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About the Cover:
Sorca the kitten and Shyia.
Photo by Shelly Peters of
Hands, Hooves & Paws.



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Gilpin County Sheriff.....	303-582-5500	Golden Senior High.....	303-982-4200
Crescent Branch P.O.....	303-642-0119	Nederland Elementary.....	303-258-7092
Golden Post Office.....	303-445-8900	Nederland Jr & Sr High.....	303-258-3212
Golden PO Bulk Mail.....	303-278-9235	Gilpin County.....	303-582-3444
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Some Dogs & Cats Are Friends

The cover this month is an animal anomaly; most of the time cats and dogs aren't the best of friends enough to be quite that comfortable with each other. But as you can see, those two trust the other won't be aggressive. In part it has to do with the dog being very amenable to the kitten and the kitten learning to trust that the dog loves the attention. It helps if the dog or kitten has had positive experiences with other dogs or cats.

These last few months we've seen political candidates act in ways that reflect that old saying "fighting like cats and dogs" and in most cases cats don't trust dogs, so go figure why cats run from dogs and then dogs just can't stop the chase reflex that makes them give the cats all the more reason to distrust most canines.

Over the many years I've had animal companions I've only once had a cat that truly loved two of my dogs to the point she would use them to sleep on for their heat and with one she played rough enough to elicit concern on my part that one of them might get hurt. But the play, rough and tumble or gentle and loving never turned to the dark side and the dogs both enjoyed the cat's antics and attention.

I was fortunate enough to have enjoyed many years of a Husky mix thinking a Bengal cat was her sibling and constant playmate. *(Pictured here watching the horses from the barn while on a walk about.)* They provided so much laughter in my home that it became a casual thing to see one of them hiding behind furniture waiting for the other to

nonchalantly walk close enough to get attacked. It happened so often I was always pleasantly surprised that the sneak attack worked. Whether it was the cat hunched down with bottom wiggling until she could spring out and jump on the head of the Husky, with paws wrapped around the dog's neck - grasping and chewing into thick dog fur or

the dog waiting around the corner for the cat to walk by so she could lunge out causing the cat to leap into the air in surprise.


They were both very young when I got each one, only about a year apart in age so they grew up together and I believe considered the other to be a sibling. The intense care they had for each other was evident even when not playing, as the cat would wait in the window for the dog's return each and every time it left the house. The cat learned to walk on a leash and the dog would hover around us as we walked the property. One time a strange dog appeared as I was walking the cat on my three acres and my dog protected the cat by barking

and putting herself between the strange dog and her cat until the other dog went away.

It is my belief it takes unusually smarter felines and canines to develop that sort of relationship that is usually not so friendly. But who am I to say, I suppose many animal lovers have had similar experiences where they get to watch a cat and dog become friends, close companions and playmates.

(Continued next page.)





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I was amazed that a sixty-pound dog could be so gentle with a nine-pound cat, but my current dog has the same ability. We fostered some kittens a couple of years ago, much to the chagrin of my current cat that fears not only

dogs, but also even her own kind. She was a rescue cat so who knows what horrible experiences her first two years gave her. While the rescue kittens lived with us my doodle dog was in heaven. (Pictured here below with Albi and at left watching the kittens take a much needed nap.) She constantly had a kitten in or near her mouth, treating them as if they were her puppies and she felt she had to move them around (gently





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putting her mouth on their scruffs). Our cat watched these antics with blatant disdain and never warmed up to the kittens. It seemed as if there was always a kitten sitting near the wood stove cleaning dog slobber off its fur, the entire time the kittens were with us.

So maybe someday I'll get a chance to have that cat/dog loving relationship to observe and enjoy again, but not now I'm sure. Anyone that is lucky to get that in their lives is truly seeing something special and I have no doubt any cat and dog that allow the possibility surely enjoy the companionship we as humans take for granted with each species. (At left here in Jan's ad you see her special dog Lotus posing with Noah, their cat.)

By A.M. Wilks

Member of Colorado Association
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New Denver Water Website A GROSS Disaster

The beat goes on, and the beat goes on - Drums keep pounding a rhythm to my brain, la de da de de, la de da de da. History has turned the page, and men keep marching off to war, ladedadede, ladedadede. And the beat goes on, and the beat goes on - (*lyrics by Sonny Bono*) another propaganda effort by Denver Water to make us think increasing the size of Gross Reservoir is a done deal. PROPOSED Moffat is the pounding in my head. Their new website they probably spent lots of money on, doesn't even work. Click on most of the options and get a repeat of one or two pages that give you the same old hype: we've been permitted, this is a good thing, blah, blah, blah.

Whatever you do, don't believe a word of it, meant to make you give up fighting them and their outdated, outmoded and environmentally destructive efforts to make Arvada and the developers rich while we pay the ultimate price of unsafe roads, off the chart decibel noise and monumental air pollution. Set your minds to a legal fight: litigation - NOT MITIGATION. Donate to TEG's legal fund today.

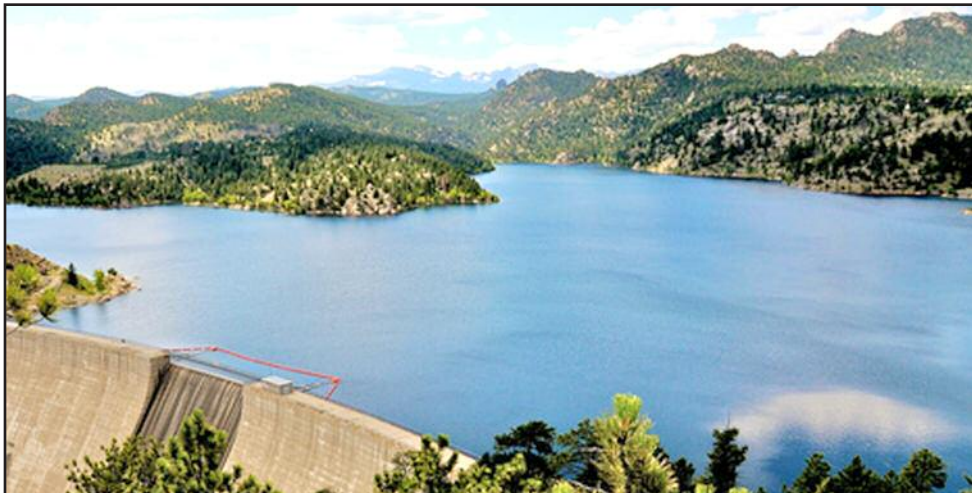
From TEG

New studies support halting Moffat Collection System Project - There have been a number of articles published recently that provide us with additional ammunition for fighting this project.

- The Washington Post reports that a new study published

in *BioScience*-confirms that a significant volume of greenhouse gas emissions is coming from a little-considered place: Man-made reservoirs. Given the world wide concerns with climate change, increasing the size of any reservoir at this point seems unwise.

- Recently, the U.S. Dept. of Interior (DOI) released its



long-awaited Environmental Impact Statement for its management plan for Glen Canyon Dam which creates Lake Powell. Responding to comments that Save the Colorado put into the Draft EIS, DOI admits that Glen Canyon Dam produces dirty energy in the form of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from methane. New science estimates greenhouse gas emissions from Glen Canyon Dam are equal to 193 million cars on the road/year or burning 976 billion pounds of coal/year.

- Science Magazine reported on the *(Continued next page.)*

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Highlander Issues

70% likelihood of a megadrought in the American Southwest. The article states that an aggressive reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions cuts megadrought risks nearly in half. Considering the Washington Post article and the DOI's report referenced above, why would the government approve additional dams when reservoirs are now thought to increase those greenhouse gas emissions?

- The Aspen Daily News published an article describing what would occur if (when) a drought like that of 2000 - 2006 were to occur - Lake Powell would be emptied. But long before it is empty there would be huge problems with the "plumbing" of the West. The 1922 Colorado River Compact requires that the Upper Basin states (including Colorado) share water with the Lower Basin states. If the surface of the water in Lake Powell were to drop only 127 feet from its current elevation of 3617 feet, a "compact call" would be triggered as the Upper Basin states would be unable to deliver enough water the Lower Basin states.

That call would almost certainly mean halting most transmountain water diversions in Colorado. Given this threat, raising Gross Dam to hold additional diverted water makes no sense as there may not be enough water in the future to fill the existing reservoir, let alone the expanded one.

These studies are getting a lot of attention. Just recently, Grace Hood, the Energy and Environment Reports from Colorado Public Radio, interviewed a number of Gross Reservoir North Shore residents for research she is doing on an article about the demands on the Colorado River. We hope to get a lot of publicity out of that and will keep you posted on when and how to listen to the story.

From Denver Water - New website launched

Stay up to date with the Gross Reservoir Expansion Project by visiting our new project website at www.Gross-Reservoir.org. The Gross Reservoir Expansion Project — also known as the Moffat Collection System Project — will pave the way for Denver Water to prepare for future uncertainties such as climate change while providing the state with a net environmental benefit, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE).

What is the Gross Reservoir Expansion Project?



