

Patuxent Newsletter

RIVERKEEPER®

Top Stories

The river's first report card shows urgent need for improvement. Citizens H₂O quality monitoring project begun to increase testing range and raise awareness.

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Your Riverkeeper

Focused on advocacy, restoration & education, we are looking to the future with a new Board of Directors.

Check out our new patrol boat.

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Advocacy

Legislative session passes some significant environmental reforms, but our work continues. Utility infrastructure plans will have major impacts on the River.

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Restoration

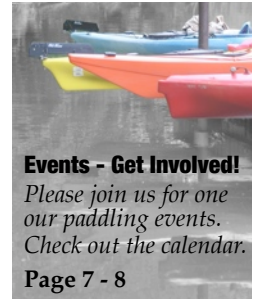
Annual Cleanup removes 11 tons of trash. Initiative to restore Reddy Branch's buffer. Fish passage project underway.

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Patuxent Goings-On

The Patuxent 20/20 report released. May's rain effects. Biodiversity's role in an environmental system's ability to recover. Crabbing struggles.

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Events - Get Involved!
Please join us for one of our paddling events. Check out the calendar. Page 7 - 8

River gets bad grades

Water quality monitoring program launched

On April 21, Patuxent Riverkeeper joined the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, NOAA, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust to release the first Patuxent River Report Card.

The report provided grades for the tidal estuary portion of the river. The grades are based on six indicators: dissolved oxygen levels, water clarity, chlorophyll a, aquatic grasses, benthic community, and phytoplankton community.

Overall, the estuary received a **D-**, meeting indicator target levels only 20% of the time. The tidal estuary was divided into upper, middle, and lower sections. The upper estuary fared the



best with a **C-**, with the middle scoring a **D**, and the lower estuary failing with an **F**.

The upper estuary was helped by relatively high levels of aquatic grasses, chlorophyll a, and dissolved oxygen.

Water clarity was poor throughout the river, a trend consistent with that of the Chesapeake Bay. To view the Patuxent River Report Card, visit www.eco-check.org.

Patuxent Riverkeeper has launched a citizen water monitoring program to expand next year's report card to include the entire river. In addition to providing more comprehensive data along the length of the river, this program will allow us to identify and create baselines for where pollution problems are occurring. Citizen water testing also raises awareness and directs public attention to the known problems in our watershed.

Patuxent Riverkeeper provides training and water testing kits to our volunteer monitors. Training includes the use of the testing kits and the website, as well as the identification of common signs of poor water quality and pollution. All testing results are posted on an interactive web portal, www.pwqi.org. This site is available to the general public to view water quality data from throughout the watershed.

In addition to water quality training, volunteers are trained on the *Get the Dirt Out!* program, a joint initiative of the Chesapeake Region Waterkeepers to educate and empower citizens on the effects of poor stormwater management. This program teaches citizens what to look for at construction sites and to provide a letter grade for the site's stormwater management practices.

If you are interested in training to become a water quality monitor, contact Lauren Webster at 301.249.8200 ext 6 or Lauren@paxriverkeeper.org.

Your Riverkeeper

What does the Riverkeeper do for the Patuxent River?

According to our mission statement, the Patuxent Riverkeeper connects and empowers Maryland citizens to act together to guard, restore, and advocate for our river. The action that mission translates into includes advocacy, restoration, and education. Our advocacy work includes responding to citizen complaints, participating in targeted litigation against polluters, and promoting policy solutions at the county and state levels, with a focus on land preservation and smarter development.

Since launching in 2004, some of our activities include:

Advocacy:

- Produced the Patuxent 20/20 Plan, a comprehensive plan that charts a course for implementation of decades of research, policymaking and knowledge about the Patuxent's problems, with the aim of advancing real solutions and real progress.
- Assumed a leadership role in the successful reform of two key state laws, Stormwater Management and Critical Area.
- Worked to promote a culture change in state and local regulatory and enforcement agencies responsible for stormwater and construction, and to enhance citizen empowerment to literally get the dirt out of our waterways.
- Participated in litigation against large-scale major polluters, resulting in millions of dollars spent to correct bad

practices and improve future water quality conditions.

