased connection, understanding, and stewardship of local waterways.

Urban waters take on large amounts of pollution from a variety of sources, including polluted runoff, which creates public and environmental health hazards. Additionally, urban patterns of development often make waterways inaccessible to adjacent neighborhoods. Lack of access limits a communities’ ability to reap the benefits of living so close to the water.

Reconnecting people with urban waterways results in both environmental and community benefits. Healthy and accessible urban waters can help grow local businesses and enhance educational, recreational and social opportunities in nearby communities.

Urban waters are also important because they impact large populations in both urban and upstream communities. And, these settings offer visibility for innovative approaches that can be adapted in surrounding areas.



Mill River Collaborative

Mill River Collaborative summer interns test water quality along the Mill River in Stamford, CT (story on page 3).

Urban Waters

- 2** Bridgeport’s BGreen 2020
- 3** Restoration of the Mill River
- 4** GreenApple Corps
- 5** Superfund designation for Newtown Creek
- 6** LISS Stewardship Initiative
- 7** Spotlight: Congressman Himes
- 8** What you can do

Sound Update provides readers with news about the Sound and the Long Island Sound Study.



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Continued on page 5.

Sound Update: Urban Waters

Did you know that more than 20 million people live within a 50-mile radius of Long Island Sound? That includes the 8.3 million residents that live in New York City, the most populated city in the United States.

With population comes development, categorizing the western end of Long Island Sound as the most urbanized estuaries in the States. This issue focuses on just a few of the efforts to restore these urbanized areas and creating a healthier Sound for all of its creatures—including us.

Bridgeport's BGreen 2020 Initiative and stormwater

By David Kooris

The City of Bridgeport is creating the actions and partnerships necessary to better control its stormwater and improve the quality of Long Island Sound through a component of its sustainability effort, BGreen 2020. Traditionally, the strategy in older cities focused exclusively on the underground separation of combined stormwater and sewage systems. Taking the lead from cities like Philadelphia and Portland, OR, Bridgeport is advancing passive and visible solutions aboveground that can mitigate the need for some costly pipes and provide a broader range of community benefits.

Bridgeport has some of the oldest wastewater treatment infrastructure in the nation, resulting in significant flooding and combined sewer overflows (CSO) into the Sound. The traditional solution is costly. Full separation of the city's stormwater and wastewater systems is projected to cost \$560 million and take decades. The city has been making progress, though, and has already completed seven projects to achieve this goal with a total expenditure of \$50 million. The next project scheduled will achieve separation in the Downtown, eastern portion of the South End, and northern portion of Black Rock. This project will cost \$25 million, is projected to be completed in 2017, and will solve most flooding and CSO problems with a solution that (after construction) will be below ground and quite intensive. But what if a solution existed that could solve some of the same problems more quickly, for less money, and improve local neighborhoods in the process?

A variety of such techniques, known as low impact development, have already been developed that can capture and hold rainwater before it enters and overwhelms a city's underground system of pipes. These strategies reduce the peak flow volume of rainwater by spreading the release of rainwater out over time and reduce the amount of stormwater entering a wastewater treatment facility. These strategies require a combination of actions on both private and public property.

Through building codes and zoning incentives, the city is working to ensure that all new development does its part to limit stormwater impacts on wastewater infrastructure. The city has identified a low-cost solution for residential neighborhoods that has an immediate impact on stormwater flow into local waterways and the Sound—buildings will be encouraged to have green roofs, permeable pavement, and as much landscaping as possible. Much of the city's building stock already exists, however, and retrofitting older buildings with these technologies can be costly and complicated. The Mayor's Conservation Corps has been going door-to-door educating local homeowners and renters on energy efficiency, recycling, and low-impact development, generating nearly 1,000 requests for rain barrels. City Hall has dispersed several hundred that have been attached to gutter downspouts.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity, however, exists on the thousands of acres of roadway and parking areas owned and managed by the city. Public streets are the city's most significant asset, its greatest open space, and the largest percentage of impermeable surface. The city's green and complete streets program seeks to redesign the space between buildings to meet a broader range of needs. The rivers of asphalt covering the city can be reallocated so that pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit share space with the automobile. In doing so, new public spaces will be created with landscaping and new permeable areas. A collection of green streets linking the city's parks to one another will create a network of green spaces that also collect and store water from a storm and filter pollutants before they enter the Sound. Visible and prominent, these spaces will also improve the aesthetics of the urban environment and add value to surrounding properties.