The Gross Reservoir Expansion Project is one of the major elements of Denver Water's long-term supply plan. It will prevent future shortfalls during droughts and correct a serious imbalance in our North-South collection system. With this project, we will provide more water to customers while improving the environment surrounding the planned expansion.

This project is crucial to provide reliability to the Front Range, reduce vulnerability in the event of disasters such as floods and fire, and ensure there is flexibility to provide water from multiple sources when needed. The imbalance between the North and South systems is substantial. Without this project, the North System remains vulnerable in terms of water shortage and reliability if the South System is shut down. This expansion will provide an additional 18,000 acre-feet of water supply for Denver Water's customers. That's enough to supply about 72,000 households a year.

Two big steps forward?

The Gross Reservoir Expansion Project recently made two big leaps forward by securing an important environmental certification and earning the endorsement of Governor Hickenlooper. The Section 401 certification under the Federal Clean Water Act provides for long-term monitoring of stream temperature, nutrients, metals and aquatic life with an adaptive management strategy for responding to water quality impairments, if detected. In his endorsement of the project, Governor Hickenlooper recognized that "this key infrastructure project will serve over 25 percent of the state's population, add reliability to our public water supply and provide additional environmental benefits throughout Colorado."

By Gov. Hickenlooper

As a native Coloradan and lifelong flyfisherman, I've spent a good portion of my life trying to sell trout a line. I've encountered many frustrated fisherman in my day, and remember too many days when I've counted myself among them.

No matter what you hear or read about how to be successful in the sport — tippet size, line length, fly pattern, cast placement — success all comes down to one word: approach.

And that same word, as it turns out, applies to how Denver Water recently secured Gov. John Hickenlooper's endorsement and a state water quality certification for the proposed expansion of Gross Reservoir that found the project will result in a net environmental benefit for the state.

Editor's Note: The proposed Moffat Project is an ill conceived, poorly documented, illegally EIS supported attempt to use archaic and unscientific methods to obtain water from an environmentally endangered Colorado River simply to support unsustainable growth and a toll road to no where in the Northwest Quadrant of metro Denver.

Amendment 69- Wild Bear Concerts- Sport Shooting

Dear Editor,

Re: the letter from Paul Fontana (Evergreen), I think your response to his diatribe was on target, polite and provided a healthy challenge for him to look for the truth. I have a complementary suggestion. If he wants to learn more about the history & problems of for-profit health insurance in America, he should read Wendell Potter's book, *Deadly Spin*.

Potter worked ~30 years in corporate communications for large health insurance companies but became so morally outraged by their practices that he quit his job, called his congressmen and testified in 2009 against the HMO industry in the U.S. Senate to expose health insurance industry practices. Writing the book was part of his soul cleansing, and he is now a strong advocate for universal health care. Private, for-profit health insurance serves the interests of the companies & investors; it does not serve the interests of the people or medical care providers.

I am a new reader of your magazine, which I picked up casually and ended up reading cover-to-cover. So now I am a fan. It has been my impression that some people get their info from talk show radio or biased TV "news" and just don't want to look further for the truth. Such attitudes put our democracy at risk. And I read somewhere on the internet about tv ads against ColoradoCares; something like ~98% of the money that pays for these ads comes from large health insurance corporations.

Too many Americans have a negative attitude about anything related to socialism — even when they don't know what socialism is. If you point out a few obvious socialism practices to them, they are still reluctant to open their minds to its good aspects.

Examples include: police support, fire departments, community hospitals, state-funded education (k-12 + sometimes college), nationally-owned and public-use forest, parks and waterways, public-funded military, etc.

As for single payer health care, my wife & I + 3 kids lived in Alberta, Canada, ~3 years in the early 1980's. It has single payer health care that is run by the Alberta provincial gov't. Each of us in the family got an ID card that covered health care from hospitals, doctors, dentist, vision services, Rx. No deductibles, no co-pays. It wasn't free; we paid a monthly fee to the Alberta gov't. Scheduling service was about the same as Wyoming (where we moved from). I've heard stories (or

rumors) of month-long waiting lines in eastern Canada, but we never experienced it in Alberta and never heard that anyone else did. I think the system works well there and in most of Europe. Thank you...Dave Rogers..

Dear Editor,

Nederland has a new live concert series, and it's a doozy! Wild Bear Mountain Ecology Center is Boulder County's only all-ages nature center, and it turns out to now be a great place to listen to world-class music close to home. Jill Dreves, the grassroots nonprofit's director, explains,

"The Wild Bear Concert series focuses on exceptional original music from extraordinarily talented touring musicians from all over the United States who help connect us in community and to nature." Part of that community building includes a shared pot-luck dinner at 6:30pm and a ride together with the performers on the Carousel of Happiness next door just before the show starts at 7:30pm. "We absolutely love Wild Bear's tradition of a carousel ride," says Carousel Director Katrina Harms.

The series has already started with a bang, hosting phenomenal artists such as Kevin So (Boston singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist who tours internationally with Keb' Mo'), Gabrielle Louise (a Colorado favorite songwriter, songbird, and guitarist who has shared the stage with Richie Havens, Guy Clark, Tom Paxton, and more), and Beth Wood (Portland singer-songwriter-poet who's won more songwriting awards than you can shake a stick at)!

(Continued next page.)



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Highlander Letters

Mark your calendar for the **Saturday November 5th show with BiG WiDE GRiN**, an award-winning bi-coastal duo that hails from California (Elaine Dempsey) and Virginia (Karl Werne). They sing heartfelt harmonies with uplifting and poignant lyrics and breathtaking guitar work. And get the December 3rd Mitch Barrett concert on



your calendar too! Concerts are \$20 per person in advance (\$25 the day of the show) and funds support the artists as well as the nature center. Wild Bear is located in Nederland's shopping center (on the busline) at 20 Lakeview Drive Nederland, CO 80466. Visit <http://wildbear.org/concerts> for music samples and more details. Joe Werne

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Dear Editor,

Target shooting education video series now available for viewing. The 5-video series provides tips for safe and respectful target shooting on public lands.

Boulder County, Colo. - A new video series entitled *Safety & Respect* has been created by the Northern Front Range Recreational Sport Shooting Management Partnership, or Sport Shooting Partnership. The five-video series was created to help new and experienced target shooting participants have a safe and successful experience on public lands. Each video in the series highlights an important aspect of the target shooting from choosing a safe location to cleaning up afterward.

One of the partnerships main strategies is to provide information and education about safe and responsible shooting for both sport shooters and other recreationists. The video series, along with other educational materials, and the full Partnership strategy can be found at

www.SportShootingPartners.org

The videos are currently all available for viewing on YouTube or the Partnership website, and will also be released on the Partnership's social media platforms as part of a new campaign – **#SafetySaturdays**. The idea is to give important safety information in smaller pieces, but allow for the option of viewing all videos in sequence if so desired.

Northern Front Range Recreational Sport Shooting Management Partnership - The Sport Shooting Partnership is a collaborative group of land managers who have joined together to develop a landscape-level, multi-jurisdictional strategy to provide safe, responsible, and accessible recreational sport shooting opportunities while addressing conflicts near residential areas and with other recreation users across the northern Colorado Front Range.

The Partnership is comprised of Colorado Parks & Wildlife - Northeast Region, Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, and Larimer counties and U.S. Forest Service: Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests.

For more information about the videos, or the Partnership in general, please contact Garry Sanfacon, Project Coordinator at 720-564-2642 of info@sportshootingpartners.org.

Standing Rock North Dakota

By Lois Hickman

I knew I must go to Standing Rock. It wasn't enough to read about the Protectors or to hear talks about what the Standing Rock Sioux tribe had organized. I became one of the many who are drawn to travel, in caravans or in their own cars, to bring solidarity and supplies to the powerful indigenous encampment in North Dakota.

It is hard to describe how very powerful and empowering the experience was for me, and for everyone who travels to volunteer at Standing Rock. Imagine yourself being immersed in an environment, a community, of powerfully spiritual people who know what must be done to save this critically endangered planet. You find yourself being part of something intensely real and focused.

Indigenous people have been gathering since April 2016 in Standing Rock, North Dakota, opposing the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). This pipeline threatens the life of the Missouri River and all that depend on her for water. "Water is Life" is the rallying cry. Centuries of colonization, oppression, broken treaties, genocide, and desecration of sacred lands, have now been ruthlessly exemplified by the heartless, mindless greed of this project. The land and those who live on it have been considered expendable for over 500 years. But no more. The tribes of this country will not leave, will not give up. They are willing to stay for 'as long as it takes' to win in their efforts as Protectors of the Water.

