



February 22, 2021

Mr. Eduardo Garcia, Chair
California Assembly
Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee
1020 N Street, Room 160
Sacramento, CA 95814

Ms. Megan Dahle, Vice Chair
California Assembly
Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee
1020 N Street, Room 160
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: March 2, 2021 Informational Hearing and CALREC Vision

Honorable Assembly Members Garcia and Dahle:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this correspondence ahead of the Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee Informational Hearing scheduled for March 2, 2021. We appreciate your interest in California's parks, public lands and outdoor recreation assets and look forward to working with you on many forthcoming initiatives related to enhancing our outdoor recreation assets and experiences.

In January 2020, Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access (MLTPA) embarked on the CALREC Vision process to highlight the essential, multi-benefit role that sustainable recreation plays in California. This process was in response to several factors impacting outdoor recreation in California over the past few years including catastrophic wildfires, increased resource impacts, uncertain funding and rising recreation demand and visitation.

In March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic became a harsh reality, and while plans for in-person convening were not feasible, the CALREC Vision process continued through a series of virtual sessions with an Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, CA State Parks, Visit California, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Rural County Representatives of CA, CA Strategic Growth Council and the CA Landscape Stewardship Network. The results of the sessions were focused discussions and agreement about the need for *cross-jurisdictional collaboration* and identified areas where collaboration can advance sustainable outdoor recreation goals within respective federal, state and local agencies, organizations and throughout California.

Released in December 2020, CALREC Vision emphasizes that collaboration by willing partners across jurisdictions is essential and notes three critical areas to success: 1) state leadership to facilitate, incentivize, and support functional alignments across jurisdictions; 2) building collaborative capacity and; 3) engaging California's diverse regions.

CALREC Vision also identified three Areas of Focus - Public Access & Visitor Experience, Public Land Management, and Local Economic Benefits – and established objectives for sustainable recreation within each of the focus areas. Additionally, a list of Implementation Actions for Collaborators was developed for various agencies and partners to pursue and is intended to provide initial project direction. The complete CALREC Vision document is included for your reference.

Using CALREC Vision’s Areas of Focus and Implementation Actions for Collaborators, we would like to share four recommendations as you consider legislation, policies and projects to enhance and steward California’s sustainable outdoor recreation experiences and assets especially in light of the historic “Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California’s Forests and Rangelands” executed between the State of California and the United States Forest Service in August of 2020:

1. Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration: Integrate the importance of cross-jurisdictional collaboration into state planning and policy processes. Recognizing that 43.7M acres of California’s public lands are managed by federal agencies and 2M acres are managed by state agencies, there is a need for federal agencies to be at the table as planning and policy processes are undertaken.

2. Regional Recreation Collaboratives: Given the state’s geographic and cultural diversity, establish standing regional recreation collaboratives between land managers and communities to improve resource stewardship, resilience, and the benefits of outdoor recreation. Use the regional recreation collaboratives to develop respective toolkits and playbooks to inform and direct their own work.

3. Recreation Access and Equity: Create and implement a statewide outdoor recreation access and equity program across all jurisdictions that removes barriers and increases equitable outdoor recreation for all Californians.

4. Functional Alignment: Align capacity, share resources, and decrease duplication across land management agencies through increased and improved partnerships. Develop policies that leverage diverse funding sources and agency capacity.

In California, we are facing the reality of ongoing pressures on effective management of natural and cultural resources due to increased use of outdoor recreation assets. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these pressures and exposed the inequities and obstacles in our institutions and a confusing set of rules and regulations across our land management agencies.

We recognize that the Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee may be considering proposed legislation focused on preserving and stewarding our natural resources in the upcoming months. We encourage you to consider integrating objectives from CALREC Vision into future legislative and policy processes related to California’s outdoor recreation assets in order to mitigate pressures and obstacles facing equitable access and enhanced experiences for all Californians.

