

## Chapter 27 Cottage Grove Community Resource Unit

### Section One: Baseline Social and Economic Information

#### A. Community Description

##### Geographic Features

The Cottage Grove CRU is identified as north toward Creswell just past Gettings Creek, west to include Lorane and Gillespie Corners, south to include Curtin and the Coast Fork of the Willamette River, and east to include the drainages of Mosby Creek and Row River, the community of Dorena, and Dorena Reservoir. The settled areas as a whole are fairly tightly wedged into a small valley between the mountains. The CRU includes the very small settlement of Latham, Royal, Saginaw, and Walker. Figure 81 contains a map of this area.

##### Settlement Patterns

Cottage Grove was agriculture, logging, and mining from the earliest times of white settlement. Many older residents are part of families with long histories in gold mining activities, the mills, forests, and timber companies. Flooding of the Willamette River marked early Cottage Grove history. A series of dams was built beginning in the 1930s, two of which are Cottage Grove and Dorena dams, forming the reservoirs of the same name. Older residents said that the city didn't have paved streets and sidewalks until the 1950s.

It was not until timber activity really took off after World War II, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, that Cottage Grove began to grow and thrive. Confidence in the timber industry prompted optimism for the future of the community that was dampened significantly with the timber downturn

Figure 81  
Map of the Cottage Grove Community Resource Unit

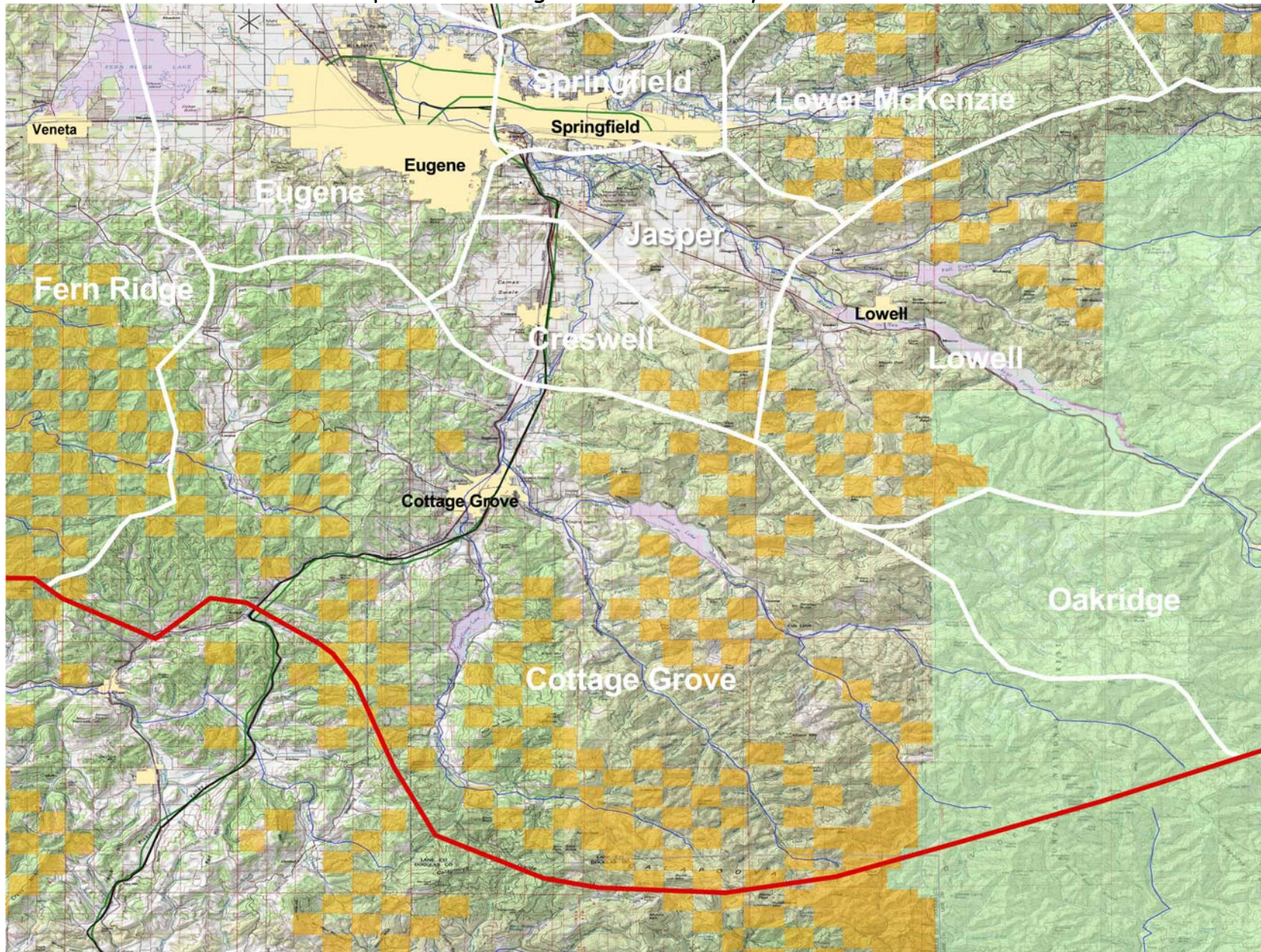


Figure 82  
The Currin Covered Bridge Near Cottage Grove Dating From 1925



in the late 1980s. Settlement that has occurred since the timber bust has been primarily commuters and retired people.

"I love Cottage Grove because it has a small town atmosphere with a splash of urban sophistication. Not every small town has two health food stores and a strong art association."

Cottage Grove had 7669 people in 1990 and 8445 in 2000, an increase of 9% (Census Data, Table Seven). Figure 82 shows a picture of one of the six covered bridges that are so well known in this area.

The settlement areas outside of Cottage Grove are very small and isolated. The Row River area had a railroading and logging background. Now, it has "retired people and people with felonies." People said it was a "meth capital" [i.e., illegal methamphetamine manufacturing operations]. The Dorena area was hurt when its mill closed in the early 1990s. Store business declined, loggers moved away, and property values went down. Drug activity increased, as did local crime, according to local residents.

"One summer there were 60 stolen cars recovered in this area."

### Publics

Four main publics live in Cottage Grove, loggers and natural resource based people, counter-culture folks, middle class families that commute to Eugene for work, and the senior population. Both the commuter and the retirement publics are growing. The immigration is occurring because of the attraction of Cottage Grove for quality of life reasons, and because housing is 10-20% cheaper than the Eugene area.