- Researched and resolved scores of water quality related complaints, including legal prosecution against large-scale violators where necessary.
- Conducted frequent patrols on the river by air, water, and land to detect and attack pollution issues, bad practices, ongoing problems, and urgent needs on the watershed.

Restoration:

- Established the only year round citizen's water monitoring program on the river to detect pollution hot spots and water quality problems.
- Sponsored citizen efforts to keep the urbanizing areas of the river clear of snags and debris so that fish and humans can maintain passage in a free flowing river.



- Coordinated the Annual Patuxent Cleanup which mobilizes over 500 volunteers at roughly 30 cleanup sites on the river each April. Worked year-round to help local groups run cleanups each month.

Education:

- Organized the Annual Patuxent Summits, which bring together policymakers and citizens each year to review conservation progress and to improve strategies and actions related to Patuxent Water Quality.
- Linked citizens and watershed groups, assisted and mentored local advocacy efforts throughout the entire river basin to improve protection of Patuxent water resources.
- Served as spokesperson for the river's health and needs in order to maintain media and public interest in the Patuxent as a vital public resource.



Thank you for keeping us afloat

Thanks to the generous support of the Calvert Watermen, the Patuxent Riverkeeper patrol boat has become a familiar site around Solomons Harbor. But the big red boat is about to be retired thanks to the incredible kindness of David Houck, an Annapolis resident who has donated his 22 foot Grady / White manufactured work boat. The new Riverkeeper patrol boat will undergo a refit on land this winter and hopefully hit the water next spring. The newer boat is sturdier, larger, and more powerful, with a more advanced electrical package, better safety features, greater range and improved foul weather suitability.

Advocacy

Legislative session —a (pretty) good year for the environment



The State legislative session ended April 9th. The environmental community won some significant reforms, and is ready to carry on fighting for the few that “got away.” The highlights of session included:

- **Critical Area Reform** (HB 1253). Gave regulatory authority to the Critical Area Commission, increased enforcement provisions of the law, requires an update of the maps that determine where the critical area ends, and included various provisions to strengthen administration of the law.
- **Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund** (SB 213/HB 369). Dedicated \$25 million to Bay restoration efforts and passed legislation that sets parameters for how that fund should be spent. (The funding was cut in half from the \$50 million allocated during special session.)
- **Energy Efficiency** (SB 205/HB 374; SB 268/HB 368). This package of bills set a goal to reduce our energy consumption 15% by 2015, and established a funding mechanism to reach that goal.
- **Renewable Energy** (SB 209/HB 375). Requires the State to get 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020.

The key bill that did not pass was the Global Warming Solutions Act, (SB 309/HB 712). This bill would have set state-wide carbon reduction caps of 25% by 2020 and 90% by 2050.

Meet the Board of Directors

Patuxent Riverkeeper sadly said farewell to our founding board in November. They served us diligently for three years and helped get the organization started. As we move forward, we are excited to have eight dedicated board members with us for the next leg of our journey.

We welcome the continued dedication of two board members:

- **Ralph Eshelman** (Calvert), owner and CEO of Eshelman & Associates, a cultural resource management and museum consultation company. He was the founding director of the Calvert Marine Museum in Solomons, MD.
- **Richard Dolesh** (Prince George’s), a Senior Policy Associate with the National Recreation and Park Association.

We also welcome six new board members to the organization:

- **Larry J. Silverman, Chair** (Montgomery), a DC attorney who has specialized in environmental law for more than 30 years and was a founding board member for the Anacostia Watershed Society.

- **Leonard Zuza, Vice Chair** (Calvert), a private consultant who advises small organizations on resource management. Len recently founded the Southern Calvert Oyster Cultivation Society.
- **Nancy Davis, Secretary** (Howard), an environmental activist for more than 30 years and helped start the Maryland League of Conservation Voters.
- **Chris Sewell, Treasurer** (State At-large), works with 1000 Friends of Maryland, a smart growth advocacy organization that works on state land use and policy issues.
- **Walter Boynton** (Calvert County) is a Professor at the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, where he runs two labs focused on estuarine ecology and has received numerous research awards for his work.
- **Iantha Gantt-Wright** (Prince George’s County) is the Founder and President of The Kenian Group, a consulting group that provides groups with the skills and tools necessary to diversify all aspects of their organization.