It's a long drive from Lyons Colorado to Standing Rock North Dakota, but after 10 hours of asking "Are we there yet" and a few false turns, we finally arrived. We were met at the south entrance by the welcoming Lakota security guards, then, down the hill a short distance, by others who let us know where we could park the Prius which was both transportation and camper for the weekend for my daughter Jennifer and me. We were in the Rosebud camp. Directly across the Missouri River from us was the Red Warrior and Overflow camp— camps you see in pictures and videos with the proud flags of over 300 indigenous Nations. The Red Warrior camp is

composed of those who are entrusted to make the serious strategic decisions about how and when to engage in non-violent actions. However, all the activities, in every camp at Standing Rock, are under the direction of Native Americans. Every action taken is peaceful. A 20 minute walk up the trail to the north from Rosebud Camp is the Sacred Stone Camp, the prayer camp for Standing Rock. When we weren't busy helping to prepare meals, wash dishes, and sort the donations constantly flowing in, we immersed ourselves in the history unfolding all around us. We met Native Americans from around the United States and beyond. A young Mayan man, with tears in his eyes, said how proud and hopeful he was for the future of his people and for Mother Earth. He planned to stay for the winter. A leader from the Mohegan tribe of Connecticut said, "This is truly an historic event. I felt 'truth bumps' when I came here. We have no choice but to be here. I would give my life this cause" as he gave us a small pouch of sacred tobacco and a shell from his own reservation. Then he told us that another Mohegan leader had asked him to bring his 13 year old daughter to Standing Rock. He thought that to experience the power of this gathering would help her overcome her feeling of hopelessness for herself and for other indigenous young people. It had exactly the effect her father hoped for. When she returned to Connecticut, she started organizing support groups and educational groups around what is

(Continued next page.)

19th Annual Tommyknocker Holiday Week Festivities in Historic Central City

Thursday Dec. 1st Children's Parade 1:30 pm

**Friday Dec. 2nd Tree Lighting & Candle Walk
6:30 pm**

with Peak to Peak Chorale Carol Singing

Community Pot Luck 6:45 pm (at the Teller House)

Sat. Dec. 3rd - 10 am to 4 pm

Sun. Dec. 4th - 10 am to 3 pm

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happening at Standing Rock. She felt empowered.

On the short walk up the trail to Sacred Stone camp, we met teenagers on horseback, and always were greeted with friendly smiles. Earlier that day we had watched the teens joyfully racing each other on their ponies. They rode with saddle pads; no saddles. We walked past a wikiup being constructed with willow branches; the women's Moon Lodge. Men were sawing a dead tree to use for firewood for the winter. And there were dogs, some belonging to the Native people, and many belonging to the visiting volunteers.

Three delicious meals were prepared each day for the camp we were in, supervised by a master cook, a Rosebud woman. Sacred Stone camp had its own tent kitchen, and there were seven kitchens across the river from us as well. Soups, salads, fruit, eggs, sandwiches, pancakes, and so much more, all made from the donations brought in from around the country. We gathered in a silent circle before each meal, a glass of water and a small amount of each of the foods we were to eat were blessed; prayer was offered in the native language, which could only be given by an especially designated person. The glass of water was

passed around the circle, each of us sipping from it in a symbolic gesture of "water is life" before shaking hands or giving hugs around the circle.

The sound of happy children running and playing was all around us. No one yelled at them; correction was dealt quietly and patiently, but was seldom needed. You would see the children come out of their tipis or tents in the morning, and they'd be outside romping and playing unless they were in school which started at 10 and went through early afternoon. School was held in a tent near the Red Warriors Camp. We didn't see anyone playing with electronic toys.

A sacred fire was kept going day and night at Rosebud camp. One night, an 11-year-old girl sat with us as we helped tend the fire. She said "The sacred fire must not be allowed to go out." That same night, the leader who led security for the camp told us to watch as wisps of light reached up into the northern sky. Those wisps became the aurora borealis, arcing over the entire camp. He said it had happened the week before as well.

The indigenous people at Standing Rock are peacefully determined to stand up to the evil of destruction of the water and of the Earth. What they are doing we should all be doing. They are our teachers. They need our support.

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In-Flight & General WiFi Safety Away From Home

By Shaun Murphy, CEO Private Giant

- 1.) Listen to your apps/devices when they say your connection is not secure.
 - Web browsers will have an indicator in the URL bar (the place where you type in the site's name) if the site is safe or not. The generally accepted icon for this is a closed (or locked) padlock. If that padlock is there and has a red X or a warning sign on top of it then you just might be on an unsafe connection.
 - Web browsers will also warn you if your connection is not secure in the area where the website normally would be displayed. If you see a screen like that instead of the expected website, do not hit continue or override this warning...
 - If you connect to a WiFi access point that requires you to log in via a web browser before using, connect to a basic website first (I always recommend <http://example.com>)... these types of WiFi access points have a system called a "captive portal" that will capture the URL and data you send to it the first time so they can redirect to their login system.
 - If a WiFi access point requires you to install anything (software, plugin, or a security certificate) before connecting, disconnect immediately. This is a known scam that can install malicious software that causes immediate damage (ransomware, malware, viruses, etc.) on your device. Or, it can install a security setting called a certificate that, although not noticeable, will permanently weaken any secure connections you ever make so that WiFi operator can read/modify all of your internet data.
 - Most operating systems will warn you if you're connecting to a WiFi that is not secure.

If you do connect to unsecure WiFi, your information is freely readable by anyone in close proximity. Only connect to WiFi access points that require you to type in a password via the operating system's WiFi connection screen (not in a web browser)

- 2.) Install a separate web browser for travelling or connecting to unknown WiFi access points. You can keep your main web browser logged into all of your favorite sites, save passwords, etc. but the other one will have none of that information. The nice thing about that is even if you do connect to an unsafe WiFi, your exposure will only be limited to the new browsing session. Use this alternative browser for basic surfing and never log into your email accounts, social media accounts, or post


any personally identifiable information. A great alternative browser is Firefox - <https://www.mozilla.org/firefox> available on most desktops, laptops, and android-based mobile devices.

If you can't install an alternative browser, see if your browser supports a Private or Incognito browsing mode. Doing this will not be as strong as a separate browsing application but will prevent leakage of most data.

- 3.) See if your home internet router has a virtual private network option. This is somewhat complex to set up but when done you can safely connect to your home network from any WiFi access point, secure or not. You will be surfing and emailing just like you do at home but while 30,000ft in the air. How cool is that!

Please note that there are some companies that sell VPN hosted services that claim to have a secure and safe browsing experience... the problem with these is you have no way of knowing what they are doing on their end with your data so instead of connecting to one unsafe/unknown internet connection, you now have two!

- 4.) Just don't connect to unknown / unsafe WiFi. Use your cell phone in tethering mode... if you have Verizon turn off that horribly invasive super cookie tracking! <https://www.techdirt.com/articles/20150115/07074929705/remember-that-undeletable-super-cookie-verizon-claimed-wouldnt-be-abused-yeah-well-funny-story.shtml>
- 5.) Basic stuff... make sure you type in websites using **https://** and not just plain **http://**. This will tell the browser to connect securely (or display an error if it can't) to your online service and give you very strong protection.



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Sea Otters On The Rise

By Anna V. Smith - HCN

One hundred decoy sea otters bobbed in the Pacific Ocean, off the California coast and just south of Half Moon Bay. U.S. Geological Survey research wildlife biologist Tim Tinker and his sea otter research team were practicing aerial counts of the marine mammal as part of a study published in 2014. At the end of this particular count, they came up one short. Tinker found it washed up on some rocks a distance away, with a huge, half-moon bite mark. Somewhere nearby in the Pacific Ocean, a shark had tried it out for a snack, finding plywood and foam instead of blubber.

In a spring survey of threatened California sea otters published in September, Tinker and his team counted a three-year average of 3,272 sea otters, for the first time above the minimum three-year average of 3,000 required by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to consider them healthy enough to delist. But currently, the sea otters are experiencing large-scale ripple effects from a marine ecosystem in flux. They're getting a boost from an unexpected sea urchin boom, but are also suffering from a huge jump in mortality from great white shark bites, who are also growing in number due to their pinniped food

source expanding.



"What we seem to have here is an ecosystem of populations that are recovering from different abuses, and are coming back at different rates," says Lilian Carswell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife's southern sea otter recovery and marine conservation coordinator.

Sea otters were hunted almost to extinction for their fur in the 1800s, and gained Endangered Species Act protection in 1977. As an apex predator and keystone species, they help structure and enrich the marine environment around them. Their eating habits are a big part of that: Since sea otters aren't insulated by blubber, they compensate by having a very fast metabolism, fueled by huge quantities of sea urchins, clams and abalone. The otters control urchin numbers, Carswell says, keeping them from forming what she describes as "roving hordes" on the seafloor, where they attack the holdfasts of kelp, causing the plants to detach and disintegrate. Kelp forests provide breeding and feeding grounds for many marine species and are important sequesters of carbon. Sea otters use the long blades as anchors when napping and to wrap their pups up to keep them from floating off while the adults forage.