The area also has a significant number of lower income residents that barely get by. These types of people are sometimes called the "working poor" since they are commonly affiliated with the blue collar sector of the community. A fair number of "welfare poor" are included in that group who came to the area after the decline of timber. Both sets of low-income residents make use of the food bank and other support programs where "the need has always been greater than the ability to serve."

### Networks

See Section Two.

### Work Routines

The City administration reported that the major employers in Cottage Grove are Healthcare Community (400 employees), Weyerhaeuser (245), Kimwood (70), Kwikke Products Co. (RV components, 67 workers), and Starfire Lumber (67) (Oregon Department of Economic and Community Development, Community Profiles, 2002).

According to residents, Cottage Grove at one point supported 20 mills. To date, two mills remain in operation. Starfire is one of the last old growth mills in the region and maintains a large supply of logs in its sort yard. Weyerhaeuser is a second and third growth mill south of town that operates 2-3 shifts of workers. Kimwood Corporation laminates wood products. About 68% of the workforce in timber and forest products was lost between 1979 and 1989 (City of Cottage Grove web site, [www.cottagegrove.org](http://www.cottagegrove.org)).

Whether or not the existing timber operations are stable is subject to debate. Many people think the bottom has been hit and the industry can sustain current levels of activity.

"Timber will do all right here as long as the California market is up. It's always been that way. Right now prices are low."

The occupational makeup of Cottage Grove has been fairly traditional until recently. That is, people made a living in logging, farming and service businesses related to these activities. Today, newcomers tend to be less tied to the local economy. They either bring their income with them, as is the case with retired people, or they drive outside of the area for their work.

New businesses in town are oriented to freeway traffic and to the trades and services sectors. Some specialty shops are evident such as antique stores and art galleries. In recent years, a number of "new age" or "progressive" businesses have opened, such as seed growing for native stocks, natural food stores and others. Pacific Yurts, a national company that has developed a good reputation, is located in Cottage Grove.

A few observers pointed to the high turnover in businesses in Cottage Grove, a condition likely to continue until jobs pay a living wage, according to one person. Another person estimated that while the national average of failed businesses is about 50%, the likely failure rate of Cottage Grove businesses is 75%.

"Some of the owners of those mom and pop stores are now working at WalMart."

Cottage Grove has also attracted a few intentional communities and research centers. The longest standing is the 1200 acre Cerro Gordo, located near a butte of the same name, on the north shore of Dorena Lake. Half of its land is used for residential development, and half has been used since 1986 for a sustainable forestry program. Its harvest is certified as sustainably produced by Smart Wood and the Forest Stewardship Council and is sold to local mills.

