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PENNONI ASSOCIATES INC.

Consulting Engineers

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INDEREDIDENT REGULATORY REVIEW COMMISSION

COMMENTS ON PROPOSED RULE MAKING

TITLE 25 PA Code Chapter 102 EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Proposed By: The Environmental Hearing Board

COMMENTS BY:

PENNONI ASSOCIATES, INC.

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November 30, 2009

Introduction:

We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the proposed rule making. We have organized our comments by Code Section. Our comments are as follows:

A. <u>Section 102.1 Definitions:</u>

1. "Nondischarge alternative--Environmentally sound and cost-effective BMPs that individually or collectively eliminate the net change from preexisting stormwater volume, rate and quality for storm events up to and including the 2-year/24-hour storm."

<u>Comment</u>: Clarification is requested as follows: it is our understanding that a "Nondischarge alternative" when applied to a stormwater BMP implies no increase in discharge. Our experience has been that some regulators interpret this to mean zero discharge up to the 100-year event.

2. "Impaired Streams of Waters"

Comment 2: The terms "Impaired waters" and "Impaired Streams" are used at numerous locations in the proposed rule change. A definition for these terms should be added. It is our understanding that this definition would limit the impairments to sediment or stormwater impaired waterways since this chapter only addresses stormwater and erosion issues. If other sources of stream impairment are included in the definition, please provide clarification and an explanation of why these impairments should be included or considered here.

B. Section 102.4 Erosion and Sedimentation Control:

3. 102.4(b)(4)(v): Protect, maintain, reclaim and restore the quality of water and the existing and designated uses of waters within this Commonwealth.

Comment: This requirement is vague and open ended. Additional clarification and definition is needed. How is the need for restoration and reclamation going to be defined? Is this provision going to require that all new development discharging to stormwater impaired waterways be required to provide BMP's over and above that which would be required to provide mitigation for that individual project? And how are "reclaim and restore" to be defined, and to what degree will individual property owners be responsible for restoration of impairments created by past generations? Since the benefits of restoration accrue to all citizens of the commonwealth, it is inappropriate to place the majority of the restoration burden on the development community including builders, developers, and future commercial or residential property owners. It is noted that the cost to provide "restoration and reclamation" as a part of new development will be passed on to the end users. Is it fair to have end users of new development shoulder the burden for "restoration and reclamation?"

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4. 102.4(b)(5)(xii): Evaluate the potential for thermal impacts to surface waters from the earth disturbance activity and include BMPs to avoid, minimize or mitigate potential pollution from thermal impacts.

<u>Comment</u>: This requirement is still too vague to be a practical requirement. While it is acknowledged that thermal impacts are possible, there is insufficient scientific data available to adequately define the extent of any thermal impacts from the variety of site conditions that are possible in development proposals (relative size of site vs. size of tributary stream, etc). And likewise, there is less data available to document the actual impact of thermal impacts from development activities. More scientific data and analytic tools defining the real thermal impacts are necessary prior to codifying a thermal impact requirement. At a minimum, this rule should be qualified to recognize the lack of data, and explicitly state that only a simple qualitative type of analysis be presented.

5. 102.4(b)(5)(vii): supporting calculations and measurements.

<u>Comment:</u> Define what measurements are being implied here.

6. 102.6(b): Permit Fees

Comment: While it is recognized that DEP permit fees have not increased in a number of years, a 10 fold across-the-board increase is inappropriate. In addition, any fee structure should have some relationship to the size of the property being developed and the relative cost of the review. For example, while a \$2,500 or \$5,000 fee may be small compared to the cost of developing a 50 acre or larger site, it would be a significant burden to the developer of a one (1) or two (2) acre site.

C. Section 102.8 PCSM requirements:

7. 102.8(b)(9): Protect, maintain, reclaim and restore the quality of water and the existing and designated uses of waters within this Commonwealth.

