July/August 2014

NGC CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECOND SECOND

Jack Barnwell Is MacRinac's Master Gardener

Plus

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WATERFURNACE UNITS QUALIFY FOR A 30% FEDERAL TAX CREDIT

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AND GEOTHERMAL

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Change of Address: Please notify your electric cooperative. See page 4 for contact information.



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ON THE COVER*

Jack Barnwell and his crew are responsible for creating many of Mackinac Island's wonderful gardens and landscaping layouts. And, it's accomplished without motorized vehicles. Photo-lan Smithers

*Some co-op editions have a different cover.



Michigan's Electric Cooperatives countrylines.com



Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy" Cooperative 🔬

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Electric bill/account questions: 517-647-7554 or 1-800-562-8232

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Tri-County Propane: 1-877-574-2740

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Join the conversation at facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

'One Size Fits All' Doesn't Fit HomeWorks



General Manager

n 2008, our state legislators passed several

laws that set new directions for Michigan's energy use.

Among those were the renewable portfolio standard, our Energy Optimization program, and choice of power suppliers for the largest industrial customers.

At the same time, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) also took a close look at how the state's two biggest electric utilities responded to power outages and created an incentive to

encourage faster action. It states that if power restoration is delayed past certain time limits, depending on the circumstances, an electric customer can request a one-time \$25 credit. For large utilities with over 1 million customers, these credits could add up quickly.

However, in creating this incentive, the MPSC decided to include *all* Michigan electric utilities, big and small.

For a large utility like Consumers Energy, its stockholders would see those credits adding up quickly, eating into their dividends, and they would raise a fuss to management about improving operations.

But for a member-owned co-op like HomeWorks, operated on a notfor-profit basis, a credit paid to one member simply comes out of another member's share.

The good news is that, to date, we have never paid out one of these outage credits, and it's because we restore outages within the MPSC guidelines.

So, at our annual meeting in August we plan to ask the delegates to take this credit right off the table. A positive vote will exempt HomeWorks from this \$25 credit.

That's the way decisions should be made for your co-op—by you, our member-owners, not by some distant commission applying a "one size fits all" rule.

Let me assure you that eliminating this potential outage credit does not mean we don't have to perform as well as, or better than, we have in the past.

If you don't like the job we're doing, you have the responsibility as a member-owner to let your board representative know you're not happy. Their contact information is printed right on this page, every issue, and is also available at homeworks.org. They will make sure our co-op staff members get the message.

We also provide time before every board meeting when members may comment, and we have many other ways by which you can contact us, from phone calls to emails to posting on our Facebook page.

What do you think about this issue of an outage credit? Should delegates vote to exempt the co-op, or to keep it on the books?

More Classrooms Receive Touchstone Energy Funds

- **he HomeWorks Tri-County Electric board of directors** authorized \$24,835 to fund 12 additional Touchstone Energy[®] Classroom Technology grants to schools in our service area. This follows nine grants, totaling \$16,060, made earlier this year. The new grants were awarded to:
- Fuller Street Elementary (Maple Valley) \$1,312 to buy a laptop and Reading Street software;
- Mason High School \$2,420 for two infant simulators for their child development classes;
- Heritage Elementary (Stockbridge) \$2,375.42 for seven Lego robotics kits;
- Twin Rivers Elementary (Ionia) \$2,139 for a new projector and several sets of ceiling mount hardware for classrooms;
- Schavey Road Elementary (Dewitt) \$2,200 for three digital document cameras;
- Lakeview Elementary \$2,473.30 for classroom iPad apps such as SplashMath;
- Ashley Community Schools \$2,500 for a drop-down screen in the gym;
- Fulton Elementary \$2,500 for tools to make interactive whiteboards in two classrooms;
- Montabella Jr-Sr High \$1,920 for online science and social studies programs;
- Shepherd High School \$2,400 for a new auditorium projector; and
- Riverview Elementary (Big Rapids) \$1,530 for five iPads to serve special education students. ■



One of this year's Touchstone Energy grants went to Wacousta Elementary, to purchase headphones for the first grade assisted reading program.

Did you know?

You can choose to stop receiving a paper bill each month and download your statement as a pdf document from SmartHub at homeworks.org. The files can be enlarged on your screen, and they're simple to file on your home computer. Save paper and postage—it's easy!

Use these "buttons" on homeworks.org to log-in to SmartHub or use the "Pay Bill Now" service.

Pay Bill Now No registration needed.







PACK A PERFECT PICNIC

Pack the perfect picnic basket with these make-ahead, portable creations.

