

# Jeffrey Pine JOURNAL

FALL 2014 | VOLUME XII, ISSUE I

## Surviving Drought

Adaptation in action

## Get Out

Explore the Bodie Hills

## Forest Planning

A sustainable future for the Inyo



THE JEFFREY PINE JOURNAL  
VOLUME XII, ISSUE I, FALL 2014

## NEWSLETTER OF Friends of the Inyo



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Friends of the Inyo is dedicated to the preservation, exploration and stewardship of the Eastern Sierra's public lands.



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#### COVER PHOTO

Water rushes through Convict Creek on a cold fall afternoon. A few hours later it started to snow, and by morning there was a foot of light autumn powder right down to the valley.

PHOTO: Sam Roberts

Inyo is a Paiute word meaning "dwelling place of the Great Spirit." For us, this dwelling place extends from the bottom of Death Valley to the top of Mount Whitney, from Owens Lake to Topaz Lake, from the crest of the Sierra Nevada to the roof of the Great Basin atop the White Mountains. The Jeffrey Pine Journal, named after the Eastern Sierra's most aromatic conifer, is distributed free to all members of Friends of the Inyo and wherever great spirits tend to dwell.

# President's Message by Sydney Quinn

Greetings on a fine day in the Eastern Sierra. All of us, whether we live here or visit our public lands, are fortunate to have access to this extraordinary landscape. Having called this place home since 1970, I never take it for granted. One of my mentors, Andrea Lawrence, once said "we will forever need to defend what we have here; there will be one battle after another." Another, Genny Smith advised: "choose your battles; you cannot take on every issue that arises."

And so, the road is long and broad with multiple issues facing our public lands and this place we all care about. The new Forest Plan is being developed, there are solar issues rumbling in the Owens Valley, and the National Park Service is preparing a draft plan for the Saline Valley Warm Springs. Pick an issue you are passionate about and get involved. We cannot complain later if we don't speak up now.

As the new President of Friends of the Inyo, I want to give heartfelt thanks to James Wilson for the years of dedication and passion he has had for this organization. There are many others who have the same enthusiasm and belief in protecting the wild

places and creatures of Inyo and Mono Counties. We hope to see you out on the land at one of our outings this fall and winter. The opinions of our members are important so please contact me at [sydney@friendsoftheinyo](mailto:sydney@friendsoftheinyo) if you have ideas or feedback. Thanks ever so much for your support whether financial, as a volunteer, or kindred spirit. We need you. The land needs you.

*"do not burn yourselves out. Be as I am – a reluctant enthusiast....a part-time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure. It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it. While you can. While it's still here. So get out there and hunt and fish and mess around with rivers, breathe deep of that yet sweet and lucid air, sit quietly for a while and contemplate the precious stillness, the lovely, mysterious, and awesome space."*

– Edward Abbey



Wildflower bloom in Oak Creek, 2010

Photo: Sydney Quinn

# Executive Director's Update

by Laura Beardsley

First, I want to apologize on behalf of everyone at Friends of the Inyo for missing the opportunity to send a spring issue of the Jeffrey Pine Journal earlier this year. As you will see in the pages that follow, it has been a tremendously busy season here in the Eastern Sierra. I hope you will accept this expanded version Jeffrey Pine Journal in its place. We will be returning to our regular publishing schedule this coming winter and spring.

I just returned from three days in the Humphreys Basin, a much needed respite from the fast-paced spring and summer we've been enjoying at Friends of the Inyo. I turned off my phone, explored at my own pace, and watched our puppy revel in a weekend spent jumping across talus and exploring alpine lakes. As I sat cooling my feet in Paiute Creek in the waning light of a glorious day, I thought about how fortunate we are to have public lands and wilderness available for our recreation, curiosity, solace, and rejuvenation. Over the next few months, we will wrap up a year of celebration commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the wild places it protects for our enjoyment and for the vitality of creatures and habitats that exist there. We will also dive in to the NEPA process and the final push to develop a sustainable management plan for the Inyo National Forest.

Our busy stewardship season may be coming to an end, but true stewardship never ends. I encourage you to take some time in the next few months to celebrate the treasure of our public lands, explore the wonder of our wild places, and give back by volunteering, getting involved in planning, or donating to Friends of the Inyo. Your support, in every form, ensures the strength and longevity of preservation, exploration, and stewardship for the Eastern Sierra.

