

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

455 MARKET STREET, SUITE 300  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2421  
VOICE (415) 904-5200  
FAX (415) 904-5400

**Coastal Commission Awards \$2.3 Million in Whale Tail Grants**

Contact: Annie Kohut Frankel [Annie.Frankel@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:Annie.Frankel@coastal.ca.gov)

Staff Report: <https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2024/2/W6e/W6e-2-2024-report.pdf>

SAN FRANCISCO, February 9, 2024. On Wednesday, February 7, the California Coastal Commission approved 60 Whale Tail Grant applications totaling \$2.3 million to non-profit organizations, local and tribal governments, and schools, for projects and programs that provide educational experiences focused on coastal protection, public access, and environmental justice.

“These Whale Tail grants reflect California’s love for the coast and commitment to protecting it for future generations,” said Coastal Commission Chair Caryl Hart. “The focus on inland and underserved communities reminds us that the coast belongs to all of us, regardless of race, zip code, age, orientation, or ability.”

Whale Tail Grants are supported by drivers who purchase Whale Tail License Plates, as well as California taxpayers who “Check the Coast” at tax time with contributions to the Protect Our Coast and Ocean Fund. Since 1998, the Commission has awarded over \$20 million to close to 1,000 grants, primarily for projects that provide opportunities for inland, rural, and historically excluded communities to experience and learn about the coast and ocean and develop leadership, stewardship, and science-based skills.

In 2021 the Legislature appropriated \$10 million for the Whale Tail Grant Program to be expended over five years, allowing this grant round to be one of the largest in the program’s history. After several months of extensive public outreach and guidance on how to apply for the grants, Commission staff received a record-breaking 219 applications. Many were first-time applicants, with innovative proposals engaging communities historically excluded from coastal education opportunities. The 60 projects selected for funding will engage communities in every coastal county, in the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties, and in the inland counties of Alpine, Colusa, Fresno, Kern, Kings, Lake, Nevada, Riverside, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Siskiyou, and Sutter.

“These funds allow the next generation of Californians to fall in love with the coast and become coastal stewards,” said Chair Hart. “We want to thank everyone who has purchased a Whale Tail License Plate and remind California taxpayers to donate to the Protect Our Coast & Ocean fund on your tax forms.”

On February 7, 2024, the Commission unanimously approved a total of \$2,286,875 for the following 60 competitive grants for these specified projects, roughly organized from north to south:

**Association for Environmental & Outdoor Education, \$19,998**

Project Title: Diversifying Environmental Leadership in California  
Engaging Communities: Statewide

A diverse group of early career environmental educators will complete California's Environmental Educator Certification Program, receive training on water and climate science education, and design and conduct meaningful environmental action projects in their communities as part of the program.

**Rural California Broadcasting Corporation, \$20,000**

Project Title: AWE: Awesome Women Environmentalists  
Engaging Communities: Statewide

A short documentary celebrating Alcatraz Island bird biologist Lydia D'Amico will be produced and then aired on California PBS stations.

**Tolowa Dunes Stewards/ Friends of the Dunes, \$49,700**

Project Title: Reconnection and Stewardship on the Tolowa Coast  
Engaging Communities in: Del Norte County

In partnership with Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, tribal youth will participate in education, restoration, and cleanup activities along the Tolowa coast. Summer programs will engage youth and adult volunteers from multiple communities in biodiversity education and removal of European beachgrass and English ivy, and in conservation activities for special status plants and animals.

**Scott River Watershed Council, \$20,000**

Project Title: Creek to Coast: Salmonid Life History Understanding for Scott Valley Youth  
Engaging Communities in: Etna, Siskiyou County

In two summer programs, participants aged 15-18 years will learn about the salmonid life cycle and local riparian restoration, and travel down their watershed to the Klamath estuary to analyze fisheries and wetland habitats.

**Big Lagoon Union School District, \$37,729**

Project Title: Big Lagoon Coastal Camp  
Engaging Communities in: Northern Humboldt and southern Del Norte Counties

Native students will enjoy an immersive three-day coastal summer camp that celebrates the connection between the Yurok people and the surrounding land and ocean, by exploring a coastal sitka spruce forest, visiting Sue-meg Village, paddling lagoons, and learning from indigenous interpreters about Yurok life.

