RipRap

Conserve Protect Restore

Newsletter of the
Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter
Volume 15 • Issue 4
March 2022

TROUT UNLIMITED

CHAPTER MEETING

Dry Fly Dick Frantes open tying night. Share your favorite patterns or watch and learn.

Zoom invite 7:00 p.m. or live at 6:00 p.m., Junior's Restaurant and Tap House.
414 South Main Street
River Falls, Wisconisn 54022

RIPRAP

Restoration, Improvement & Preservation through Research & Projects.

Photo: Ken Hanson

The Drift

I would like to start off with a HUGE THANK YOU to everyone who participated in our 4 x 100 drawing and on-line auction. The auction brought in $9,104, the drawings $4,670, and with a donation of $300 from TCTU , the total gross amount donated is $14,074!

This was our most successful fund raiser ever and discounting expenses, we netted $11,871 for the chapter. Thanks so much to everyone that donated items for the drawing and auction. Special thanks to Tom Schnadt for once again doing an incredible job on the drawing and thanks to the auction committee that included: Tom, Scott Wagner, Ken Hanson, Ed Constantini, Dave Johnson , and Matt Janquart.

This issue of RipRap kicks off an incredibly active spring for the chapter! R4F, the River Falls Film Fishing Festival, starts things off on March 4th at Tattersall in River Falls, which we will be helping out with. Get your tickets now! The Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo will be March 18-20 in St. Paul and we will have a booth there. Covid kept us out of the schools for the past couple of years, but Dean Hanson and Bugs in the Classroom will be back in April! Fingers are crossed with hopes we can help out with the trout release days for Trout in the Classroom as well. Rocky Branch Elementary will be collecting aquatic insects from the Kinni for their ECO Day and we will have our booth set up at the River Falls Earth Day celebration at Glen Park.

We are looking forward to launching our Stream Girls program for the Girl Scouts in May and will be helping to launch a fly fishing class at UW-RF. Hopefully, the city of River Falls fly fishing clinic will be back on too.

Of course, Randy Arnold is continuing to host brushing days every Saturday and is organizing some youth service days around this activity as well. Fundraising for the Kinni restoration is on-going too. Whew!!! We are an active chapter, and we are able to take all this on, because of your involvement. If any of these activities sound like something you would like to help out with, please reach out to me at: driftless23@gmail.com.

Oh yeah, the fishing should be heating up too! Hoping that BWOs will be on the menu soon!

From the Editor

Here we are, on the verge of spring, with the cold winter hopefully behind us. It's about this time of year that my optimism for the trout season goes from a simmer to a boil.

My hopes are high for this season. Kasey Yallaly reports that stream sampling trends show that 2021 was a "Banner Year for Trout," and that sampling showed numbers of all size classes of trout are above the average of the last 10 years. Hopefully the trout survived the low stream flows that were carried into the winter.

From what I observed on my winter forays, many of the areas I visited were covered with surface ice. I had long found this disturbing, since it was my understanding that surface ice is detrimental to fish survival. I thought, geez, how is all this ice going to affect the "Banner Year for Trout" predictions for the upcoming season.

With that in mind I decided to do a bit of research into the effects of stream surface ice on trout survival. To my surprise, I found that surface ice is in most cases beneficial to wintering trout.

In a paper titled "Ice cover alters the behavior and stress level of brown trout Salmo trutta," Watz et al. wrote that "the presence of surface ice may improve energetic status and broaden habitat use of stream fish during winter" (Behavioral Ecology (2015), 26(3), 820-827). The authors hypothesized that surface ice can act as a buffer for a stream's thermal environment and provide protection from predatory land animals.

Researchers tested groups of 4 trout, each with varying degrees of resting metabolic rates (RMRs) — high, low, or mixed — under the assumption that RMR would affect an individual's behavior in the winter. Each group was exposed to conditions of ice or no ice cover.

Findings showed that, overall, stress levels were reduced when the trout were exposed to ice cover, and that swimming activity increased (highest activity in high RMR groups) with ice cover; the mean proportion of time spent swimming was 38% with ice cover compared to 21% without. Researchers also measured aggressive behavior, described as chasing or nipping, and found that this behavior increased in the presence of ice cover.