Approvecho Research Center, west of Cottage Grove, is a non-profit research and education facility that has a sustainable forestry program drawing interns from around the country. It is also involved in the appropriate technology field around the globe, and its Approvecho stove is known internationally in development circles. Approvecho's third area of activity is organic gardening. The forestry program uses horse logging and on-site mills to experiment with sustainable forestry practices. They have a demonstration center open to the public.

### Support Services

Cottage Grove is a community that prides itself on making it on its own. Self-sufficiency was a key value in the past and continues to influence the community. Informal caretaking and support agencies are both strong and effective. The Catholic and the Trinity Lutheran Churches were mentioned as being very involved in the community. Community Sharing is the social service agency involved in the coordination and integration of other social services. They are key to the community in Cottage Grove.

The Community Sharing Program is running a community garden for the second year. Its goal is to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to the local food bank. Seed companies donate seeds for the garden. The garden is well supported by volunteers through the growing season. The garden is linked to other community gardens in the region. The garden was vandalized last year and needs a fence.

The South Lane School District serves 3,000 students and approximately 15,000 people in the Cottage Grove area. The district operates a high school, middle school and two elementary schools within city boundaries and four elementary schools outside the city.

The community heavily supports schools. Elementary attendance is declining, indicating an aging of the population. A new high school is to be opened next year, but school officials are concerned about the fate of Cottage Grove schools with the changing demographics.

Lane Community College has a Learning Center in Cottage Grove. Established in 1997, the center has 3 computer labs, 7 classrooms and offers a variety of classes in different subjects. The campus was active in re-training timber workers after the spotted owl injunction curtailed timber production in the region.

A new hospital is being built in the community. Residents were worried that they were going to lose the facility. The old hospital is becoming a social service delivery center with a variety of social service agencies likely to move into the building. The old railroad yard was bought recently and the new owners intend to convert it into a museum. A community/senior center was recently completed. More retirement and assisted living facilities are coming into the community, representing an emerging economic niche.

The City has a small industrial park north of town that is seeking light industry or high tech operations. Because Cottage Grove is part of a federally designated Enterprise Zone, tax benefits accrue to companies that locate there.

The Dorena Grange has 160 members and is one of the most active in Lane County. It remains farm oriented and many members combine small-scale agricultural activity with small woodlot management. Members have interests in fire and hunter safety and woodlot management. This group actively supports Native Americans, hospitals, nursing homes, and those with hearing disabilities throughout the region.

Some community events include the Bohemia Mining Days in July, the Fall Harvest Festival in September, and the Main Street Chili Cook Off in October. The Cottage Grove Rodeo, Cottage Grove Home Show, South Lane Cruisers Show & Shine, and the Western Oregon Exposition are also local events.

### *Recreational Activities*

See Section Three.

## B. Trends and Themes and Citizen Issues Related to Community Life

### Trends

Increased reliance on commuting

A fair degree of stability with remaining forest products facilities

An influx of retirement-influenced services

### Themes

1. "There's always been somewhat of a culture clash between the hippies and the loggers." The ties between traditional and progressive elements of the community have not been strong. Earth Day events and the Watershed Councils tend to bring both sets of people together. It is fair to say that these social segments remain polarized.

2. "We are changing from a natural resource area to a bedroom community." Residents said that the logging and mining culture was one of stewardship, care for the land and for the community. The concern of traditional people is that the new community has less stewardship. Local companies give less to the community, for example.

"Bedroom commuters don't invest in the community as much—their scope of community is much broader, like Eugene." [Meaning their affiliation is regional and not local]

### Citizen Issues Related to Community Life

"There's a high turnover in businesses."

"A new wastewater plant is needed but there is no funding yet for the project."

"We need more young families to keep the diversity of the town."



“Especially with a retirement focus, fewer and fewer people have ties to the school. The schools won’t have the support they do now.”  
[School administrator]

## Section Two: Communication Strategies

### A. Informal Networks and Communication

#### Gathering Places

McCoys Pharmacy for retired people

Nine Lives

The Brothel Café

Vintage Inn restaurant is used by local businesses

The Bookmine sells books and plants; it has an active bulletin board and is somewhat of a gathering place.