**Blue Lake Union Elementary School District, \$8,000**

Project Title: Environmental Stewardship & Indigenous Education Program  
Engaging Communities in: Blue Lake

Sixth and seventh graders will take part in kayaking, camping, hiking, and lessons in Traditional Ecological Knowledge from local interpretive rangers and Indigenous leaders during the 2024 and 2025 school years.

**Earth Equity, \$50,000**

Project Title: Kelp Restoration from the Inside Out

Engaging Communities in: San Quentin, Eureka, and Arcata

Incarcerated adults will have weekly ocean stewardship lessons over a six-month period while a Humboldt County cohort of formerly incarcerated adults will engage in a year of weekly meetings about kelp restoration, including engaging in stewardship work, learning sustainable kelp farming job skills, and creating a business plan for an environmental justice and ocean stewardship co-op. Monthly educational workshops will engage the cohort and a wider audience of carceral system-impacted community members.

**Friends of the Dunes, \$20,000**

Project Title: Inspiring Coastal Connections

Engaging Communities in: Humboldt County

Classroom presentations and field trips to coastal wetlands and dunes will teach students about coastal biodiversity, natural history, and Wiyot language and stories.

**Northcoast Regional Land Trust, \$19,955**

Project Title: ¡Exploremos juntos! Let's Explore Together!

Engaging Communities in: Humboldt County

Community members will enjoy structured and unstructured opportunities for hands-on restoration, interpretive tours, recreation, and cultural exchange in an event series with a focus on coastal wetlands, habitat protection, and sea level rise. The Land Trust will partner with other local community organizations and Cal Poly Humboldt students as part of 20 events.

**Cigarette Surfboard LLC / International Documentary Association, \$20,000**

Project Title: From Waste to Waves: The Cigarette Surfboard Educational Outreach Program

Engaging Communities in: Northern California

An educational outreach program for a new documentary about cigarette litter, ocean mindfulness, stewardship, and surfing will visit 15 universities and community colleges for screenings and discussion.

**Pacific Environmental Education Center, \$24,756**

Project Title: Connecting Students to Their Local Ecosystems

Engaging Communities in: Fort Bragg

Fort Bragg Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> graders will attend a four-day overnight environmental education camp to explore their local coastal ecosystems and engage in hands-on comparative ecology.

**South Yuba River Citizens League, \$26,763**

Project Title: Salmon Expeditions

Engaging Communities in: Nevada and Sutter Counties

Third through 5<sup>th</sup> graders will experience river rafting trips during salmon spawning to learn about salmon lifecycle, watershed science, and impacts of the Gold Rush, with pre- and post-trip in-class lessons.

**Colusa Indian Community Council, \$50,000**

Project Title: Wintun Waves

Engaging Communities in: Colusa Rancheria

Students in the Council’s afterschool program will enjoy three field trips from the Sacramento River to the California Coast, including a three-day camping trip in Point Reyes National Seashore, with multiple interdisciplinary learning opportunities both in the classroom and during outings to understand the importance of the river and watershed and how to be stewards of their land.

**Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians, \$50,000**

Project Title: Pomo Indigenous Food Sovereignty Alliance

Engaging Communities in: Sonoma, Mendocino, and Lake Counties

Youth in Pomo and other California Native American communities will learn about coastal stewardship from an indigenous perspective through interpretive events focused on traditional harvesting, wetland restoration, ecology, and sea level rise, and through community film screenings and discussions.

**Alpine Watershed Group, \$18,787**

Project Title: Enhancing Environmental Education in Alpine County

Engaging Communities in: Markleeville, Woodfords, and Bear Valley

K-8 students will experience classroom lessons about watersheds and their connection to the coast, climate change, and wildfire, and take two local field trips for nature exploration and stewardship activities. In partnership with Alpine County Library, a summer reading program will focus on coastal issues, and a nature investigation kit lending program will be established.

