GREENWAYS

Newsletter of D&R Greenway Land Trust Volume 33, Number 1 Spring 2024

Land Preservation Update

Since 1989, D&R Greenway has preserved 327 properties totaling 22,208 acres.

Celebrating 35 Years of Connecting ~ People ~ Wildlife ~ Community ~ Land

Hopewell Farm and Woods adds to Big Picture of Preservation

opewell Valley's beauty is comprised of many parts all in close proximity—rocky ridges, rushing streams, horizon-wide views, deep woods and a historic working landscape.

In Spring, we feel rejuvenated by all of nature's wonders that can be found on the land, from sprouting trout lilies in the woods to new lambs birthed on a farm. D&R Greenway is sharing good news that also birthed this Spring was newly preserved land! George and Anne Carcagno, longtime Hopewell residents who have been active in the community, permanently protected their farm fields and woods with a conservation easement that protects the majority of the couple's 84-acre farm.

These protected acres include woodlands and hedgerows, a stream tributary to Jacobs Creek, and pastures. Pleasant noises heard from this land comes from birds and the pastoral baas of the Carcagnos' flock of sheep. George Carcagno shares, "We began raising sheep after someone gave us four sheep that had been a 4-H project. We currently have 32 sheep, 17 fall lambs and 22 spring lambs. Anne looks after the sheep and other animals. She has become quite adept at helping deliver lambs!"

Preserving the property also protects the water quality of Jacobs Creek, a tributary of the Delaware River. And it preserves the landscape of a historic Hopewell Valley farm: the farmhouse (which is not itself part of the easement) was "reportedly built around 1735 by Timothy Titus," according to George Carcagno.

George notes, "We've always been interested in conserving the property," which he and Anne bought in 1979. They first looked into preserving it in 2000 but funds weren't forthcoming. A few

Proudly reaccredited in 2023! Excellence. Trust. Permanence.



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years ago, they decided to renew the effort. "We asked both our kids about what they wanted—sell it, take it over, preserve it. They each independently voted for preservation. So we began the process again."

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The pastoral beauty of newly preserved Carcagno Farm in the Hopewell Valley

Hopewell Farm

Continued from page 1

D&R Greenway orchestrated the complex process of obtaining funding and support. "I was first introduced to the Carcagnos more than twenty years ago, when they were exploring preservation with local government," says Linda Mead, the organization's President and CEO. "Though that transaction did not happen, George and Anne kept true to their goal," she continues. "We reconnected four years ago when D&R Greenway protected neighboring land. Good things come to those who wait."

With such a multi-faceted value for the Carcagno easement it is no wonder that several entities contributed to the funding: New Jersey's Green Acres Program, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (FOHVOS) and Hopewell Township. Mercer County's Open Space Board supported the easement. Funds from D&R Greenway's Revolving Land for Life Fund made the difference in filling the gap to preserve the land.

An interesting wrinkle to the funding is that a portion of the easement purchase price is paid to the Carcagnos over time, as an annuity. Wade Martin, Managing Director-Financial Advisor RBC Wealth Management, an expert in land conservation financing, explains the rationale: "When landowners are selling their property [or an easement on it], proper tax planning with the use of annuities, may lower their capital gains tax and produce more income over a longer period of time. Owners should consult their accountants, estate planning attorneys and financial advisors to develop the optimal financial plan for the sale of their property." D&R Greenway has worked with other landowners in the past, including the Matthews family in Montgomery Township, to achieve preservation using an annuity that provides an ongoing income to the landowners.

The conservation easement also provides for a future trail on a wooded area of the Carcagnos' property that will connect to the new Farm-to-Ridge Trail on the adjacent Cifelli land that was protected under D&R Greenway's leadership in 2020.

The brand-new trail, completed in early 2024 thanks to the leadership of Alan Hershey and New Jersey Trails, a volunteer trail-building program of



A donkey in front of the sheep barn at the Carcagno farm

D&R Greenway, connects the Jacobs Creek Trail managed by Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (FOHVOS) with the popular co-managed Woosamonsa Ridge Preserve trails. The new 0.85-mile trail is on lands protected by D&R Greenway with FOHVOS and Hopewell Township.