<u>Comment</u>: As identified in the comment under Section 102.4 this requirement is vague and places too much of the burden for reclamation and restoration of stormwater impaired waterways directly on future developers and owners of future residential and commercial property. How is the need for restoration and reclamation going to be defined? Is this provision going to require that all new development discharging to stormwater impaired waterways be required to provide BMP's over and above what would be required to provide mitigation for their projects? And how are "reclaim and restore" to be defined; and to what degree will individual property owners be responsible for restoration of impairments created by past generations? Since the benefits of restoration accrue to all citizens of the commonwealth, it is inappropriate to place the majority of the restoration burden on the development community including builders, developers, and future commercial or residential property owners.

8. 102.8(f)(14): An evaluation of potential thermal impacts from post construction stormwater to surface waters and inclusion BMPs to avoid, minimize or mitigate potential pollution from thermal impacts.

Comment: As identified in the comment under Section 102.4, this requirement is still too vague to be a practical requirement. While it is acknowledged that thermal impacts are possible, there is insufficient scientific data available to adequately define the extent of any thermal impacts from the variety of site conditions that are possible in development proposals (relative size of site vs. size of tributary stream, etc). And likewise, there is less data available to document the actual impact of thermal impacts from development activities. More scientific data and analytic tools defining the real thermal impacts are necessary prior to codifying a thermal impact requirement. At a minimum, this rule should be qualified to recognize the lack of data, and explicitly state that only a simple qualitative type of analysis be presented.

- 9. 102.8(g): PCSM Plans for proposed activities requiring a permit under this chapter require the following additional information:
 - (1) Analytical testing and assessment of soil, geology, and other predevelopment site characteristics including infiltration and geotechnical studies that identify location and depths of test sites and methods used.
 - (2) Analysis demonstrating that the PCSM BMPs will meet the volume reduction and water quality requirements specified in an applicable Department approved and current Act 167 stormwater management watershed plan; or manage the net change for storms up to and including the 2year/24-hour storm event when compared to preconstruction runoff volume and water quality. The analysis for the 2-year/24-hour storm event shall be conducted using the following minimum criteria:
 - (i) Existing predevelopment nonforested pervious areas must be considered meadow in good condition or its equivalent.
 - (ii) When the existing project site contains impervious area, 20% of the existing impervious area to be disturbed must be considered meadow in good condition or better, except for repair, reconstruction, or restoration of roadways or utility infrastructure when the site will be returned to existing condition.

<u>Comments</u>: This section of the proposed rule making is an attempt to codify the guidance runoff volume control standard included in Chapter 3 of the Pennsylvania Stormwater BMP Manual (BMP Manual).

The volume control standards in Chapter 3 of the BMP Manual, referred to as CG-1, were originally intended as only *guidance standards*. Mr. Scott Brown of our staff participated on the Oversight Committee during the development of the BMP Manual. According to Mr. Brown, a significant majority of the technical and scientific representatives on the BMP Manual Oversight Committee would never have agreed to these standards if they would not have been proposed as only "guidance" in nature. They were intended as just one method to demonstrate that the stream water quality requirements in Title 25, Chapter 93.4 of the Pennsylvania State Code ... the "anti-degradation" regulations ... were being met. These anti-degradation regulations state that, depending on stream classification, a waterways use or water quality cannot be degraded.

The purpose of the volume control standard CG-1, as originally intended in the BMP Manual, was to provide a somewhat simplified analytical method that <u>could be</u> used to assess whether a site development met the anti-degradation regulations in Title 25, Chapter 93.4. It was clearly not the intent of the oversight committee to rule out other analysis methods, or that alternate methods or additional analysis may be necessary to demonstrate that a site design was in compliance with the anti-degradation regulations. The oversight committee recognized that one guidance standard could never fit all the complex geologic, soils, and surface cover conditions within the state.

In addition, CG-1 sets the bar too high, and in many instances may actually pose an increased risk of economic loss as a result of its application. The PA BMP Manual speaks to this issue in Chapter 7, identifying special management areas where strict compliance with CG-1 may not be appropriate. These areas include Brownfield's, highways and roads (linear projects in limited right-of-way), karst areas (areas underlain by limestone or dolomite), mined lands, areas near potable water supplies (wells and or surface supplies), and highly urbanized areas.