## Members & Sponsors Help Our Programs Thrive

I've said it before and I'll say it again - our programs would not be possible without the support of our dedicated members and sponsors. Their contributions of time, energy, services, and, of course, money allow Friends of the Inyo to provide high quality, meaningful programs across the Eastern Sierra. As we begin to wrap up our busy program season and gear up for our end of the year fundraising campaigns, we want to say thank you all of the generous members, foundations, and business sponsors who support preservation, exploration, and stewardship for the Eastern Sierra's public lands. Please join me in welcoming our newest sponsors, Southern California Edison and Horizons4 Condominiums in Mammoth Lakes for their recent contributions to our programs. For more information about business sponsorship and other ways to support Friends of the Inyo, please call our office at 760-873-6500. Thanks for all you do to care for and protect our local wild places.



Clyde gazes out across the Humphreys Basin, continuing his fruitless quest for Beldings.

Photo:  
Laura Beardsley



## PRESERVATION

# The Inyo National Forest: Opportunities for Exploration

by Drew Foster



Variable Checkerspot in Glass Creek Meadow

Photo: Jora Fogg

The Inyo National Forest covers nearly two million acres of land (for reference, Los Angeles County is about three million acres), and is a global destination for visitors. It's not hard to imagine why: Mt. Whitney, the Ancient Bristlecone Pines, Mono Lake, Mammoth Mountain, great camping, great fishing, sweeping vistas. But you already know this; the Eastern Sierra is awesome—a place treasured by millions of people. For over a century, the Inyo National Forest, first established in 1907 by President Teddy Roosevelt, has been a recreation destination. Before the Inyo was designated as a national forest, the local native people cared for the landscape. Then, settlers moved west, sought gold and new opportunities, and the U.S. Geological Survey and first forest rangers observed and recorded the stunning features of the wild lands of Eastern California. Eventually management plans were created to help provide guidance as more and more visitors to the area increased the demand for services. Today, the Inyo National Forest is in the process of revising its management plan to address new challenges and opportunities. This is an important process which will help establish and guide future decisions.

With ever growing numbers of visitors, the new plan needs to include elements of sustainable recreation, landscape-level protections, and the best management for wildlife, plants, and water. It should include goals for partnerships, restoration, and monitoring, and set the standard for prudent land management of national forests across the country. These are public lands, meaning that they are owned by the American people, and your participation and feedback is essential for ensuring that this plan is the best that it can be. In addition to some more specific management language and policy, Friends of the Inyo is highlighting some special focus areas on the forest that you may or may not have visited.

### These focus areas include:

- **The White-Inyo Bridge**, a critical nexus of the Great Basin and Mojave Desert ecoregions and an important migratory connection for mule deer, bighorn sheep, and countless other animals;
- **The Glass Mountains**, a reservoir of ecological, recreational, and cultural resources, and a potential refuge for species responding to climate change;
- **The Excelsior Range**, a less visited region where the Inyo meets the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest that houses a Great Basin wonderland of sagebrush, pinyon forest, dune fields, and broad opportunities for exploration; and
- **The Sierra Escarpment**, the steep eastern front of the Sierra Nevada crest down to the edge of the eastern valley floors including significant destinations such as Sherwin and Laurel Lakes, Haiwee Canyon, Mt Olsen, and the Coyote Plateau.

The goal of highlighting these areas is to showcase some places on the Inyo National Forest that deserve more attention and more resources, and emphasize the need for increased capacity to care for our public lands. Hopefully this will also inspire more people to explore these places – people like you. Over the next year or so as the Inyo overhauls its management plan, you will have the opportunity to provide a voice for the future of the Inyo National Forest. Don't miss out! Get involved by coming on one of our walks or projects, tell your story, attend one of the many public meetings to be hosted by the Inyo National Forest, write a letter or make a phone call. The public lands of the Eastern Sierra have always been, and should continue to be, cared for by the people.

## How You Can Get Involved:



## PRESERVATION

## Recent Developments and Next Steps in Forest Planning

By Jora Fogg

Over the last six months, the Inyo National Forest as well as the two other early adopters in the Sierra have moved forward with their Forest Planning process. In June the Forest released its draft of Desired Conditions, Need to Change, and Preliminary Wilderness Inventory Maps. In conjunction with the Sierra Club, Friends of the Inyo held a June 12th Forest Planning training workshop at our Bishop office with 28 people in attendance. The workshop helped answer questions and prepare participants for the Inyo National Forest's public meeting to discuss proposed changes to the Forest Plan, the development of desired conditions based on public input, and maps of the preliminary wilderness inventory.