Thank you for your interest in CALREC Vision. We look forward to future opportunities to discuss next steps and collaboratively identify projects for implementation.

Respectfully submitted,



John Wentworth

CEO / Board President

Mammoth Lakes Trails & Public Access Foundation

CALREC Vision



**Cross-Jurisdictional
Collaboration
To Advance Sustainable
Outdoor Recreation
In California**



CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL COLLABORATION TO ADVANCE SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION IN CALIFORNIA

Managing public lands for outdoor recreation in California connects three fundamental dimensions of sustainability: environmental protection, economic opportunities, and social impact. Environmentally, stewarding public lands for outdoor recreation is associated with ecosystem protection and conservation efforts that ensure watershed, forest, and habitat preservation. In economic benefits, more than 691,000 jobs are supported and \$92 billion in economic impact is created by consumer spending in California's outdoor economy.¹ Socially, active recreational pursuits and public access to the outdoors provide proven physical and mental-health benefits for individuals.

As critical as these benefits are to California, there is often inconsistent coordination or a lack of cross-jurisdictional collaboration among federal, state, regional, and local entities that are responsible for managing recreation lands and programs. Institutional silos persist even where significant shared interests and operational efficiencies overlap, leading to duplicated efforts among agencies with stretched resources and budgets. Conflicting public-access rules and fees for the same recreational experience, sometimes on neighboring public lands, arise. And the silos create tension between promoting recreation assets to drive visitation and managing ongoing environmental impacts to natural resources.

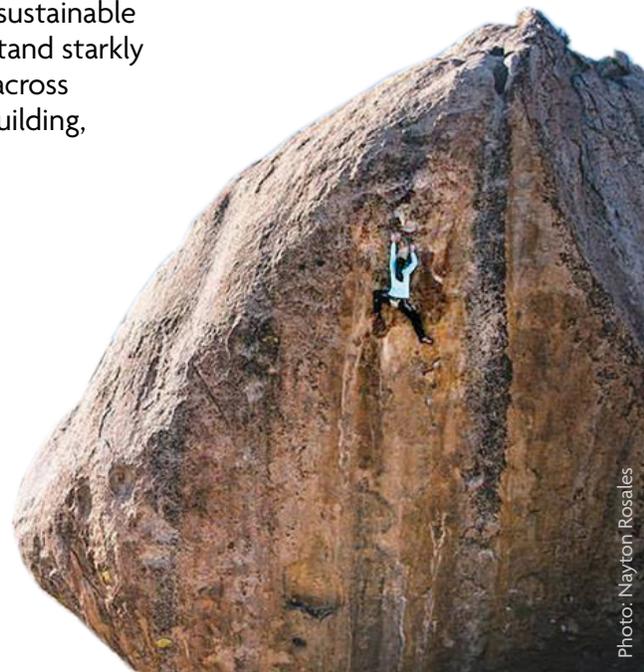
The case for statewide cross-jurisdictional collaboration is clear. Catastrophic wildfires and other consequences of climate change have demonstrated the necessity for coordination among agencies, local governments, and organizations that collectively face destructive impacts to communities, forests, and recreation resources. Greater demand for equitable access to outdoor recreation for all Californians has highlighted systemic institutional and cultural barriers that have excluded underserved communities from the outdoors. In 2020, COVID-19 added a stark, imperative argument for collaboration. The need for alignment with public-health rules has underscored the interconnectedness of outdoor recreation and the public's well-being. Variances in timing, scope, and scale of public-land closures and reopenings across sometimes contiguous jurisdictions, however, exposed the inadequacies of siloed jurisdictional approaches and created confusion for users and visitors while exacerbating inequality of access for underserved and minority populations.

Now is the time to direct stewardship-focused collaboration across government agencies and local jurisdictions to benefit the public through the practice of sustainable outdoor recreation. As institutional and operational inefficiencies stand starkly exposed, there is an unparalleled opportunity to create alignments across agencies for shared purposes. To do so, state leadership, capacity building, and a focus on regional solutions is necessary.

