

## New Secretary tours pump site, South Delta with Congressman Wicker



**Friday, October 24, 2003.** An MH-60 Blackhawk helicopter lands near the Steele Bayou Drainage Structure in Issaquena County. At the request of Mississippi's District 1 Congressman Roger Wicker, the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, John Paul Woodley, Jr., made a personal visit to the Yazoo Backwater Project as part of a two day visit to Mississippi.

Residents and landowners in the South Delta area have been waiting since 1941 for the federal government to construct a previously promised pumping station, now expected to cost around \$191 million. The pumping station (a part of Mississippi River and Tributaries Project) will pump millions of gallons of rain and floodwaters, over the levee during high stages on the Mississippi River. Over 4,000 square miles of Mississippi Delta relies on the Steele Bayou Drainage Structure as the outlet for flood waters.

"This is part of a series of trips I am making to see a number of projects underway," said Woodley who is now the civilian head of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "I am very new to this position having been in it for about two months. I have made it a point to see what's in progress here in Mississippi. Thanks to my good friend Roger Wicker, I'm seeing what's going on in Mississippi," Woodley said of the visit.

"This is a project that has generated a lot of controversy and I wanted to see first-hand the impacted area and talk to people. The decision-making process on this project is still ongoing but things are in the works. Nothing is finalized yet. I want to strike the best balance between the environmental concerns and the concerns of the people who are most directly affected by what is happening in the South Delta area of this state," Woodley said.



**Jim Wanamaker gives briefing at Steele Bayou Drainage Structure.**



**Secretary Woodley, Congressman Wicker and Ruby Johnson at Catledge Shop.**

Woodley had an opportunity to meet a few of those affected landowners Friday at the Catledge Farm shop building at Fidler. One of those, Ruby Johnson, chair of the South Delta Flood Control Committee, requested time with Wicker and Woodley during the visit so they could see and hear from people who get flooded out of their homes, lose their animals and otherwise are directly impacted by the lack of action on the pumping station.

"We have been told that we can move out or put our homes on stilts,"

Johnson said. "We don't want to do that. We want you to give us something to help keep the water off of us. We do not intend to give up our homes and we are willing to march on Washington, D.C. **Our families--they left us with a little piece of dirt. Why should we give that up?** We can't afford to start over and we shouldn't have to do it."

"We went through some hard times," added Fidler resident Anderson Jones, Sr. "The flood got so bad in 1973 - I don't want to go through this no more. We don't want to lose our homes. Sixty-plus years is too long to get something done."

**"We intend to go back to Washington to tell the human side of this," said Wicker, in response.** "We hope that the 60 years comes to an end very soon. The point of this whole trip is that we've got to work together. The Corps of Engineers is very vital."

Since Woodley and Wicker have been friends for over 30 years, Wicker said he expects his friend to use caution and "to look at the facts rather than the hyperbole."

**"This is exactly what I came here to see," Woodley said.** **"The people I've heard from prior to the visit are not the people affected by the problem or by the solution.** This has been a very informative trip. We want to do what's right to help people in their daily lives. It's not for me to talk on this trip,

# RiverGages.com

The Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently launched a new public website called RiverGages.com that allows the public an easy access to real-time water data for nearly 900 gaging stations along lakes and rivers within MVD's geographic boundaries stretching from the Canadian border along the Mississippi Valley to the Gulf of Mexico.

RiverGages.com encompasses all six MVD Districts (St. Paul, Rock Island, St. Louis, Memphis, Vicksburg, and New Orleans) and is offered to the public as an alternative to the existing Water Control websites available through individual District's homepage.