On August 29th, the Forest released its

Notice of Intent and Proposed Action to begin the NEPA process for Forest Plan Revisions. The publication of these documents began the 30-day scoping period which closed September 29th. On September 9th, Friends of the Inyo held a second, successful training workshop focused on understanding the scoping process and writing effective comment letters. This workshop was followed by two more local public meetings in Bishop on Sept 18th and Dyer, NV on Sept 15th. Throughout this process, Friends of the Inyo worked with members, stakeholders, and the conservation community as well as regional and local Forest staff to develop comments and recommendations on the Proposed Action and the Notice of Intent.

We continue to be active players in

the process of developing a suitable management plan for the forest with attention to sustainable recreation, wilderness and special designation, species of conservation concern, and partnerships among other important issues. The Wilderness Evaluation comment period will be open for a period this fall, and our Forest Supervisor will make his recommendations for wilderness and other special designations in early winter. Later this winter, we expect the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Friends of the Inyo submits comments through each step of the Forest revision process and encourages our members and volunteers to get involved. If you'd like to view some of our previous comments, visit the Forest Planning page in the Preservation section of our website.

Looking east to Dexter Canyon from the Glass Mountains. Photo: Jora Fogg



## PRESERVATION

# Fifty Years of Creating Wilderness By Paul McFarland

As America rode its post-World War II boom of babies, education, and economic prosperity, Aldo Leopold warned the nascent American conservation community that “wilderness is a resource which can shrink, but not grow...creation of new wilderness in the full sense of the word is impossible.”

This evening, however, I watched a rainbow spill from a dark spring thunderhead onto “new” wilderness east of Mono Lake. With the stroke of his pen on the Omnibus Public Lands Act, President Obama created the Granite Mountain Wilderness in March of 2009. With this act, over 30,000 acres of sublime pinyon-juniper forests, granite boulder mazes, sagebrush meadows, and volcanic cliffs centered around 8,920’ Granite Mountain joined 109 million other acres of public land as designated wilderness.

Was Aldo wrong in thinking we couldn’t ‘create’ wilderness? Yes and no. To understand why let’s consider not just the full sense of the word wilderness, but also, it’s capitalization. Wilderness v. wilderness; big W v. little w.

The wilderness - little w - Leopold warned against losing was, by in large, already gone before he even put on his first US Forest Service uniform. In truth, I don’t believe that

the concept of American little w wilderness - wild, untamed, untouched land of bountiful beasts, unending timber, and no people - has been valid on this continent for tens of thousands of years. Little w wilderness is more Natty Bumpoo and Manifest Destiny

**“wilderness is a resource which can shrink, but not grow... creation of new wilderness in the full sense of the word is impossible.”  
-Aldo Leopold**

than historical and ecological reality- great for story-telling, but perhaps not the whole story. Look no further than the obsidian chips and house rings of the Granite Mountain Wilderness - we aren’t the first ones anywhere.

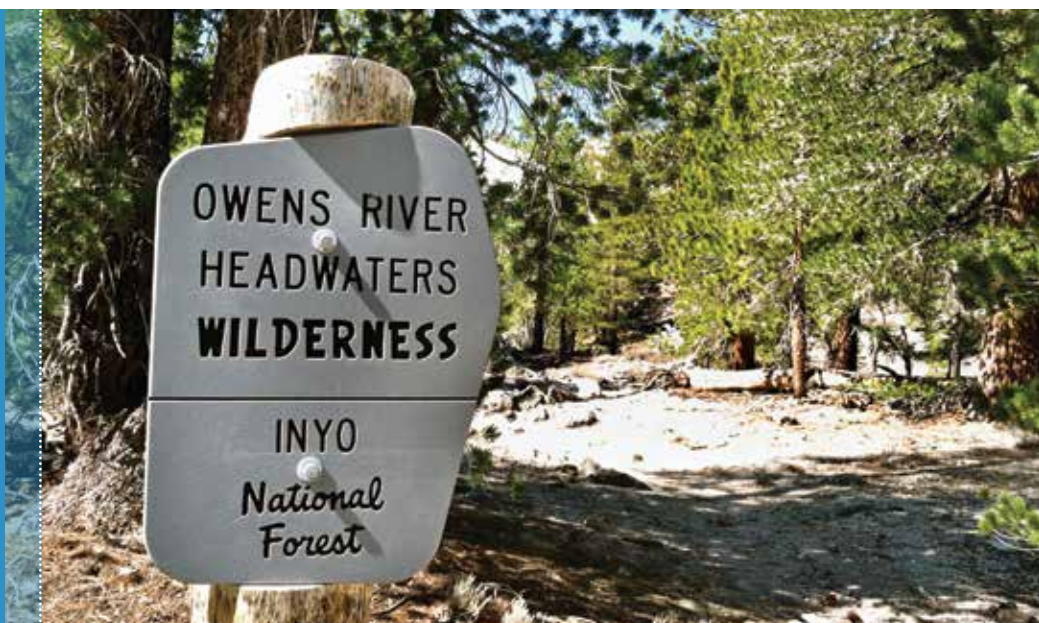
Leopold clearly saw a growing American population quickly consuming and overrunning, both for economic benefit and modern recreation, much of American’s remaining wild landscape. Without some means of protecting what tag-ends remained, he and many others feared there would soon be no place wild for future generations.