This paper reviews recently passed policies that offer incentives for collaboration, underscores the urgency for realizing sustainable outdoor recreation in California, suggests objectives on which collaboratives can focus, and identifies next steps for furthering this important work.

¹ Outdoor Industry Association; 2017 National Recreation Economy Report, California Data; retrieved from <https://outdoorindustry.org/state/california/>

Cover Photo: Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce/Inyo County Photo Shootout



OUTDOOR RECREATION IN CALIFORNIA...



*Source: 2015 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), California Department of Parks and Recreation

INCENTIVES FOR COLLABORATION

Two recent policy actions signal potential for greatly advancing cross-jurisdictional collaboration for sustainable outdoor recreation in California. First, the newly passed **Great American Outdoors Act** (GAOA) brings increased federal funding to recreation facilities and amenities across local, state, and

federal parks and recreation lands.² This new federal law dedicates up to \$1.9 billion annually for five years to address the deferred-maintenance backlog on federal public lands, including lands managed by the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Bureau of Indian Education. The GAOA also provides full funding for the existing Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), ensuring up to \$900 million annually to be allocated to conservation and recreation projects across the United States. State-specific allocations will be made on a formula basis, and the combined size and needs of California's local, regional, state, and federal park systems are anticipated to place the state in a leading position for increased LWCF funding.

The second recent development is the August 2020 signing of the **Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California's Forests and Rangelands** between the state of California and the United States Forest Service.³ Under the agreement, the state's Natural Resources Agency and the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region agree to "maintain and restore healthy forests and rangelands that reduce public safety risks, protect natural and built infrastructure, and enhance ecological habitat and biological diversity" and to "develop shared tools, coordinated processes, and innovative approaches to increase the pace, scale, and effectiveness of forest and rangeland stewardship in California." Significantly, one of the key actions identified in the agreement is the commitment by the state and its federal partner to work toward improving access to sustainable recreation through a commitment to "leverage resources and extend capacity through partnerships and alignment around a shared vision of access and diversity."

Together, these two new policies offer great promise, both as a key funding resource for sustainable infrastructure and programs and as a policy framework for elevating sustainable outdoor recreation across public-land managers and their partners in the state.

The GAOA and the Agreement for Shared Stewardship are important incentives to implement statewide initiatives using cross-jurisdictional collaboration to advance California policy goals:

- AB 32 Climate Change Scoping Plan (Air Resources Board)
- Access for All Initiative (California Natural Resources Agency)
- Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California's Forest and Rangelands (California Natural Resources Agency)
- California 2030: Natural and Working Lands Climate Change Implementation Plan (Air Resources Board)
- Cutting Green Tape Initiative (California Natural Resources Agency)
- Destination Stewardship and Sustainable Travel Plan (Visit California)
- Health in All Policies (Strategic Growth Council)
- Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (Governor's Office of Planning and Research)
- Local Government General Plan Guidance (Governor's Office of Planning and Research)
- Regions Rise Together (Governor's Office of Planning and Research [OPR] and Governor's Business and Economic Development [GOBiz]).
- Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Program (California Department of Parks and Recreation)





URGENCY

Passage of the GAOA and the signing of the Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California's Forests and Rangelands responds to the reality of the ongoing pressures on effective management of outdoor recreation-dependent natural and cultural resources. Deferred maintenance and neglected improvements to outdoor recreation infrastructure have diminished the availability of assets to the public. Agencies and local governments grapple with uneven visitation across public spaces; some of California's most popular natural resource attractions experience overcrowding, over-visitation, and adverse impacts that force periodic shutdowns, while other destinations struggle to maintain operations with little visitation and fewer available resources. Varying and conflicting access rules, policies, and fee structures on adjacent lands managed by different agencies lead to public confusion or resistance to such a patchwork of public access. COVID-19 has exacerbated these conditions and revealed systemic inequities and obstacles in institutions across the state and in the country. For outdoor recreation providers, land managers, and those promoting tourism and recreational pursuits, the current moment has proven especially acute.