Kooris is a Vice President at Regional Plan Association and Director of RPA's Connecticut Office.



Onsite stormwater management, such as this passive water feature in Victoria, BC, is one example that will be replicated in Bridgeport.

David Kooris



www.sitephocus.com, "12th Avenue-Portland-004"

These rain gardens and passive stormwater elements will be incorporated into the streetscape, similar to this example in Portland, OR.

The restoration of the Mill (Rippowam) River

By Milton Puryear

In April 2010, river herring returned to the Rippowam River...by truck. This was one sign that a transformation had occurred in the Mill River in Stamford, CT. Another was the mink that caught one of the first eels to swim upstream.

Historically, as the Rippowam River entered its last reach before the Stamford Harbor, it slowed into the impounded Mill Pond and spilled over the historic dam above Main Street. The lower reaches of the Rippowam came to be known as the Mill River as, historically, nearly a dozen hydro-powered mills were built there. The Rippowam River watershed drains 37.5 square miles that extend from north of the New York State line to Long Island Sound. Approximately 75 percent of the Rippowam watershed is in Stamford.

River Restoration Project: In 2009, the Army Corps of Engineers demolished the Mill Pond dam and walls and reconstructed the river channel and flood plain. The Corps also demolished remnants of a dam at Pulaski Street and restored two salt marshes. This \$7.9 million project was funded by \$5 million in federal Section 206 Habitat Restoration Funding, with the balance paid by the City of Stamford. It has addressed long-standing and costly challenges for the City, businesses, and residents. It is also unlocking the development potential for downtown Stamford, the largest central business district between Manhattan and Providence.

The restoration of the river that is now completed has major implications for Stamford. The dam removal, reconstructed river channel and flood plain are lowering downtown 100-year flood elevations by nearly three feet, removing many properties from flood risk and flood insurance costs. This change promises to propel an already established incentive for denser development near downtown jobs and the rail station that are central to the Stamford Master Plan, which seeks to de-link growth from growth in auto use.

The restoration of the river also creates the foundation for the construction of Mill River Park & Greenway, a 28-acre downtown park and three-mile greenway, linked to Long Island Sound. This idea was first suggested in the 1870s, but was left unfulfilled until now.

Wildlife: The dam blocked the passage of diadromous fish species, including river herring, which swim upstream to spawn. River herring are a keystone species that support osprey, kingfishers, egrets, mink, otter and striped bass among other species. Over the last two decades the populations of river herring returning to spawn in Connecticut's rivers have dropped dramatically. The chart to the left shows the decline in the numbers of blueback herring counted during returns to the Connecticut River over a 20-year period.



Sue Sweeney

Mill River is now home to eels that can migrate upstream since that the dam has been removed. Other wildlife such as mink (pictured here feeding on an eel) has also moved back into the area.

Year	Blueback Herring (Holyoke only)
1986	520,000
1987	360,000
1988	340,000
1989	290,000
1990	390,000
1991	410,000
1992	310,000
1993	100,000
1994	32,000
1995	110,000
1996	55,000
1997	64,000
1998	12,000
1999	2,700
2000	11,000
2001	11,000
2002	1,900
2003	1,300
2004	151
2005	534

River herring, such as alewife and blueback herring, live their adult life in the ocean circling from the east coast of Canada to the Caribbean Sea. At maturity, they return to the river where they hatched from eggs to spawn themselves. Dams on rivers like the Mill River prevented herring from access to fresh water spawning habitat. Through the removal of dams at Pulaski Street and the Mill Pond, the restoration of Mill River has opened four and a half miles of new freshwater spawning habitat to river herring.