To preserve this vanishing wildness - lands where the workings of modern culture were still largely absent, lands that gave birth to the myth of little w wilderness - the American concept of designated Wilderness - with a big W - was born. Poetically defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964 as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man,” we, together as a nation, created big W Wilderness to preserve for future generations chunks of this country retaining the ingredients for the myth of wilderness.

Am I glad Aldo was correct that we will never create wilderness? Yes, because we need myths we can never realize. Am I glad he and his buddies crafted big W Wilderness? Hell yes, because we need Wilderness. And, I am even more heartened by those many, many people who go on creating even more Wilderness nearly every year since 1964.

A fresh sign marks the boundary of the new Owens River Headwaters Wilderness, established, along with the Granite Mountains, as part of the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Act.

Photo: Friends of the Inyo



## PRESERVATION

## How Drought in the Sierra Nevada and Climate Change are Affecting Streams by David Herbst

As you have hiked the trails of the Eastern Sierra this year you no doubt have seen the parched landscape and how little water there is in streams. How does this dry year affect stream habitats and aquatic life and what does the future portend?

A common misconception about global warming is that this results only in rising temperatures in the atmosphere of the earth. With warmer temperatures though comes a host of other climatic effects, so the more catch-all term climate change is now used more often. As heat is trapped in the atmosphere under the building content of carbon dioxide gas from burning of fossil fuels, one of the most notable manifestations is an increased frequency of extreme conditions of drought and flood in some regions.

The current severe drought that we are experiencing in California is a trend that is related to climate change. To understand how warming affects mountain streams, begin with the fact that flow is driven mainly by melting snow. But as temperatures rise a greater fraction of precipitation falls as rain instead of snow and so runs off more quickly instead of the water being stored frozen in snow. The diminished snowpack also melts earlier than usual, and summer drought ensues, with extended low flows in rivers that may end in smaller streams drying altogether. Springs and meadows may provide some stored release of groundwater, but these too must be recharged by a slowly melting snowpack that is disappearing.

Using an understanding of how projected increases in temperature alter the timing and amount of snowmelt, mathematical models of water availability in the Sierra have shown that the critical-dry year type that we are now experiencing would increase in frequency from about 1 in 5 years historically to 3 of every 5 years by the end of the century, if not sooner. These projections apply mainly to the rivers of the west slopes of the southern Sierra, but the northern Sierra is forecast to lose snow more rapidly and have wet year types decrease from one-third of the time at present to just one-tenth of the time by the latter half of this century. The Eastern Sierra is more fortunate to have high elevations retaining snow for longer than other regions, but these too will diminish as the snow line rises.

At the opposite end of extremes are the flood events that come from what climatologists call atmospheric river storms, known as the "pineapple connection" to meteorologists. These occur when warm, wet winter storms from the tropical Pacific deliver winter

rains to high elevations where condensation and melting snow produce winter floods that can scour and wash out rivers. A perfect example is the New Year's Day storm in 1997, which destroyed Highway 395 in the West Walker River Canyon. Climate models also show that these types of storms will become more frequent in the future even as stream flows on average are in decline. Rain instead of snow also results in a shift to greater winter than summer runoff and this means less flow and hydroelectric power generated during the peak summer needs for agriculture and energy in California.