**Kashia School District, \$36,097**

Project Title: World and Wilderness Youth Leadership Development Project

Engaging Communities in: Kashia Rancheria Reservation, Stewarts Point

In collaboration with the Kashia Tribal Office, a year-round environmental education and service-learning program will connect K-8 students to the coast and Kashia lands, including three multi-day outdoor education trips. Fifth through 12th graders will take part in a five-day summer camping program on the coast.

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Sonoma-Marin, \$50,000**

Project Title: Under the Sea Program

Engaging Communities in: Eastern Sonoma County

At eight summer camps in both 2024 and 2025, a five-day program will include fun, ocean-related activities and a field trip to the Sonoma Coast.

**NatureBridge, \$50,000**

Project Title: Youth Marine Science Education in the Marin Headlands

Engaging Communities in: San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento and Central Valley

Repairs and improvements will be made to this outdoor school’s Intertidal Lab, and scholarships will support classes to attend a multi-day experience in the Marin Headlands including intertidal education, wildlife observation, and hiking.

**Elk Grove Unified School District/Monterey Trail High School, \$47,847**

Project Title: Catalina Island Marine Institute Field Trips

Engaging Communities in: Elk Grove and South Sacramento

During two school years, upper division high school biology and environmental science students will attend a three-day program on Catalina Island to learn about marine ecosystems through labs, hikes, and snorkeling, followed by presentations to freshman biology classes to inspire them to continue their science education and care of the coast and ocean.

**Audubon Canyon Ranch, \$35,962**

Project Title: Hugging the Shoreline - Connecting Tomales youth to the Bay in their backyard

Engaging Communities in: West Marin County

Rural elementary and high school students will enjoy day and overnight trips to the coast to learn about coastal species, geography, history, and stewardship during the 2024 and 2025 school years. High school students will collect geospatial data and work with scientists on GIS applications and present their own research during a coastal watershed science symposium.

**Stockton Unified Native American Indian Center/Stockton Unified School District, \$49,943**

Project Title: Sovereignty, Stewardship, and Water

Engaging Communities in: Stockton

A four-week summer learning program will engage Native American students in cultural knowledge, water issues, and the interdependence of the Delta and the California coast through guest speakers, hands-on science and art, cultural practices, and field trips around the Delta and to the coast.

**Canal Alliance, \$42,700**

Project Title: Canal Alliance Whale Tail

Engaging Communities in: San Rafael's Canal District

In partnership with One Tam, middle and high school students in Canal Alliance's college-readiness program will engage in seven coastal field trips, including facilitated personal storytelling and education on conservation, climate change, and outdoor access equity, with the final trip including a family celebration.

**MeWater Foundation, \$40,600**

Project Title: Surf and Outdoor Education Camps

Engaging Communities in: San Francisco Bay Area

Over a two-year period, 50 surf and outdoor education camps will engage youth and their families in surfing, ocean safety, mindfulness, beach cleanups, storytelling, and structured discussions.

**Rosie the Riveter Trust, \$20,000**

Project Title: Open Outdoors for Kids - Protecting our Waters

Engaging Communities in: Richmond, North Richmond, San Pablo

Fourth grade classes will be visited by National Park rangers, followed by a field trip to the Rosie the Riveter WWII/Home Front Historical Park to learn local history, watershed and habitat connects, and impacts on the Bay and its inhabitants caused by the proliferation of plastics during and after the war.

**Kids for the Bay/Earth Island Institute, \$50,000**

Project Title: Watershed Action - Ocean Stewards Program

Engaging Communities in: Richmond and San Pablo

In-class lessons, community cleanups, field trips to local habitats and the ocean, and a student-led family presentation will engage 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> graders in watershed stewardship and ocean ecology.

**Mission Science Workshop/Community Initiatives, \$15,000**

Project Title: Whale on Wheels

Engaging Communities in: San Francisco

In-school programs will bring an interactive whale skeleton to elementary schools to teach about whale anatomy, evolution, and conservation, allowing the students to handle and assemble the skeleton themselves.

**Weekend-Adventures/ San Francisco Study Center, \$19,999**

Project Title: Summer by the Sea

Engaging Communities in: Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco

Eight full-day weekend trips for youth in grades 3-8 will connect them to the coast with environmental education, outdoor skill building, physical activity, and social emotional support.

