



# Colorado State Forest Service

## La Junta District 2009 Annual Report

**The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) mission is to provide for the stewardship of forest resources and to reduce related risks to life, property and the environment for the benefit of present and future generations.**

The La Junta District of the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) is one of 17 districts located throughout Colorado. We are an agency within the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University.

## 2009 Highlights from the La Junta District

### Ordway Fire Victims Begin Recovery Process through Planting Trees

Splashed with green, the Town of Ordway and Crowley County planted over 350 trees in the spring of 2009. Crowley County suffered a devastating wildfire in April 2008. The consequences of this disaster were innumerable—scores of families lost everything on their properties. After having lost so much, these community members were ready to begin rebuilding their lives. Many landowners were interested in replacing trees that were lost or severely damaged on their property due to the fire. There is arguably no better symbol for renewal than planting trees!

With the mounting interest to replant trees after the fire, the Reforest Ordway Committee formed in the summer of 2008. The committee is a diverse

group, with active members from the Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado State University Extension (Crowley County), Crowley County Commissioners, West Otero-Timpas Conservation District, and the Ordway Tree Board. The committee submitted a proposal to the Colorado Tree Coalition (CTC) requesting disaster assistance funds from the non-profit organization's program called "Reforest Colorado." The CTC subsequently awarded the committee \$7,500 to help fire victims replant trees.

Two days were set aside for planting trees, and many people volunteered their Saturdays to lend a hand to the project. Most landowners participating in the project were very humbled by the whole experience, and were surprised by the turnout of volunteers. These landowners are hard working and highly self-sufficient; therefore accepting so much help was hard for some. But they were all very gracious and just happy to "see something green" on their land, in the words of one landowner.

Volunteers were an essential component for this project. Volunteer recruiting was heavy; in the end, over 80 people volunteered their time and services. The committee and project recipients are very grateful to those who devoted time and services to see this project through to success.

#### ***Donations for the Reforesting Project Included:***

**Crowley County:** Heavy equipment and operators for removing dead trees, digging holes, and hauling debris; the use of the Crowley County Fairgrounds as a staging area for the project; and camping facilities for volunteers

**Lee Shofler, Fowler:** Cutting/shaping of tree staking materials

**Keith Swartz, S&B Porta-Bowl:** Two portable toilet facilities for both tree planting dates

**KJ Foods, Ordway:** Bottled water

**JR's Convenience Store, Ordway:** Ice

**JC Carrica, Second Chance Rental, Swink:** Heavy equipment/operator for tree removal, hydrant repair, digging holes

**Society of American Foresters, Southeast Colorado Chapter:** Funds for volunteers beverages

**Kim Baltazar, Jo Jancar, Brook Matthew, Natalie Edmundson, Gayla Brown:** Homemade cookies and brownies for volunteers

**Hotchkiss Volunteer Fire Department:** Fabrication of metal stake pounder

**Sugar City Volunteer Fire Department:** Compilation/storage of lunches, snacks and drinks for volunteers; use of fire engine/operators on both planting days to water newly planted trees

**Colorado State Forest Service, Volunteer Program:** Funds to purchase lunches, snacks and drinks for volunteers

**West Otero-Timpas Conservation District:** Funds to purchase tree staking materials, administration of project funds and grant reporting

### **Tree Planting Volunteers**

Crew Leaders: John Grieve, CSFS Cañon City District; Mike Hughes, CSFS Fort Collins District; Jeff Burns, CSFS Alamosa District; Donna Davis, CSFS La Junta District.

### **Crew Members**

- Phi Theta Kappa Members, Otero Junior College
- Boy Scout Troop 83, Fort Collins
- Colorado State Forest Service: La Junta District,

- Granby District, Fort Collins District, Golden District, State Office
- Regis University, Denver
- Colorado State University Master Gardeners in Training, Pueblo West
- Karval Future Farmers of America (FFA) sponsors and members
- Colorado Tree Coalition members
- West Otero-Timpas Conservation District
- Colorado State Forest Service Volunteer Stewards, Fort Collins
- Ordway Tree Board
- Natural Resource Conservation Service Earth Team members
- CSU Ag Research Farm, Rocky Ford
- Las Animas community members
- La Junta community members
- Swink community members
- Ordway community members
- Colorado State University Extension, Crowley County

The CSFS would also like to recognize the following people:

First and foremost, thanks to Kim Baltazar with CSU Extension in Crowley County. Kim took on project logistics and kept committee members on track throughout the entire process. Kim consistently offered her services to the project, and was always calling to ask, "What do you need me to do next?" Without Kim, this project would not have come to fruition.