Black Bean, Tomato & Mozzarella Salad

can black beans, drained and rinsed
 2 green onions, chopped, include greens
 c. cilantro, roughly chopped
 c. finely chopped celery
 pt. grape tomatoes, halved
 c. mozzarella cheese, cut in small cubes
 zest of one lime
 T. or more lime juice
 T. olive oil
 t. sugar, or to taste
 Optional—avocado slices

In a glass bowl, combine beans, onion, cilantro, celery, tomatoes and mozzarella.

Whisk together zest of lime, lime juice, lemon juice, olive oil and sugar. Pour lime/lemon dressing over the ingredients and mix gently. Refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving. Add avocado just before serving. This salad is very colorful and easy to take on a picnic. Everyone who tastes it wants the recipe.

Barbara Steele, Charlevoix

Old-Fashioned Coney Dog Sauce

lb. ground beef, browned and drained
 c. ketchup
 c. chopped onion
 c. dark corn syrup
 c. brown mustard
 T. vinegar
 T. chili powder

Simmer all ingredients in saucepan, stirring occasionally. Serve over hot dogs.

Tommie Schmidt, Union

Banana Cupcakes

2 c. flour 2 ½ t. baking powder ½ t. baking soda ½ t. salt ½ c. shortening 1 ¼ c. sugar 1 t. vanilla 2 eggs 1 ½ c. mashed ripe bananas

Sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Cream shortening. Slowly add the sugar while still beating the shortening. Add vanilla and eggs and continue beating for a total of 2 minutes. Add mashed bananas while alternating with the flour mixture. Beat 1 more minute. Bake at 375° in 18 cupcake lined pans for 25 mins. or till done. Cool. Frost with your favorite frosting.

Mary Jean Troyer, Fairview

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "Best Original" recipes by **Aug. 10**.

Mail (handwritten or typed on one side, please) to: *Country Lines* Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com.

Contributors whose recipes we print in 2014 will be entered in a drawing and *Country Lines* will pay the winner's January 2015 electric bill (up to \$200)!

Find more of our readers' recipes at **countrylines.com**

Photos—831 Creative

Energy-Saving Tips for Manufactured Homes

f you own a manufactured home (formerly called mobile homes), you may feel like the only option you have to make it more energy efficient is to replace incandescent lightbulbs with CFLs or LEDs. In fact, there are many actions you can take that will save energy for years to come. Following are four areas where you can increase efficiency and comfort. If you are mechanically able, you can perform many of the tasks yourself. If not, contact your nearest professional for assistance.

1. FURNACE

Make sure the furnace is safe and burns fuel efficiently. Clean your fueloil furnace every year; gas-fired furnaces every two to three years. Hire a contractor with a good track record on manufactured homes and check company references.

For the highest energy savings, replace the old unit with a high-efficiency condensing furnace. The extra cost can be offset within the first few years of operation. It is essential to seal all ceiling gaps or cracks above the furnace with caulk and sheetrock (Fig. 1).

2. DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

Once the furnace is in top order, ensure that the heat and AC can be freely delivered to all rooms without restrictions or duct leakage. Clean or replace the filter to assure good air-flow through the furnace; replace all registers that are flattened; and inspect the AC evaporator coil for dust.

You can achieve *major* savings by sealing holes and gaps in the ductwork, but first you must find the leaks! Remove the registers and look for gaps at the boot and trunk. Then, use a flashlight and mirror to inspect ducts, if accessible. Use a high quality aluminum or butyl tape to seal gaps once you have cleaned the surfaces (see how-to resources below).

3. UNDER YOUR HOUSE

The road barrier on your home's underside should be intact to ensure that it is retaining heat. When entering the crawl space, lay down plastic or cardboard. Start under the furnace and water heater, where damage usually starts. Patch any holes on the outer edges using ½-inch foil-faced foam board. Large holes between the I-beams require a "sling-patch" made of 1x2 boards and air-barrier material, such as TYVEK® (Fig. 2). Before patching, seal any duct leaks and install insulation where possible, especially under the ductwork, using the widest material available. Do not isolate the water lines from heat, or they may freeze in winter.

4. AIR LEAKS IN SHELL

Large holes can often be found around the tub, furnace, under sinks, and behind cove molding in newer homes. Seal these openings with spray foam, caulk, or sheetrock.



Cove molding

Some newer manufactured homes can also be

retrofitted to improve energy efficiency and incorporate renewable energy technologies, such as installing a geothermal heat pump (for permanentlysited homes), and solar water heating. Other measures to consider include spray or roll-on roof coating to reflect summer's heat.



Fig. 1—A large chimney hole is a huge energy loser. It can be sealed with sheetrock, then caulked air-tight.