Along the coast, California sea otters have reestablished a

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small part of their historic range that stretched from Baja California to the Pacific Northwest. Lately, a strange trickle effect has boosted their population. Tinker and others hypothesize that sea star wasting disease—proliferated by warming waters—has wiped out huge numbers of sunflower sea stars, a main predator of sea urchins. Tinker describes communities of the unrestrained urchin populations, called urchin barrens, as a purple shag carpet covering the ocean floor. This has given sea otters an extra food source in their central range, one that had previously been at carrying capacity. The unusual bump in sea urchins has been good for this year's sea otter juveniles, but it's not expected to last. The expansion of the sea otter population is key for their long-term viability, but it has been hampered by a curious roadblock: Mortality from shark bites at both ends of their range along the coast.

Due to a 1994 California ban on gillnets that killed shark as by-catch and an increase in sharks' food sources—sea lions and elephant seals—great white sharks are thriving, too. Researchers think that juvenile sharks are conducting "investigation bites," like the one given to Tinker's decoy sea otter. The sharks don't actually eat the sea otters; they give them one bite, and when they don't find blubber, they swim off. The injured otters usually die, though, and wash back up on shore. "That's significant because range expansion is part of their recovery and that's been curtailed by the shark gauntlet," Tinker says.

At this point, Carswell, Tinker and other researchers are waiting to see what will happen—whether diseases might affect the sea otters or urchins, and if the shark-bite deaths will persist. Tinker remains optimistic that the sea otters will continue their upward trajectory since large-scale killings caused by the fur trade and the use of gill and trammel nets have now been abolished. Because the habitat



Sea otters form "rafts" when resting, shown here.
Lilian Carswell/USFWS

and food sources are still there, Tinker says, it's not a matter of if, but rather when and how the otters return.

Anna V. Smith is an editorial intern at High Country News.

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From Bears To Berries

By Antonia Malchik

The current debate over removing certain grizzly bear populations from endangered species protection often strays into arguments over hunting, but grizzlies might have less to fear from hunters than they do from the possible demise of an unobtrusive berry. Studies of grizzly and black bear scat show that huckleberries, at times, can make up to 15 to 50 percent of their diet. Given that female grizzlies can't reproduce without sufficient body fat — about 20 percent of their total weight — the barely knee-high huckleberry gains ecological significance far beyond its size.

Crouched amid deep green alpine shrubbery and grass, a beige U.S. Geological Survey cap shading her face, Tabitha Graves leans through berry bushes, painstakingly counting huckleberries 6,000 feet up in the mountains of Glacier National Park on a cold August day. Graves is a wildlife

biologist with the USGS in northwest Montana who has devoted most of her professional life to grizzlies. She thinks that understanding how climate change will affect huckleberries, one of their main food sources, is crucial to understanding how it will affect the bears themselves.

Graves places a grid, roughly eight inches by eight inches and open in the middle like a picture frame, over a huckleberry bush and calls numbers off to her assistant: three ripe berries, five white, two green. "That's a lot of white berries," she comments before moving onto the next set of bushes. The whiteness is caused by a fungal infection called monilinia, but it's not the main reason she's here. In 2014, Graves launched a pilot project to compile a comprehensive record of this beguiling berry in order to figure out how changes in climate might affect its growth and production. She's seeking to answer essential questions: Where and under what conditions do huckleberries grow best? Her careful counting and documentation of the health of huckleberry patches is intended to help forest and park managers make the best management decisions they can in an uncertain future. While much is known about huckleberries, she says, "very little of what's out there is in scientific journals or peer-reviewed studies." Most of it is in the heads of a wide variety of people: tribal elders, commercial and recreational huckleberry pickers, bear managers, professional silviculturalists and botanists. Early research was done without modern tools or much knowledge of the effects of climate change, and most modern research is buried in obscure U.S. Forest Service technical reports. The previous baseline for Graves's own work was set by

Katherine Kendall, her predecessor at West Glacier's USGS office, in the 1980s. Kendall's work focused on berry productivity, and Graves is monitoring many of the same sites to understand how sunlight exposure, slope aspect, snowpack and other factors affect the plants' timing and growth.

With no birds singing, no insects humming, no tourist helicopters droning overhead, the silence makes the day seem colder. For company, Graves and her assistant have only the occasional appearance of a group of hikers tramping downhill from a night at Granite Park Chalet, asking how far it is to the bottom. Counting berries in the woods is quite a change from Graves's previous work analyzing bears' hair samples, but both

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approaches can help researchers better understand how grizzlies survive and reproduce.

A ripe huckleberry patch in Glacier National Park, Montana. The berries provide about 15 percent of bears' diets in the area. Courtesy Tabitha Graves



While grizzly bears are generally seen as highly adaptable, climate change still poses a threat. Shifts in temperature and snowfall are likely to impact food sources, from huckleberries and serviceberries to salmon and whitebark pine nuts. And these changes, along with temperature fluctuations that have altered the times bears enter and exit their dens, intensify the possibility of conflict with humans, grizzlies' greatest survival challenge.

Graves leads the way to another site farther up the trail, where she keeps track not just of berry production, but also the effect of seasonal climatic variations, pests and pollinators throughout the growing season. The lower study sites were covered in bushes full of plump ripe berries. Here, the berries have not yet ripened. Graves and her assistant step carefully through the short, sparse foliage, dotted with tiny yellow St. Johnswort flowers and the husks of Glacier lilies, to find her discreetly tagged study

subjects. Their voices calling out counts and percentages penetrate the high alpine silence.

The pilot project is scheduled to run for three more years, depending on funding, and even then the information will likely be incomplete. As Graves points out, her observation

sites are located only in spots humans find easily accessible, which aren't necessarily the same as those preferred by grizzlies. She envisions a study that relies instead on tracking grizzly bears, following their natural ranges to get a fine-grained idea of food sources and uses.

For now, she turns and heads back down the trail, pausing to pick handfuls of berries — free, for the moment, to eat and simply delight in their tart flavor.

Antonia Malchik writes from Northwest Montana.



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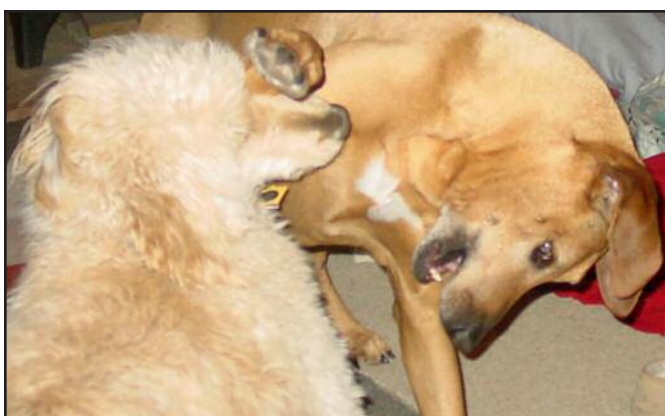
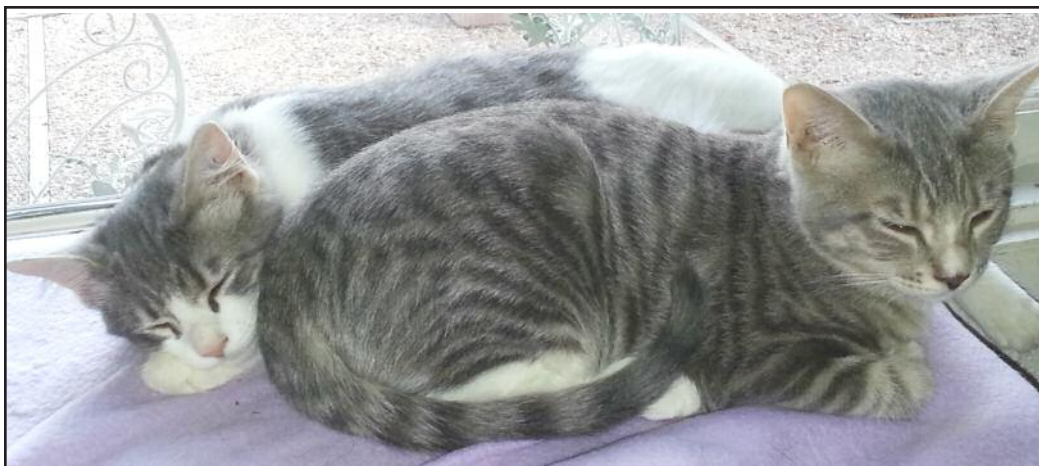
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Top: Athena & Sorca (cover kitten) napping.
Left: Chanel play fights with Roo.
Middle Right: Shyia gets massage from Sorca.
Bottom: Foster kittens snuggling.

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A white, fluffy dog is sitting in a shallow stream, surrounded by green plants and purple flowers. The dog is looking towards the camera.

Top: Jake wears his ribbons.

Top Right: Pigeon stretches.

Bottom Right: Sascha & Spirit exchange scratching.

Bottom: Kona poses.

Voter Driven Ballot Initiatives

By Joshua Zaffos

A person making minimum wage in Arizona earns \$8.05 an hour. At full-time, that adds up to less than \$17,000 a year, before taxes — better than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, but still not enough to lift workers above the federal poverty line. Nevertheless, this spring, state lawmakers rejected a modest, incremental wage hike, to \$9.50 by 2020.