**City Surf Project, \$50,000**

Project Title: Youth Surfing

Engaging Communities in: San Francisco

Youth will enjoy one-day introductory surf experiences, week-long summer surf camps, and semester-long surf courses while developing a sense of belonging and responsibility for the coast, practicing social-emotional skills, and improving physical fitness.

**Headwaters Science Institute, \$50,000**

Project Title: Hands-On Marine Research Experience for East Bay Students

Engaging Communities in: Oakland and Richmond

Ninth grade classes will take part in supported, self-directed marine research projects, including a three-day research trip to Monterey Bay.

**Roosevelt Middle School/Oakland Unified School District, \$46,744**

Project Title: Rising Tides, Different Shores

Engaging Communities in: Oakland

Through in-class lessons, guest speaker assemblies, staff workshops, and a field trip to the coast, the entire middle school will learn about sea level rise and impacts on the local community and on international Pacific Islander communities.

**Acta Non Verba, \$50,000**

Project Title: Coastal Education at Camp ANV: Ocean Week & Water Safety

Engaging Communities in: East and West Oakland

Youth aged 5-11 will enjoy weekly swim lessons, coastal art projects, marine science lessons, and a field trip to the coast during a six-week summer camp in 2024 and 2025.

**Coastside Land Trust, \$40,165**

Project Title: Junior Land Stewards

Engaging Communities in: Coastal San Mateo County between Half Moon Bay and Montara

An outdoor education and stewardship program will engage all 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the Cabrillo Unified School District during the 2024 school year with weekly in-class lessons and four walking field trips to coastal bluffs for habitat restoration and nature journaling. Educators will receive training in nature journaling and two high school classes will be trained to assist in field trip instruction for the 4<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Building Skills Partnership, \$30,000**

Project Title: Environment, Exploration, and Wellness Project

Engaging Communities in: Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Clara, San Mateo, and Orange Counties

Two community coastal stewardship events and six bilingual interpretive outings, including aquarium visits and nature walks, will engage the mostly immigrant communities of property service workers in both northern and southern California.

**Sunday Friends Foundation, \$45,237**

Project Title: Wellness in Bloom

Engaging Communities in: San Jose and Santa Clara County

A nine-month program will engage participants in predominantly Latino and Vietnamese neighborhoods in monthly education sessions featuring local government and community partners working on environmental conservation topics, a watershed cleanup event, and a family field trip to the coast.

**County Park Friends/Friends of Santa Cruz County Parks, \$42,959**

Project Title: BIPOC on the BEACH!

Engaging Communities in: Santa Cruz County

Twelve bonfire events and four “coastal adventures” will build community alongside Monterey Bay while participants connect to coastal systems and watersheds, build outdoor skills, and learn cultural history from local community leaders.

**University Corporation at Monterey Bay/Habitat Stewardship Project, \$50,000**

Project Title: 4<sup>th</sup> grade - Flows to the Bay

Engaging Communities in: Salinas

Over two years, 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the Alisal School District will engage in a three-part program of hands-on watershed experiences in their schoolyard, at local creek parks, and on a beach field trip, including nature journaling, neighborhood cleanups, and wildlife observation.

**Monterey Bay Aquarium, \$45,000**

Project Title: Ocean Learning Adventures

Engaging Communities in: Monterey County

A five-day camp experience will connect middle school youth to Monterey Bay through kayaking, journaling, labs, and engineering projects.

**Hanford Elementary School District/Jefferson Academy School, \$18,029**

Project Title: Be the Author of the Change You Wish to See in the World

Engaging Communities in: Hanford, Kings County

Third graders will conduct research, visit the coast on two field trips, and collectively publish a bilingual book about animal and plant life on the California coast. Students will host a publishing event to inspire the local community to care for the coast and its inhabitants.

**Coalinga Huron Unified School District, \$33,300**

Project Title: Oceans are for Everyone

Engaging Communities in: Huron and Coalinga

Coalinga High School students will engage in classroom learning about the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and then travel to the Islands for three days to camp, hike, snorkel, kayak, and learn about the islands' history and ecology, and then create a visual presentation on their experience.