We look forward to a great year ahead with new energy, focus, and drive to protect the Patuxent River.

The work continues

Implementation of new legislation is a lengthy affair, including regulatory revisions by the state agency and implementation of those regulations by the local jurisdictions. Patuxent Riverkeeper continues to track the progress of the Stormwater Management Act of 2007. The Maryland Department of the Environment will finish their first draft of those regulations in late June or early July. We will also track the implementation of the

new Critical Area reforms, which will be a multi-year process.

Looking to next year, we anticipate growth reform being the top legislative priority next session. We will keep you informed as that legislation comes together! We also expect next year to focus on reforming standing, the ability of citizens and organizations to defend their right to clean water in court. This critical legislative fix has been thwarted for many years, and Maryland has some of the most restrictive standing laws in the nation. Stay tuned for more —next session starts in January.

Utilities to Cross the River Again?

As Maryland and the surrounding region becomes increasingly built out, the demand to run infrastructure into the river or through sensitive natural resource areas is increasing:

- Mirant's Chalk Point Plant is planning to apply for permits to discharge wastewater from its new wet scrubber air filtration system directly into the Patuxent.
- Dominion Power is already planning the addition of a new LNG pipeline, involving multiple Patuxent river crossings (not to mention egress across streambeds through some of the more sensitive areas of the watershed).

- Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant is seeking to add a third reactor which would increase the existing discharge of heated water into the Bay.
- Further north, Howard County plans to install a new 12-mile long sewage pipeline in the flood plain and the channel of the Little Patuxent River.
- The Southern Maryland Electrical Coop plans to install a new buried power line south from Holland Cliff to Lexington Park, crossing the Patuxent River.

Viewed individually these projects seem almost mundane, but viewed together it suggests that the river is being ravaged by the many "cuts" of unending construction, upheaval, and loss of critical habitat.

The cumulative impacts this construction activity will have on the river system is immense. Patuxent Riverkeeper will remain vigilant over the coming year to ensure that the impact is prevented where possible and minimized at the very least.

Patuxent Riverkeeper often submits comments and input on these projects to help assure that water resources in the Patuxent are safeguarded. All of these projects have public comment and review opportunities. Your voice and your concerns can and should be heard in the permitting process. If you would like to become better informed and help protect your river your Riverkeeper will help you get plugged in. Send an email to info@paxriverkeeper.org.

Restoration

Annual Cleanup— to clean up a river, somebody has to get dirty

With the warm spring weather comes the Annual Patuxent River Cleanup. This year's river-wide cleanup was held on April 5. Each year Patuxent Riverkeeper works to increase the amount of trash removed from the watershed and the number of volunteers who join us to clean up this precious resource. The Riverkeeper is joined by scores of other partners including Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, the Patuxent River Commission, the Calvert County Waterman's Association, and Mirant to provide supplies, site supervision, promotional and other resources.

During this year's Annual Cleanup, over 475 volunteers worked at 30 sites to remove trash and debris from the streambanks and waterway. Volunteers collected about 11 tons of trash, including 3904 bottles and cans, 59 tires, 2 couches, 3 computers, and car parts of every kind.

If you know of a site that could use a few good volunteers or are interested in working with us to coordinate a site in your



neighborhood for either a special cleanup this summer or as part of next year's Annual Patuxent River Cleanup, contact Lauren Webster at 301.249.8200 ext 6 or Lauren@paxriverkeeper.org.

News and information about the Annual Patuxent River Cleanup is posted on its own web site: www.cleanpatuxent.org.

Reddy Branch Initiative

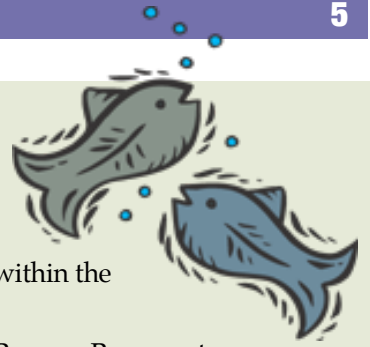
This spring, the first in a series of initiatives will begin to restore the Reddy Branch stream buffer. Multiple agencies will be working together to plant native trees and shrubs to restore riparian buffer along a first order reach of Reddy Branch, which is a tributary of the Hawlings River (a tributary of the Patuxent). The land to be re-forested is owned by MNCPC and a local non-profit, Our House Inc.