Yet economic-justice activists and union supporters were unfazed by the legislative failure. That’s because — like most Westerners — they had another option: They could put the question directly to voters. This summer, they gathered enough petition signatures to put a more ambitious initiative on the November ballot. Proposition 206 would raise the minimum wage to \$10 in 2017, and then gradually to \$12 by 2020. A recent Arizona poll found that voters support it by a 2-to-1 margin. Similar measures are on the ballots in Colorado and Washington.

Every Western state except New Mexico allows citizens to make new laws at the ballot box, compared to just over half of all states. The region embraced direct democracy 100 years ago as a populist response to corporate power and ineffective government. This election season,

individual states will vote on approving universal healthcare, legalizing assisted death for terminally ill patients, creating the country’s first carbon tax, and repealing the death penalty. And in addition to wage hikes, multiple states will consider measures that would establish tougher background checks for gun and ammo sales, and legalize marijuana. Those initiatives are attracting big bucks from national organizations and wealthy donors, making the West a proving ground for certain progressive causes.

“Washington gridlock (is) forcing states to tackle these issues,” says Bill Scheel, the campaign manager for the Arizona wage hike. And in Republican-controlled states, he adds, “the only way we’re going to move these issues is through the ballot box.”

Ballot initiatives by the numbers

24: Number of states targeted for minimum wage hikes through ballot initiatives by a \$25 million nationwide campaign by The Fairness Project.

\$4 million: Contributions to help pass legalization measures in Arizona, California, Nevada, Maine and Massachusetts from individuals or groups with “direct financial stakes” in the marijuana retail industry.

18: Number of measures on the California ballot this November. Voters will consider repealing the death penalty, regulating prescription drug prices, banning plastic grocery bags and mandating condoms for porn actors, among other issues.

\$22 million: State lottery money to go toward an Oregon “Outdoor School Education Fund” to support outdoor ed and science programs for fifth and sixth graders, if voters approve Measure 99.

12: Number of endangered species, including rhinos, tigers and elephants, to be protected through an Oregon ballot measure that would prohibit selling the animals’ parts and products. The measure, supported by the Humane Society, resembles a 2015 -initiative passed in Washington.

\$100 - \$150: Amount per ton that carbon pollution must cost by 2050 in order to meet Washington’s goal of cutting

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emissions to half of 1990 levels by 2050, according to *Sightline Institute* estimates. Initiative 732 would set the initial price at \$15 a ton, and gradually raise it. *Sightline* estimates it would reach about \$100 by 2059.

The enthusiasm for ballot initiatives can be traced back to 1978, when Californians approved Proposition 13, which radically cut property taxes and capped future tax increases. It showed the sweeping power of direct democracy and triggered similar reforms nationwide. Some even credit it with kick-starting the modern conservative movement.

Now, liberal groups are increasingly using ballot measures to pursue far-reaching reforms of their own. As of September, the New York-based *Everytown for Gun Safety* had spent more than \$3.2 million on Nevada’s Question 1, which would require any sale or transfer of a firearm to go through a licensed gun dealer who can run federal background checks. The Fairness Project, backed by California unions, has contributed \$338,000 to the Arizona minimum wage campaign, and \$200,000 each to the campaigns in Colorado and Washington.

Billionaire benefactors, often from the tech world, have also bankrolled campaigns. Sean Parker, the former Facebook president, has given hundreds of thousands of dollars to background-check and pot legalization campaigns in Nevada and California. Nick Hanauer, a Seattle venture capitalist and founding investor in Amazon, has given \$500,000 to the Washington minimum wage campaign, and \$275,000 to the Nevada gun control measure.

Such spending reflects the fact that it’s increasingly difficult for purely grassroots initiatives to reach the ballot, says Todd Donovan, a Western Washington University political science professor. Most states require petition signatures from 5 to 10% of registered voters, and with populations growing in many Western states, campaigns have to spend ever more time and money to meet that mark. Case in point: Two grassroots anti-fracking campaigns in Colorado came up short on signatures after relying mostly on volunteers, while the energy industry spent readily from a \$16.8 million war chest to urge citizens to “decline to sign.”

But Donovan says the surge of money from national groups and wealthy individuals isn’t necessarily a bad thing. “Ironically, it levels the playing field” for progressive causes, he says, because corporations and industry trade groups spend hundreds of millions of dollars each election to

torpedo ballot measures that could dent their bottom lines. In Colorado and Arizona, restaurant associations are contributing to defeat the minimum-wage hikes, while a handful of health-care and insurance providers have each given between \$250,000 and \$1 million to kill Colorado’s universal health-care initiative: Amendment 69.

Interestingly, politicians on both sides of the aisle are also resisting many of these initiatives. Many Democratic lawmakers and candidates have declined to endorse the Washington carbon tax and the Colorado health-care measure. Party leaders have criticized funding mechanisms, and even backed away from previous support on those issues.

But backers believe their efforts can bring voters to the polls and sway skittish politicians, especially in an election when people are less than excited about the presidential candidates. In at least one case, the threat of a ballot vote propelled lawmakers into action: This spring, after a slightly more aggressive wage-hike measure was certified for the California ballot, legislators passed a law to raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2022. Proponents then withdrew their initiative — proof, says *The Fairness Project’s* executive director Ryan Johnson, that “ballot initiatives serve as really powerful messages to elected officials.”

Correspondent Joshua Zaffos writes from Fort Collins, Colorado. Follow @jzaffos

Editor’s Note: A very high percentage of minimum wage workers are subsidized by state and federal monies: such as food stamps. etc., taxpayers end up paying. Same goes for ColoradoCares Amendment 69, if it doesn’t pass we all continue to have our taxes pay for indigent medical care for those who cannot afford health care or are underinsured.

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Curbing Gun Violence

By Gabriel Furshong

Last year, several residents of Missoula, Montana, asked Bryan von Lossberg, a first-term city councilman, to introduce an ordinance requiring background checks on most gun sales and transfers within the city limits. Von Lossberg immediately felt nervous.

The councilman, who keeps a rifle in his home and enjoys Montana's long hunting seasons, knows that gun rights are fiercely defended in the state, which ranks sixth in gun ownership nation-wide. "The topic is so taboo in Montana," he says, even though Missoula is a university town with a reputation for being the state's most liberal community.

"It was surprising to me to have conversation after conversation where I would hear a variant of, "Ya know, I support what you're trying to do here, but I'm not so sure I'd been willing to stand up and express support for it."

Despite his misgivings, von Lossberg couldn't stop thinking about the data he'd received from local members of Moms Demand Action, comparing states that have passed gun safety measures to those that have not.

In the eight states that require background checks on all gun transfers, there were 38 percent fewer deaths of women shot by intimate partners, as well as lower rates of gun suicides and aggravated assaults with firearms. By contrast, Montana ranks fifth in gun deaths per capita and received an 'F' from the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence in 2015. To make matters worse, seven of the 11 Western states also earned failing grades, including all four of Montana's neighbors.

These figures led von Lossberg to another important number: His daughter had recently turned 4 years old. "Hunting and guns are really important parts of Montana culture, and I want my daughter to pursue hunting, but I also want to set a good example for her on gun transactions," he says. "The research shows when communities use this tool, it benefits the community. I want her to follow that example."

Von Lossberg introduced an ordinance a year ago this September. A month later, over 300 people attended a hearing on the measure. Testimony lasted five hours and was interrupted several times by disruptive behavior, including one speaker who passionately accused council members of treason. And yet the majority of speakers supported the measure. It was as if a "pressure valve" had been opened, according to von Lossberg. "The number of people who want this topic discussed and addressed - it was overwhelming."

The councilman was encouraged by the support, but he also listened to his opponents. He worked with Councilwoman Marilyn Marler, a co-sponsor and fellow gun owner, to revise the original ordinance. They agreed to include language exempting concealed-carry permit holders, because they already go through a background check. The change earned praise from some skeptics, and the gap between supporters and opponents began to shrink.

"Most dialogue on this topic gets boiled down to where you're pro-Second Amendment or you aren't," von Lossberg says. "Over the course of the year, our community wrestled with that dichotomy, and we realized that it's just not reality."



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Eventually, the council was rewarded for pushing the difficult topic into the open. This Sept. 26, a second hearing was held, nearly one year after the first. Another large crowd turned out and the ordinance passed on an 8-4 vote, making Missoula the first city in the Northern Rockies to require background checks on gun sales and transfers.

Now, the question is whether the ordinance will survive legal challenges. Opponents, including the Montana Shooting Sports Association, claim it violates both state law and the Second Amendment. But volunteers with Moms Demand Action are confident in the city attorney's opinion, which states that a "local government unit - has power to prevent and suppress - the possession of firearms by convicted felons, adjudicated mental incompetents, illegal aliens and minors."

Volunteers are now considering how to export the ordinance to other Western communities. In von Lossberg's view, the linchpin of that effort will be civil dialogue, similar, he says, to what we strive for within our families.