The authors concluded that ice cover has a definite influence on the behavior of brown trout. The trout were more inclined to leave their holding areas in conditions of ice cover. Similar results were found in studies involving Atlantic salmon, leading to the hypothesis that the commonality of this behavior may indicate a "general phenomenon" for stream fish.

The data in this study can be directly correlated to the negative effects of global warming. The authors note that effects of global warming are expected to be stronger at higher latitudes and altitudes, posing a major threat to resident species since they have adapted to longer periods of ice cover. Warming temperatures will shorten the annual period of surface ice on rivers and lakes, negatively impacting activity levels and trout production.

These findings have definitely altered my thinking about surface ice on our local streams and given me a much greater appreciation for how trout adapt to these icy periods and how these conditions can be beneficial to their welfare. I think most of you would agree with me that winter fishing can be extremely challenging. But if you did decide to venture out during these past few months and got skunked, sit back and think about Kasey's reports of increased numbers of trout and how the little buggers were probably tucked safely away under that layer of ice, watching our boots swoosh by, thinking "move along, move along, we want to come out and feed."

THE FRANTES TECHNIQUE

Mike Alwin

Let's begin by recognizing that Trout Unlimited is not a fly-fishing club, it's a conservation organization dedicated to trout and cold water fisheries. It's motto could be, "What's good for the trout is good for the trout angler." Founded in 1959, TU accepts any trout angler who wants to help conserve and protect trout and the cold-water habitat they rely on. Angling methods, whether bait, fly or spinner, are less important than your desire to protect and conserve.

Among Great Lakes steelhead anglers there's a technique that calls for a fly rod fitted with a fly reel loaded with monofilament. The advantage of this rig is twofold: the fly rod, generally longer than a spinning rod, extends the anglers ability to lengthen the cast and control the drift, and the thinner mono allows the spawn sack, egg, or fly to sink deeper faster because it is less subject to the vagaries of the current.

Years ago, there was a debate in the Fly Shop about what actually defined fly fishing. At that time a veritable hoard of guys would crowd the shop every Wednesday to drink coffee, trade the same old stories, and debate various issues, one of which was what defined fly fishing. We called them "the Lost Boys." Gordy was the one member of this unofficial club whose life had purpose; he fished every day, no exceptions. While he had explored every method of catching trout on a fly and was an excellent caster, his favored method of trout fishing was with mono because he recognized its advantages. With a weighted nymph or two, split shot, and a wood strike indicator, Gordy relied on the weight of his rig to make the cast. The Lost Boys rejected this method as "spin fishing" with a fly. And therein lies the debate.

If you want to practice your spin casting you need your rod, reel spooled with mono, and a lure or plug because it's the weight of the lure that pulls line from the reel. If you want to practice your fly casting you need your rod, reel, fly line (which supplies the weight), and something that could pass as a leader. You wouldn't need a fly because a fly weighs nothing. So, what defines fly casting, as well as fly fishing, is the fly line.

Bruce Maher and Bob Trevis wrote an excellent article in the January *RIPRAP* about Tenkara and Euro Nymphing as trout fishing techniques. Tenkara relies on rods that are long and willowy and a short "line." What they describe is either level fluorocarbon or braided or furled nylon. Both are described as roughly the length of the rod, 10′ to over 14′. Approximately 3′ of tippet is attached to the end and a fly attached to that. I've frequently thought that Tenkara, because the rods telescope to 20″, would be an ideal lightweight outfit for backpacking into those small mountain streams I love. But to make a point, the authors admit that the "line" rarely touches the water and in fact is not cast in the traditional sense. Likewise, in their description of Euro Nymphing, they explain that the fly line, usually only a foot or two beyond the tip top, also rarely touches the water. With a 20′ leader and heavily weighted nymphs the angler is actually casting the weighted nymphs, not the fly line, copying Gordy's technique. If you think a 20′ leader is kinda long, brace yourself; I found a leader formula that was 45′.

Both of these methods, Tenkara and Euro Nymphing, are legitimate and excellent fish catching techniques. Maher and Trevis should be applauded for introducing us to these techniques, and we could all stand to adapt some of these ideas into our fishing repertoire. Absent a fly line, however, is it fly fishing or is it spin fishing with a fly? Therein lies the debate.