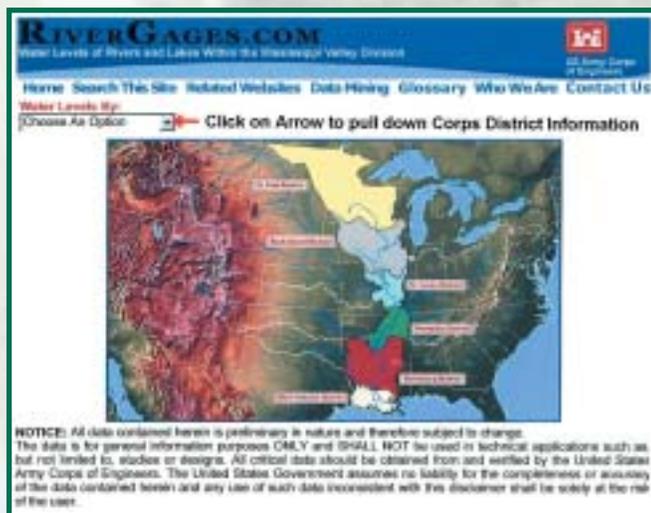
RiverGages.com offers observed hourly stages in near-real-time mode for any of its gages for the past 30 days in either tabular or graphical form. Many of the gages also offer precipitation and flow data, and, in some cases, even air and water temperatures and wind data.

The website's database is constantly being updated with additional historical daily stage data. This will allow interested users to easily search for available water data for a gage of interest, download the data to the user's personal computer, and apply statistical analysis tools for research purposes.

All of the plots displayed on RiverGages.com may be cut and pasted directly into word processing programs. Likewise, data values may be cut and pasted directly into spreadsheet programs.

RiverGages.com may be accessed by clicking on the hyperlinked texts or by entering the following address in to the web browser: <http://RiverGages.com>.

For more information, contact Don Flowers, Mississippi Valley Division, at 601-634-5891. - MSLB



## Corps Corner

### Former Deputy returns to manage Flood Control Works



US Army Corps of Engineers®

Robert P. Petersen has recently been named Project Manager in the Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division of the Vicksburg District, Corps of Engineers.

He will serve as Project Manager on the team overseeing flood control and environmental projects along the Mississippi River and the lower Yazoo River basin.

Petersen retired with more than 26 years of military service in the U.S. Army, and before retiring from the Army, served as Vicksburg District's Deputy District Commander/Engineer. Prior to his present assignment, he served as the program manager for the civil works research and development program at the



**Robert P. Peterson**  
Project Manager

Engineer Research and Development Center.

A Burlington, Iowa, native, he graduated from Burlington High School. Petersen received his bachelor of science in civil engineering from Iowa State University, and earned his master's degree from Webster University and MSCE from the University of Iowa.

Civic and professional organization membership includes American Society of Civil Engineers, Society of American Military Engineers, and Army Aviation Association of America.

Petersen is married to the former Barbara A. Bagby and they have six children and four grandchildren. - MSLB

# 2003 Helicopter Application

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began work on the Big Sunflower River & Tributaries Project in 1947 which included channel improvements to over 700 miles of interior streams located within the Mississippi Delta. These streams provide the outlets for flood water within the Delta. In 1950, the Mississippi Legislature authorized the Delta's two Levee Boards to participate as the local sponsor for these Corps of Engineers' projects. The Mississippi Levee Board provides minor maintenance along the 350 miles of Interior Streams within its' District. The major tool utilized to perform the required vegetation maintenance is the application of aquatic herbicides to a portion of its' streams each Fall in order to maintain the required clear channel width.

The Mississippi Levee Board has completed its 2003 helicopter application utilizing a contract with Provine Helicopters based in Greenwood, MS, the low bidder. The work started September 29 and was finished October 2, 2003. The privot and underbrush within the channel along 36 miles of interior streams were treated this year. The Bolivar County portion of the Big Sunflower River near Merigold, MS, the upper reach of Valewood Ditch in Issaquena County, and the bottom third of Steele Bayou in Issaquena County were treated. "We try to kill the brush and small trees located within the stream to maintain the required minimum clear channel width," Chief Engineer Jim Wanamaker said. Wanamaker continues, "the more underbrush and privot that invades your channel, the less flow the stream can handle during a flood event." - MSLB