"My wife and I are raising a little girl," he explains, "and every moment we're together seems like an opportunity for a teachable moment - talking about our feelings, our fears, our hopes." He's convinced that this simple recipe for open communication is part of the answer for communities hoping to curb gun violence.

"It's hard to have courage about something when you can't even talk about it within your community," he says. "Regardless of your position or passion, it's critical to hear all the voices that are touched by this issue."

Gabriel Furshong is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News (hcn.org). He writes in Missoula, Montana.

Editor's Note: I have always been a gun owner since my first 410 at the age of twelve. Learned to shoot squirrels first and then upland game with my brother and cousins. I have believed in the right to bear arms and I uphold the Second Amendment that protects that right. BUT, I am also tired of die hard NRA members getting all over-reactive whenever ANY gun control measures are mentioned. The right to bear arms laws says they should not be impinged upon: so when cracking down on background checks or tightening up gun show exchanges of firearms is even mentioned these same groups and individuals go all ballistic (pun intended) saying anyone who wants those kinds of measures is trying to impinge upon their right to bear arms - it is more than silly - it is unhinged. While those folks hoop and holler about what our laws should protect us from, innocent citizens are being shot and killed. All U.S. citizens deserve the right to live safely and not be shot dead by mentally degraed gun owners who obtained the weapons simply due to the unrealistic fears of NRA members losing sight of reality.

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We Need A New Civilian Conservation Corps

By *Gundars Rudzitis*

Thirty-three years ago, I co-wrote a story for *Environment Magazine* that highlighted the “irreversible damage” being done to our national parks, according to a growing chorus of concerned park superintendents. As we take a close look at our nation’s parks and monuments during this year, their centennial, it is apparent that the maintenance and upkeep problems have gotten worse, even as the park system has expanded.

Protected federal lands are essential to the West’s economy: They attract innovative companies and workers and are a powerful component of the region’s competitive advantage. Increasingly, entrepreneurs and families who work remotely relocate to places based on their quality of life. So I’d like to propose a solution for the Park Service’s maintenance difficulties. I can’t claim credit for inventing it, because it’s not a new idea: President Franklin D. Roosevelt pioneered the way when he created the Civilian Conservation Corps during the economically desperate 1930s.

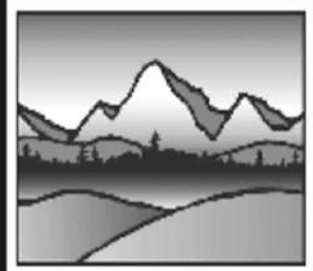
In 2011, I was one of over 100 economists who

concluded that a new Civilian Conservation Corps was needed, so we wrote a letter to President Obama, urging him to revive the program. His administration moved fast, proposing a \$1 billion effort that also aimed at helping veterans returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. I naively thought that both Democrats and Republicans would support such a worthwhile program, given the historical fondness for the old Conservation Corps, which helped so many families during the Great Depression. Boy, was I wrong. The presidential election was coming up, and a party-line Republican vote defeated Obama’s proposal.

Now we’re in another election year, but this time, both presidential candidates are eager to promise that they would spend on the order of \$275 billion (Hillary Clinton) to over \$500 billion (Donald Trump) on various public projects to “fix” our national infrastructure. Still, this is a drop in the bucket compared to the estimated \$4 trillion that the American Society of Civil Engineers says the country needs.

Proposals from the candidates to repair our national parks, however, are either inadequate or entirely absent. Earlier, Bernie Sanders was the exception; he co-sponsored

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the Rebuild America Act of 2015, which would set aside \$3 billion a year to improve both our national parks and other public lands.

As for Clinton, she proposes replacing the Land and Water Conservation Fund with an American Parks Trust Fund and roughly doubling its funding. The average annual appropriation for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which gets its money from offshore oil and gas drilling, has been a paltry annual \$40 million for federal lands, and that money is often diverted by Congress to other uses. In any case, the public-land need is in the billions, with the Park Service alone facing a \$12 billion backlog of deferred maintenance projects.

Neither candidate's proposal is necessarily benign: Clinton says she wants to increase oil and gas production, as well as renewable energy, on public lands, and Trump's Republican Party has been at the forefront of proposals to either turn federal land over to the states, or to privatize the public lands.

Both candidates say that they will work hard to put people back to work, especially the 'angry' people who say they feel forgotten, or discounted. If so, there's a ready-made solution for such people, especially our returning war veterans: Put them to work repairing roads, bridges and buildings in our national parks and on our other public lands. This would give veterans a chance to transfer their hard-earned skills from military war zones to peaceful public purposes. The program could also be expanded to help workers displaced by jobs going overseas, something that politicians often promise but seldom achieve.

Our public lands generate ecological, social and economic benefits that last for decades, if not centuries, and

Highlander Conservation

they need to be funded by long-term debt. These lands were not set aside to become cash registers, and relying on the free market to monetize them is fruitless. It is long past time that we drop the austerity policies that keep failing our public lands.

What can we do as Election Day draws near or is over? We can put the elected officials on the spot by asking when will they support a Civilian Conservation Corps along the lines of the one proposed by President Obama. Our national parks, forests and rangelands and our prized fishing, hunting and hiking areas have all been neglected. We say we cherish our wide-open spaces; well, it's time we made them healthy again.

*Gundars Rudzitis is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News (hcn.org). He is professor emeritus of geography at the University of Idaho; his next book is the forthcoming **The Ongoing Transformation of the American West.***

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Burner Of Land Management

By Krista Langlois

It takes year-round planning to host 70,000 people in one of the planet's harshest environments.

Every summer, tens of thousands of people descend on the Black Rock Playa in northwest Nevada to build Black Rock City, a temporary utopia that's the site of the Burning Man festival. Burners, as attendees are called, see the sun-bleached, heat-shimmered desert as a blank slate, an empty canvas onto which they can project radical self-expression and creativity. But Bureau of Land Management employees William Mack, Jr. and David Freiberg have a different perspective.

Unlike Coachella, Bonnaroo or other big festivals that unfold on private property, Burning Man takes place entirely within a 800,000-acre National Conservation Area managed by the BLM, a federal agency best known for overseeing mineral leasing, petroleum drilling and grazing. That means the whole event — from the private planes dropping off techies from San Francisco to the trucks

trundling across the playa to the 40-foot-tall burning effigy that gives the festival its name — is governed by federal officials and required to abide by strict environmental laws.

Figuring out how to safely get 70,000 people in and out of one of the harshest places on the planet without harming the environment is a full-time job — literally. In 2014, the BLM created a “Burning Man project manager” position to handle the increasingly heavy workload. Freiberg, then a outdoor recreation planner in Idaho, applied. He was hired. For the past three years, Freiberg's working life has revolved around Burning Man. Mack — his boss, who manages the Black Rock BLM office — has a slew of other responsibilities, but he, too, juggles Burning Man year round, and coordinates law enforcement and emergency services during the event, among other tasks.

High Country News spoke with Mack and Freiberg about what it's like to be the federal government's leading experts on Burning Man. And a couple of notes: all costs associated with Burning Man — including the project manager position — are covered by event organizers and do not come from taxpayer money. Also, the following interview was conducted by phone and email, and was edited for clarity and conciseness.

HCN: Why is managing Burning Man a full-time, year-round job?

Mack: I only have 13 staff members in my office, and they have a full gantlet of work. The Black Rock Playa attracts a lot of people — a lot of films and commercials are shot out there. If my outdoor recreation planners have to deal with all that, there's no way they can deal with Burning Man on top of it. It's key to have someone who can focus specifically on this event, because there's a lot of coordination that goes on. My phone never stops ringing with some issue or another dealing with Burning Man. It's part of our lives all year long.



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HCN: What kind of issues?

Mack: It's not one specific thing. It's the highway department dealing with traffic or an issue the tribes might identify. But to give you one example, this year, Black Rock City decided they wanted to implement their own commercial airline. That took a lot of coordination.

HCN: Had either of you been to Burning Man before?

Mack: Before I came to Nevada I worked for BLM Wyoming for 18 years, and I had never heard of Burning Man. I had no idea it existed. I was kind of taken aback... I've been involved in a lot of things in public lands in my career, but nothing like this.

Freiberg: I've been with the BLM for 15 years, and as an outdoor recreation planner, I jumped at the chance to do this. It's the biggest, most visible, most complicated special recreation permit in the country. It's a real career opportunity.

HCN: The event just ended. Are you already working on next year?

Freiberg: Yeah, the review process begins immediately.

BLM, Black Rock City, the sheriff's office — all the cooperating agencies start reviewing the 2016 event and making recommendations for next year.

*An aerial view of Black Rock City, 2013 Flickr user
Duncan Rawlinson (Continued next page.)*



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And then there's the famous post-use site inspection, which is a geospatial exercise to determine how much MOOP — matter out of place — is left out there. Burning Man is held to a standard of no more than one square foot of MOOP per acre. Usually they pass by a wide margin.

HCN: So does that mean Burning Man's impact on the playa is fairly low?