Views From This Side of My Vise

PAUL JOHNSON

In my last column, I went through a list of the top things that I like about fly tying. After reviewing that list I realized I neglected to talk about all of the fly tying materials that are available to us fly tyers. Please keep in mind that I really do not have all that much tying material. Really!

There is one particular tying material that folks seem to really like or really hate and that is CDC feathers. I happen to really love tying and fishing with flies tied with CDC feathers.

So what the heck is CDC? CDC is short for Cul de Canard. Cul de Canard is French for duck bottoms. (I had to Google that!) So if a duck is flying North, these feathers would be on the South end of the duck from around their preen glands. This is where ducks get the oil to clean and waterproof their feathers. It is that oil that makes the CDC feathers float so well.

So why would some folks dislike flies that are tied with CDC feathers if they float so well? The short answer is that the CDC feathers float very well until they get slimed up by a fish. After that happens, you really need to get those feathers dried out before they will be buoyant again. That can be a little putzy and even a challenge on a damp or rainy day. Also, you cannot use your standard floatant on these flies; you need to use a powder like Frogs Fanny.

But wait, there is more! CDC feathers also work great on some of your nymph patterns. The natural water proofing of the feathers tends to trap air bubbles and fish are attracted to air bubbles around an emerging nymph.

CDC feathers are readily available at your local fly shop. They come in several different colors to give your flies a different look. Like most tying materials, CDC will not work on every pattern, but it sure works well if you use it correctly. Give it a try and let me know what you think.

Skip's Loose Threads

Sometimes Simplicity Wins

In a previous article, I wrote about the history of fly-design moving between poles of simplicity and complexity, with a funny story about salmon fishing in Scotland. Sometimes, and more frequently than not, simplicity wins.

Emergers are a class of immature insect in the act of ascending to the surface, attempting to split wingcases, or drying wings, or escaping the remains of a nymphal exoskeleton. Trout, being efficient predators by necessity, feed upon the most vulnerable insects, those that, because of a disability or handicap, will never fly away.

During a hatch, there are thousands of individuals in the process of becoming adults. If everything goes as nature intends, they will all look alike. The cripples have one thing in common: theylook different from the successful individuals.

The differences may vary, but there will be some trigger that lets the trout know which ones are vulnerable, so the fish can rise confidently and not waste precious calories in an unsuccessful effort. This is also nature's way of eliminating less robust individuals from the breeding pool. After hatching, the birds take their share, again targeting those individuals that exhibit less than perfect flying ability.

Consider now the standard dry fly, with hackle, wings, body and tails, tied on a metal hook which often breaks the water surface. Can you see your fly on the water amid a hatch of insects? If you can, then your fly doesn't look like the naturals. The trout will also notice these irregularities and perhaps eat your fly. Ironically, the take is precisely because all of your ingenuity to craft the right silhouette, match color and size, and simulate movement creates just the opposite impression to the fish. The fish recognizes that your fly is a fake, but sucks it in because it won't fly away. I think it's terribly humbling to consider this, but it leads to a clearer understanding about what makes a great emerger imitation.

If any irregularity in the natural causes it to be targeted by trout, the more general and simple we can make those irregularities, the better. With fewer elements in each fly, we can concentrate on getting the colors and size right. The goal is to convince the trout that our imitation is a member of the same species that's hatching, but also that it is crippled.

Soft hackle flies do exactly that, provided the body is the same color as the natural's underbody, and the hackle is soft and sparse enough to get wet and simply lie along it. Don't worry about flotation. Even wet, most soft hackles will stay in the film, despite the hook point. By the way, make sure you tie them on light weight hooks. Are your soft hackles hard to see on the water? I hope so. You may not be able to see the fly, but you can watch your tippet for a tell-tale twitch, or lift your rod tip if you see a rise where you think your fly is.

Change Your Flies

Kent Klewein: Gink and Gasoline

How long do you fish with flies without success before you decide to change them? I'll usually fish for about 30 minutes with my first rig of the day, and if I'm not getting any hook-ups, I'll begin regularly changing my flies until I find a pattern that works. The willingness to change your flies on the water when you're not getting bites is often the key factor in determining whether you have a good or bad day of fishing.

I can't tell you how many times I've had someone walk up to me in the parking lot at the end of the day and complain about how the fish weren't biting, while I had caught and released dozens of fish in the same section of water. Most of the time that discouraged angler stuck with a few patterns during the day and didn't change flies often enough to find the patterns that were really working. How do I know this? Because I was that angler many times early in my career.