### B. Formal Groups and Communication

Figure 83

Organizations With Interest in Public Lands in the Cottage Grove Area

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>	<b>Mission</b>
Bohemian Mine Owners Association	Faye Steward P O Box 16 Culp Creek, OR 97424 (541) 942-0870	Promote mining Mining museum Mining education
Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council	John Falzone 28 South 6th St., Suite A Cottage Grove, OR 97424 (541) 767-9717 <a href="mailto:jmifalzone@cs.com">jmifalzone@cs.com</a>	Watershed restoration
Dorena Grange Lorane Grange	Joe Snook (541) 942-4733	
Cottage Grove Art Guild	Sujo Tryk (541) 942-8931 1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday Community Center	A developing art community
Cottage Grove Service Christian Camp	Randy Russell (541) 946-1667	Outdoor education

Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce	Tim Flowerday 330 Highway 995 Cottage Grove, OR 97424 (541) 942-2411	Business development and support
Cottage Grove Recreation Association	Bill Smille 20 Thornton Lane Cottage Grove, OR 97424 (541) 942-3079	Youth sports
Bohemia Foundation	Bud Stewart (541) 942-5463 Stub Stewart 541) 484-3371	Encourage mining in Bohemia Mining District; put together a museum that shows the history of logging and mining
Blue Mountain School, Inc.	76132 Blue Mountain School Road Cottage Grove, OR 97424 (541) 942-7764	Active interest in trail maintenance and trail head cleanup
BMX Track	Dave Hass P O Box 693 Cottage Grove, OR 97424 (541) 946-8522	Youth Organization
COPS (Clean Our Parks & Streams)	Jeff Hagedorn P O Box 1288 Cottage Grove, OR 97424 (541) 942-0942	
Cottage Grove Prospectors & Golddiggers	Robert Moody P O Box 415 Cottage Grove, OR 97424 (541) 942-9250	Fraternal

## Section Three: The Public Lands Perspective

### A. Uses of and Orientation to Public Lands

Cottage Grove residents are very outdoors oriented. The outdoors and recreation amenities of the area are one of the primary community values and a primary reason for settlement into the area. Dorena Lake and Cottage Grove Lake offer fishing, swimming, boating, water skiing and camping. Opportunities for cycling, hiking, fishing, hunting, camping, horseback riding, skiing, snowmobiling, fourwheeling and wilderness exploring are widely available. The new Row River Trail is a 15.6-mile, paved multi-use trail that begins inside the city limits and follows an old railroad bed past Dorena Lake into the Cascades. There are numerous other trails used on a regular basis. The community has three golf courses, as well as art galleries, specialty shops and antique shops.

Mountain biking has become popular in the area but local people said that bikers don't spend very much money in Cottage Grove.

"They just stop to use the restroom."

The City of Cottage Grove, with Forest Service support, began the Urban Forestry Commission in 1994 that has fostered tree planting in town. Because of this effort, it has received Tree City USA designation for several years. It sponsors annual Arbor Day events and brings in grants to foster healthy urban forests.

The Cottage Grover Ranger District is administratively part of the Umpqua National Forest. For the past many decades, the Cottage Grove Ranger District manages the Cottage Grove municipal water supply. Some conflicts were reported in the 1970s over water, but Forest Service people characterize the relationship today as positive and collaborative.

The Forest Service administers mining claims on several hundred private acres plus manages many placer mines on public lands.

The Cottage Grove District produced about 35 MMBF (Million Board Feet) in the 1980s. A large amount of the land base is now out of timber production due to the designation of 3 roadless areas, riparian preserves, and 9000 acres of LSR (Late Successional Reserve) lands, which are preserved for spotted owl habitat. Most of the district is "matrix" lands on which timber production is permitted. Under the Northwest Forest Plan, the district is authorized to produce about 11-12 MMBF annually, but it has not been successful in getting sales developed and sold. Court rulings have affected the district, and they had to re-conduct several surveys of particular species.

In addition, Forest Service people said that "Eugene people have recently re-discovered us." Although individuals from environmental organizations have monitored forest management activities for many years, they have been quiet for a few years. In the last couple years, some Eugene people have once again begun to monitor and protest timber sales offered in this area. A number of news articles about the protests made the front page of the Eugene newspapers recently.

Today, forest management projects are forest health oriented and include a reliance on thinning.

"Day of Caring" is a yearly activity of Lincoln Middle School in which kids do good deeds, such as pulling weeds, helping retired people, or doing forest projects.

There is an outdoor school for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders that is actively attended and represents a longstanding tie between the Forest Service and the community.