The trail provides a moderate hike with gentle hills, and plenty of variety in terrain and surroundings. From the Woosamonsa Road parking area at Woosamonsa Ridge Preserve, the trail winds south through the forested FOHVOS Walker Preserve on a sloping,

rocky valley above Jacobs Creek. The trail's designers have created a superbly dramatic approach to the creek: its rushing sound can be heard before you catch sight of it, then you're rewarded with overhead views of the creek flowing along the floor of the steep-sided valley.

The footpath rambles through a mature oak-tulip tree-beech forest that shades the rocky slope. It dips gently to cross two small brooks, climbs up the south side of the valley, then pops out of the woods to open onto a light-filled vista of Hopewell Valley farmland. The farm is protected by D&R Greenway's easement on the Cifelli property. The trail goes east along the farm field's perimeter. In the future, it will



The Carcagno's flock of domestic sheep

connect through the Carcagno's woods to township-protected land.

While the protection of this land was envisioned more than twenty years ago, it proves that persistence is among the necessary ingredients to success. The tax planning provided an important tool to getting the land preserved, and while it may be complicated, the result is clear: a farm, a ridge and nothing but Hopewell Valley beauty in between, forever.

To explore preservation of your land and how it can benefit your family and financial planning, contact D&R Greenway's Senior Director of Land Protection and Planning, Rick Lear at rlear@drgreenway.org.

The EverGreen Circle

A planned gift is a contribution to the future that reflects the donor's beliefs and values. People who make a bequest, establish a gift annuity or designate D&R Greenway as a recipient of life insurance, an IRA or land are recognized as members of our EverGreen Circle. These visionaries make a lasting impression on their community's quality of life after they are gone through their legacy gifts.

We are grateful to those who have shared their belief in

our mission to preserve and care for land now and forever. To learn more about how your planned gift will contribute to a sustainable future, contact Linda Mead, D&R Greenway's President and CEO, 609-924-4646. We are eternally grateful to those who have joined our legacy group by leaving a bequest.

The following generous donors live on through their green legacy, recognized in 2023:

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Land Preserved through a Family Estate Expands Sourlands Ecosystem Preserve

n a special day—Leap Day 2024—D&R Greenway preserved two special properties to expand protection of the Sourland Mountain forest by 12.5 acres.

Both parcels are undeveloped woods; there is a 7.1-acre lot on Lindbergh Road and about 0.7 miles to the east is another 5.42 acre parcel. They share an ambiance of remote serenity, occupied only by majestic oak and hickory trees, upstart beeches and sturdy maples above a carpet of leaves that settles around the rocky forest floor.

The serenity speaks to the ecological value of these high-quality forested sites. Their undisturbed character has protected them from non-native invasive plants, safeguarded the sites' hydrology,

and nurtured the growth of a biodiverse, mature woods.

"They are puzzle pieces in a larger, long-range effort to protect the Sourlands ecosystem," says Rick Lear, D&R Greenway's Senior Director of Land Protection and Planning. The two lots contribute to the 20,000 acres of contiguous forest in the 90-square mile Sourlands mountain in Mercer, Somerset and Hunterdon Counties. The Sourland Mountain forest provides critical nesting habitat for neotropical birds, its rich tree and shrub layers provide food for young, and shelter from predators, that they cannot find in disturbed woods.

"The land was owned by my late grandparents Eleanor and Harold W. Sutphin," explains Monica Mozingo. "My mother Susan Apgar and aunt Carol Lyons were co-executors of the estate. They never wanted to build on this family land, and eventually decided to preserve it." Monica reached out to D&R Greenway on their behalf. Linda Mead, D&R Greenway's President and CEO, began the preservation conversation with the family that was spread far and wide, with many family members who needed to agree to preservation and sign off on the sale of the land. "D&R Greenway was great to work with," Monica says.