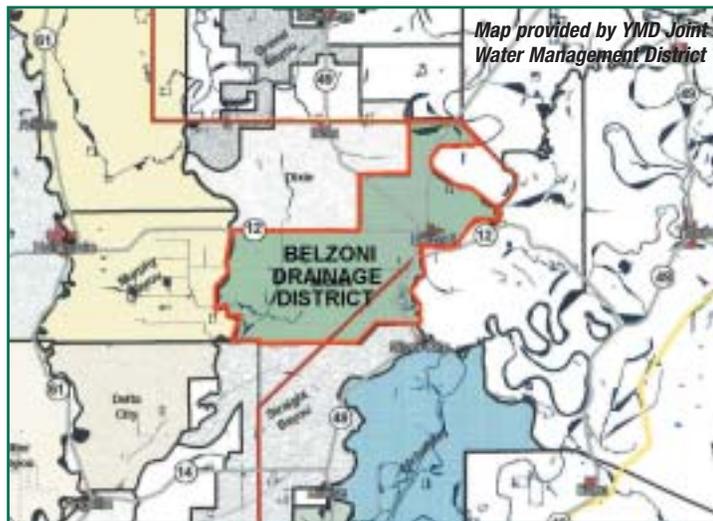
Loading aquatic herbicides on helicopter



Applying herbicides to privot and underbrush

## Belzoni Drainage District

Maintaining some 150 miles of drainage ditches, the Belzoni Drainage District is one of three drainage districts in Humphreys County. Belzoni farmer Larkin Chapman, Board President since 1995, explains that "our coverage area goes from the Yazoo River right at Belzoni west to the Sunflower River."



With two other board members, Denon Braswell and Herbert Hill, the Belzoni Drainage District spends most of its budget maintaining existing drainage ditches that run on section lines east and west in the area. "We also maintain our own drag line and have two full time employees who dredge out existing ditches and spread the dirt over the right-of-ways," says Chapman.

Chapman goes on to say that the Belzoni Drainage District is one of the few such districts in the state that still maintains its own equipment. "We bid out only a few ditches that are located

in Belzoni where we can't get our dragline in; but, otherwise, 95% of our ditches are maintained by our own equipment."

Financed through property taxes, Chapman says the Belzoni Drainage District's budget is about \$150,000 a year.

"When we have technical questions or issues come up, we always give the Mississippi Levee Board a call," Chapman says of the District's relationship to Chief Engineer Jim Wanamaker and his staff. "They are always more than happy to come help us with any assistance we may need. We've had questions come up about culvert flows and similar drainage problems and they have been extremely helpful." - MSLB

## Bill Hobgood Retirement Ceremony

On October 16, 2003 a retirement ceremony was held for Bill Hobgood, Chief of Operations of the Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers. Fred Ballard, President of the Mississippi Levee Board presented Mr. Hobgood a shovel used during the 1927 flood fight for his outstanding career at the Corps and assistance provided to the Levee District. - MSLB



# LEEVE ENLARGEMENT and BERMS PROJECT

## CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON ITEM 488L

The Corps of Engineers continues to stay on schedule on the Levee Enlargement and Berms Project. The Carlisle to Tallula, MS Levee Enlargement and Berms Project (Item 488L) was awarded to Weeks Marine, Inc. based in Covington, LA. This project is an 8.8 mile levee enlargement and dredged berm project being constructed under a \$28.3 million contract.

A pre-construction conference was held at the Corps' Greenwood Area Office on September 30, 2003, attended by officials representing the Levee Board, Corps, contractor and sub-contractor to discuss the project before initiation of work. Work was initiated on October 1, 2003 with Weeks Marine performing the dredge berms while

their sub-contractor Chancellor & Sons will handle the dirt moving portion of the contract. Chancellor & Sons is based out of Cordova, TN and was the contractor on Items 502L and 496L.

"We are excited to get this project underway," Chief Engineer Jim Wanamaker said. Wanamaker continued, "We have worked with Chancellor & Sons on past levee jobs and are looking forward to working with Weeks Marine." Re-evaluation of the project design flood following the 1973 flood resulted in 69 miles of deficient levee within the MS Levee District. 7.6 miles of enlarged levees have been completed while 24.4 miles are currently under construction. Another 3.4 miles of levee will be awarded in late 2003. -MSLB

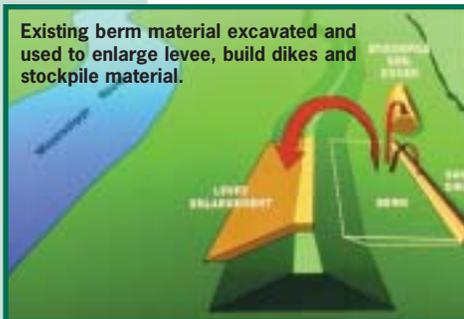


Item 488L - Clearing Operations



Item 488L - Clearing Operations

**(BELOW)** In an effort to reduce the amount of borrow and to minimize impacts on surrounding land and habitat, the Corps has developed several "avoid & minimize" design techniques. In areas with existing berms built from suitable material and with the MS River being close enough to provide a economical source of sand, the Corps is utilizing a hydraulic dredge. Item 488L will utilize this innovative "avoid and minimize" design.