Also, thanks to Natalie Edmundson with CSU Extension and Crowley County Commissioner Frank Grant. They worked tirelessly to see this project through and offered their assistance with many aspects of the project, from volunteer recruiting to site preparation and making the long journey to Colorado Springs to pick up a load of trees. Pat Cole, the Ordway Tree Board and the Sugar City Volunteer Fire Department also deserve a huge thank you for their efforts. The fire department volunteered to gather and deliver lunches, snacks and drinks for the over 80 volunteers. They also volunteered the use of

one of their fire engines and operators to water newly planted trees on both days of the planting effort.

A lot of hard work went on behind the scenes for this project to realize success, but not everyone who helped wanted special recognition. Their hearts were just glad to know that what they did helped those who had lost so much. A special thank you to all of these humble helpers.



*Reforest Ordway volunteers celebrate Arbor Day with the planting of over 350 trees in Crowley County.*

## **Fire Funding for the Plains: 11 Departments Receive Grants for 2008-2009**

Almost \$394,000 in Volunteer Fire Assistance Grants have been awarded to local departments since 2001.

- 2001 – \$62,940, 17 fire departments
- 2002 – \$64,190, 16 fire departments
- 2003 – \$58,842, 16 fire departments
- 2004 – \$44,317, 9 fire departments
- 2005 – \$59,556, 14 fire departments
- 2006 – \$54,593, 11 fire departments
- 2007 – \$49,525, 11 fire departments
- 2008 - 2009 – \$35,183, 11 fire departments

Through the National Fire Plan, needed funding came to rural fire departments in southeast Colorado. The Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program,

administered through the Colorado State Forest Service, offered matching funds to fire departments for organizing, training and/or equipping rural fire personnel serving communities with a population under 10,000. A big thank you to the fire department personnel who initiated an application. Through their efforts, their departments received the following funds:

- LeRoy England, Campo VFD - \$978
- Michael Smith, Cheyenne Wells FPD - \$4,282
- Randy Corsentino/Kelsey Fedde, Fowler FPD - \$2,473
- Clay Hasser and Hasty-McClave VFD - \$3,777
- Kyle Neil and Michael Daskam, Holly Fire Department - \$2,482
- Aaron Eveatt, La Junta FD - \$6,335
- Jim Pryor and Jonathan Kindell, Las Animas/Bent County FPD - \$1,644
- Staffon Warn, Prowers County RFD - \$5,404
- Bobby Schaller, Springfield VFD - \$1,104
- Monty Weeks, West Cheyenne FPD and Kit Carson VFD - \$4,086
- Harold Unwin, Kim VFD - \$2,413

## **Without Expecting It... Fire Reimbursement Came**

The CSFS La Junta District Office assisted Crowley County by collecting initial attack engine/crew documentation for the Ordway Fire from April 15-17, 2008.

The Ordway Fire expense did not meet the minimum threshold requirement for the FEMA Fire Suppression Grant application, however. The minimum threshold needed was approximately \$267,000.

Despite not receiving FEMA funds, reimbursement did come in the spring of 2009, under Executive Order funding provided by the Governor's Office and administered by the Colorado Division of Emergency Management.

The professionalism and "whenever-needed" emergency response from southeast Colorado fire departments couldn't be more deserving of these reimbursements funds. The following are fire reimbursement fund recipients and the amounts each department received.