Mack: I wouldn't say that. The National Environmental Policy Act document for Burning Man identifies areas of significant impact that Black Rock City agrees to mitigate. Part of it is trash cleanup, part of it is moving the location periodically so it's not in the same place on the playa each year. But with 70,000 people and numerous vehicles and airplanes, there are impacts. To our knowledge, though, there hasn't been enough impact to say the playa is forever damaged.

Freiberg: The Black Rock Desert Playa is unique in that it's an unvegetated, flat expanse of alkali lake-bed, and while the Burning Man event certainly has impacts on the ecosystem, an event of this size and scale may not be appropriate for a different landscape, such as sage-steppe grassland like you might find in Idaho. Impacts like vegetation trampling, human-caused wildfire and wildlife displacement aren't as likely on the playa.

In most cases, though, large events like this are not well suited to undeveloped natural areas on public lands. Over

the past few years I've received inquiries from other potential applicants for similar or related events, but usually these folks eventually opt for a private property location due to the difficulty and complexity of finding an appropriate site on BLM land.

HCN: What are some of the unique challenges to planning Burning Man?

Freiberg: The BLM is responsible for managing public lands for all the American people — which includes the participants. We never overlook that primary responsibility. But there are also impacts that BLM has little or no control over: impacts to nearby communities, highways, Native American tribes and other public land users. Burning Man affects a very diverse group of people, and it's challenging to find a way to foster communication among those different folks.

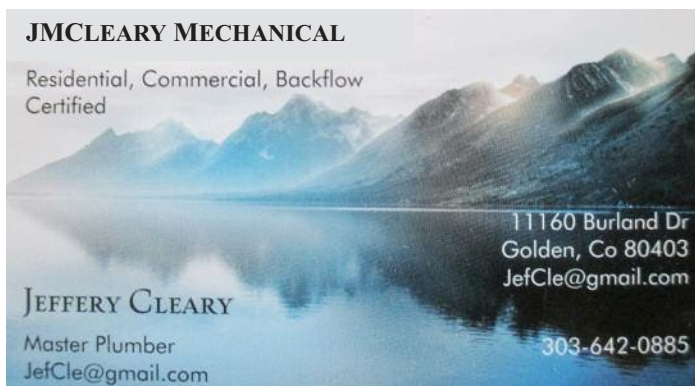
Mack: We have everyone from multi-billionaire business moguls to celebrities to crown princes of countries coming to the playa. It takes a lot to prepare for such a clientele to come to such a remote area. We have one large group of people that support and adore this event, and another that doesn't. At the end of the day, building relationships between those groups is key to making this happen. The political aspect is huge.

Krista Langlois is a correspondent with High Country News.



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Buffalo Migration Has Begun:

Invoking The Honorable Harvest

For the third straight October, wild buffalo families are already beginning to migrate from Yellowstone into Montana. Until these recent years, it was extremely rare for the matriarch-led family groups to leave the park so early. They have traveled many miles to their new year-round habitat on Horse Butte, causing BFC and local residents to both celebrate and become increasingly vigilant, watching out for threats. As we feared, within a day of the buffalo being spotted, hunters arrived. Luckily, the buffalo are currently safe on lands where hunting is not allowed, and they have many people looking out for them. But the hunters and game wardens are watching closely, too, possibly being tipped off by the local Montana Department of Livestock agent and the state-run "buffalo hunt hotline." Fair doesn't even come into play and the buffalo don't stand a chance with so much stacked against them, including hunters racing against Yellowstone's buffalo trap which the Park Service intends to open earlier this year.

As we stand on the edge of another season, when many hundreds of buffalo will likely either be gunned down or captured and sent to slaughter, we would like to re-awaken the concept and practice of The Honorable Harvest, and remember our responsibility to other beings on this Earth. One example is from the tribes of the Pacific Northwest. When the salmon were about to return from the ocean to the rivers of their birth the people would light beacon fires on the headlands to help them find their way. As these elders swam from ocean to rivers, the people would sing them welcoming songs in gratitude for their return. They would also watch as the fish swam by, refraining from taking a single one for at least four days. This ensured that the salmon would be able to complete their journey to lay and fertilize the eggs who would later return to the ocean, completing the cycle. After this life-giving task was completed, the elder fish would die, their life spent and it's purpose nearly complete. Those bodies of the dead fish who made it so far up river were also feeding the forest from the bellies of grizzly bears, the people, ravens, eagles, wolves, and others who consume their flesh. The forest in turn offered shade to the life-giving waters, offering life to the fish, who offers life to the people, who would offer life back to the salmon.

This reciprocal relationship is known as the Honorable Harvest. It is something that we have largely forgotten. Imagine if, when the buffalo first arrived into Montana, rather than being descended upon with rifles and traps, we

sang them welcoming songs. Imagine if instead of killing every buffalo who walked across the government's man-made line, we let them pass freely, for days and weeks, allowing them to continue on their journeys, giving them life before ever asking them to give us theirs. Do people even ask anymore? We have become a culture of takers, but it is never too late to find our way again. It is time to embrace The Honorable Harvest. It is time to re-enter true relationship and give back to those who sustain us. We pray for the buffalo that the people will awaken from this colonial nightmare that has us trapped in



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our fitful sleep, and remember that the buffalo, like the salmon, like all of life, is a gift.

Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer, a Potawatomi scientist, articulates it best: "The Honorable Harvest, a practice both ancient and urgent, applies to every exchange between people and the Earth. Its protocol is not written down, but if it were, it would look something like this: Ask permission of the ones whose lives you seek. Abide by the answer.

Never take the first. Never take the last.

Harvest in a way that minimizes harm.

Take only what you need and leave some for others.

Use everything that you take.

Take only that which is given to you.

Share it, as the Earth has shared with you.

Be grateful.

Reciprocate the gift.

Sustain the ones who sustain you, and the Earth will last forever.

Though we live in a world made of gifts, we find ourselves harnessed to institutions and an economy that relentlessly ask, 'What more can we take from the Earth?' In order for balance to occur, we cannot keep taking without replenishing. Don't we need to ask, 'What can we give?'

Make A Stand In Your Mind: Hope

By Frosty Wooldridge

Passion drove such men as Leonardo da Vinci to paint the Mona Lisa. That same desire compelled men like the Wright brothers to create an airplane so they could fly. Passion drove Susan B. Anthony to organize the suffragettes to bring voting rights to the women of America. Martin Luther King's fervor vaporized racial barriers for all people in the United States.

Another hundred examples of men and women following their passions could be given. We all benefited from their courage, their faith and their hope.

But what drives most people to make this a better world? I contend that "hope" causes the greatest energy within a human being to persevere, to endure great hardship and to triumph when all else fails.

It reminds me of the story of the three guys who died in a car crash. When they arrived at heaven's gate, St. Peter asked each of them what they hoped folks would say at their funerals as they looked down into the casket:

The first man said, "I hope they mentioned that I was a good doctor, husband and father."

The second man said, "I think they will say that I was a

good family man, hard worker at the office and that I played a great game of tennis."

The third man said smiling, "Look! He's still moving!" Ah, yes, we hope to live forever.

If you remember Pandora's box, the last treasure of "hope" lay at the bottom. It created the foundation for all the other surprises in Pandora's box.

"Hope" drives each of us to work for a better day, a stunning victory and a personal triumph. Those without hope quickly give up, pass on and fail to triumph.

In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, he spoke about moving through your life until you reached your mid-years where you arrive at a dark woods. Which path will you choose? What do you contemplate for your remaining years?

Are you familiar with Christmas wreaths? During the dark days of winter before the rebirth of the sun on December 21st, ancient people removed their wheels from their carts. They stashed them against their houses while they covered them with pine branches, bulbs and other colorful objects. Within the darkness of the December days, they "hoped" for the sun to shine longer and brighter.

While winter days mean slowing down, you enjoy the chance to rekindle your "hope" with wreaths, ribbons and lights. We face dark days and the hope for brighter days.

During that time, you may plant a seed within your mind to bring thought to form. You may inject an idea into the universal "mind" to germinate throughout the winter, which in turn may birth in the spring. Make a stand in your mind.

It's been said that difficulties break some men or women and make others great. That case could be made for the late Nelson Mandela who suffered 27 years of imprisonment for his actions against apartheid. While in prison, he birthed a seed of freedom and kept it burning within him for 27 years. At the end, he became president of the country that imprisoned him. He died recently as a

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3. Open to possibilities and take a leap of faith toward your intended goals.
4. Know that your expectations coupled with actions create results.




(White-winged pelicans fly thousands of miles to their nesting grounds in Canada to rear their young.)

Finally, look up the parable of *The Cape*. It features a kid who tied a cape around his neck so he could jump off buildings and fly. Whether you engage a cape or your mind, it's all up to you how far you can fly. Ask the Wright brothers!

Editor's Note: At this particular time in this year it is difficult at best to find hope. We've all been beat down by the negative of politics, societal unrest and painful cultural change.

While I personally have always subscribed to pulling positives out of negatives, sometimes it is much harder to do than to say.

This month highlights the act of thanksgiving so if nothing else we must rise to that occasion and remember what we are thankful for and focus on giving thanks.