## B. Trends, Themes, and Citizen Issues Related to Natural Resource Management

### Trends

More recreation focus on public lands

A continued interest in a politically viable timber sale program

Modest but increased recreation activity in an area whose businesses are not very oriented to it. A number of residents complained that recreational visitors do not spend money in the local community, but the JKA team also observed that businesses did not seem to cater to visitors in their service or products.

### Themes

1. "Recreation is not going to save us." Jobs associated with recreation do not pay well, and recreation-oriented businesses come and go. Local people have little confidence yet that the recreation economy can last or provide adequate livelihood. The timber sector was valued not only for the independence that it represented but the family wage income it provided—a standard of living not yet duplicated in the new economy.

2. "There has to be more dialogue." Residents believed that the present polarization between adherents of "cut" and "no cut" is so strong that public timber sales are unlikely in the short term. However, most believed that better communication was the only way to move beyond present conditions.

3. "We believe federal timber sales are environmentally sound and should be offered consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan." This theme is widespread in the community and reflects a belief that timber sales can and should proceed.

### Citizen Issues Related to Natural Resource Management

#### Outdoor Education

"Cottage Grove has an active senior population that is asking for outdoor education."

"The [outdoor education] programs are piecemealed together from random funding using already overworked educators. We need to institutionalize these programs."

## Recreation

"We had 70 bikers come through last year. They didn't buy a thing but they left a lot of trash. Most of these trips are catered so most people don't need to buy anything."

"There are too many roads that are gated off. The gravel roads already in the mountains should be maintained."

"With the fee system in place, it is hard for low income people to get into the woods. They don't feel like the forest is 'theirs' in the same way that people with money do."

## Forest Management

"Strip logging should not be permitted any longer, but thinning should happen."

"How come there isn't a real program to get timber to these mills?"

## C. Management Opportunities

Local businesses in Cottage Grove and in the surrounding area are not oriented to recreation. While complaints are made that the recreation visitors don't spend money, it appears equally true that their interests are not catered to. Some businesses could use assistance in making that transition since some have the attitude of waiting for a return of timber harvest. Although this role is probably not a direct one for the Forest Service, the agency could facilitate a response to this interest through collaboration with tourism promoting organizations.

A partnership with the community garden through technical assistance or fencing materials would create non-political relationships with the

environmental community of Cottage Grove. Similarly, mutual education projects with Approvecho and Cerro Gordo could be a way to develop ongoing relationships with moderate environmental interests.

Local people expressed an interest in outdoor education and they reflected an increased demand for this service. Among the ideas offered were:

"The Ranger District could put together a non-credit class in forest ecology for Lane Community College."

"Maybe they could put together a web site that offers educational opportunities and then groups can choose a suitable activity and sign up."

"Maybe a way could be developed for the Forest Service to help in getting our low income clients into the forest. It could open up a dialogue between the agency and an often-silent public. It can help to educate a public with possibly the least education about the forest."

It may be that the Umpqua National Forest is not the most appropriate to manage lands near Cottage Grove. The lands in this district are part of the Willamette Basin. In addition, this research has shown that Cottage Grove relates, as the land does, to the north. Socially and economically, Cottage Grove is part of the larger South Willamette Human Resource Unit (Figure 60, Chapter 20). Moreover, the distance from Roseburg is farther than from Eugene. For these reasons, one could predict the management challenges would be different than elsewhere on the Umpqua, and a continual challenge because of the mis-match between administration and geography.

The Forest Service could consider developing a community-based approach to forest management projects. Adopt an outreach process of inclusion in which all relevant voices are contacted and citizens develop the project as much as possible. With citizen ownership as the goal, this approach tends to be time-intensive on the front end but shortens the implementation time down the road. The goal is to create a middle ground of practical approaches to forest management that incorporates the best science, is open and visible in its process, and is adaptive over time. When community-based approaches



are successful, the extreme voices on either end are either pulled in to participate or isolated by the larger citizen movement.

"We are not funded or supported for collaboration, or community-based work." [Forest Service staff]

The need for what JKA calls "Social Cost Benefit Accounting" has been growing across the country in light of the new planning efforts by BLM and the Forest Service. The notion is that the benefits of the community support work engaged in by natural resource agencies should be documented so that the budget process is not just commodity oriented but amenity oriented. Specifically, there is little budget support for the collaborative, community-based work that is now being promoted by Forest Service policy and regulation. In other words, the benefits to local communities from leadership and community development, from grant writing and grant making assistance, from successful efforts to create community-based programs, all should be measured and included in the budget process.

"These are where the problems are and I can't staff it." [Forest Service manager]

The final chapter (Chapter 28) discusses these ideas in greater detail.

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