In spring 2009, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP) released 400 adult alewives into the Mill River to restart the spring migrations. CTDEP fisheries biologist, Steve Gephard said the adults would spawn and return to the ocean after a few weeks. The hatchlings will spend the summer in the river to grow and then go out to the ocean in the early fall. After growing to maturity in several years, they will return to the Mill River to spawn.

Puryear is the Executive Director of the Mill River Collaborative.

Aviva Miller



The Mill River Park and Greenway creates a 28-acre downtown park and three-mile greenway to Long Island Sound. The table, above, shows the decline in the numbers of blueback herring counted during returns to the Connecticut River over a 20-year period.

GreenApple Corps: A taste of stewardship at the Sound

By Elizabeth Bowler

“At the core of the GreenApple mission is a push to restore the woodlands and shorelines of New York City into ecologically self sustaining habitats, rich in natural biodiversity and productivity.”
- Peter Puelo, member of part of the GreenApple Corps (GAC) team.

Born and raised in Canarsie, a neighborhood in Brooklyn, Peter is ecstatic to be part of the GAC team, an arm of the New York City (NYC) Department of Parks & Recreation, whose mission is to provide service and environmental stewardship to the five boroughs. The program operates to equip members with technical environmental skills, teaching proficiency, and personal development opportunities while supporting NYC’s effort to “green up”.

For GAC, as exemplified through many of their projects, protecting and improving urban waterways like the Sound is crucial to NYC’s overarching environmental campaign. Supporting the Long Island Sound Study’s central goals, GAC works in various capacities to decrease toxic and pathogen contamination, enhance living habitats, and engage the public in environmental education. GAC projects that support these objectives range from greenroof installations, ecological restoration work, coastal clean-ups, and environmental education in schools throughout all five boroughs. But how do these projects specifically relate to the health of urban water?

Restoration work that targets degraded woodland and marshland sites within the Long Island Sound watershed contributes to the increased health and self-sustainability of the ecosystem. Reducing the cause and effects of erosion significantly increases stormwater capture, which minimizes the amount of contaminated water and sediment that can enter the Sound. Planting beneficial vegetation along shores and waterways also improves water quality for fish to spawn and feed in these areas, while increasing native habitats and vegetation.

Greenroof projects can also directly impact waterbodies like the Sound. In 2010, with the help of the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, GreenApple Corps completed a 24,000 sq ft. greenroof on Randall’s Island. Aside from creating habitat corridors, enhancing the natural cooling and heating capacities of buildings, sparking biodiversity, and increasing pollination, greenroofs are hugely beneficial in increasing stormwater capture. The greenroof on Randall’s Island, which boasts 18 different greenroof prototypes, increases the vegetated cover of the island and slows and absorbs rain. As opposed to overflowing off impervious surfaces, overtaxing combined sewer systems and adding pollutants into waterways, rain gets recycled on site. Currently GAC is working on 10 greenroof installations atop Parks Department buildings throughout NYC. These vegetated roofs are proving to be an essential component in a new wave of protecting urban watersheds.



GreenApple Corps

GreenApple Corps volunteers and community members plant trees at Wolf’s Pond Park in Staten Island, NY as part of the MillionTreesNYC Initiative.



GreenApple Corps

GreenApple Corps members install green roof structures at The Jackie Robinson Recreation Center in Harlem, NY.

Finally, the GAC mission is rooted in the importance of environmental education and community involvement. Teaching bi-weekly classes in schools and offering day workshops such as “Street Tree Stewardship”, the GAC teaches students about personal health as well as the health of the larger ecosystem. By encouraging school kids to become the stewards of tomorrow, GAC recognizes the necessity of education at the core of environmentalism. Further, the GAC facilitates coastal clean-ups in the fall and spring so that community members take ownership of the plant and animal communities directly in their backyards.

The GreenApple Corps aims to continue supporting the important work of the Long Island Sound Study to restore this watershed back to its original identity as a natural jewel of the east coast.

Bowler is Program Assistant & Outreach Coordinator for GreenApple Corps, part of the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation.