## WORK ON ITEM 502L IS COMPLETE



Item 502L - Completed levee



Item 502L - Levee Board building fence

The first item of work on the Levee Enlargement & Berms Project has been completed. Item 502L - Carolina to Valewood, MS was a 7.6 mile conventional levee enlargement project. Chancellor & Sons, Inc. based in Cordova, TN was the contractor on this \$7.8 million item. Work on Item 502L began September 17, 1998 and was accepted by the Corps of Engineers on July 30, 2003. The Corps of Engineers returned the r.o.w. to the Mississippi Levee Board on September 17, 2003.

"This was our first levee enlargement project designed to protect the Delta from the project design flood following a review of stages on the Mississippi River during the 1973 flood," Chief Engineer Jim Wanamaker said. "We have learned a lot during construction of this item of work that we will carry over to our future levee enlargement items of work." The Mississippi Levee Board will finish building the fencing on this project area this fall in order to turn it back over to the maintenance contractors. -MSLB



Item 477L - Borrow Area



Item 496L - Borrow Area

### LEEVE ENLARGEMENT PROJECTS UPDATE:

- Item 502L - 7.6 miles - 100% complete (Chancellor).
- Item 496L - 10.5 miles - 94% complete (Chancellor).
- Item 488L - 8.8 miles - 1% complete (Weeks Marine).
- Item 477L - 5.1 miles - 64% complete (ASA Enterprises).

# Board Member Profile:

## Roy Nichols: Issaquena County



**C**ary, MS native and farmer Roy Nichols was first elected as the Issaquena County Commissioner for the Mississippi Levee Board in July, 1996. He is currently serving his second term.

"A dear friend of mine, John Allen Darnell, had been a commissioner for the Mississippi Levee Board," Nichols says, explaining his initial involvement with the organization. "I had always appreciated the work he had done and with my living so close to the levee, I understood well the importance of the work of the Mississippi Levee Board. As Mr. Darnell got older and closer to retirement, I thought that filling his position would be a good opportunity for me to serve the Delta."

Nichols, a cotton, soybean and corn farmer with a pecan orchard, currently lives just outside of Glen Allan in north Issaquena County. "I've lived on the farm my whole life and have been a full-time farmer since 1973," Nichols says. "Maintaining the integrity of our levee systems here is crucial to those of us who farm for a living and that's why I'm extremely proud to be working with the Mississippi Levee Board."

"The fact that we are able to live and work in the Delta is due in great part to the work that the Mississippi Levee Board does," Nichols continues. "We are not flood free, but without the levees in place our lives would be much harder and the economy much harsher. Being from a farm family and having that background, I really appreciate the Corps of Engineers and this Levee Board for the work being done to protect and support our agricultural economy, which is the backbone of the United States in my opinion."

An attendee of Mississippi Delta Community College and Mississippi State University, Nichols is married to the former Betty Jo Parkerson of Greenville. The couple has two children, Amanda Blair and Jason Roy. Nichols and his wife are active members of the Methodist Church in Glen Allan. -

MSLB

## MS Levee Board Officers & Staff

### COMMISSIONERS:

**Fred A. Ballard, Jr., President,**  
Washington County

**Kenneth Rodgers, Vice-President,**  
Humphreys County

**Johnny Robinson,**  
Washington County

**James W. House, Jr.,**  
Bolívar County

**Nott Wheeler, Jr.,** Bolívar County

**Roy Nichols,** Issaquena County

**Laurance Carter,** Sharkey County

### STAFF:

**James E. Wanamaker,**  
Chief Engineer

**Peter Nimrod,** Assistant Engineer

**Charles S. Tindall, III,** Attorney

**Judy B. Ross,** Treasurer

**Ginger Morlino,** Secretary

**Patrick Bolls,**

Maintenance Superintendent

**Rick Boyd,** Engineering Technician

## October 2003 Board Recap

Levee Board took the following action: granted permission to advertise for Workman's Compensation Insurance and a used Bulldozer; concurred with permits issued to Brown & Brown on the Brunswick Circle Levee and Trunckline Gas Company for a service roadway near James Crossing; and received status reports on all the ongoing projects in the Levee District, including the Levee Enlargement and Berms Project, the Yazoo Backwater Project, and the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project. - **MSLB**

## Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association Annual Fall Congressional Meeting



President Fred Ballard and Chief Engineer Jim Wanamaker pose during a break between congressional visits with Senators Cochran and Lott and Congressman Bennie Thompson. The Levee Board provided the congressional delegation an update on FY 2004 Appropriations and WRDA 2003.

## Great Delta Bear Affair



MS Levee Board Assistant Engineer Peter Nimrod explains to students the role of the Levee Board in flood control for the Delta. Approximately 360 fourth graders from different schools in the Delta came by the booth during the October 17, 2003 Great Bear Affair in Rolling Fork, MS. - MSLB



## Bolls wins Backhoe Competition



Patrick Bolls, Maintenance Superintendent of the Mississippi Levee Board, is congratulated by Randy Robertson (right) for winning the Backhoe Loader Contest held October 29, 2003 at the Thompson Machinery Cat Dealership in Greenwood, MS. The competition included 18 different operators representing governmental agencies located throughout the Delta. - MSLB

## MS River Commission Hearing



Jim Wanamaker, Chief Engineer, presents oral testimony to members of the Mississippi River Commission (Clifford Smith, Sam Angel, Gen. Don Riley and R.D. James) during the August 20, 2003 public meeting. - MSLB

## Mattie Akin School Presentation



On October 16, 2003, Jim Wanamaker, Chief Engineer of the Mississippi Levee Board gave a briefing to over 100 fourth graders at Mattie Akin Elementary School in Greenville about the Mississippi River and the Mississippi Levee Board. - MSLB

## Corps Annual Levee Inspection



Lamar Jenkins, Greenwood Area Office Assistant Engineer, Jim Spencer, Operations Division of the Vicksburg District, and Jim Wanamaker, Chief Engineer of the Mississippi Levee

Board pose in front of the Steele Bayou Drainage Structure during the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Annual Levee Inspection on October 15 and 21, 2003. Because the Mississippi Levee District is responsible for 212 miles of levee, the inspection trip is broken into two days. Jason Overstreet, Office Engineer of the Corps' Greenwood Area Office and Peter Nimrod, Assistant Engineer of the Mississippi Levee Board also attended the inspection trip. - MSLB

### Secretary continued from Front -

it's for me to listen."

Jim Wanamaker, Chief Engineer for the Mississippi Levee Board headquartered in Greenville, also presented Woodley and Wicker with a detailed, visual overview of the status of the project. "It's very important for Secretary Woodley and Congressman Wicker to see what's under discussion and why this project is so important to the South Delta," said Wanamaker.

Chip Morgan, Executive Director with Delta Council at Stoneville, said that Delta Council, which has been very active in this discussion, was "very appreciative" that Wicker and Woodley "came to the Mississippi Delta."

Woodley said he didn't expect a decision on the project until sometime next year at the earliest, but that he "would now review the information and material" and "see about a consensus as quickly as possible."

*This article originally appeared in the Delta Democrat Times and was written by David Lush. It is reprinted here by permission in a modified and edited form. - MSLB*

# Better Soil, Better Food Plots

By Trey Cooke  
Executive Director, Delta Wildlife, Inc.



Typically, sportsmen who manage and/or hunt in the Delta portion of the state quickly skip over an article about soil quality because they don't think its "pertinent" to them. This is a gross misconception. Just because you manage and/or hunt in the Delta portion of the state doesn't mean your soil fertility, pH, and/or soil quality is

perfect. Think about it for a second. The richest soil and most productive land in the Delta is in agricultural production. This leaves the worst of the worst Delta land for woodlands, wetlands, wildlife and sportsmen.