Also, Subparagarph (ii) creates an arbitrary requirement that new development over-design onsite stormwater management controls to help mitigate stormwater impacts created by developments that were built before the need for stormwater volume control was recognized or a part of regulatory requirements. This is simply another attempt to get the development community to "restore and reclaim" the water quality in stormwater impaired streams. A benefit (as identified above) accrues to all residents of the Commonwealth. It is unfair and inappropriate to place this burden on future developers and owners of new commercial and residential properties.

Additionally, subparagraph (ii) conflicts with the PennDOT Antidegradation Policy. How will this conflict be resolved?

The fact that the proposed volume control standard in the proposed rule making (CG-1) has already been identified as being problematic in a significant number of development situations, and that parts of this standard pose an undue burden on new development, demands that the analytical anti-degradation standard be flexible. Therefore, it is not appropriate to code this standard into regulatory language. It is suggested that a performance based standard defining the intent of the anti-degradation regulations in Title 25, Chapter 93 be used in its place.

10. 102.8(g)(3): Analysis demonstrating that the PCSM BMPs will meet the rate requirements specified in an applicable Department approved and current Act 167 stormwater management watershed plan; or manage the net change in peak rate for the 2-, 5-, 10-, 25-, 50-, and 100-year/24-hour storm events in a manner not to exceed preconstruction rates.

Comments: This section of the proposed rule making is an attempt to codify the guidance peak runoff rate control standard included in Chapter 3 of the Pennsylvania Stormwater BMP Manual (BMP Manual). Although less flexibility is required in peak rate control methods, there are dangers in codifying any analytic standards since there may be instances where it is more appropriate to use some other standard.

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depth for analysis.

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Please address each of these issues.

11. 102.8(k): A licenses professional or a designee shall be present

<u>Comment:</u> this should read "A qualified licensed professional ... " Licensed professionals are not necessarily qualified in all areas of science associated with their license.

D. <u>Section 102.11 Erosion and Sediment Control and Post Construction Stormwater Management</u> <u>BMPs; General Requirements:</u>

12. 102.11(a): A person conducting or proposing to conduct an earth disturbance activity shall

<u>Comment:</u> An additional section should be included here stating that

- 1. PCMS plans should be prepared by a person trained and experienced in PCSM design methods and techniques. The experience needed should be spelled out and Professional Licensure should be required.
- E&S Plans should be prepared by a person trained and experienced in E&S Design methods and techniques. The experience needed should be spelled out and Professional Licensure should be required.
- 13. 102.11(a)(2): If required to develop a PCSM Plan, design, Implement and Maintain PCSM BMP's to mimic preconstruction stormwater runoff conditions to protect, maintain, reclaim, and restore water quality ...
 - <u>Comments:</u> It is physically impossible to "mimic preconstruction stormwater runoff conditions." Scientists understand that any and all development activities impact the natural hydraulic balance among the many components that make up this balance including infiltration, soil water holding capacity, deep percolation, evapotranspiration, and surface runoff. The best we can do is mitigate the impacts to this balance resulting from the development activity to the maximum practical extent. The wording of this section needs to be changed to reflect these facts.

E. Section 102.14 Riparian Forest Buffer Requirements:

14. 102.14(a)(1)(i): The activity requires a permit under this chapter, is located within an Exceptional Value watershed, and the project site contains, is along or within, 150 feet of a river, stream, creek, lake, pond or reservoir.

<u>Comments</u>: The use of the word "and" in the list of activities in this subparagraph implies that all three conditions must be met ... i.e., the activity must require a permit, and the activity must be located within an Exceptional Value Watershed, and the project site must contain or be along or within 150 feet of a river, stream, creek, lake, pong, or reservoir. However, later in this section under subparagraph(d), buffer widths are provided for all waters, impaired waters, and special

protection waters. This appears to imply that stream buffers are required along all waters and not just Exceptional Value waters. This inconsistency requires additional clarification.

Also, does the description here include Exceptional Value Wetlands? (Example, the site is along a stream which is classified as CWF, but is on the list of trout producing streams. An area of wetlands tributary to that stream would be EV, but the actual watershed would be CWF...) If so, this would essentially create a mandatory 150' wooded buffer around EV wetlands, even if the wetlands weren't in a wooded area to begin with. Is this the intent?