EPA plans to work with communities, especially those in urban watersheds, to improve the health of the water and the land while addressing community priorities. To that end, EPA is focusing existing resources to further these five goals:

1. Understanding of urban waters and their potential: Greater public awareness of urban waters and its potential for improving public health, economic development, and the quality of life.
2. Connection to urban waters: Greater access to urban waterfront and greater public participation in waterfront activities, such as recreation, volunteer monitoring, clean-ups, education, and leisure.
3. Public stewardship of urban waters: Greater public benefit from improvement efforts, especially in underserved communities, and consequent increased priority given to the improvement of urban waters.
4. Protection and restoration of urban waters: Acceleration of the measurable improvements to urban water quality.
5. Community revitalization: Equitable community improvements that capitalize on the social and economic benefits derived from improved urban waters and adjacent lands.

Check epa.gov/urbanwaters for more information on Urban Waters. On this site, you'll also find information about how EPA is working with other federal agencies to align existing resources in support of community efforts on urban waters and an online forum where you can share stories about work you're doing to revitalize your local urban waters.

Hughes is on the Urban Waters Team with EPA.

On the Web...

To join the Urban Waters network, email urbanwaters@epa.gov with the subject line: "Sign me up for Urban Waters updates".

Superfund designation for Newtown Creek: Cleaning up a toxic legacy

On Sept. 27, EPA announced its decision to list Brooklyn's toxic Newtown Creek on the Superfund National Priorities List. Newtown Creek is a tributary of the Hudson and East Rivers, located between Brooklyn and Queens.

Over a century of industrial pollution and raw sewage overflows have rendered the Creek one of the most highly polluted waterways in the United States. Under the Superfund designation, the EPA will bring its considerable legal and technical resources to bear to completely address the legacy of contamination that has nearly obliterated the Creek's natural systems and posed a public health risk to nearby residents.

Super-what?

Superfund is the name given to the environmental program established to address abandoned hazardous waste sites.

Visit EPA's Web site at: <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/about.htm> to learn more about what categorizes an area as a superfund site, how these areas are cleaned, and if there are any superfund sites in your area.

Riverkeeper has been a vocal advocate for a Superfund cleanup for Newtown Creek since the EPA announced that it was considering the Canal for the federal Superfund program in December 2009. Riverkeeper has been active on Newtown Creek since 2002, when its first boat patrol discovered oil seeps, abandoned cars, and floating garbage littering the Creek. Over the past eight years, Riverkeeper has also established itself as the leading pollution enforcer on the Creek, exemplified by its citizen suits against oil companies, cement manufacturers, and other polluters.

Riverkeeper also helped found the Newtown Creek Alliance, a coalition of elected officials, local residents, business owners, and other non-profit organizations working to improve the Creek and adjoining neighborhoods. Since 2002, the Alliance has served as a catalyst and channel for effective community action and our efforts have made a positive and enduring impact on the health and quality of life of Creek-side communities. With the completion of another Creekside open space at the end of the Manhattan Avenue, a community-based Brownfields planning grant from New York State, and recent investments in green infrastructure and stormwater management, the Alliance continues to support local businesses, job generation, community health, and a cleaner Creek.

This article was contributed by Hudson Riverkeeper, an organization whose mission is to protect the ecological integrity of the Hudson River and its tributaries, and to safeguard the drinking water supply of 9 million New Yorkers.



Giles Ashford

Newtown Creek in Brooklyn, NY was listed on EPA's Superfund National Priorities List in September 2010.

Encouraging stewardship in an urban estuary

By Larissa Graham

Long Island Sound Study's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and the 2003 Long Island Sound (LIS) Agreement set goals to conserve natural resources and increase public access around the Sound. In an urban estuary, such as LIS, these goals can be quite challenging. Over 20 million people live within 50 miles of the Sound and the coastal communities have a population density of 2,170 persons per square mile—the second highest of any coastal system in the country.