Fig. 2—Underneath the home, a "slingpatch" can be screwed into the inner side of the I-beam. It stretches to the other I-beam and holds insulation under the ductwork in place.

Photos—Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corp.

Other Resources

Visit http://energysavings. togetherwesave.com/Manufactured-Housing for a handy graphic that shows a full list of areas where you can make energy-saving improvements. Find other resources at YOUTUBE.com: Sealing ductwork in a mobile home; http://energy. gov/energysaver/articles/energyefficient-manufactured-homes; and a book, "Your Mobile Home: Energy and Repair Guide for Manufactured Housing" (John Krigger).

And, installing CFLs, LEDs and using other energy efficiency tips that work for any home, really do help, too! YOUR CO-OP

Your Electric Service Needs You!

The Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) provides a unified voice for America's 900-plus electric cooperatives and the 42 million member-owners they serve.

It's a grass-roots political action committee that represents hardworking people like you and your neighbors.

Please join us to make sure legislators and regulators in Lansing and Washington, D.C., hear a unified voice from rural America as new laws and regulations are written.

I want to help keep the voice of rural electric cooperatives heard in the political process by participating in ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action[®].

Please add the following amount to my monthly electric bill:

□ REGULAR MEMBER: \$2.08 per month (\$25 per year)

CENTURY CLUB MEMBER: \$8.33 per month (\$100 per year)

□ PRESIDENT'S CLUB MEMBER: \$41.66 per month (\$500 per year)*

□ OTHER: \$_____

 \Box I would like a complimentary ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action lapel pin.

I affirm that my contribution has been made with non-corporate funds.

Name: _____

Address:_____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Cooperative: HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

E-Mail:_____

Signature: _____

*Federal election law requires the following information for contributions exceeding \$200:

Employer: _____

Occupation:_____

The Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association qualifies as a multicandidate political committee and is registered with the Federal Election Commission.

Contributions to ACRE/ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action are strictly voluntary. Contributions to federal and state Political Action Committees are not deductible for tax purposes. Consumer-owners have the right to refuse to contribute without reprisal. Contributions may be stopped at any time upon notification to the cooperative. The contribution guidelines are suggestions only. You may contribute more or less than the recommended amount.

Please mail your completed form to:

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative 7973 E. Grand River Ave. Portland, MI 48875

Thank you!



Co-op Owners

ACR

Three Family Farms Honored

arriet and Ron Shaw Converse, of Charlotte, display two of the signs honoring their farms for being in the same family over several generations. The 40 acres in Chester Township, originally purchased by John Shaw in 1850, has grown to 140 acres of corn and soybeans.

Two other farms served by HomeWorks Tri-County Electric received Centennial Farm status recently.

Gregory and Kathleen Adams, of Evart, are the current owners of nearly 80 acres originally purchased in 1910 by his great-grandparents, Ralph and Margaret McCallum Hinkley, of Chippewa Township, Mecosta County. Corn, hay and beans are their current crops.

Patrick Carr of Lakeview is the current owner of Carr Farms, Inc. The land was originally purchased in 1894



vas originally purchased in 1894 by Danish immigrant Niels Johnson, grandfather of Carr's cousin; and the farm, located in Pine Township of Montcalm County, currently includes 356 acreas used for cash crops such as corn, potatoes and soybeans.



Harriet and Ron Shaw Converse display the signs for their centennial farms.

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- Go to homeworks.smarthub.coop/PayNow.html
- Key in Amount to Pay
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- Select your Payment Option
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Ave time: 1 minute, 50 sec

By Phone:

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- Select "Make Payment" Option
- Key in Account Number, followed by #
- Listen to your Current Balance
- Key in Amount to Pay
- Key in Payment Information
- Wait for Payment Confirmation (Note your confirmation number)

Ave time: 2 minutes, 45 sec



*SmartHub is your online and mobile gateway to managing your HomeWorks account. The mobile app is available through Google Play or iTunes.

Jack Barnwell Is Mackinac's Master Gardener

ackinac Island has been getting a facelift. It's the kind that requires rakes and shovels, because it's a facelift in flowers and plants. Barnwell Landscape & Garden Services has been designing and planting picturesque gardens for six years—with boatloads of colorful flowers—around Mackinac's stately Victorian homes and historic businesses. Jack Barnwell and his crew are painting the island, which is served by Cloverland Electric Cooperative, with a fabulous array of dazzling petunias, sweet-smelling alyssum, and gorgeous larkspur, to name a few.

"We've more or less created what has become the 'Mackinac Island look," says Barnwell, who spends much of the winter coming up with new designs for over 130 island clients.