Volunteers are being recruited to help with this collaborative effort to improve water quality through temperature mitigation and nutrient removal; to stop further degradation of the stream reaches by slowing stormwater runoff; and to increase terrestrial habitat diversity. For more info, contact Lauren Webster at 301.249.8200 ext 6 or Lauren@paxriverkeeper.org.

Green Branch Fish Passage Project

A large culvert on Green Branch, a tributary of the Patuxent River in Bowie, is significantly impairing fish passage to spawning grounds upstream. Native fish such as herring, alewife, and American eel are no longer able to pass through the three-pipe culvert located under an access road within the Governor Bridge Natural Area.

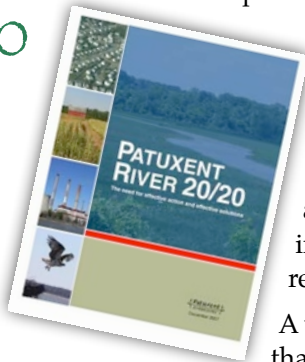
Patuxent Riverkeeper has been working with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Fish Passage Program to design a restoration plan for the culvert and adjacent stream and has received funding from Fish America Foundation and Chesapeake Bay Trust to support the project.



Patuxent Goings-On

Patuxent 20/20 report

On December 17, Patuxent Riverkeeper released our report, *Patuxent River 20/20: The Need for Effective Action and Effective Solutions*. The report focuses on pollution from development, point sources, agriculture, and the air. Special attention is called to curtailing out of control growth.



The release was a tremendous success, with coverage in over a dozen papers. Board member Len Zuza spoke at the conference along with State Delegate Elizabeth Bobo of Howard County and Margaret Palmer from the Chesapeake Biological Lab. Additionally, Board Members Larry Silverman and Ralph Eshelman attended the conference. Special thanks go to two of our amazing volunteers: Kelly Myers for designing the report and Lew Armistead for helping with the press conference.

As part of our press release, we disclosed results from our Patuxent 20/20 Survey. Thanks to your help, nearly 200 people responded. Results showed that a majority of local citizens believe the state of the Patuxent is fairly poor and getting worse:

- 57% feel that the most critical issue facing the environment is growth and development.
- 63% believe that the greatest impediment to restoration of the Patuxent is that "politicians are not willing to make tough decisions," and
- 60% think that stronger state and county monitoring and enforcement is the most important action to improve restoration efforts.

A very powerful finding was that 90% of respondents vote in every election!

May rain squalls produce chart-breaking floods

Rain squalls in May produced flow rates at Governor's Bridge Road that were off the charts—over 50 times the normal rates. Low lying areas along the Patuxent were inundated and rains swept sediment into the river, turning the water in places the color of dark chocolate.

The rapid column of rainwater flowed into sanitary sewers throughout the region and resulted in major sewage overflows and discharges. Western Branch Plant near Upper Marlboro discharged over 15 million gallons of untreated wastewater into the waterway.

These storms show the impact man is having on the environment both through climate change and the addition of impervious surface to the watershed. These flood events also raise new questions about government and the public preparedness.

Storms of this magnitude are certainly increasing in number, and preparedness should guide our regional planning, our shorefront restoration activities, and our perspective on the role that water resources play in our development patterns and community planning.

Resilience: how much can it take?

Your Riverkeeper recently attended a conference hosted by the Stoney Brook-Millstone Watershed Association in New Jersey designed to help municipal planners examine issues of resilience.

Resilience has been defined by some as the amount of change a system can absorb before it fails or breaks down. One of the persistent themes that emerged from the conference was the fundamental role played by biodiversity in helping ecosystems bounce back. It suggests that looking primarily at crabs or oysters, rather than the entire system that contains them, could lead to egregious errors in planning and policy.