The Long Island Sound Study's 2006 Public Perception Survey indicated that there are clear differences in how often watershed residents use the Sound. Less than half (<50%) of residents surveyed in the more-urbanized areas of the Sound (i.e., Westchester County, the Bronx, and Queens) participate in at least one Sound activity each year, compared to over 70 percent of residents from Long Island and Connecticut. Even more surprising, one-third of Bronx and Queens residents did not know how far they lived from Long Island Sound. Without access to the Sound, residents may not be able to enjoy the Sound and, in turn, may not appreciate its value.

One method that the Long Island Sound Study has implemented to increase public access around the Sound is the creation of the Stewardship Initiative. The Stewardship Initiative is a partnership which was formed to conserve natural areas, increase access to the Sound, protect important habitats, and plan for multiple uses.

The 2006 Stewardship Atlas identified areas around the Sound with significant recreational and ecological values. These open spaces not only are important for wildlife but are also for us, as we need open space to enjoy, too. The 33 "Inaugural" Stewardship Areas were selected based on the recommendations of agencies, non-profits, and the public, culminating a 3-year effort, ending in 2006. As you can see from the Atlas, many of these sites occur within urbanized areas, where population density is the highest.

The Long Island Sound Study Stewardship Initiative Work Group also works to increase stewardship of the Sound by initiating projects to develop creative partnerships with local communities and landowners to protect and enhance the values of the Stewardship Areas. This Work Group provides tools to local decision-makers to protect their Stewardship Areas, identifies properties for public acquisition and/or protection, and develops watershed-based management plans for Stewardship Areas.

Land acquisition is a priority of the Work Group and, to date, the Long Island Sound Study Stewardship Initiative had helped preserve 94.4 acres of land in or around two inaugural stewardship sites. An even greater achievement is the protecting of more than 687 acres of open space through LISS partnerships.



Larissa Graham

Sound Stewards is a LISS program that works in conjunction with Brookhaven National Laboratory to involve students in research projects within LISS Stewardship Areas. To date, 1300 students in Suffolk County, NY have participated in this program.

On the Web...

Visit <http://longislandsoundstudy.net/stewardship> to get a better look at our 33 Stewardship Areas.

Open space helps protect our surface and ground waters, in turn keeping Long Island Sound clean. Open space also increases opportunities for all watershed residents to have physical access to the Sound, which provides recreational opportunities. By promoting stewardship and encouraging others to care for natural resources, including open spaces, we ensure that they are available for our use, as well as the use and enjoyment of others for years to come.

By promoting stewardship and encouraging others to care for natural resources, including open spaces, we ensure that they are available for our use, as well as the use and enjoyment of others for years to come.

Graham is the Long Island Sound Study NY Outreach Coordinator with NY Sea Grant.



Stewardship Areas around the Sound were chosen based on their recreational and ecological values.

Spotlight: Congressman James Himes

Position: Connecticut's 4th District, House of Representatives
Party: Democrat
First elected: 2008
Now serving: 1st term
Education: Harvard University and Oxford University in England
Birthplace: Lima, Peru



Congressman Himes' office

Q. What are the issues related to Long Island Sound (LIS) that most concern you?

A. I consider myself a proud and lifelong environmentalist and as an avid rower I've spent many hours on waterways in and around Long Island Sound. It only takes a moment, though, to recognize the enormous and irreplaceable importance of the Sound to our economy and our quality of life.

Our rivers, harbors, and beaches are a big part of what makes our communities great places to live, own a business, and raise a family. And from improving urban water infrastructure to increasing the federal commitment to Long Island Sound restoration to historic levels, I am greatly encouraged by the steps this Congress has taken to help protect our nation's natural resources.

Q. How have you been supporting the protection of Long Island Sound?

A. As a representative of the people of Connecticut, I was very proud to play a role in the appropriation bill passed by the House in 2010 that increased funding for the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Acts to \$15 million, almost \$12 million more than had been previously requested. With several colleagues from New York and Connecticut, I am cosponsoring the Long Island Sound Improvement Act Amendments of 2010 (H.R. 5876), which will amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize and improve activities for the protection of the Long Island Sound watershed.

