

Projects . Successes . Partnerships

 **NRCS** Louisiana  
**Conservation Update**  
United States Department of Agriculture . Natural Resources Conservation Service

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April 2013

**We have always  
been here**

**Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana  
River Cane Project**

**New Feature!  
Stories from the Field**

A cooperative partnership with local  
Soil and Water Conservation Districts and  
Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D)

**HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND**

The Conservation Update is distributed monthly by mail and e-mail.

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## On the Cover



The Chitimacha settled on land around the bayous of what is now known as the Atchafalaya Basin in Louisiana around 500 A.D. In 2001, the Chitimacha Tribe and the Natural Resources Conservation Service entered into a consultative process to develop and implement a "Chitimacha River Cane Project." To learn more about this project, see pages 4 and 5.

## USDA's Commitment to Equality

USDA believes every farmer and rancher should be treated equally and fairly, and we are committed to resolving all cases involving allegations of past discrimination by individuals.

### Referral Guide for USDA Settlements and Claims Adjudication Process

<p><b>Women and Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers Claims Adjudication Process</b></p> <p>If you believe that USDA improperly denied farm loan benefits to you for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000 because you are a female or because you are Hispanic, you may be eligible to apply for compensation. To request a claims package by telephone, call 1-888-508-4429. To request a claims package online, please visit <a href="http://www.farmerclaims.gov">www.farmerclaims.gov</a></p>	<p><b>Native American Farmer and Rancher Class Action Settlement (Keepseagle v. Vilsack)</b></p> <p>If you are a Native American who was denied a farm loan or loan servicing by the USDA between January 1, 1981, and November 24, 1999, you may be eligible for benefits from a Class Action Settlement. To request a claims package by telephone, call: 1-888-233-5506. To request a claims package online, or for more information, please visit: <a href="http://www.indianfarmclass.com">www.indianfarmclass.com</a></p>	<p><b>African American Farmer and Rancher Class Action Settlement (Pigford II)</b></p> <p>If you are an African American farmer (a) who submitted a request to file a late claim on or between October 13, 1999, and June 18, 2008, under the 1999 USDA settlement in the earlier class action known as Pigford v. Glickman ("Pigford") and (b) who did not receive a merits determination on your discrimination claim, you may be eligible for benefits from a Class Action Settlement. To hear information by telephone, call 1-866-950-5547 or 1-866-472-7826. To find information online, please visit: <a href="http://www.blackfarmercase.com">www.blackfarmercase.com</a></p>
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## Notes from the Acting State Conservationist

Since our beginning as the Soil Conservation Service during the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and our Soil and Water Conservation District partners have been leaders in development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and techniques. Today, we continue to pursue new technologies to conserve, improve, and sustain our natural resources by awarding competitive Conservation Innovation Grants to eligible applicants. We are currently requesting applications for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) from eligible government or non-government organizations or individuals for competitive consideration. Applications must be received by 4 p.m. Central Time on June 3, 2013. To find out more about this opportunity, go to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

Sometimes conservation innovation has an impact on ancient traditions. Such is the case with the Chitimacha River Cane Project. In the late 1990s, it was feared that the ancient tradition of basket weaving with cane could be lost by the Chitimacha because of the scarcity of wild cane. NRCS has worked with the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana for over a decade to help re-establish river cane on tribal lands to provide a renewable supply of cane for their basket weavers. As you will see on pages 4 and 5, this innovative project has been very successful and rewarding.

If you are interested in finding out more about conservation opportunities through NRCS, visit your local NRCS or Soil and Water Conservation District office. A directory of offices is included on the back page of this publication.

W. Britt Paul  
Acting State Conservationist  
Louisiana

## Quote of the Month

**"You have to believe in places like this. You have to keep them in your heart... or they are not going to exist anymore."**

Roger Emile Stouff, author, Chitimacha tribal member, and son of the last traditional Chitimacha Chief, speaking of the Atchafalaya Basin in "Native Waters: A Chitimacha Recollection" video, Louisiana Public Broadcasting.

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**Twitter** Follow us on Twitter: [http://twitter.com/NRCS\\_Louisiana](http://twitter.com/NRCS_Louisiana)



State Conservationist Kevin Norton is on detail assignment to Washington, DC, to work on Senator Debbie Stabenow's staff to help draft the language of our nation's next Farm Bill.