- Boone VFD - \$3,369
- Cheyenne County FPD 1/Cheyenne Wells VFD - \$1,761
- Crowley FD - \$2,882
- Edison FPD (Yoder) - \$3,175
- Fowler RFPD - \$1,480
- Hasty/McClave Volunteer Fire & Ambulance - \$1,493
- Haswell VFD - \$530
- Hoehne FPD - \$1,244
- Huerfano County FPD - \$2,068
- Karval FPD - \$1,776
- Kiowa County Fire (Eads) - \$2,159
- Kiowa County Road & Bridge - \$565
- West Cheyenne County FPD/Kit Carson VFD - \$2,337
- La Junta RFPD - \$2,771
- Lamar City FD - \$1,108
- Las Animas/Bent County FPD - \$1,570
- Limon FD - \$1,180
- Manzanola RFPD - \$1,539
- Olney Springs VFD - \$734
- Ordway/Crowley County FD - \$17,043
- Prowers Rural Fire - \$932
- Pueblo County DEM - \$4,319
- Pueblo City FD - \$1,262
- Pueblo Rural FD - \$3,796
- Pueblo West FD - \$5,617
- Rocky Ford RFPD - \$1,690
- Springfield VFD - \$1,432
- Sugar City VFD - \$17,476
- Tri-County FPD (Rush) - \$2,799
- Trinidad FD - \$2,607

Sometimes, without expecting it... reimbursement does come. Thank you!

## Regional Annual Wildfire Operating Plan Now Online

The Regional Annual Wildfire Operating Plan (AWOP) for Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, and Otero is now on the web – including the plan, all appendices, maps for all jurisdictions, and in one location with all agreements for this area.

To view the AWOP, go to <http://csfs.colostate.edu>, click on Your Local Forester, then La Junta District, then Fire Program.

Additionally, there is a hyperlink to the Kiowa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and the 'Are You Plains Firewise?' notebook for our area.

A big thank you to GayLene Rossiter and Teradette Wilson for all their efforts to make this happen.

## Riparian Restoration in Southeastern Colorado

Tamarisk threatens and degrades native riparian ecosystems in numerous ways, including:

- Crowding out native plant species.
- Increasing salinity of the surface soil, rendering it unsuitable for other plants to grow.
- Providing a less diverse and lower-value wildlife habitat.
- Significantly increasing non-beneficial water consumption.
- Widening floodplains, clogging stream channels and increasing deposition of sediment.
- Diminishing human enjoyment and interaction with the river environment.

But from another perspective, tamarisk also increases wildfire risk to communities because of extreme fire behavior including easy ignition, intense heat and rapid spread, which occurs when tamarisk burns.

The Arkansas River Watershed Invasive Plants Project (ARKWIPP) was formed in 2007 to bring together all the different groups working within the Arkansas River basin on tamarisk and Russian olive removal projects. The group, led by Jean Van Pelt of the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District, completed their strategic plan in 2008 and have been in full swing with four on-the-ground projects in Pueblo, Otero, Bent and Prowers counties. Funding for the projects was provided by a grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board with matching funding from project partners. Thanks to Jean for all of her determination and hard work not only getting

this group up and running, but continuing to keep the ARKWIPP group viable and collaborating. ARKWIPP will host their second annual Southeast Colorado Tamarisk Conference on March 30 in Pueblo. For more information about this conference and ARKWIPP visit [www.arkwipp.org](http://www.arkwipp.org).

Tackling Tamarisk on the Purgatoire (TTP) is a collaborative project that has been in full swing the past two years restoring riparian areas in the Chacuaco drainage which is the largest tributary to the Purgatoire River. The Chacuaco drainage is a prime place to conduct riparian restoration as the drainage exhibits only minimal tamarisk infestation, and also retains a very healthy and diverse native plant population. About 350 acres have been treated along Chacuaco Creek within the past two years, mostly by the cut-stump method of cutting off the plants and applying herbicide to them. Funding has been provided by the Colorado Division of Wildlife Wetlands program, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, The Nature Conservancy, the Colorado State Land Board, the Purgatoire River Water Conservancy District and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Partners program, with matching funds coming from project partners and private landowners. TTP hired a field implementation supervisor this year—Dick Loudon of Branson, Colo. He has been key to the project's success during the past year. A big thank you also goes to the Branson-Trinchera Conservation District's district manager, Jonnalea Tortorelli, for keeping everyone on track and managing the piles of paperwork.