15. 102.14 (d) Average Minimum Widths

Comments:

1. A single "minimum average width" standard is inappropriate and is not based in sound science. Work done at the Pennsylvania State University (Dr. Albert Jarrett, Unpublished Observations on Effective Stream Buffers within University Agricultural Plots, The Agricultural and Biological Engineering Department, the Pennsylvania State University), has indicated that in many cases stream buffers as narrow as 35 feet provide significant protection to streams and waterways. In fact, in personal conversation s with Dr. Jarrett, he has indicated that he does not believe that there is much water quality value to be gained from using forested buffers greater than 35 feet in width, particularly since the water quality value comes from the movement of runoff as "sheet flow."

It also makes logical sense that smaller buffers would be appropriate for the protection and enhancement of smaller waterways. It is recommended that any required buffer width be revisited and be established based on stream width, tributary drainage area, or some other more appropriate variable measure.

- 2. Another concern is the impact of the proposed buffer widths on developable land areas. In a significant number of cases the buffer width requirements will render parcels undevelopable. For example, consider the developer who purchased a parcel of land with the knowledge that, under the regulations in effect at the time, he could develop the parcel for his intended use. However in the interim, these new buffer regulations go into effect and render his project unbuildable. Consider the following examples which are not uncommon:
 - a. Example 1- PA Army National Guard STRYKER Brigade Combat Team Readiness Center and Field Maintenance Shop, Northampton County Pennsylvania. (Refer to site plan in Attachment 1).
 - 21.99 acre site ... prior use farm;
 - No existing wooded buffer;
 - A 150 foot buffer would drastically reduces the already limited site area (see Attachment A);
 - Project building requirements for the STRYKER Brigade could not be met on this site if a 150 foot buffer requirement were superimposed;

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- The Commonwealth of PA purchased this property to build this facility. If the proposed buffer requirements had been imposed prior to completing development plans, this site would have been unusable resulting in a financial loss to the Commonwealth.
- **b.** Example 2- Lake Harmony Fire Company Emergency Services Facility, Monroe County, PA (Refer to site plan in Attachment 2)
 - 2.99 acre wooded site;
 - As illustrated in Attachment 2, if a 150 foot buffer were superimposed on this site, this tract of land would be undevelopable.

As illustrated by these examples, the proposed buffer width rules would have a significant economic impact on existing parcels along impacted waterways.

3. More significant is the impact the proposed buffer rules will have on redevelopment within the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania played a major role during the industrial revolution and the availability of water was key to the Commonwealth's economic development during this period. As a result Cities and development evolved around our rivers and waterways. Today, our waterways are lined with older communities and abandoned industrial sites. Some of these industrial sites have environmental contamination issues qualifying them as "Brownfields" sites. Federal, State and Local programs are in place to encourage redevelopment of these areas.

Redevelopment of older, previously developed areas provides a significant economic opportunity and benefit to many Pennsylvania Communities. Redevelopment encourages people and industry back to our cities; it helps clean urban blight and pumps money back into our urban neighborhoods and Cities. It also promotes passive and recreational activities adjacent to these beautiful waterways. Evidence of successful redevelopment projects can be seen in Pittsburgh, Bethlehem, Philadelphia, and other small industrial communities throughout the Commonwealth.

The proposed riparian buffer requirements will significantly impacted future economic development opportunities in many of the older communities within the commonwealth. Most available redevelopment sites are linear in nature, being tucked immediately adjacent to existing waterways. The proposed buffer requirements will significantly reduce the developable land mass available for these projects impacting their economic viability. Even with the available federal and state funding (all be it, ever dwindling funding) these projects require private capital and investment to work. By limiting land use within the buffer areas, the incentive and economic justification for private investment in these projects will be impacted.

To ensure the success of redevelopment efforts in the commonwealth, it is our recommendation that provisions be included in the buffer requirements to provide for flexibility and alternate approaches to the one-size-fits all buffer requirements in these proposed regulations.