**Upcoming Event**  
**Pond Management Workshop**  
**May 2, 2013 - 5:30 p.m.**  
**Grand Bayou Resort Events Center**

**5286 Highway 784**  
**Coushatta, Louisiana**  
Workshop topics include: aquatic weeds, pond stocking rates, pond maintenance and management, and financial assistance. Sponsored by Red River Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and LSU AgCenter. RSVP by 4:00 p.m. April 29, 2013 to: Dani Finnefrock (318) 932-4352, ext. 3 or email [dani.finnefrock@la.nacdnet.net](mailto:dani.finnefrock@la.nacdnet.net)



Sovereign Nation of the **CHITIMACHA**

As the vast Roman Empire was crumbling some 7,000 miles away, the Chitimacha Tribe was establishing a settlement centered around the bayous of South Louisiana.

from: [www.chitimacha.gov](http://www.chitimacha.gov)

**The Chitimacha settled on land around the bayous of what is now known as the Atchafalaya Basin in Louisiana around 500 A.D.**

Through the centuries, the Chitimacha Tribe has seen great prosperity; fought battles against the French and English to defend their land and people; faced encroachment by the Spanish; suffered the bonds of slavery; and faced extinction. Today, about 1,300 tribal members remain.

“People ask us, ‘Where do you originally come from,’” said Kimberly Walden, Cultural Director/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana. “We always tell them that we have always been here.”

Through the spoken word, the Chitimacha language, customs, rituals, and traditions have passed from generation to generation. The ancient art of weaving baskets from wild cane can be traced back to the earliest legends of the Chitimacha Tribe, and today, basket weaving remains

For more information about NRCS’ Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center, visit: <http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/lapmc/>  
For more information about the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, visit: [www.chitimacha.gov](http://www.chitimacha.gov)



The Chitimacha dedicated most of their efforts to cultivating the soil, fishing and developing the domestic arts . . . (they) displayed the greatest skill through the art of weaving baskets. Wild cane gathered from the swamps was split by the teeth of the basket makers, dyed in vivid yellows, reds and blacks, and woven into two layers, producing beautifully intricate baskets of unique designs that were capable of floating.  
from: [www.chitimacha.gov](http://www.chitimacha.gov)

Kimberly Walden, Cultural Director/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana

## We have always been here.

an important tradition that family members share.

In the late 1990s it became very hard to find wild cane for weaving, and much of the cane found was on private land and not readily available to Chitimacha basket weavers. It was feared that this ancient tradition could be lost because of the scarcity of wild cane.

In 2001, the Chitimacha Tribe and the Natural Resources Conservation Service entered into a consultative process to develop and implement a “Chitimacha River Cane Project.” Project goals

included plant identification, collection, propagation, and field establishment of river cane (*Arundinaria sp.*). In consultation with the Chitimacha, NRCS selected superior ecotypes to meet the objectives of the tribe and identified appropriate sites on tribal land for re-establishment of the river cane.

In the years since, the river cane that was originally collected was propagated at NRCS’ Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center in Galliano, Louisiana, and returned to tribal lands. Subsequent collections and plantings

have occurred to ensure that one day Chitimacha basket weavers will be able to harvest river cane in a traditional 10-year rotation and allow for regeneration.

Today, the Chitimacha Tribe, NRCS Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center, NRCS Franklin Field Office, St. Mary Soil and Water Conservation District, and teams of local volunteers (Chitimacha Fire Protection, Baldwin Fire Department, Chitimacha Public Works, local farmers, and more) work together to harvest and plant river cane (*Arundinaria sp.*) to ensure current and future generations of Chitimacha basket weavers have access to the wild cane of their ancestors.

## Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana Conservationists

## Around the State

**Mar 15**

**Tree Plantings in Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge** - On March 15, 2013, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, St. Mary SWCD, LSU AgCenter, St. Mary Parish Black Bear Conflict Office, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with 4-H Junior Leaders held a tree planting in the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge. The group planted over 300 seedlings of acorn producing trees to improve black bear habitat.

**Apr 17-18**

**Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center School Visits** - On April 17 and 18, 2013, Alexis Luke and Curt Riche visited local Lafourche Parish schools to talk to students about the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Plant Materials Program, as well as the importance of Arbor Day and Earth Day.



**Apr 19**

**Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center Tree Giveway** - On April 19, 2013, the Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center donated 50 willow oak and 50 green ash trees to the South Lafourche Public Library in honor of Earth Day and Arbor Day.



**Apr 20**

**Earth Day Activities: Party for the Planet at the Alexandria Zoo** - On April 20, 2013, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rapides Soil and Water Conservation District, and Earth Team volunteers visited with hundreds of children and their parents at the Alexandria Zoo during Party for the Planet, an Earth Day celebration. Alphonse the Alligator introduced his new wetland friend, Terry the Turtle, and children learned about wetlands and constructed origami hopping frogs.