The Timpas Creek Riparian Restoration Project addressed about 20 acres this year using cut-stump and foliar herbicide treatments. In 2007, aerial foliar applications were conducted on over 130 acres (15 river miles). 2008 and 2009 treatments have followed up the aerial applications, treating areas near cottonwood and willow stands with the cut-stump method, and using foliar herbicides to treat minimal regrowth or areas that were missed by the initial application. This year's funding was provided by the Colorado State Conservation Board's Matching Grants program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners program, and private landowners. Thanks go to Shelley Pfeiff, district manager for the West Otero-

Timpas Conservation District for managing this year's grants and organizing a field tour of the project.

From the vision of comprehensive mapping of tamarisk in the watershed, to targeting trees and working downstream for removals, to monitoring and treatments – all starting from modest beginnings with no funding source – it is a pleasure to share this year's accomplishment through the third quarter of 2009.

- Chacuaco Creek Riparian Restoration/Tamarisk Control Project – 204 acres in the second & third quarters 2009.
- Timpas Riparian Restoration Project/Tamarisk Control – 15 acres treated by the Colorado Legends and Legacies Youth Corp in the third quarter 2009.

A mention of funding (difficult with grant award variance to show just 2009 – but to give a sense of the magnitude) - Timpas Creek project funding for 2009 included:

- Colorado State Conservation Board - \$10,000
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Partners Program - \$8,000



*Crew prepares to treat tamarisk at the Chacuaco's headwaters.*

Purgatoire 2005-2010 EQIP (Close-out Fall 2010) - \$50,000

Chacuaco & Purgatoire Funding (August 2009 through December 2011)

- Colorado Division of Wildlife Wetlands Program - \$85,000
- Colorado Water Conservation Board - \$100,000
- Purgatoire River Water Conservancy District - \$10,000
- Colorado State Land Board - \$6,000
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Partners Program - \$15,600
- The Nature Conservancy - \$25,000

Many other projects are underway within the Lower Arkansas River basin. Please contact your county Natural Resource Conservation Service office for information on current projects in your area.

## **2009 Insect and Disease (I&D) Assessment Report on the CSFS La Junta District**

**Counties include: Baca, Bent, Cheyenne, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero and Prowers (Additional observations, Eastern Las Animas County)**

### **Major Native Forest Insect and Disease Issues**

#### **Piñon-Juniper**

*Assessed by several site visits within eastern Las Animas County as well as “windshield” observations throughout the year.*

Extensive piñon twig borer damage was observed in eastern Las Animas County this year. No evidence was found of piñon ips in the trees that had twig borer, but piñon pitch mass borer was found alongside the trees infested by twig borer. Piñon ips beetles remain in the area, despite the lack of detection. The trees affected are older piñons— about 10 inches or greater in diameter and about 10-15 feet tall. Many trees

have died this year, and others look to be dying. The affected trees are easy to spot in the landscape as there are not many large piñons left due to the previous ips beetle epidemic. However, during the past three years, piñons have continued to regenerate in more open areas, and also within thicker stands of juniper. One-seed junipers continue to increase and encroach onto rangeland. There have not been any I&D issues of note this year in one-seed junipers. There are a few Rocky Mountain junipers (RMJ) within this forest type, but they are typically found adjacent to riparian areas, or along canyon slopes. No I&D issues were observed in RMJ this year.

#### **Riparian Forests**

*Assessed by several dozen site visits throughout the district as well as “windshield” observations throughout the year.*

Regeneration of cottonwood continues to be observed in some areas that are not greatly impacted by tamarisk or other uses. No abnormal I&D issues were observed in southeast Colorado’s river/perennial stream/dry arroyo riparian areas this year. Of course, one of the greatest threats to the native trees in southeastern Colorado’s riparian areas and riparian forests is the continual encroachment of tamarisk.

Of note were the massive numbers of leaf hoppers during mid to late summer. Leaf hoppers are insects that are about 1cm long, bright green and of multiple species. They seemed to be feeding extensively on tamarisk and began causing yellowing and slight defoliation of the plants in late August, observed mostly in Otero County. Dan Bean of CDA Insectary said that when tamarisks were introduced, a leaf hopper was also introduced that feeds on tamarisk. They don’t kill the plants, and rarely cause stress.