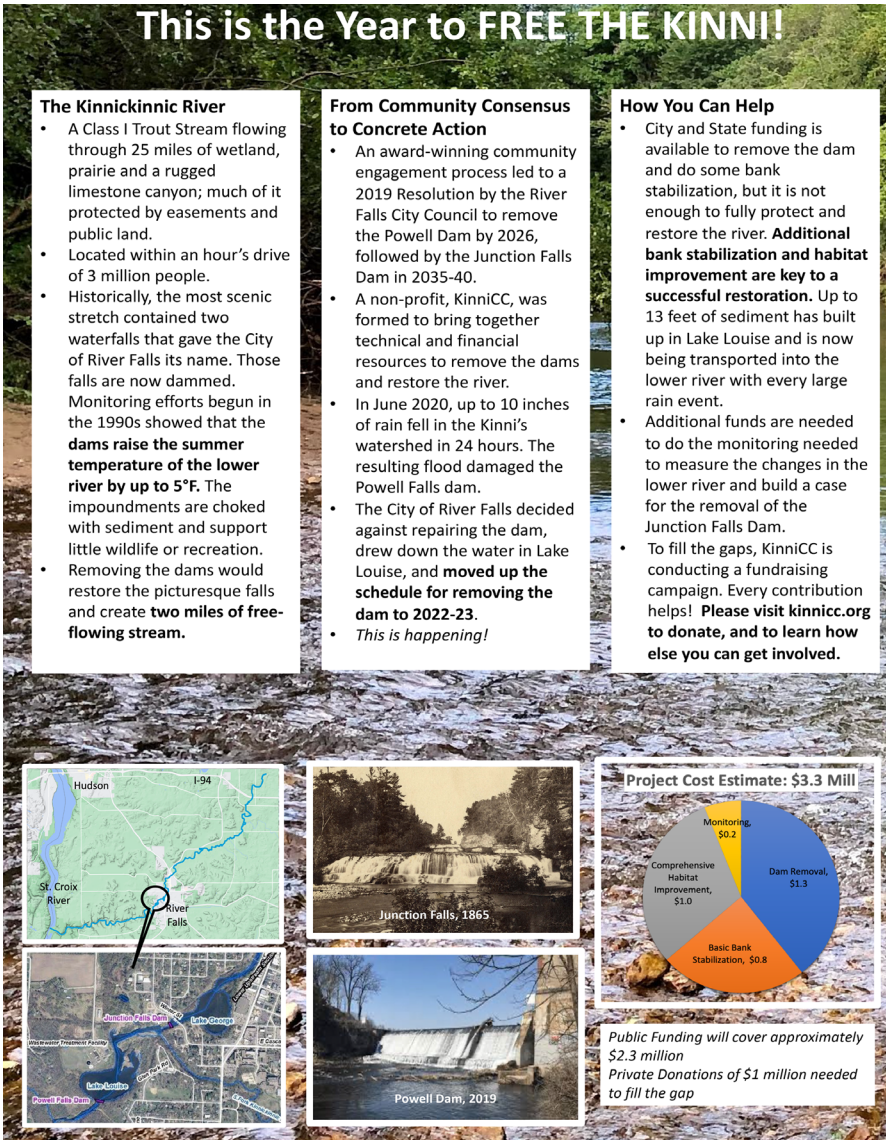
It can be obvious that changing flies is the answer when we're able to sight-fish and see fish rejecting our flies. But you'll often find yourself fishing in conditions where sight-fishing isn't an option—like fast-moving choppy water, or water with significant glare or stained water conditions. None of these provide the chance for visual feedback. In these conditions, change your flies when you aren't getting bites for extended periods of time.