It seems Islanders didn't know they needed Barnwell's services until he started sprucing things up. Now, he says people can't wait to get their landscaping done as early as possible. This creates a crunch for his crew who must rely on boats, bikes, horse-drawn buggies and strong backs to tote their plants and tools because motorized vehicles aren't allowed on the island (except for emergency vehicles and snowmobiles).







Photos—Mike Lanzetta

It all starts before the sun comes up over Lake Huron. "The boats arrive at 3 a.m. with annual flowers," Barnwell says. "We'll get the hanging baskets up downtown before it gets busy with tourists." The remainder are bedding plants that must go directly into the ground. This all has to happen as soon as the weather starts getting nice, including accepting the delivery of six semi-trailer loads, brought over by Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry. "We have trusted them with hundreds of unique loads," says Barnwell, whose company also plants trees, installs irrigation, and does stone work.

Dealing with the spring demand can be a challenge. "It's such a short season to make their money," he explains of the businesses he caters to. "My clients depend on it (the flowers) so much for their image."

Barnwell relies on 12 workers to get the job done without pickup trucks, loaders and skid steers. They make it all work with horses, oversized bike baskets, trailers attached to bikes, and ancient ingenuity.

"I often tell my crew to 'think like an Egyptian," Barnwell adds, "because all these concepts are not new. Many were used for 1,000 years to build some amazing structures, some which are still standing today." For the heavier work, they've retrofitted standard ball carts (meaning the root ball of very large trees), used to move large trees and boulders, into three-wheeled swiveling carts that can handle more weight over long distance with less effort. "We also use a lot of winch and come-along setups, block-and-tackle pulley systems, and good ol' fashioned leverage," he says. "It's amazing what can be moved with the right fulcrum point."

The Barnwell crew's work is also a central feature in the Grand Garden Show, a joint venture with the Proven Winners[®] company, the Grand Hotel, and Barnwell Landscape. The second annual event is Aug. 24–26 (see grandgardenshow.com). ■



Your Board in Action

Meeting at Portland, May 19, your board of directors:

- With staff, performed an initial review of the Michigan Low Income Energy Assistance program.
- Reviewed the cooperative's loan portfolio, done on an annual basis.
- Nominated the board for re-election to the board of Tri-Co Services, Inc.
- Reviewed the May safety report.
- Read and approved "Board Policy 202—Memorials and Illness Remembrances," and "Board Policy 203—Drug-Free Workplace," as revised.

Time Set Aside for Members to Comment Before Board Meetings

The first 15 minutes of every board meeting is available for members who wish to address the board of directors on any subject. Upcoming meetings are set for June 23 at Portland; July 28 at Blanchard; and Aug. 25 at Portland. Members who need directions to either office or wish to have items considered on the board agenda should call 517-647-7554.

How to Apply for a Tri-County Electric People Fund Grant

The Tri-County Electric People Fund provides grants to individuals and organizations in the co-op's service area for food, shelter, clothing, health, and other humane needs, or for programs or services that benefit a significant segment of a community.

If you believe you or your organization qualify, write to 7973 E. Grand River Avenue, Portland, Mich. 48875. We'll send you an application form and grant guidelines. You'll also find details and forms at homeworks.org.

Note: Applications must be received by Aug. 5 for the August meeting, and by Sept. 29 for the October meeting.



Lead the way with LEDs

Outdoor lighting systems are a necessary and often costly—expense for your business. But, there is a light at the end of the tunnel: Make the switch to highly efficient LEDs to illuminate your exterior signage, parking lots, and other outdoor areas and start saving your business energy and money! Visit **michigan-energy.org** to view available rebates and get started today.

ENERGY TIP: Utilize wireless controls with LED lights to maximize energy savings.

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org PHONE: 877.296.4319



Tri-County Electric

Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Michigan service locations only. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit michigan-energy.org

Check Your Boat, Dock, and the Neighbor's, Too!

or water fun and safety, there are items you must legally have on your watercraft—life vests, fire extinguisher, throwable floatation device, and properly working lights—but make sure the boat itself and the dock are safe, too!

July 2012 saw some horrific fatal accidents near boats and docks. A 20-year-old Port Huron man entered the water behind a moored boat and became disabled as he tried to climb onto the swim platform. Friends trying to pull him onboard reported getting shocks. He could not be resuscitated. An investigation confirmed voltage behind the boat, caused by an AC-to-DC fault in the battery charger that energized the underwater gear, and there was no AC-DC bonding connection. In another incident, a young woman was electrocuted by an energized dock ladder.

To help prevent such tragedies, the National Electrical Contractors Association says:

- All installations should be performed by a professional electrical contractor.
- All dock receptacles must comply with the National Electrical

Code, which mandates a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). A GFCI measures a circuit's current and senses any imbalance (such as a discharge into the water), which trips the GFCI and cuts off the power.