**Kern Environmental Education Foundation, \$43,878**

Project Title: Camp KEEP Sustainability & Climate Justice Project

Engaging Communities in: Kern County

This outdoor school program serving 35 districts in Kern County will integrate climate change, environmental justice, human impact on natural cycles, trauma-informed and culturally sustaining practices into existing programming, including teacher training. Learning stations and interpretive signs will be created on the Los Osos campus to model watershed health, sustainable agriculture practices, and climate connections.

**One Cool Earth, \$44,600**

Project Title: San Luis Obispo County Watershed Education Program

Engaging Communities in: San Miguel and Shandon

K-8 students will experience year-round, watershed-focused educational opportunities including outdoor lessons, field trips to the coast, school waste audits, and sustainability leadership training. Teachers will take part in marine debris education workshops, and families and the wider community will be invited to community workdays.



**Cabrillo High School Aquarium/Lompoc Unified School District, \$50,000**

Project Title: Coastal Gallery Expansion – Phase 2 Gallery Annex

Engaging Communities in: Lompoc Valley, Vandenberg, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Ynez Valley

The student-run aquarium will expand exhibit space by nearly 50% and add eight new displays focusing on climate change impacts, as they lead programming for schools throughout the region and half of the Lompoc USD student body every year, as well as for the broader community during monthly open house events.

**Explore Ecology, \$47,512**

Project Title: Flows to the Ocean Project

Engaging Communities in: South Santa Barbara County

Fifth graders in Goleta and Santa Barbara Unified School Districts will participate in in-class lessons, beach and campus cleanups, action projects, and immersive field experiences about watershed issues, including a boat trip through Santa Barbara Channel.

**Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy, \$11,666**

Project Title: CAUSE Building Coastal Stewardship of Youth

Engaging Communities in: Santa Maria, Oxnard, Santa Paula, Ventura

Three trips to Ormond Beach wetlands and Guadalupe Dunes will engage high school-aged youth in cultural history, natural systems, and ecological restoration, and a day-trip to the Channel Islands will offer learning in island history and Chumash and Limu traditions while enjoying a boat ride and island hike.

**Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans Foundation, \$49,885**

Project Title: ¡Vamos a la playa!

Engaging Communities in: Port Hueneme and Oxnard

Elementary and middle school students will take field trips to the coast to learn about water quality, intertidal species monitoring, and sea level rise impacts; middle school students will receive in-class presentations, participate in an outdoor leadership camp, and complete coastal volunteer work; and teachers and after-school instructors will take part in a series of professional development workshops to integrate climate, ocean, and environmental literacy into their instruction.

**Mujeres de la Tierra, \$17,692**

Project Title: Vamos a la Playa

Engaging Communities in: Northeast Los Angeles

*Platicas* (conversations) will engage participants in topics related to coastal access and ocean health, followed by a fun trip to the beach including surf lessons and environmental education activities.

**Queer Surf/Green Cities Fund, \$50,000**

Project Title: Project Ocean Access

Engaging Communities in: Los Angeles County

Scholarships will subsidize low-income adults to participate in single day and overnight surf lessons and beach programs designed for LGBTQ+ sustained ocean belonging and connection.

**Children's Lifesaving Foundation, \$50,000**

Project Title: Coastal Eco-Mariners Surf Camp Program

Engaging Communities in: Los Angeles, Mar Vista, Palms, Culver City, Pacoima

A day camp at the beach during summer 2024 will engage youth aged 8-12 years in guided surf therapy, art projects, boogie-boarding, and ocean education. LAUSD students will take part in school-year field trips to Malibu Lagoon State Beach in partnership with Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains to explore coastal habitats and marine science.

**Marine Mammal Care Center Los Angeles, \$20,000**

Project Title: Marine Mammal Food Chain Discovery

Engaging Communities in: Los Angeles

Development and implementation of pre- and post-trip lessons will enhance a field trip program for Los Angeles USD students to learn about marine mammals and related ecology at the Care Center.