It was D&R Greenway's Revolving Land for Life Fund, and a grant from Hunterdon County, that made this transaction possible. "We were forward thinking when D&R Greenway established our Revolving Fund through our Land for Life campaign. We continue to preserve land over and over again, by investing and replenishing this fund to ensure it is at the ready when needed," says Linda Mead. "We are grateful to our private donors whose legacy continues through this fund for preserving land."

Other preserved land is nearby in the Sourlands, including county protected lands. Every piece of this forest is valuable to help protect the whole ecosystem. The Sutphin/Apgar family's legacy is not only the preservation of the trees on their family land, but additional protection for the larger forest.

To explore how your estate can contribute to a lasting legacy of preserved land, or to make a gift to D&R Greenway's Revolving Land Fund, contact Linda Mead at lmead@drgreenway.org.



Serene Sourland Mountain forest on newly preserved land

The Taplin Circle

he Taplin Circle was introduced twenty years ago in Lelebration of D&R Greenway's 15th Anniversary. As we enter into our 35th anniversary of preserving land, we remember and honor the philanthropic vision of Frank Taplin and his wife, Peg. Their generous leadership led to the preservation of two signature Princeton landscapes:

The Institute Woods and Coventry Farm including Farmview Fields, now a public park. Our dedicated Taplin Circle members continue the Taplin legacy and demonstrate their love of preservation by contributing \$1,000 or more to D&R Greenway annually. We are grateful for their leading support.

Donations Received January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023

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Changing of the Guard

Peter J. Dawson, Pennington resident and owner of Leigh Visual Imaging, retired from D&R Greenway's Board of Trustees following 11 years of service, with the past three as Chairman. We applaud his dedication and leadership.

"It's the breadth and significance of the work that is done every day at D&R Greenway that inspired my leadership. Bringing in people through the arts, welcoming community at our Johnson Education Center and Discovery Center at Point Breeze, caring for the land, wildlife and birds, and always another parcel of land teeing up for preservation. The benefit to our region is just phenomenal! We have many more good things to look forward to as we celebrate our 35th anniversary year and look to the future."

-Peter J. Dawson, Retiring Chair, Board of Trustees

Announcing New Leadership

Officers of the Board Co-Chairs: Michael Kunst and

Ieanne Perantoni

Vice Chairs: Adrian Huns and

Diana Moore

Treasurer: Dan Motto

Secretary: Heather McCusker, Esq. Assistant Secretary: Michael Bramnick

Michael Kunst

"Peter led with his heart, humor, and human touch which inspired us to deepen our commitment to land preservation and to embrace forward-thinking roles in stewardship and sustainability."

-Michael Kunst

Jeanne Perantoni AIA, ALEP, LEED AP;

Senior Principal, SSP Architects

"As new co-chairs, we will channel Peter's gifts in asking the right questions and engaging stakeholders to meet the challenges of Hillside Farm. We will transform it into a resilient refuge for wildlife, an accessible park of awesome beauty, and a unique destination inspiring land preservation and conservation practices in honor of Betty Wold Johnson." — Jeanne Perantoni



(l) Peter Dawson, retiring Chair of the Board, with Co-Chairs Jeanne Perantoni and Michael Kunst

Welcome New Trustees

s D&R Greenway celebrates its 35th As D&K Gleenway Coloring

Anniversary we warmly welcome our new and returning 2024 Trustees:

Jack Gallagher is a longtime Taplin Circle supporter and is a familiar face on our preserves, volunteering as a trail steward. He is a retired Verizon executive with



experience in leadership, organizational development and technology.

"Land preservation is critical to the health of our local ecosystems and greatly enhances the wellbeing of all in our community—a vital mission. D&R Greenway is an outstanding organization that I'm proud to support."

Iim Waskovich lives on a property protected with a conservation easement held by D&R Greenway. His stewardship contributes to the



conservation of the Baldwin Lake Wildlife Management Area and our Pennington Loop Trail. Jim is an entrepreneur and business investor. He grew up on a farm in Monmouth County.

"My family and I are tremendously grateful to D&R Greenway for their role in preserving the farm nearly twenty years ago. Without D&R Greenway, it is unlikely properties like ours would still exist in our area. D&R Greenway ensures that farms and open space will remain a part of our community in the future."