- Test a GFCI at least monthly. Locate it along the ramp to the dock so it can be easily tested by local fire departments.
- Metal dock frames should have "bonding jumpers" that connect all metal parts to an on-shore grounding rod. This means any dock part that becomes energized by electrical malfunction will trip the GFCI or circuit breaker.
- Ask neighbors if their dock electrical systems have been inspected and are up to Code.
- Household wire is not suitable for boats.
- *Do not* use wire nuts (these are for solid conductor wire, which should never be on a boat) or splice connectors (can cut wire strands)!



Photo-Energy Education Council

- Fuses are rated to protect the wire, not the stereo. If a fuse blows continuously, something else is wrong.
- If you rent a dock or boat, notify the owner of safety violations immediately.
- Have your boat's system (especially with onboard generators) checked at least annually, and when something is added or removed.
- Ropes, string, masts and rigging also conduct electricity—don't be the common ground between water and electricity!
- See SafeElectricity.org for more tips.
 ■

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When you're upgrading your electric water heater, come to HomeWorks for great energy-saving options!

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Call Today! **1-800-562-8232**



*Participating in our Hot Water Deal allows HomeWorks to temporarily interrupt the flow of electricity to your water heater for a short time during peak electric use periods. Even with the interruption, your water heater will keep water hot for hours, leaving you plenty of hot water for showers, laundry, and your family's other needs.

Summer Thrills

ummer means "vacation" to many, and memories of family road trips along with the familiar mantra Mom and Dad grew weary of hearing: "Are we there yet?" I remember traveling to the Detroit Zoo and the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village back in the '60s when speed limits were more of a suggestion than law. Dad was known to occasionally hit 100 mph—a great thrill for a young lad!

Today, I still enjoy a thrilling ride with my family while taking in some of the most panoramic Lake Michigan views, thanks to Mac Wood's Dune Rides in Mears.

A fourth generation family business that's served by Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, Mac Wood's began operating in 1930 when Mac started looking for ways to entertain guests at a nearby resort he managed. Mac built the first four-passenger 'dune scooter' from a Model A Ford and charged 25 cents per ride.

Things were less restricted back then and like my Dad, with Mac behind the wheel, many described the trips as 'thrill rides.' Mac's granddaughter, Shelby Olson, describes it as a time when "there were no rules. It was a go-anywhere, full-speed fun ride."

Though times have changed, the dune rides are just as exciting today (open until Oct. 5—see macwoodsdunerides.com) as they were 84 years ago. Between climbs and descents through some of the most beautiful dunes in the state, you'll stop along the way to enjoy views of Lake Michigan and Silver Lake while learning about the ecology of the dunes.

Today's dune scooters seat more folks more comfortably (your backside will appreciate it!) so bring a few friends along for the ride.

Working every summer since she was a child, Shelby emphasizes that the dune rides are still all about family, friends and fun. "Visiting Mac Wood's is a unique experience that everyone in the family can enjoy from babies to grandparents!" She also says that many former guests are now bringing their kids and grandkids to ride, commenting about riding the dunes "when they were little." Ah, those family memories. You gotta love 'em.

There is plenty of time left to enjoy a Pure Michigan summer. Comb the shores for beach glass, dip your toes



in one of our Great Lakes, or simply soak up the sunshine.

Family memories await just over the next dune! All you need is a map and the spirit of adventure.

Share a story idea with Jack by email to: jack@countrylines.com or write J. O'Malley, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. ■

Jack O'Malley

Deer Blind Contest: The Hunt Is On!

If you think yours is the best Michigan deer blind, enter our *Country Lines* Deer Blind Contest by **Aug. 15**.

Categories for entering a photo of your blind are: Most tricked-out; Best story behind it; and Most interestingly-engineered. Enter at countrylines.com or mail it to *CL* Deer Blind Contest, 2859 W. Jolly Road,



Okemos, MI 48864. Include your name, contact information, and a description of what makes it great. Winners will receive a \$50 credit on their co-op electric bill and have a photo of their blind published in *Country Lines*.



Where This Is?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **Aug. 10** will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 credit for electricity from their electric co-op.

We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone. Enter your guess at countrylines.com; or send by mail to *Country Lines* Mystery Photo, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and the name of your co-op. Only those sending complete information will be entered in the drawing. The winner will be announced in the Sept. 2014 issue.

The May contest winner is Luke Bourne, a Great Lakes Energy Cooperative



member from LeRoy, who correctly identified the photo as the LeRoy Hardware store.

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