**Bret Harte Preparatory Middle School/Los Angeles Unified School District, \$48,564**

Project Title: Fostering Awareness in Sustainability among Underserved Urban Corridor Youth

Engaging Communities in: South Central corridor of Los Angeles

Middle school teachers will plan and lead lessons in climate science and coastal stewardship in their classrooms, followed by their students taking part in a local beach cleanup and visiting Catalina Island for a three-day coastal science program during the 2024 school year.

**New Heights Charter School, \$48,400**

Project Title: Experiential Learning and Environmental Literacy

Engaging Communities in: South Los Angeles

Across two school years, 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders will have multiple ocean experiences aligned with in-class learning, including kayaking, a plankton trawl, ocean sailing, a beach cleanup; and plan two ocean-based family events each year.

**TreePeople, \$49,604**

Project Title: Natural Connections for Kids: From Mountains to Sea

Engaging Communities in: Wilmington

A series of three field trips will take middle and high school students from local mountains to the ocean to understand watershed functions, local wildlife, and accessible stewardship actions.

**Inland Empire Waterkeeper, \$45,863**

Project Title: Santa Ana River Watershed Education Program

Engaging Communities in: Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties

Junior high and high school students will take part in in-class workshops and a series of three field trips to explore natural spaces within the Santa Ana River watershed, including guided hikes, scientific research, and restoration activities.

**City of Huntington Beach Fire Department, \$50,000**

Project Title: Beach Ranger Coastal Education Program

Engaging Communities in: Oak View neighborhood of Huntington Beach

A four-week program will engage youth ages 9-17 in beach and ocean education, safety, and recreation in a version of Huntington Beach Junior Lifeguards program without a swimming skill prerequisite.

**Nature Collective, \$49,976**

Project Title: Student + Family Coastal Learning

Engaging Communities in: Escondido

All Escondido USD 5<sup>th</sup> graders and their teachers will engage in in-class lessons, a field trip to San Elijo Lagoon, and a conservation action project relating to their watershed and local environmental topics. Four schools will take part in additional field opportunities for students and their families to observe coastal wildlife, restore dune habitat, and explore slot canyons.

**Escondido Creek Conservancy, \$18,965**

Project Title: Interactive Watershed Model

Engaging Communities in: Escondido

An interactive model of the Escondido Creek watershed will be used during field trip programs with all 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in Escondido USD and by other grade levels participating in Trout in the Classroom programming, by elementary-age summer camp attendees, and by the broader community while on exhibit at the Elfin Forest Interpretive Center year-round.

**Paddle for Peace, \$50,000**

Project Title: Diversify Our Coast

Engaging Communities in: City Heights, Lemon Grove, Spring Valley, National City, Southeast San Diego

In-class lessons and field trips will engage elementary-age students in environmental education and equitable coastal access. Valencia Park Elementary students will take part in a four-week weekend program of surfing and beach activities. High school students will receive mentorship for leadership and surf skill development. A Juneteenth community event will welcome the public for surf lessons, games, and a beach cleanup.

**Outdoor Outreach, \$50,000**

Project Title: Coastal Education, Access, and Health Promotion for South Bay San Diego Youth

Engaging Communities in: South San Diego Bay

Middle and high school students will take part in a series of 40 coastal recreation experiences, such as biking, camping, and fishing, each with an environmental health component to prepare participants to safely repeat the experience on their own. Staff will be trained to use environmental health tools to support programs in coastal areas impacted by transboundary pollution.

**Ocean Foundation/Ocean Connectors, \$45,000**

Project Title: Connecting Youth for Conservation

Engaging Communities in: National City

Every National City School District school will participate in ocean programming, with classroom presentations and field trips such as whale watching, habitat restoration, and aquarium visits depending on grade. The program will expand into 8<sup>th</sup> grade for an ocean acidification unit including a kayak trip, and into high school exploring the blue economy and ocean science career pathways.

**Boz Life Science Research and Teaching Institute, \$50,000**

Project Title: Tijuana River Estuary Environmental Protection Student Ambassador Program

Engaging Communities in: Imperial Beach, National City, greater San Diego region

High school and college students will engage in an 11-week scientific research immersion project centered on environmental health risk assessment of Tijuana River Estuary water quality, including a formal presentation of their findings and recommendations for solutions.

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