**Apr 21**

**Louisiana Earth Day at the Old Governor's Mansion in Baton Rouge** - On April 21, 2013, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Capital Soil and Water Conservation District, Upper Delta Soil and Water Conservation District, and Earth Team volunteers visited with hundreds of children and their parents at the Louisiana Earth Day at the Old Governor's Mansion in Baton Rouge. Alphonse the Alligator introduced his new wetland friend, Terry the Turtle, and children learned about wetlands and constructed origami hopping frogs.



### RMS Plan Charts Conservation Course for Acadiana Cattle Producer

Bryan Alleman is a registered Braford cattle producer running 300 head on approximately 1,200 acres in Acadia and Lafayette Parishes. His goals are to improve forage production, improve water quality, and increase his herd to 500 head.

Alleman is a participant in the Louisiana Master Farmer Program. As a Master Farmer participant, Alleman is working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop a Resource Management System plan on 273 acres of land on three separate farms. His plan was developed to improve his forage production through implementation of Forage and Biomass Planting, Fence, Watering Facilities, Pipeline, Heavy Use Pads, Nutrient Management, and Prescribed Grazing conservation practices.

During the planning process, NRCS began using a "strike team" approach to planning—deploying a team of conservationists to visit the farm, assess the resources, and work with the producer to develop a plan. This approach not only resulted in a sound conservation plan, but helped train new soil conservationists and soil conservation technicians in the art of conservation planning.

Submitted by Jack Haller, NRCS District Conservationist, Crowley Field Office

## Stories from the Field

### MRBI SWAT Team Helping Ag Producers Improve Water Quality in East and West Carroll Parishes

The East Carroll Soil and Water Conservation District and the West Carroll Soil and Water Conservation District received funding through a cooperative agreement between the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry and the Natural Resources Conservation Service Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) to hire a district technician to help agriculture producers plan and implement conservation practices to improve water quality.

The cooperative contribution agreement establishes a Strategic Watershed Assessment Team (SWAT) to help develop new conservation plans to implement high priority buffer type practices, irrigation pumping plant efficiency, and/or irrigation water management plans on agricultural land in the MRBI focus watersheds.



NRCS Agricultural Engineer Biff Handy is training the new MRBI SWAT District Technician, Rowdy Putman, on testing techniques for irrigation water wells and safety. Handy and Putman recently visited Larry Sanderson's farm in East Carroll Parish to test one of his irrigation wells. Sanderson is enrolled in NRCS' Conservation Stewardship Program.

"Now I can be more aware of the amount of water I am applying to this field," said Sanderson. "It will be good for us (landowners) to know what we are getting from our well drillers . . . now farmers can tell if a well is giving out."

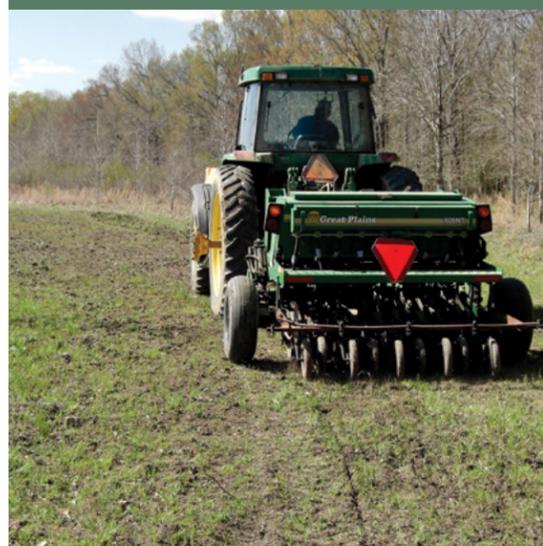
Sanderson also commented that producers need to look at early season well performance versus late season performance so that aquifer drawdown can be monitored by the farmer.



If you are interested in having your irrigation well tested or learning more about the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service or Soil and Water Conservation District office. A contact list is included on the back page of this publication.

Submitted by Jay Crawford, NRCS District Conservationist, Lake Providence Field Office

### Helping People Help the Land



### Landscape Diversity Increases Wildlife Habitat in Franklin Parish

Through the years, J.H. Martin has established over 500 acres of bottomland hardwoods on his marginal cropland. To increase wildlife habitat in the existing monoculture of hardwoods, Martin elected to add diversity by establishing native grasses. Utilizing cost-share funding from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Martin planted

28.4 acres with sunflower, partridge pea, and switchgrass. This planting will provide critical habitat for wild turkey, quail, and whitetail deer.