See Resiliency, Page 7

Concerns by county

Howard	Downscale Riverdale	Environmentally concerned citizens in Columbia, “Downscale Riverdale,” have raised concerns about “Riverdale,” a housing project near the Little Patuxent River. This development would site immense growth on a wooded riparian site, invariably causing hardship to the river and an adjacent nature center.
	Dredging stormwater “lakes”	Columbia residents also continue to raise new issues about plans to dredge the “lakes” in the riverfront communities along the river that drain into the Patuxent. Concerns about the stormwater systems there, including design, maintenance, and modernizing problems, have emerged as citizens seek more transparency in decision making.
Prince George’s	Stemming massive rural development	After nearly three years, activists are still struggling to create a program to stem the massive housing developments in the rural areas of the county. Activists seek to establish a system that would transfer development rights away from rural areas into areas with the infrastructure to support new growth. The Riverkeeper serves on the advisory panel seeking to protect agriculture and farmland in the county.
	Laurel Racetrack to fill wetlands	Owners of the Laurel Racetrack have announced plans to fill in some four acres of wetlands. The fill is part of their plan to reconfigure the race track site to rejuvenate this local landmark, possibly in the hope of accommodating future slot machines.
Prince George’s & Anne Arundel	Huge development proposed at edge of refuge	Ribera Development is planning to build 1600 new homes, utility lines, and other infrastructure on 300 acres at the edge of the Patuxent Research Refuge. Conservationists have raised concerns over numerous, potentially catastrophic, impacts on the adjacent Wildlife Refuge.
Anne Arundel	Illegal dump	Citizens have raise harsh questions about the discovery of a 40-year-old illegal dump found along the WB&A hiking trail near the Patuxent. The abandoned dump is on land acquired by the county, which must now pay to haul hundreds of tons of plastic waste and debris away from this recreational amenity.
	Fly ash contamination	Citizens are concerned about the effects of fly ash used to reclaim an abandoned gravel mine pit near Gambrills. Fly ash is a by-product of coal-fired power plants, and Constellation Energy contracted to use their ash to fill the abandoned pit. Pollution is now leaching from this poorly designed system, possibly contaminating a feeder to the Patuxent and homes with well water near the site.
Charles & St. Mary’s	Commuter ferry	Citizen and government officials are starting to review a proposal from a prospective ferry operator exploring the possibilities of installing a Hovercraft commuter ferry service from Hallowing Point (near Benedict) to Patuxent Naval Air Station. Habitat impact, noise, and the potential for interference with other uses are among issues being discussed.
St. Mary’s	Industrial development	Citizens near Hughesville have raised concerns about a proposed rezoning that would convert a former gravel pit at the headwaters of Indian Creek into an intensively developed industrial zone. The industrial activities could pose dangers to water quality in this sub-tributary of the Patuxent.

Events/Get Involved

Up for fun, sun and paddling?

Patuxent Riverkeeper offers members day and overnight excursions to paddling destinations in the greater Chesapeake Bay region. From late March through October, these tours combine the quest for quality paddling experiences with great local food, good exercise, and chances to learn about sustainability, restoration, and preservation.

Our tours connect people with places, and produce better stewardship for our regional natural resources. The trip fees generated by these excursions help support the non-profit work of Chesapeake Waterkeepers who serve as guardians of our region's waterways.

Tours at Patuxent Riverkeeper are generally selected and organized by our staff, but can be custom-designed at the request of a member. A typical tour has a maximum capacity of 12 people. Trips are generally all-inclusive with food, refreshments, transportation costs, paddling and safety equipment, and all other trip expenses wrapped into one reasonable fee.

Patuxent Riverkeeper utilizes a specially designed converted school bus to haul people and gear to and from our excursions. Considerable attention is paid to making the bus trips, fun, scenic, and comfortable. The trips are hosted by trained staff and experienced paddlers.

A typical excursion includes a premiere destination, ample snacks, bottled water and refreshments, a boxed or communal style meal, folding deck chairs and many outdoor comforts. The menu usually includes organic locally grown or prepared food. Sometimes hot food is prepared on site and served chuck wagon style. Overnight trips are fully equipped with tents and other camp gear. Participants need only bring a sleeping bag, mattress pad, and their own personal effects.