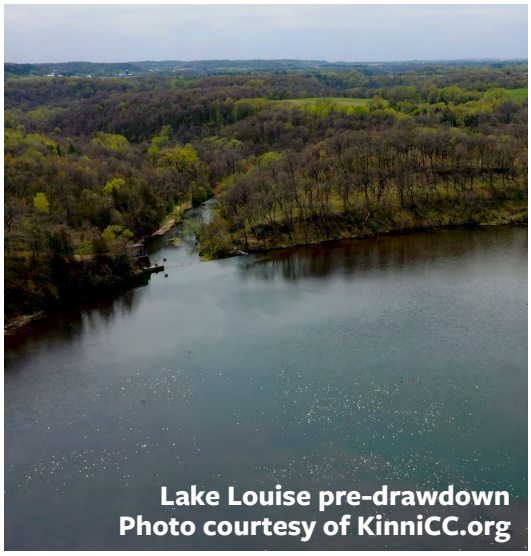
If you know your rig is set up correctly (correct tippet size, fly size, split-shot amount, or indicator placement) for the water your fishing, and you're making good presentations, a light bulb should be going off in your head telling you to change fly patterns if you're not getting bites.

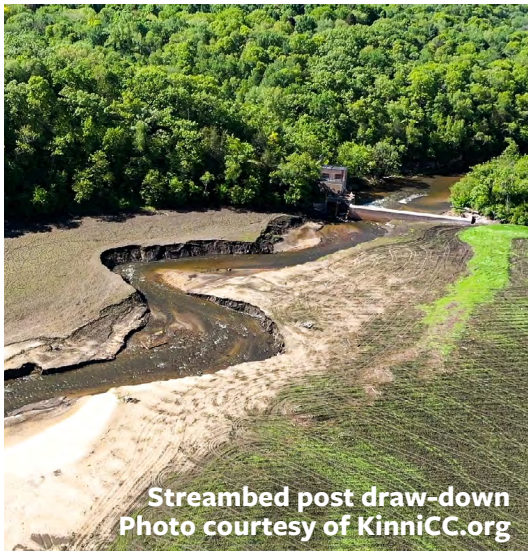
Sometimes you'll find a single pattern will work for the entire day when there's a hatch that fish are keying in on. When this isn't happening, you may find that one pattern will work in one area and in the next spot it won't work at all. Consider changing flies.

The best advice I can give anglers is don't be lazy and stick with fishing flies that aren't producing. You should always be ready for the food menu to change throughout the day. Different species of aquatic bugs are more active at different times of the day, so one fly may work great in the morning but not work at all later in the day. This is a curve ball that many rookie fly anglers will swing and miss at. They'll be thinking, I caught a half dozen fish right off the bat with this pattern, so I'm going to continue to fish it. Don't make this mistake!

Next time you're on the water and not getting bites, change your flies until you find a pattern that works (sometimes nothing works). In many cases, sticking to the same fly is the only reason you're not catching fish.




Lake Louise pre-drawdown
Photo courtesy of KinniCC.org


Streambed post draw-down
Photo courtesy of KinniCC.org

Kinnickkinnic River Corridor Plan

In 2016, the City of River Falls began the planning process for one of the most ambitious, complex, and far-reaching projects in its history. The goal — to prepare a future vision for the Kinnickinnic (Kinni) River Corridor that meets residents' needs and desires, reflects the values of the community, and protects the river for future generations. Central to the planning process was to determine the future of the two hydroelectric dams on the Kinnickinnic River

Arriving at a decision around this highly divisive issue required a commitment from the City to support an inclusive and creative community engagement process, one that would bring all voices to the planning table and ensure meaningful consideration of all stakeholder interests. In February 2018, after considerable community engagement, and extensive analysis examining the feasibility and impacts of dam removal, the City Council approved a resolution to remove the two dams. The City is targeting removal of the Powell Falls dam and associated stream restoration and has since drawn down the water in Lake Louise and moved up the scheduled dam removal to 2022–23 — removal of the Junction Falls dam is currently slated to ocurr between 2035-2040.

In the spring of 2018, the City initiated the preparation of this Kinnickinnic River Corridor Plan. The Plan's purpose is to provide a vision and framework for the future of the river corridor, addressing parks and recreation, natural resources and river ecology, access and connectivity, and land use and economic development opportunities. This plan has been prepared as a community-based and action-oriented plan so that planning concepts can begin to be realized in the short-term and achieve more significant ideas in the long term. This plan is also intended to inform the update to the City's Comprehensive Plan, including plans for land use and redevelopment, transportation, parks, trails, and public infrastructure.