If you would like to increase wildlife habitat on your farm or ranch, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service or Soil and Water Conservation District office. A contact list is included on the back page of this publication.

Submitted by Jason Hardie, NRCS District Conservationist, Winnsboro Field Office

# Contact Our Offices

Parish	Field Office	Soil and Water Conservation District	Address	Telephone
Acadia	Crowley	Acadia SWCD	157 Cherokee Drive, Suite C, Crowley, LA 70526	(337) 783-5823, ext. 3
Allen	Oberlin	Allen SWCD	309 North 1st Street, Suite 1, Oberlin, LA 70655	(337) 639-4850, ext. 3
Ascension	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD and New River SWCD	2274 Highway 70, Suite C, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Assumption	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD	2274 Highway 70, Suite C, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
Avoyelles	Marksville	Avoyelles SWCD	629 Tunica Drive West, Marksville, LA 71351	(318) 253-9445, ext. 3
Beauregard	DeRidder	Calcasieu SWCD	597 Mahlon Street, Suite B, DeRidder, LA 70634	(337) 463-8555, ext. 3
Bienville	Minden	Saline SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
Bossier	Benton	Bodcau SWCD	200 Burt Boulevard, Suite 101, Benton, LA 71006-4901	(318) 965-2185, ext. 3
Caddo	Shreveport	Caddo SWCD	1402 Hawn Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71107	(318) 676-3461, ext. 3
Calcasieu	Lake Charles	Gulf Coast SWCD	1400 Highway 14, Suite B, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 436-5020, ext. 3
Caldwell	Columbia	Boeuf and Dugdemona SWCD	7128 Highway 165 South, Suite 2, Columbia, LA 71418	(318) 649-2651, ext. 3
Cameron	Lake Charles	Gulf Coast SWCD	1400 Highway 14, Suite B, Lake Charles, LA 70601	(337) 436-5020, ext. 3
Catahoula	Jonesville	Catahoula SWCD	3545 4th Street, Jonesville, LA 71343	(318) 339-4239, ext. 3
Claiborne	Minden	D'Arbonne SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
Concordia	Ferriday	Tensas-Concordia SWCD	8331 Highway 84, Ferriday, LA 71334	(318) 757-2455, ext. 3
DeSoto	Mansfield	DeSoto SWCD	211 Washington Avenue, Mansfield, LA 71052	(318) 872-4949, ext. 3
East Baton Rouge	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	2191 Tower Drive, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 664-1430, ext. 3
East Carroll	Lake Providence	East Carroll SWCD	406 Lake Street, Suite C, Lake Providence, LA 71254	(318) 559-2604, ext. 3
East Feliciana	Clinton	Feliciana SWCD	9752 Plank Road South, Clinton, LA 70722	(225) 683-5496, ext. 3
Evangeline	Ville Platte	Evangeline SWCD	205 Court Street, Ville Platte, LA 70586	(337) 363-6602, ext. 3
Franklin	Winnsboro	Northeast SWCD	616 Riser Road, Winnsboro, LA 71295	(318) 435-6743, ext. 3
Grant	Colfax	Grant SWCD	510 Main Street, Colfax, LA 71417	(318) 627-9903, ext. 3
Iberia	New Iberia	Iberia SWCD	2617 Northside Road, Suite 600, New Iberia, LA 70563	(337) 369-6623, ext. 3
Iberville	Addis	Lower Delta SWCD	7747 Highway 1 South, Addis, LA 70710	(225) 687-2184, ext. 3
Jackson	Ruston	Dugdemona SWCD	1412 Celebrity Drive, Ruston, LA 71270	(318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Jefferson	Boutte	Crescent SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
Jefferson Davis	Jennings	Jefferson Davis SWCD	2003 Port Drive, Jennings, LA 70546	(337) 824-0975, ext. 3
Lafayette	Lafayette	Lafayette SWCD	905 Jefferson Street, Suite 310, Lafayette, LA 70501-7913	(337) 262-6601, ext. 3
Lafourche	Thibodaux	Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD	143 Laura Drive, Thibodaux, LA 70301	(985) 447-3871, ext. 3
LaSalle	Jonesville	LaSalle SWCD	3545 4th Street, Jonesville, LA 71343	(318) 339-4239, ext. 3