Iohan Firmenich

returns to our Board after a one-year hiatus. Iohan is Co-founder of Nature360 Inc. and formerly served as the Sustainability Officer for Firmenich



Corporation. Johan and his wife Emily preserved their Montgomery Township farm. Johan was recognized with the 2023 Donald B. Jones Conservation Award for his land stewardship.

"I care about D&R Greenway for the incredible stewardship work it does on the thousands of acres of land they have preserved. It is critical to be able to maintain the land once it has been preserved in perpetuity. J.M. Barrie said it best—'Forever is a very long time'and I trust that D&R Greenway is here for the long run."

Steadfast Stewards

&R Greenway thanks our Steadfast Stewards for their dedication and continued support of our mission to preserve and care for land and inspire a conservation ethic, now and forever. Their confidence in our work helped us to

expand and grow from a small startup organization to one of the leading land trusts in New Jersey and the country with over 22,000 acres preserved. A special thank you to those who joined us in our early years and continued to support us through 2023.

Donations Received January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023

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Futuro students from the Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund learning about the Delaware River. Thanks to SPLASH for their partnership. Visit drgreenway.org for future announcements about our 2024 kayak adventures. (photo: Angelica Stern)

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Forest Bathing with Romy BYO Picnic Lunch

Saturday, May 18, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Cedar Ridge Preserve - From Stony Brook Road parking area. \$15 per participant

Join Romy Toussaint, a certified health coach, for an uplifting session of calm and quiet amongst the trees. Commonly known as the Japanese practice of forest bathing, Romy will lead a meditative hike through the beautiful Cedar Ridge meadows and forest.

Bring-your-own picnic lunch and a blanket or chair to sit and enjoy camaraderie with Romy and our Director of Land Stewardship Tina Notas after the hike.

> D&R Greenway will provide desserts along with the ambiance!

Space is limited, reservations are necessary and can be made at www.drgreenway.org. &

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Grassland Renewal at Cider Mill Preserve Draws Rare Winter Birds

On a winter's day in Cider Mill Preserve, tall dried native grasses stretch as far as the eye can see in all directions. The vista is painted in a palette of subtle shades of amber, taupe, russet and chestnut; the textures of stalks and seedheads take form in a profusion of shapes and textures.

As alive as these grasslands are to the eyes, they are also full of wildlife—even in the dead of winter.

Flying low and fast over the fields is a large dark bird with a long tail; it flaps its wings, glides, rocks side to side then turns, a white patch on its rump flashing in the sun, finally dropping straight down into the grass. This is a Northern Harrier hunting for field mice (meadow voles) that scurry through the fields, digging shallow surface runways as they forage on grasses.

Northern Harriers, along with other birds that depend on vanishing grasslands, have declined in population in New Jersey; many grassland birds are on the state's Rare, Threatened and Endangered list. The Northern Harrier's spring breeding population is statelisted as "endangered"; the bird is also considered by New Jersey's Natural Heritage program to be "imperiled" because of rarity.

So it's big news that during the winter of 2023-2024, Harriers were relatively abundant at Cider Mill Preserve, with observers seeing a half dozen or more. "It's exciting that so

many of these rare raptors were able to settle in to the Cider Mill grasslands for the cold months," says Tina Notas, D&R Greenway's Director of Land Stewardship.



Northern Short-eared Owl (photo: Cornell Lab of Ornithology)

Short-eared Owls, another rare species whose breeding population is endangered, also made an appearance at Cider Mill this winter. They're unusual owls in that they don't forage at night but rather are "crepuscular," hunting at dusk and dawn. They shelter and roost in hedgerows that line the fields.

Both birds require large tracts—at least 20 acres—of undisturbed grasslands for foraging. Although they can share the same habitat, it is an uneasy co-existence, because they compete for the same prey—albeit at different times of day. If the owls are disturbed during daylight hours the harriers may even attack them.

Hawk watch at Cider Mill Preserve (photo: Dan Kapner)

The appearance of these two special wintering birds follows a new phase in management of the preserve that began in 2022. Cider Mill has been a D&R Greenway preserve since 2010. It is part of a 1,593-acre area designated by the New Jersey Natural Heritage Program as the "Amwell Valley Grassland macrosite," which is one of the finest remaining examples of agricultural grasslands in New Jersey.