In this same moment, an influx of recreation participants is requiring new ways of managing and enabling recreation. As under-resourced land managers navigate a pandemic, interest, awareness, and use of recreational resources has exploded as the public has turned to the outdoors as one of the few safe places to engage in social distancing. New uses of technology and changed operations and maintenance practices have been quickly implemented across recreation landscapes. Public-access limits have been instituted to protect visitors' and local residents' health while maintaining natural resources. The unprecedented public demand has created intense additional pressures on land-management institutions that were already underfunded and understaffed.⁴

2 United States Public Law 116-152—Aug. 4, 2020

3 Retrieved from <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/08/13/california-u-s-forest-service-establish-shared-long-term-strategy-to-manage-forests-and-rangelands/>

4 "Pack it in, pack it out": Tahoe locals protest trash, tourism amid COVID-19" Tahoe Daily News, Aug. 21, 2020



OBJECTIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION

- federal, state, regional, and local public land management agencies
- tourism offices and departments
- economic development agencies
- public health agencies
- business community (local, regional, and statewide)
- local and regional governments
- local community organizations
- conservation and recreation organizations
- recreation service providers

Cutting across various organizational and management boundaries requires a commitment to engaging in cross-jurisdictional collaboration and a process to effectively and creatively address problems by building shared commitments among partners to a new, common vision. Objectives to guide the development of that common vision are listed on the following page. These, and the sample implementation actions that follow, are intended as starting-place recommendations for land-management agencies and their partners as they pursue shared sustainable outdoor recreation goals. Additional opportunities, objectives, and actions should also be pursued as practitioners and their stakeholders engage in these efforts, work across bureaucratic barriers to align critical needs and opportunities, and learn from their practice.

This paper supports the implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act and Land and Water Conservation Fund allocations in California, along with the Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California's Forests and Rangelands between the state of California and the United States Forest Service, by including suggested objectives and sample collaborative actions in three key elements of sustainable outdoor recreation on the following page: **visitor experiences, public-land management practices, and local economic benefits.**

Meeting the urgency of the moment means marshaling expertise, authority, capacity, and resources from a variety of entities spanning diverse geographic and political jurisdictions. Critical partners in sustainable outdoor recreation collaboratives include:

The following agencies and organizations—not a definitive list—can provide cross-jurisdictional leadership to inspire collaborative sustainable outdoor recreation efforts in California:

FEDERAL

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- National Park Service (NPS)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- U.S. Corps of Engineers (USCOE)
- Department of Transportation (DOT)

STATE

- California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)
- California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
- California Department of Transportation (CalTrans)
- Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz)
- Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR)
- State Conservancies (Conservancies)
- Strategic Growth Council (SGC)
- Visit California (Visit CA)

REGIONAL & LOCAL

- County and City governments
- Public-health departments
- Parks and recreation districts and departments
- Special districts
- Conservation and recreation organizations



OBJECTIVES FOR...

 Public Access & Visitor Experience	 Public Land Management	 Local Economic Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Deliver consistent, high-quality outdoor recreational experiences across diversified landscapes, regardless of agency management. 2 Remove barriers and increase equitable outdoor recreation access opportunities for all Californians. 3 Increase the inclusion of sustainable outdoor recreation practices in appropriate state policy initiatives. 4 Enhance the public's understanding of California's outdoor recreation opportunities and their benefits. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Increase the ability of state, federal, and regional agencies to jointly construct, maintain, and operate recreational infrastructure and programs. 2 Align and enhance consistency in public messaging across agencies for outdoor recreation that reflects a shared California point of view. 3 Align outdoor recreation, tourism, and public-health sectors to achieve shared goals across contiguous landscapes. 4 Encourage the dispersment of visitation to outdoor recreation amenities throughout the state. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Build resilience into the economies of gateway communities to sustain their affordability and quality of life. 2 Elevate the benefits of sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism that steward and protect natural resources. 3 Align capacity, share resources, and decrease duplication across land-management agencies through partnerships. 4 Diversify economies of tourism- and recreation-based gateway communities through high-quality and well-paying jobs.



IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS FOR COLLABORATORS



<p>Create and implement a statewide outdoor recreation access and equity program across all jurisdictions.</p>	<p>Adopt a common set of sustainable outdoor recreation objectives in agencies' and departments' respective strategic plans.</p>	<p>Include sustainable outdoor recreation strategies in gateway community economic development plans.</p>
<p>Develop a coordinated, simplified public-access program or pass for equitable access to state and federal recreation lands.</p>	<p>Establish regional forums to share program ideas and inspire opportunities for active collaboration across jurisdictions.</p>	<p>Develop and share mapping and data across jurisdictions to identify sustainable outdoor recreation regions.</p>
<p>Include sustainable outdoor recreation infrastructure and program needs targeting underserved communities in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) for California.</p>	<p>Coordinate with state and regional tourism agencies to create and deploy consistent, cross-jurisdictional messaging regarding responsible recreation and stewardship.</p>	<p>Establish standing regional collaboratives between recreation land managers and rural communities to improve resource stewardship, resilience, and the benefits of outdoor recreation.</p>

MOVING COLLABORATION FORWARD

Land-management agencies and their outdoor recreation partners work with the knowledge that increased resource impacts, uncertain public funding, and rising recreation demand are becoming “the new normal” for California. With this in mind, collaboration by willing partners across jurisdictions to achieve the environmental, economic, and social benefits of sustainable outdoor recreation in California is essential. To do so, state leadership, capacity building, and a focus on the state’s regions will be critical to success.

STATE LEADERSHIP

State leadership is imperative to facilitate, incentivize, and support the functional alignments required to achieve sustainable outdoor recreation.



BUILDING COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY

Building collaborative capacity and anticipating the needs for successful collaboration is essential.



CALIFORNIA'S REGIONS

California's regions are a vital lens for the state and her citizens.



FOR STATE LEADERSHIP...

- Cross-jurisdictional collaboration as an agency or departmental objective must be considered essential, visible and enduring.
- Collaboration metrics should be developed for measuring the use and impact of cross-jurisdictional collaborations.
- State agencies and departments should share examples of collaborative resources and agreements, as well as support and disseminate additional resources developed by partners.