The planning process and planning concepts built upon current and past initiatives related to the river corridor, engaged and collaborated with citizens and groups, many who have been engaged in the future of the Kinni for decades. Community engagement was a key component to this planning process, which included regular meetings with City staff and the Kinni Corridor Project Committee, public meetings/workshops, events for the general public, and online surveys. To read the entire corridor plan go to https://kinnicc.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Kinni Corridor Collaborative (KinniCC) is a River Falls based nonprofit whose mission is to work collaboratively with public and private organizations and individuals to assemble the technical and financial resources needed to implement the current Kinnickinnic River corridor master plan while preserving and managing the ecology and beauty of the Kinnickinnic River. They are organizing the fundraising effort for removal."

March Brown Spider

Hook: Standard nymph hook, size 16, 1x long
Body: Waspi Awesome Possum Natural Nymph Dubbing
Thread: UNI-Thread 8/0, wine color
Rib: Gold UTC Ultra Wire, size small
Hackle: Hungarian Partridge feather dyed dark brown and sized to hook

If adding a bead: Use a 16 2x or 14 1x long hook to maintain thorax body length, add a brass or tungsten bead, three turns of lead-free wire, continue with steps 2-8

- Mount hook into vice.
- Secure thread and lay down a thread base by wrapping along the hook shank to just above the barb of the hook.
- Lay rib wire along the hook shank and wrap back towards the hook eyelet making sure to leave enough room to prevent "crowding" the head when the hackling step is completed.
- Apply a thin noodle of dubbing, wrapping down the hook shank and taking one wrap behind the ribbing wire before wrapping forward. Continue this wrapping process striving to get that "carrot shape" thorax body look.
- Wrap 4 to 6 turns of ribbing wire and tie off behind the hook eyelet.
- Size, prepare, and tie in hackling feather. Take 2 to 3 wraps before securing the feather behind the hook eyelet. Skip intends his pattern to be heavily hackled. I prefer the same as well.
- Check to see if any "gap" exists between the end of the dubbing and the hackling feather. If so, apply more dubbing to fill in that gap, again striving to maintain that "carrot shape" thorax body.
- Whip finish to complete the tie. The result should be a "pronounced" thread wrapped head which also serves as a hot spot to the fly.

As a fly fishing enthusiast and novice fly tyer back when I earnestly began pursuing this sport some 25 years ago, I was surprised to learn that 90% of trout eat their meals subsurface. Wanting to catch these finny critters, it seemed only reasonable that I should fish a minimum of 90% of my time subsurface. Researching effective nymph patterns to do just this led me to legendary fly tyer Skip Morris' book, *The Art of Tying the Nymph*. Paging through it I was drawn to Skip's description of his March Brown Spider pattern, especially the portion of his description where he referred to it as his favorite search pattern. From there, I was metaphorically hooked.

Over the years I have made some slight modifications to Skip's recipe, and these have worked very well for me on the Kinni, the Rush, the Root, and the northern triangle streams of Iowa as well. This versatile pattern can be tied with or without a bead, with my preference being to tie it without the bead. The pattern is also well suited to being tied on a jig hook for those preferring a Euro nymph presentation as well. If so inclined, I would recommend still sticking with only two hook sizes – 16 and 14.

Kiap-Tu-Wish Logo Contest Winner

Following direction from the Kiap-Tu-Wish board, a contest was held to select a chapter logo that will not only give the chapter a unique identity but will also offer another fund raising resource from merchandise containing the logo. To start, the new logo will be embroided on hats that you will be able to purchase and show off to the rest of the fishing community. Further down the road, the board is considering expanding to additional items (yet to be determined) that will carry the logo.

The Kiap-Tu-Wish board would like to thank the following artists who submitted logo entries. These include: Charlie and Leo Witzke. Gretta Bevis, Missie Hanson, Ed Constantini, and Bethany Olson.

Winning Logo: Submitted by Charlie and Leo Witzke

Runner-up Logo: Submitted by Ed Constantini

TROUT UNLIMITED

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UPCOMING EVENTS

RF4 River Fall Film Festival
March 4th, 2022
5:00-9:00 pm
Tattersall Distilling,
1777 Paulson Rd,
River Falls, Wisconsin, 54022

Great Waters Fly-Fishing Expo - 2022
March 18-20
Hamline University Walker Fieldhouse,
1550 Hewitt Ave, St. Paul, MN 55104

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