Declining grassland bird species that have been documented at Cider Mill include bobolink, grasshopper sparrow, vesper sparrow, eastern meadowlark, and American kestrel. These birds are attracted to the preserve for both foraging and breeding habitat.

Without regular disturbance, though, inland grasslands transform into forests, simply by natural succession. In addition, grasslands are vulnerable to invasive non-native species that can take over quickly once they get a foothold, by out-competing native grasses during the spring and summer when these invasive plants produce copious amounts of seed.

In 2022, Tina began implementing new management approaches at Cider Mill to promote native grasses and wildflowers, eliminate and prevent seeding by invasive plants, and eliminate trees and shrubs that had begun to colonize the fields.

Tina worked with the New Jersey
Forest Service to do a "prescribed
burn" of the grasslands in March 2022.
Burning is an ancient land management
technique to rejuvenate a grassland by
not only getting rid of woody species,
but also improving the soil. Grassland
soil is a complex ecosystem that thrives,
hidden from sight underground.
Microbes and tiny invertebrates break
down organic matter, releasing nutrients
that feed native plants, which in turn
provide forage and cover for birds, bees,
butterflies and other wildlife.

Mimicking a natural fire, this controlled, very slow burn warms up the soil, which increases microbial activity. It also reduces thatch from mowing, and litter from grasses and flowers, which encourages seed germination and growth. As a collateral benefit for visitors, it also reduces tick populations.

In 2022 Cider Mill's fields were also mowed with a forestry mower to cut down 6-foot tall cedar trees that

had grown in over time. In addition, stewardship staff used herbicides to spot-treat invasive plants like mugwort, thistle and Callery pear.

In 2023, Tina fortified the native grass population in the fields by overseeding native warm-season including little bluestem, big bluestem, and purpletop, using a no-till drill to pop the seeds into small holes in the soil. This technique is designed to minimize disturbance of the soil structure that is critical to a grassland habitat.



Observant Owl at Cider Mill Preserve (photo: Harold Quinn)

Restoration of Cider Mill's grasslands will continue; for example, some areas will need more over-seeding to suppress reed canary grass. It is sometimes planted as silage or forage, but displaces native grasses when it spreads into (or persist in) natural areas.

But the appearance of two rare winter "snowbirds" suggests that the last two years work to re-vivify grasslands at Cider Mill has already gone beyond a mere facelift to a rebirth of critical habitat.

"The success of this project North shows the value of active stewardship of preserved land," says Linda Mead, D&R Greenway President and CEO. "When we purchased the land from Bryce Thompson in partnership with the State of New Jersey, it was fallow fields that had been used for hay production." D&R Greenway began the land's transformation by removing invasive ailanthus, known as Tree of Heaven, which was a significant task.



Northern Harrier (photo: National Audubon Society)

Since then, stepping up stewardship to manage this land as a signature preserve has shown a significant increase in its value for birds and wildlife. "We chose to focus on Cider Mill because of its size and potential for habitat enhancement. Land management requires staff and funds, and the results at Cider Mill shows what is possible."

"Enjoy Nature Responsibly" ~ Ethical Birding and Nature Photography

The rare birds that appeared at Cider Mill Preserve this past winter attracted many human fans eager to spot them or take photos. Unfortunately, in their enthusiasm, some visitors disturbed the birds, damaged habitat, trespassed on neighbors' property and created public safety issues by obstructing the narrow S-shaped road.

While it is easy to get caught up in the excitement of tracking a rare bird, it's not hard to make sure we don't get so excited that we damage the very thing we love. Following a few simple ethical guidelines will make sure that your fun doesn't come at the expense of others.

Avoid causing unnecessary disturbance or stress to wildlife.

When your behavior affects the behavior of the animal you are observing, you've probably gone too far. Approaching closely, making noise, or removing cover, are prime examples of actions that can expose wildlife to predators, cause them to abandon a nest, or prevent them from feeding or resting.