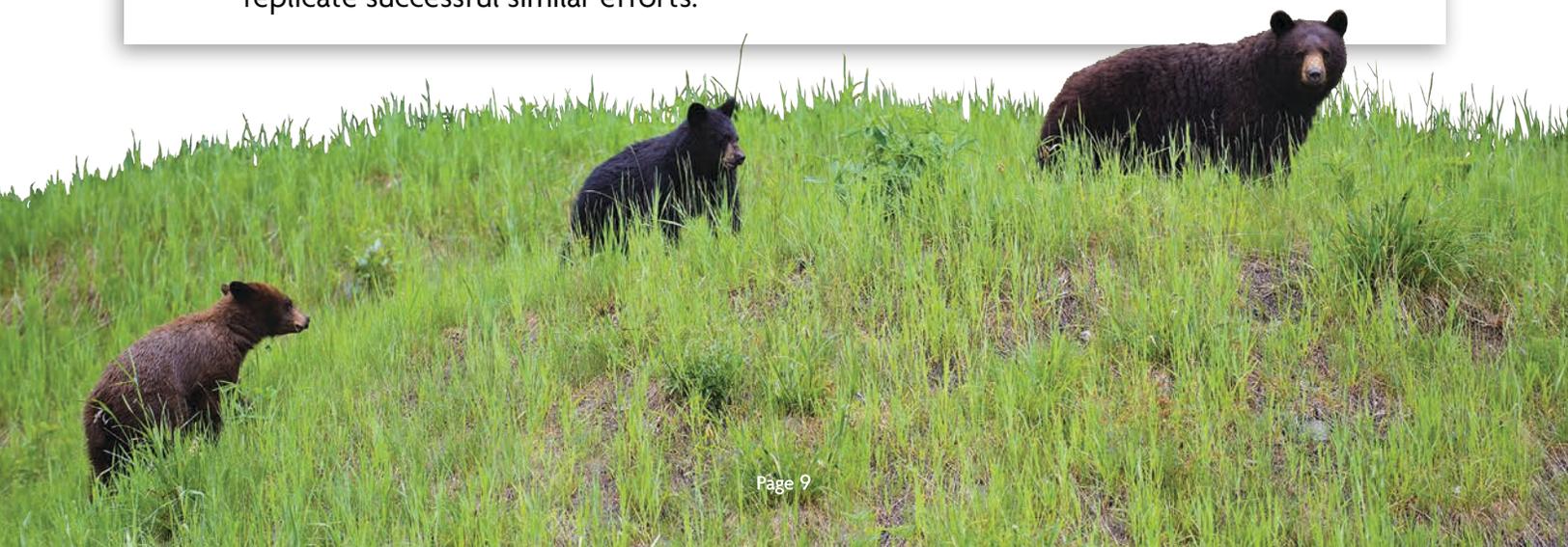
COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY...

- Agencies, organizations, regional partners, and stakeholders must acquire and share the necessary training and skills to effectively collaborate.
- As projects and programs are incepted and refined, key collaboration tools—strategic convening, effective communications, quality facilitation, meeting materials and support—must be built into project design and budgets.
- Projects and initiatives must purposefully anticipate the inclusion of relevant jurisdictions, agencies, and partners that can contribute to greater project success.



CALIFORNIA'S REGIONS...

- Given the state's geographic and cultural diversity, recreation collaboratives must be regionally determined with land managers, jurisdictions, practitioners, and stakeholders in the lead creating and guiding their own work.
- Toolkits and playbooks from regional efforts should be developed, published electronically, and widely disseminated to inform land managers and stakeholders across the state on best practices and models for success.
- A network of regionally based recreation collaboratives should be built to increase knowledge, connections, and resources that will help support and replicate successful similar efforts.



IN CONCLUSION

The responsibility for achieving triple-bottom-line benefits from sustainable outdoor recreation cannot rest on any one agency, department, or organization. State policymakers must assert the necessary leadership to promote collaboration. Local and regional organizations and entities must begin the on-the-ground work to recruit and align willing partners. The combination and coordination of these efforts will reveal a truly sustainable future for outdoor recreation in California. We invite all parties to come together and commit to this important work.

Please visit calrecvision.org to find out how.



CALREC
Vision

ABOUT

Sponsored and initiated by the Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation (MLTPA), the CALREC Vision project is working to highlight the essential, multi-benefit role that outdoor recreation plays in California. MLTPA has been engaged with local and regional issues of sustainable recreation and collaboration in California's Eastern Sierra since its inception and provides technical support to a regional public/public recreation-based solution, the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership. Given its role employing collaboration to improve the social, environmental, and economic impacts of recreation in the Eastern Sierra, MLTPA invites you to visit mltpa.org to learn more about our work.

In launching the CALREC Vision Project, MLTPA engaged counsel from an array of federal, state, and regional agency and organizational experts as an Advisory Committee. Participants in the Advisory Committee generously shared their time, perspective, and advice on these topics through a series of facilitated, virtual meetings from May 2020 through July 2020. The results of those productive meetings were focused discussions and agreement about the need for cross-jurisdictional collaboration, as virtually every participant expressed encountering similar challenges. Participants also helped identify areas where collaboration can advance sustainable outdoor recreation goals within their respective agencies and organizations and throughout California.

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