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Digitally Disconnected

By Leah Todd

How rural students struggle to find internet access, and what one small college is doing about it.

Completing homework assignments is tougher for Aaliyah Juanico, 14, than it is for other kids at Farmington High School. That's because, unlike 90% of her peers, Juanico's family doesn't have an internet connection at their home.

Juanico can access the internet on her cell phone, but she says it's a slow connection at her house an hour from town. She also fears using too much cellular data, which can slap her family with a fee. Sometimes, Juanico's parents drive her to a library or McDonald's. While that approach usually works, it's hardly ideal.

"It's very stressful at times," Juanico said. "Because sometimes we don't have gas in the car. And I have to explain to my teachers why I can't get the assignment done."

Roughly one in 10 students at Farmington Municipal Schools lack internet access at home, according to a student survey conducted among 6th through 12th graders there earlier this year. (Teachers say the real figure is likely even higher.) That's a problem for a school district that

requires students to complete online exercises and turn in homework electronically. It's also an issue that disproportionately affects students whose families can't afford the internet—a substantial concern in Farmington, where half the students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. And the lack of connectivity isn't just a problem for schools. Nationally, home broadband in rural areas lags behind urban and suburban centers, a discouraging reality that can stifle economic development and employment. Fortunately for Juanico and other Farmington residents, however, one potential fix to the connectivity crisis is happening just across town.

The budding solution comes courtesy of Christopher Schipper, director of the San Juan College library in Farmington. For years, Schipper watched students migrate from their spots in the college library to hallways and stairwells just outside once the library closed—a desperate attempt to squeeze a little more work out of the free campus internet before returning home for the night. A simple idea occurred to him: why can't these students take a little piece of the internet home with them each night?

Schipper had read about the New York City Library's wireless hotspot program, which, starting in 2014, used a \$1 million donation from Google and several grants to offer 10,000 free wireless hotspots for families for an entire school year. The devices, hardly larger than a pack of playing cards, are often available for free with a contract from major cellular companies, and can connect to the internet anywhere with cell phone reception.

Last year, inspired by New York's success, Schipper purchased 10 hotspots, using \$5,000 from the college foundation's endowment fund. "The need is consistent and it's strong," Schipper said. Typically, he said, there's a waiting list of 10 to 15 people who want to check out one of his hotspots for a week at a time. "It's not perfect. If it were perfect, we'd be loaning these out for an entire semester, and we'd have 100 of them or more."

This year, the program's second, Schipper added five more devices and increased the amount of data each student can use tenfold. He's received inquiries from a rural librarian in Florida and a library in Iowa that want to try the same approach.

"It's woefully inadequate," Schipper said of his program. "But we do what we can. It's a social justice issue. I don't know how else to think about it."

Although Schipper's program is helping Farmington's college students, bigger connectivity solutions are a necessity for America's small towns. Internet connections are often slower and more expensive in rural places than in cities, in part because it's so expensive to run high-speed lines to tiny, remote communities. And costs can vary

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wildly. According to a 2015 analysis by the state Public School Facilities Authority, the monthly rates schools pay for internet access run from as little as \$1.35 per megabit per second to as much as \$3,780. Federal and state initiatives have tried to incentivize infrastructure development, especially in rural communities, but towns like Farmington are still a long way off.

Schools nationwide have adapted. A school district in Arizona partnered with local businesses to install Wi-Fi on school buses. Another district in Washington built wireless internet kiosks in public housing. In Farmington, each student in grades 6 through 12 receives a laptop. But the devices don't help much if students can't access the academic sites and research links the school increasingly relies on.

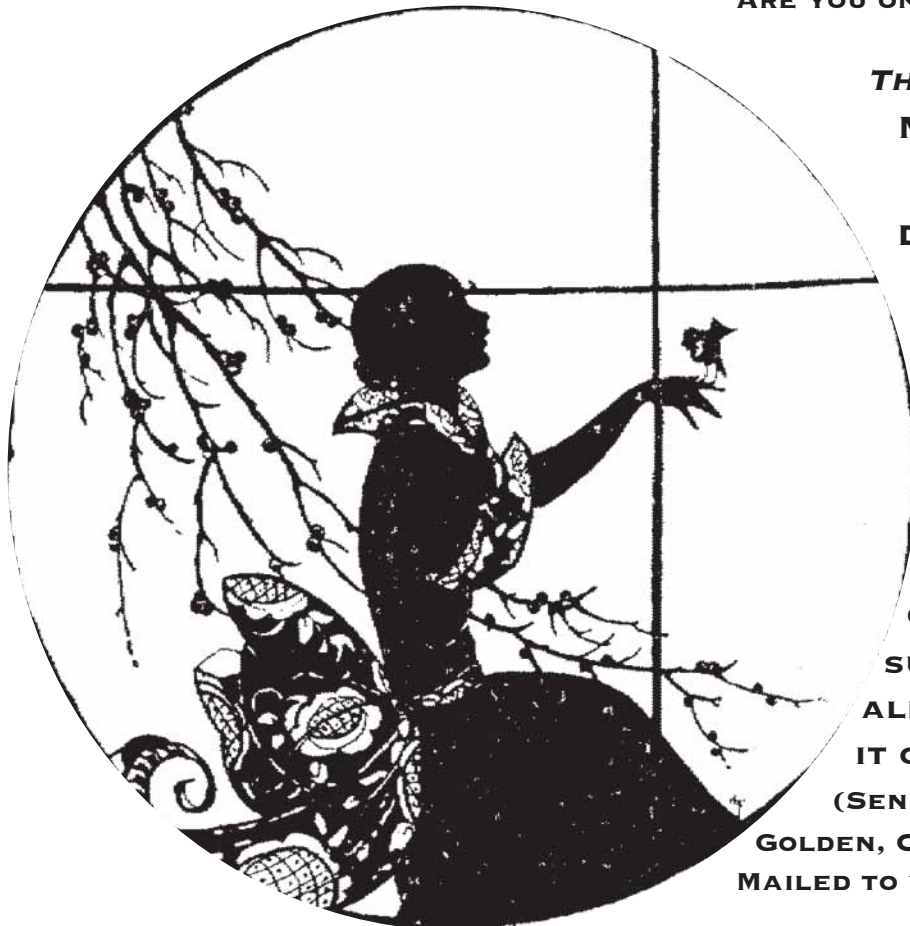
Despite these challenges, and although a growing number of schools elsewhere are experimenting with wireless hotspots, the Farmington school district hasn't seriously considered sending the devices home with students. That's partly because even the hotspots are an imperfect solution: they only work in places with adequate cell phone reception, which is not a guarantee in northern New Mexico. Plus, the district isn't exactly flush with cash these days: due to an ongoing state budget crisis, Farmington Municipal Schools started the year in a \$4.2 million deficit, with more cuts pending.

Instead, the district is focused on bringing decent internet to school facilities, said Charles Thacker, the district's executive director of technology. Thacker is also working on a bigger vision: He wants wireless hotspots installed throughout the city, not just at the schools. That will take money, new infrastructure and a level of cooperation between the town, county and private industry that other cities have managed, but that has eluded Farmington so far. (Farmington ranked last in a survey of American cities that measured high-speed internet use in 2013.)

Until better wireless access comes to Farmington, students will continue to improvise. Charity Roy, a ninth grader whose family doesn't have broadband, will carefully leave open the website windows she thinks she will need before she leaves school each day. Teachers will continue to give Zechariah Ancira Buckway, a seventh grader, more time on assignments because they know his family doesn't have internet access at home.

And Aaliyah Juanico will hop from McDonald's to the library when she can. She'll continue spending afternoons at the Farmington Boys and Girls Club, where she waits until her parents get off work, and where the internet is plentiful—and free.

This story is part of the "Small towns, big change" project through the Solutions Journalism Network.



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New Facility Up and Running

United Power's 13-bay garage and warehouse is now complete at our Coal Creek Office. The project was an effort to continue to provide our members with the most reliable and efficient service. The facility provides space to store our vehicles and equipment throughout the year, especially during the winter months which can bring adverse weather conditions.

By utilizing an upgraded facility, United Power is able to maintain our vehicles and equipment for a longer period of time, which equates to a cost savings to the cooperative and our members.



Our crews will now be able to respond quicker and safer to outages because vehicles and equipment will be more easily accessible - rather than being buried under three feet of snow.

For more information, please call our Coal Creek office at 303-642-7921.



Free Trip to D.C.

United Power is now accepting applications for the Washington, D.C. Youth Tour to be held June 8-15, 2017. The cooperative will pay all expenses for this unique opportunity for three local students to experience our nation's capital first hand.

United Power's Youth Tour is open to high school students 16 years of age or older and whose primary residence is in United Power's service territory. Applications are available under the 'My Community' tab at www.unitedpower.com. For more information contact Julie Stewart, Community Outreach Specialist, at 303-637-1334. **Applications must be postmarked by January 12, 2017.**



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Washington, D.C.
June 8-15, 2017

Customer Service: 303-637-1300

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www.unitedpower.com

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