Respect private and public property.

A basic rule is don't go onto property where you're not invited (that's trespassing); and when you are invited onto private or public property, follow the rules established by the owner. These rules are not created to restrict your freedom, but to protect the property owner's rights to decide how the property will be used. Rules protect the habitat (vegetation, soil, rocks, etc.) that wildlife need to survive.

Respect other people.

Consideration for others is the basis for civilized interaction. Remember the Golden Rule: Don't do things to others that you would not want other people to do to you.

Bottom line to remember when visiting preserves.

If the parking area is full, come back another time. When you do, stay on trails or designated areas as shown on the D&R Greenway kiosk you'll find at our signature preserves.

Please remember to support D&R Greenway's work by sending a contribution—we are a nonprofit organization and your gifts enable our preservation and enhancement of special places you can enjoy!

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2023 Volunteers

D&R Greenway thanks our loyal volunteers whose collaborative contributions continue to build community and are invaluable to our growth and success.

Citizen Scientist Birders and Habitat Conservationists:

D&R Greenway partners with Conserve Wildlife Foundation and Washington Crossing Audubon Society to identify, count and protect species on our preserves.

Native Plant Nursery: Volunteers learn about, grow and care for native plants. Their valuable help growing and caring for nursery plants, and with native plant sales, raises funds to preserve and steward more land.

Stewardship and Trail Stewards: This resolute group enjoys the true community spirit as they keep our trails open and safe for the public's enjoyment. In 2023, stewardship volunteers assisted D&R Greenway staff with tree planting on our preserves.

New Jersey Trails: Led by former Board Chair Alan Hershey, skilled volunteers move boulders, build bridges over streams and clear brush to create welcoming experiences for people to connect with the land. Plan your visit to a preserve at www.nitrails.org.

Photographers and Graphic Design: A talented group of photographers and graphic designers dedicate their time and fields of expertise to support D&R Greenway's signature and educational events and public outreach.

Discovery Center and Historic Garden at Point Breeze:

Volunteers play an important role welcoming visitors, sharing stories about our exhibits, and assisting with special events. They help us grow heritage crops from the Bonaparte era and tend our Three Sisters Garden. Since we opened in May 2023, we've welcomed 1,000 visitors and donated 481 lbs. of produce to feed people in the local community.

Sharing Garden at St. Michaels Farm Preserve: In 2023, with the help of our dedicated volunteers, we donated 2,714 pounds of produce to the Chubby's Project in Hopewell to provide nutritional food to those in need.

Willing Hands and Smiling Faces: This enthusiastic group of volunteers are true partners in promoting a conservation ethic by processing mailings, decorating, organizing, greeting guests and helping with logistics at D&R Greenway's signature events, art receptions and outdoor events.

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101 East Park St., Bordentown, New Jersey

Join us to help visitors "discover" the beauty, history and importance of this special place. Make new friends while you learn from our speakers and exhibits.

Open hours: Saturdays and Sundays, noon—4:00 p.m. Occasional weekend events or group tours on weekdays.

You are sure to find a task that fits your interests and your schedule!

Contact Melanie at ptbreezemanager@drgreenway.org



Partners in Preservation

&R Greenway thanks our Partners in Preservation for their support and partnering with us to protect the open spaces we all love.

Our Partners in Preservation realize preserved open space is important to maintain clean water, fresh air, wildlife and agricultural land that provides wholesome foods to eat. They know spending time outdoors in nature has a positive effect

on overall health, including lowering stress, strengthening muscles, improving overall well-being for adults and children alike. Preserving natural and agricultural landscapes enhances our community by providing a sustainable and greener future for futures generations. We are grateful to our Partners in Preservation for joining us in our mission to preserve land and inspire a conservation ethic now and forever.

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D&R Greenway Land Trust is a regional 501(c)(3) nonprofit land conservancy dedicated to preserving and caring for land and inspiring a conservation ethic, now and forever.

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Please note: This annual report reflects giving from January 1 to December 31, 2023. We apologize for any errors that can be brought to our attention by calling 609-924-4646.

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