Kayak instruction is provided to novices. While most trips are paddling oriented and utilize our own fleet of kayaks (not canoes), other trips are hiking or tour oriented. Occasionally the trips feature tubing and the Riverbus is equipped with inner tubes, air compressors, safety vests, and other necessary gear. Kayak trips are limited to people who are both old and strong enough to competently handle a kayak solo.

Sweeping riverscapes, fantastic vistas, sun drenched scenery, sandy beaches, tidal marshes—we go to places of incomparable beauty, rich in historical significance or natural resources value. Places where visitors are likely to have an enjoyable paddle, hike or visit.

Past trip destinations have included: The Conowingo Hydroelectric Dam and the Poplar Island Restoration site. Paddling destination have included Sotterly Mansion (St. Mary's County); Jefferson

Patterson Park, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (West/Rhodes River); Tuckahoe State Park (Choptank River) and several other destinations of ecological significance and local interest. We have also gone tubing and camping along the C&O Canal at Little Orleans in Western, MD. Upcoming trips are advertised in our newsletter, through email alerts, and on our website at www.paxriverkeeper.org. We look forward to having you out on the river.



Resiliency From Page 5

The notion of resiliency seems alien in the decision-making that dominates Patuxent River policy. Yet healthy watersheds don't just happen; they are the result of shrewd thinking, capable advocacy, zealous planning for the future, and better decision making by all involved. Those interested in this fascinating subject can search works by authors such as Simon A. Levin, Solomons-based Margaret Palmer, Brian Walker and David Salt, Lawrence J. Vale, and Thomas Campanella, among many others.

Patuxent crabbers take it on the chin

Recent headlines proclaimed the State of Emergency for Maryland's Crab industries and the governor has sought federal disaster relief as we face some of the lowest shellfish harvests on record. Yet can regulations on harvest overcome increasingly poor water quality in the Bay and its tributaries?

The working waterman of the Calvert Watermen's Association actively engage in restoration and water quality projects. Recently they completed a nine-day project cleaning and restoring oyster bars located south of Broomes Island.

Nonetheless, these watermen will be hit hard by regulations limiting an already limited catch. Increasing regulations on their industry won't bring back the crabs or oysters. It's water quality that needs fixing, but that's a solution for which the government doesn't seem to have a strategy. It is up to us as citizens to demand real solutions and to find new ways to reverse the plight of watermen and our river by making water quality a first priority in our policy-making and public deliberations about environmental quality and social accountability.

PATUXENT RIVERKEEPER CALENDAR

june

18

Environmental Education Day, King's Landing Park (Karen Mullin, 410.271.2481 or habitat@maeoe.org)

19-24

Patuxent Sojourn (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, 410.377.6270)

28

Stormwater Pollution Prevention Workshop (Richard Klein, 800.773.4571 or help@ceds.org, for more info go to: <http://potomacriverassociation.org/studies/>)

july

19

Roughnecks Trip

26-27

Tubing trip in Western Maryland, Little Orleans (overnight camping and float trip cosponsored by MD Sierra Club & Patuxent Riverkeeper)

28-8/1

Youth Patuxent Sojourn (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, 410.377.6270)

august

3

Corsica Day Trip

9

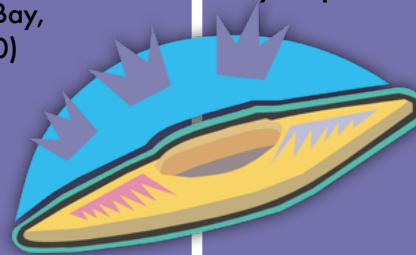
Roughnecks Trip

16

Sotterly Plantation Day Trip

23

Swanson Creek Day Trip



Patuxent Riverkeeper is a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance.



Support Patuxent RIVERKEEPER® - Become a Member

Name _____

Membership Level (check)

Street Address _____

- Red-winged Blackbird..\$35
- Green-winged Teal..... \$75
- Osprey..... \$125
- Great Blue Heron..... \$250
- Bald Eagle..... \$500
- Whooping Crane..... \$1000
- Other _____

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Thank you!