Lincoln	Ruston	D'Arbonne SWCD	1412 Celebrity Drive, Ruston, LA 71270	(318) 255-3136, ext. 3
Livingston	Denham Springs	Capital SWCD	2191 Tower Drive, Denham Springs, LA 70726	(225) 664-1430, ext. 3
Madison	Tallulah	Madison SWCD	1900 Crothers Drive, Tallulah, LA 71282	(318) 574-4158, ext. 3
Morehouse	Bastrop	Morehouse SWCD	9604 Marlatt Street, Bastrop, LA 71220	(318) 283-7626, ext. 3
Natchitoches	Natchitoches	Natchitoches SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3
Orleans	Boutte	Crescent SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
Ouachita	Monroe	D'Arbonne/Boeuf River SWCD	2410 Old Sterlington Road, Suite B, Monroe, LA 71203-2668	(318) 343-4467, ext. 3
Plaquemines	Boutte	Plaquemines SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
Pointe Coupee	New Roads	Upper Delta SWCD	180 East Main Street, New Roads, LA 70760	(225) 638-7746, ext. 3
Rapides	Alexandria	Rapides SWCD	3734 Government Street, Building C, Alexandria, LA 71303	(318) 473-7856, ext. 3
Red River	Coushatta	Red River SWCD	1311 Ringgold Avenue, Coushatta, LA 71019	(318) 932-4352, ext. 3
Richland	Rayville	Boeuf River SWCD	141 Industrial Loop, Rayville, LA 71269	(318) 728-4451, ext. 3
Sabine	Many	Sabine SWCD	570 Highway 171 By Pass, Many, LA 71449	(318) 256-3491
St. Bernard	Boutte	Crescent SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
St. Charles	Boutte	Crescent SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
St. Helena	Amite	Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD	805 West Oak Street, Suite 1, Amite, LA 70422-2820	(985) 748-8751, ext. 3
St. James	Donaldsonville	Lower Delta SWCD and New River SWCD	2274 Highway 70, Suite C, Donaldsonville, LA 70346	(225) 473-7638, ext. 3
St. John	Boutte	Crescent SWCD	14246 US Highway 90, Boutte, LA 70039	(985) 758-2162, ext. 3
St. Landry	Opelousas	St. Landry SWCD	5832 I-49 North Service Road, Opelousas, LA 70570	(337) 942-2530, ext. 3
St. Martin	Lafayette	St. Martin SWCD	905 Jefferson Street, Suite 310, Lafayette, LA 70501-7913	(337) 262-6601, ext. 3
St. Mary	Franklin	St. Mary SWCD	500 Main Street, Franklin, LA 70538	(337) 828-1461, ext. 3
St. Tammany	Franklinton	Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD	1111 Washington Street, Franklinton, LA 70438	(985) 839-5688, ext. 3
Tangipahoa	Amite	Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD	805 West Oak Street, Suite 1, Amite, LA 70422-2820	(985) 748-8751, ext. 3
Tensas	St. Joseph	Tensas-Concordia SWCD	1223 Plank Road, St. Joseph, LA 71366	(318) 766-3502, ext. 3
Terrebonne	Thibodaux	Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD	143 Laura Drive, Thibodaux, LA 70301	(985) 447-3871, ext. 3
Union	Farmerville	D'Arbonne SWCD	604 East Water Street, Farmerville, LA 71241	(318) 368-8021
Vermilion	Abbeville	Vermilion SWCD	3221 Veterans Memorial Drive, Suite H, Abbeville, LA 70510	(337) 893-5664, ext. 3
Vernon	Leesville	Calcasieu SWCD	205 North 5th Street, Leesville, LA 71446	(337) 239-2193
Washington	Franklinton	Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD	1111 Washington Street, Franklinton, LA 70438	(985) 839-5688, ext. 3
Webster	Minden	Dorcheat SWCD	216B Broadway, Minden, LA 71055	(318) 377-3950, ext. 3
West Baton Rouge	Addis	Upper Delta SWCD	7747 Highway 1, South, Addis, LA 70710	(225) 687-2184, ext. 3
West Carroll	Oak Grove	West Carroll SWCD	208 South Constitution Street, Oak Grove, LA 71263	(318) 428-9303, ext. 3
West Feliciana	Clinton	Feliciana SWCD	9752 Plank Road South, Clinton, LA 70722	(225) 683-5496, ext. 3
Winn	Natchitoches	Dugdemona SWCD	6949 Louisiana Highway 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, LA 71457	(318) 357-8366, ext. 3



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