### **Major Causal Agents of Insect and Disease Issues**

#### **Black Walnut Decline—Thousand Cankers Disease**

Black Walnut trees in Olney Springs were investigated for symptoms of dieback in 2008. Secondary flathead and/or roundhead wood borers of unknown species

were found, but the initial cause of dieback was not determined. Within one block, approximately four black walnut trees were also declining. One tree also was infected with witch's broom, a bunch disease of walnut caused by a phytoplasma. At one residence, the owner has been applying a systemic insecticide to the soil as well as applying insecticide to the foliage in the early spring, and this seems to have greatly reduced the dieback. However, it has not completely stopped it. Black walnut trees in Rocky Ford at Library Park were also investigated.

This year brings more bad news for black walnut trees in southeast Colorado. CSU Entomologist Whitney Cranshaw found thousand canker disease, a threat to black walnut trees caused by the walnut twig beetle and an associated fungus (*Fusarium solani*), in Rocky Ford and Olney Springs.

The CSFS sent news releases to all counties within the La Junta District encouraging people to contact our office if they have declining walnut trees. If you have walnut trees, we are able to investigate your trees for I&D problems. Please contact our office or visit [http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/0812\\_alert.pdf](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/0812_alert.pdf) for more information on thousand cankers disease.

### **Honeylocust**

Honeylocust spider mite and two-spotted spider mite were fairly common this year on honeylocust trees. Honeylocust plant bug was also a suspect in many locations. A Putnam cicada egg deposition on one small tree in Kiowa County caused a lot of damage.

### **Elm Species**

Continued observations of trunk attacks by elm bark beetles were noted all over the district as well as continued high populations of European elm scale. Many English elm are in decline in La Junta due to massive elm scale infestations, especially on sites where supplemental water is insufficient. Elm leaf beetle populations sharply increased this year in eastern Otero County, with English elm being the hardest hit. Elm flea weevil was also heavily on the scene this year in almost every southeast Colorado county.

### **Willows and Evergreens**

Willows and evergreens, especially arborvitae, were hit by a hard freeze in mid-April.

### **Lilac Ash Borer/Ash Bark Beetles**

Lilac ash borer and ash bark beetle were again observed to a great extent this year all over the district. Every age of ash tree (predominately green ash), from 1 inch diameter to fully mature, are constantly attacked by these bark beetles/borers. We do not recommend planting ash trees in southeastern Colorado—if a client insists on planting them, it is recommended they apply a preventive spray every year for the life of the tree. This is one of the more common inquiries that comes into the La Junta District office.

### **Trunk Damage by Weed-Whips and Lawn Mowers**

The transport of water and nutrients happens directly under the bark of trees. Thus, damage to the bark will damage tree cells responsible for this transport, which reduces the amount of water and nutrients that can be distributed throughout the tree. Damage to the trunk also makes it easier for insects and diseases to attack the tree.

### **List of Minor Causal Agents of Insect and Disease Issues**

#### **Chlorosis Symptoms**

This is very common in our area, especially in the more clay-shale, poorly drained soils. Ornamental pears and maple varieties tend to show chlorosis more than other species. This is one of the more common inquiries to come into the La Junta District office from all over southeast Colorado.

#### **Cottonless Cottonwood Dieback**

Cottonless cottonwood trees commonly experience stress in southeast Colorado. The primary cause is poor site location in clay-shale, poorly drained soils. The secondary insects that follow stress are typically borers including carpenter worm, cottonwood borer and cottonwood crown borer. This is another common inquiry that comes into the La Junta District office.

## **Improper Planting**

Many trees that have secondary insect problems are planted too deep and/or have been planted with the burlap, twine and wire baskets left on the root ball.

## **Improper Watering**

Trees that have secondary insect problems often lack deep watering on a regular basis.

## **Misapplication of 2,4-D, banvel**

The broadleaf weed herbicide applied to grass can also be a contributing factor to tree damage.

Remember that most insect and disease issues are secondary problems. Proper planting, watering, pruning and care are a tree's best defense against I&D attacks.