In addition, I was extremely proud to secure federal funding in fiscal year 2010 for three water infrastructure projects that will ensure the vitality of local water resources and the livelihood of the businesses and communities that depend on those waters, including funding to restore the Mill River in Stamford and dredge the Norwalk and Greenwich Harbors.

Q. Why do you think it is important to restore our urban waterways?

A. Residents of urban areas - especially in the Northeast, where infrastructure is in greatest need of systemic repair - deserve the same access to clean water and unspoiled ecosystems as their rural and suburban neighbors.

There's no denying that the environment is still under threat and that we need common-sense environmental protections. For example, due to federal court decisions that Clean Water Act provisions were not applicable to waterways that were deemed to be "isolated," federal legal protections were removed for some of Connecticut's most beautiful and ecologically important rivers and streams.

In an effort to begin reversing some of these threats, I recently voted for the Water Quality Investment Act (H.R. 1262), which renews the federal commitment to addressing our nation's water infrastructure needs and improving water quality. Specifically, the bill makes substantial investments to improve our wastewater infrastructure, reduce the cost of constructing and maintaining that infrastructure, and promote energy- and water-efficiency improvements to publicly owned treatment plants. Through these efforts and others, I believe we can begin to give our urban waterways the attention and protection that the residents of our cities deserve.

Long Island Sound Futures Fund Recipients Announced

On Nov. 8, 2010, more than \$2.4 million was awarded to local governments and community groups in CT and NY for 38 projects that improve water quality, restore habitat, enhance living resources, and educate and involve the public with the ultimate goal of protecting and restoring the Long Island Sound. Major financial support for the Sound Futures Fund is provided by the EPA in concert with LISS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Shell Marine Habitat Program, FedEx, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The next call for proposals should be out before the end of the year. Visit: longislandsoundstudy.net/grants for more details.

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“What can I do?”

Simple ways you can help our urban waterways

1 Reduce polluted runoff. Urban waters take on large amounts of pollution from a variety of sources, including polluted runoff from urban landscapes, which creates public and environmental health hazards. Remember, what goes on the ground, goes in the Sound—be sure not to dump unwanted wastes on the ground, but instead dispose of them properly. Visit Earth911.org to learn more information about proper disposal.

2 Find access. Although access is limited in some areas, there are opportunities to increase access and enjoy the Sound. Visit www.lisrc.uconn.edu/coastalaccess (CT) and www.dec.ny.gov/62.html (NY) for outdoor recreation areas and ideas near you. And encourage others to get out: greater interaction with the natural environment promotes greater stewardship.

3 Support low impact development. Learn more about low impact development and how it might best work in your community. The Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) Program has lots of great information on their website (www.nemo.uconn.edu or nyseagrant.org/nemo) to help you get started!

4 Spread the word. Many residents do not understand the importance of our waterways. Encourage your friends to visit the EPA's Web site (epa.gov/urbanwaters) to learn more about urban waters and the Long Island Sound Study Web site (www.longislandsoundstudy.net) to learn more about the Sound.

5 Plant a tree. Get a group in your neighborhood together and contact your local arborist or urban forester about planting native trees on private property and public land. Don't have enough space for a tree? Native plants are a good alternative. Not only are they adapted to live in local conditions, but they also support the local ecosystem and don't spread, unlike invasive non-native plants.

6 Make your voice heard. Let your state and local elected officials know that you support efforts to protect and restore Long Island Sound. Support federal, state, and local government coastal management and clean water efforts that result in restoration and protection of habitats in urban areas.

7 Volunteer. There are many public recreational areas that can use your help. Why not volunteer for a beach or park cleanup, plant a tree, or help maintain your local park? Visit our “Get Involved” website at: longislandsoundstudy.net/volunteer for an opportunity near you!

On the Web...

Visit our “What you can do” Web page at: longislandsoundstudy.net/get-involved for tips on reducing polluted runoff.



GreenApple Corps

The MillionTreesNYC Initiative sets goals to plant and care for one million new trees across the City's five boroughs over the next decade. Why not help out? Find out more at: www.milliontreesnyc.org

Happy Holidays, from the LISS staff!

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