When managing food plots in the Delta or the Bluff Hills, you must always start with the lowest common denominator... the soil. Soil quality determines habitat quality, and thus,

provide useful information (NPK and pH) to help maximize productivity in your food plots and improve your soil quality.

pH is one of the most important soil variables you will want to control. pH of Delta soils are often very stable and neutral (close to 7) whereas the Bluff Hill soils are often acidic (less than 7). Most plantings used for wildlife like a fairly neutral soils. You can use the information from your soil test to determine if you need to apply lime to adjust the pH on your food plot. If you pH is low, and you do not adjust your pH with a lime application, your food plots will provide little value to wildlife.

NPK (nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium) are commonly used as fertilizers to maximize food plot productivity and should be used in some combination on every food plot you plant. The only problem is knowing how much and in what combination should you apply NPK. Soil test information tells you how much NPK and in what combination it should be applied based on the soil analysis and plants you plan on using.

Fertilization rates can also be found through other sources that

are not based on soil test. Some of these sources include literature from the seed source, the back of a seed bag, research articles, and the MSU Extension Service. Fertilization rates that aren't based on specific soil tests are pretty good but are most often "ranges" rather than "rates." This leaves room for error, which can result in a waste of time and money in extreme cases.

pH is critical. Adequate NPK is critical. But there are also other soil issues to consider when managing food plots. In some areas of the Delta and in some creek bottoms in the Bluff Hills, the soil can become saturated from shallow groundwater or periodic flooding during parts of the year. Very few plants can survive in saturated soils for extended periods of time, much less flooding. This must be taken into consideration when selecting sites for new food plots or diagnosing "sick" plots that don't have fertility problems.

Compaction is a common problem in production agriculture but can also cause problems in food plots. Clay soils (Sharkey and Alligator included) should be deeply broken every 3-5 years. If the compaction problem is not solved, food plots become more prone to draught stress because the soil cannot absorb rainfall. Compaction also makes food plots extremely difficult to prepare for planting. It is difficult to use this practice on small remote food plots, but where it is applicable, the practice should be used.

If you need help maximizing your food plots' potential, please contact the Delta Wildlife office at (662) 686-3370 or the Mississippi State Extension Service. - **MSLB**



determines the carrying capacity and quality of wildlife. In fact, plants and animals couldn't exist without the soil. So it only makes sense that the better your soil, the better your plants and animals will be.

No matter where you are geographically in the state or how good or bad you might think your soil is, you need to perform a soil test on all food plot sites at least 3 months before planting. Soil testing kits are available from the Mississippi State University Cooperative Extension Service. These kits contain instructions for sampling and are very easy to use. Samples are mailed in and analyzed. The test results will

# WABG covers Levee Board activities through regular news reports

Helicopter application news story - September 29, 2003



Item 496L news story - September 15, 2003



**B**eginning in mid-September, WABG TV-6, the Delta's ABC affiliate television station based in Greenville, initiated a series of reports covering the activities of the Mississippi Levee Board. Three of the 13 reports have already aired, according to Ryan Evans, WABG's weather anchor and news reporter, who has been assigned to the coverage.

"It's been very interesting," Evans says about doing the Levee Board news segments. "In particular, I was fascinated with the story we did on the helicopter spraying brush on the Big Sunflower River so that the flood waters could flow more freely. You just don't think of spraying brush as a part of flood control," Evans laughs. Explaining the reports, Evans comments, "We're trying to cover, in an unbiased way, what the Levee Board is doing to control flooding for the Delta."

With an average of one report airing about the Mississippi



Levee Board every two weeks on WABG, Assistant Engineer Peter Nimrod says the response has been very good.

"Several people have stopped me and remarked that they have seen and been interested in the reports," Nimrod

says. "This all fits in with our public information campaign for the Mississippi Levee Board which started almost three years ago."

WABG airs the reports on their 5, 6 and 10 pm newscasts, with repeats of the segments on their "Good Morning Mississippi" program, which airs at 6 am. To date, the reports have focused on the aforementioned helicopter spraying on the Big Sunflower River, the 496L Levee Enlargement Job in Mayersville, and the Yazoo Backwater briefing with Mississippi Congressman Roger Wicker and the new Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, John Paul Woodley. - **MSLB**



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