## **Shelly Simmons Awarded the Prestigious CSFS 2009 Outstanding Performer Award**

An Outstanding Effort on the Ordway Reforesting Project

As described earlier in the report, Crowley County and the Town of Ordway suffered a devastating wildland fire in April 2008. After so much lost, these community members and landowners began rebuilding their lives and their community this past spring – in part by the replanting of trees, thanks to Shelly's leadership, organizational skills, professionalism and team investment.

The Colorado Tree Coalition (CTC) awarded \$7,500 through the Reforest Colorado Fund to support a grant written by Shelly. Over 350 trees and seedlings were planted by over 80 volunteers throughout the State. Shelly is very much loved by landowners getting new trees, volunteers, and all that supported this effort. Gertie Grant from CTC's "Trees Across Colorado" and now a CTC member-at-large glowed in her CTC Board report about the project and Shelly's awesome presence. Shelly is appreciated by all who participated in what was not only a tree planting, but a healing for one of our Colorado communities.

The International Society of Arboriculture's Rocky Mountain Chapter also recently recognized the community and county with the 'Gold Leaf' Recognition Award. Way to go, Shelly!

A Leader in Tacking Tamarisk

Shelly has been a leader for tamarisk removal for the La Junta District, the southeast region and in many instances, the state level. She is well known statewide for her leadership, knowledge, can-do attitude and on-the-ground expertise with tamarisk control projects. For example, she recently spoke at a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service meeting in the Denver Metro area. Shelly, representing the CSFS created the Tackling Tamarisk on the Purgatoire (TTP) project for Las Animas & Bent Counties along with The Nature Conservancy and many supporting partners in 2006. She also assisted Dan Bean, Colorado Department of Agricultural Insectory at Palisades, with his agency's insect release program - by contacting NRCS suggested landowners and creating an itinerary for 13 site releases of the tamarisk leaf beetle on the Purgatoire, Chacuaco, Apishapa, and Arkansas drainages.

Shelly is very highly regarded and appreciated on the district, especially with tamarisk control efforts. She receives many commendations – like this recent accolade from John Knapp, Area NRCS Director: "Shelly is SUPER! We couldn't do what we have done without her!"

The health of our forest resources mirrors the economic vitality and health of our rural communities and citizens. The "forest" picture is a little different here on the plains, but is an interwoven, interconnected and integral part of lives, livelihoods and resource systems in our environment. Shelly is a positive contribution to the plains forests – from communities & rural areas, to riparian and piñon-juniper forests. Thank you, Shelly, for all you do!

## CSU President Visits Southeast Colorado

We were honored to have Colorado State University President Tony Frank visit southeast Colorado for a three-day outreach tour in our communities.



*CSU President Tony Frank on an outreach tour in the La Junta District.*

## In Closing...

We would like to thank our many customers and cooperators. It is a pleasure to serve and work with you. If you have questions or need assistance with forestry-related issues, please contact us.

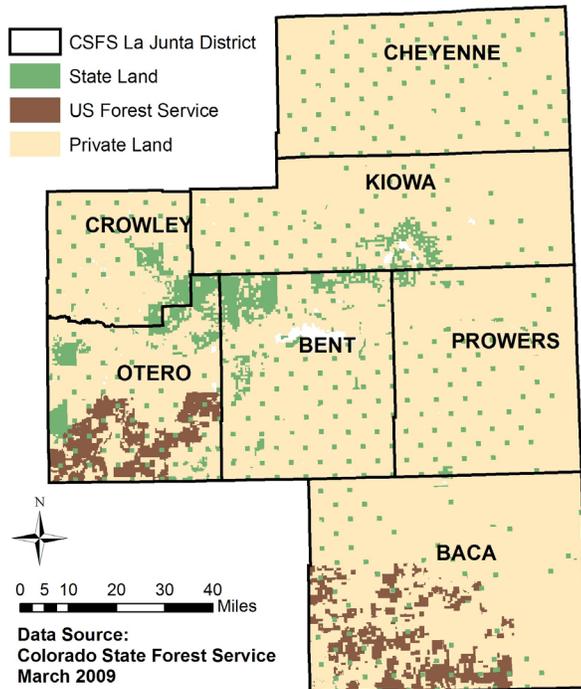
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# *La Junta District Colorado State Forest Service*



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