F. <u>Cost Impacts</u>

16. Section F of the rule change executive summary states that "These regulatory revisions should not result in significant increased compliance costs for persons proposing or conducting earth disturbance activities." It further states that "moderate costs may be incurred due to: increased permit application fees; PCSM Plan licensed professional oversight and preparation of record drawings; and long-term operation and maintenance of PCSM facilities." But then goes on to state that "Generally, there may be cost savings as a result of eliminating the outdated and unnecessary requirements (and) emphasis ... on nonstructural, "low-impact" stormwater management approaches ...".

Comment: Section F of the proposed rule making (as quoted above) provides only a very week discussion of costs and impacts. The implication is that costs associated with the proposed changes would be minor. However, significant costs have been overlooked in the Section F summary. These include:

- A 10-fold increase in proposed permit fees (this is not minor as suggested);
- Professional design fees and costs associated with professional oversight and preparation of record drawings;
- Stormwater BMP long term operation and maintenance activities associated with this rule change will be significant. If developers are required to provide surety to cover long term O&M, this will add significantly to the cost of development, which is ultimately passed on to the public through increased housing costs or the cost of goods and services.
- Costs associated with the increased land area required to yield the same commercial square footage or number of residential units;
- Additional ROW acquisition needs for transportation projects.
- Local and regional economic losses resulting from lost redevelopment opportunities in older communities and industrial areas along Commonwealth waterways.

We'll explore a couple of these issues to demonstrate the depth and breadth of potential economic impacts resulting from this rule change.

Consider the effect of impacts to the amount of land necessary for development or redevelopment. This includes both the cost of land, and the cost to society of increased sprawling development. Similar to the wetland regulations of the late 1970's and 1980's, the post construction stormwater management and buffer requirements being suggested in this rulemaking will require that more land area be dedicated to the control of storm runoff and buffers.

Significant additional land will be required to develop the same commercial square footage or number of residential units. An analysis of the costs associated with this additional land has not been considered. Unless local municipalities are aggressive at altering local zoning regulations to permit increased density to offset the need for more land (which is highly unlikely), the proposed rule change will result in an acceleration of urban sprawl at the expense of prime farm and agricultural lands. And it's not just the land cost that's at issue here, it's also the cost of additional needed infrastructure and the consumption of other natural resources and environmental impacts associated with sprawling development that needs to be considered.

The proposed rulemaking summary also states that a cost savings may be realized as a result of implementation of nonstructural, "low-impact" stormwater management approaches. While in theory this sounds good, the reality is that most municipal subdivision and land development ordinances do not currently permit many of the low impact development techniques suggested in the Pennsylvania Stormwater BMP manual. Therefore, a cost savings cannot be assumed. Unless there are sweeping changes to local ordinances (again highly unlikely), implementation of the volume control standards in the proposed rulemaking (Section 102.8) will result in a sizable increase in the cost of stormwater control facilities and practices. This is confirmed by the increase in costs experienced by builders and developers over the past several years since the enforcement of similar standards under the NPDES stormwater permit program.

Similarly, the proposed stream buffer requirements will add significant cost to development projects. These additional costs will include:

- **Design fees-** As with any DEP permit application a design professional will have to spend a significant amount of time to design the buffer, submit a design narrative and interact with the agency. A conservative estimate of realistic design fee increases associated with meeting buffer requirements is 10-15%.
- Buffer Cost- If the proposed buffers consist of a 60% +/-canopy coverage of native plant species, it is estimated that the buffer cost could be approximately \$40,000 per acre. Although this could be argued as a nominal cost to a large development project, it would be significant for small development projects (such as the two examples provided under item "E" above) or public projects such as development of riverfront trails, etc.
- Land Yield- The biggest impact to cost, as it relates to buffers, is the land yield. When a plot of land is purchased, the boundary is set and the land mass is fixed. No matter how it is stated, a riparian buffer reduces the available land to develop, therefore reducing the return on investment for the land. This has particular impacts when it comes to the redevelopment of brownfield's or older urban communities. Redevelopment projects located in areas impacted by stream buffers will not be economically viable under the proposed rules.

As an example of the impact on return on investment, consider the following example:

- Given a 10 acre 500 foot by 870 foot site along an Exceptional Value waterway or wetland;
- 250,000 SF building proposed;
- Stream buffer requirement = 150 feet X 870 feet = 30% of site;
- Resulting building square footage = 175,000 SF (reduced by same percentage as site area due to loss of land and other zoning requirements);
- Market rate for rent = \$20 per SF;
- Original annual rent projection = \$5,000,000;
- Reduced rent resulting from buffer limitations = \$3,500,000
- Economic loss = \$1,500,000 per year.

And consider transportation project impacts. Many of our roads and highways run along stream corridors. These proposed rule changes may make widening projects within a given right-of-way impossible, requiring the need for extensive additional right-of-way acquisition and possibly relocation of roadways along new alignments. The costs associated with this can be staggering. And in some cases projects intended to provide safety improvements along a roadway, may become impractical if not impossible, increasing the risk of accidents and loss of life.

The cost impacts identified here are intended to emphasize the complexity and significance of the cost impacts that will result from the proposed rulemaking. Increased costs will not only accrue to the development community, but also to all the citizens of the commonwealth through increased housing costs, increased costs of goods and services, and the increased costs associated with lost economic development opportunities within communities needing redevelopment and economic revitalization.

The need for a detailed cost and impact analysis is not only our comment, but it is a requirement under Title 1, Chapter 305 of Pennsylvania State Code (Procedures for Delivery and Review of Proposed Regulations). These procedures include completion and delivery of the Independent Regulatory Review Commissions Regulatory Analysis Form. Section III of this form requires a detailed assessment of costs and impacts resulting from the proposed regulatory action.

ADDITIONAL GENERAL COMMENT:

17. The missing link ... funding for education, training, and research in the science of Stormwater Management:

Responsible stormwater management requires an understanding of the complex physical relationships and processes involved in the rainfall / runoff process, and the impact mans activities on the land have on these processes. To understand this complex relationship, practitioners (including practicing design professionals and regulatory staff) need to be well versed in a variety of subjects including hydrology, hydraulics, soil sciences, hydropedology, hydrogeology, geomorphology, water chemistry, etc. In addition, practitioners must have tools available that enable them to accurately predict pre-development and post-development runoff characteristics.

Unfortunately, a large percentage of practitioners and regulators are not equipped with the education necessary to adequately address the issue these rule changes propose to regulate. The lack of understanding and knowledge of the sciences has and will continue to result in confusion and conflict between regulators and the design profession. Also, this lack of knowledge and understanding has and will continue to result in inefficient and costly designs that don't necessarily provide the environmental protection desired.

In addition, the design tools or "models" available for engineering analysis of storm runoff have been shown to be inappropriate for application at the scale of typical development projects. Research has demonstrated that applying watershed based models to land development scale projects can result in model predicted runoff peaks rates and volumes that are off from actual measured values by as much as 500 percent or more. But these watershed scale models are the only tools available to assess potential impacts from development activities. Research is

desperately needed to provide better analytic tolls for analysis of stormwater impacts.

Therefore, to effectively protect the Waters of the Commonwealth, the proposed Chapter 102 legislation must include substantial funding to meet existing education and research needs, thereby advancing the science and providing for more cost effective and appropriate solutions to address stormwater impact mitigation.





Attachment 2

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Chambers, Laura M.

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From: Brown, Scott A. [SBrown@Pennoni.com]

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY REVIEW COMMISSION

- Sent: Monday, November 30, 2009 3:22 PM
- To: EP, RegComments
- Cc: Bryson, Craig; Bennett, Andy; Caracciolo, Rocco; Mullen, Joseph F.; Colello, Jeremy; Woodworth, Jenni; Szewczak, Stephen; Lello, Chad M.; Pluciennik, Edward; Shaffer, Nelson J.
- Subject: Proposed Rulemaking Environmental Quality Board [25 PA. Code Ch. 102] Erosion and Sediment Control and Stormwater Management

Dear Sirs,

Attached please find our comments on the subject rulemaking. I will be the contact person for these comments. My address and other contact information is provided below.

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott A. Brown, P.E. Senior Engineer

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