How are stream ecosystems altered? It is no surprise that stream areas contract in the low flows of a drought, but the type of habitat present also changes. Stream zones can broadly be defined as either deeper slow-moving pools or as swift shallow rocky riffles. Riffles harbor greater biological diversity and, as food-resource areas, produce larger and more varied insects and other invertebrates that are fed on by fish, amphibians, and by riparian birds and bats when the insects emerge as adults. Anglers know that pools just below riffles are favored areas for feeding by trout waiting for insects drifting downstream. As flows decline, the areas of pools increase at the expense of riffles, so there is a net loss of the

productive and diverse riffle zones for aquatic life. The lower flows and warmer temperatures these past summers have also shown an increase in algae and decomposing matter as they are concentrated and stagnate in deposits. As water warms it holds less oxygen, and sediments also accumulate and bury stream bottom habitat when flows cannot flush them out. Smaller invertebrates with the capability to tolerate poor water quality increase while larger ones succumb to the loss of habitat, with as yet unknown consequences to the food web that these organisms support. At the extremes of late summer drought conditions, we are also seeing streams throughout the Sierra going dry – some from above as snow disappears, and some from below as receding waters vanish below stream beds. On the plus side for many, the snowmelt ponds that support mosquitoes dry earlier so there are fewer of these insects to contend with, but other ponds and lakes are suffering loss of volume and area, especially of their productive nearshore shallow zones.

As with our own dependence on water and when it comes, so will the fortunes and vitality of mountain and desert aquatic ecosystems rise and mostly fall in the age of climate change and drought.



Low summer flows in the West Walker River, showing large areas of exposed bed  
Photo: David Herbst

## ►► FIELD GUIDE

# Making it Work: Living with Drought

by Paul McFarland, drawings by Autumn Eanes

It's no secret California, and much of the American Southwest, is experiencing the third consecutive year of dry weather. Reservoirs sport massive bathtub rings, wells run dry, and at least for this past winter, it seemed there was often more rock than ice in what should be our snowy Sierra.

We Westerners - Californians especially - have literally moved mountains, lakes, and rivers to combat our natural state. From Walker Lake to Owens Lake, the consequences of moving water to grow crops, people, and industry in dry lands are well known and clearly visible across the Eastern Sierra. As we struggle to balance our water-filled dreams with the reality of an ever-changing climate, perhaps we can learn a little by looking to the plants and animals who seem to have figured out how to live bountifully in our land of seeming scarcity. They've been at this a lot longer than we have.



**PANAMINT KANGAROO RAT**  
(*Dipodomys panamintinus*)

*Waste not, want not*

One of the desert's most iconic species, the kangaroo rat's got desert living down. Rather than foolishly baking themselves in the blazing heat of day, this little bouncer waits till nightfall to leave their cool, deep burrows and forage for seeds and leaves. Models of creative efficiency, kangaroo rats not only "create" what's known as metabolic water from their food through a specialized digestion process, but also conserve what little water they have by concentrating their urine to six times what a normal mammal would excrete. Not to be outdone, these little fellows also don't waste any water in their hard, dry poop.

**BIG SAGEBRUSH**  
(*Artemisia tridentata*)



*Room for everyone, everyone in their place*

In the constant battle for what little water falls from summer thunderstorms or soaks in from scant winter snows, the humble sagebrush covers its bases. The shiny hairs on their small leaves reflect intense sunlight and protect from desiccating desert winds. With a deep tap root - often up to and beyond 12 feet - and an extensive network of smaller roots just below the soil surface, sagebrush is prepared to tough out long droughts with deep reserves while quickly soaking up ephemeral, shallow rains. By basically laying claim to all the available water in its reach, the sagebrush literally distances itself from its neighbor.



## FIELD GUIDE ◀◀

**WATER BIRCH****(*Betula occidentalis*)***Strategic retreat*

As the name implies, the water birch loves water. Today, this coppery-barked tree hugs creekbanks along boulder strewn canyons across the Great Basin. Millions of years ago, give or take a few, water birch could have been found spread across much more of today's arid land in a rich forest of maple, alder, rhododendron, spruce, and maybe even a sequoia or two. As the climate gradually warmed and dried, decreasing summer rains and colder winters proved too difficult for these more temperate species, and rich forests were replaced with grasslands, scrublands and eventually desert. Perhaps biding its time for another era of wetter weather, the water birch persists, hiding out from our harsh climate, keeping its feet wet in desert streams. Check out lower Pine Creek or Rock Creek to wait for the next glacial period with these relics of a wetter world.

**GREAT BASIN SPADEFOOT TOAD****(*Spea intermontana*)***Get it while the gettin's good*

While the concepts of 'dry' and 'toad' don't seem to go together, spadefoots have learned to make the most of what they get. Spending much of the cold winter and dry summer deep in an insulating burrow, these desert amphibians quickly emerge from being buried alive when the rains come. As thunder peals and rain soaks the parched ground, spadefoots emerge to engage in what many resources refer to as explosive breeding. Following an ecstatic period of mating, females will lay up to 1000 eggs that rapidly hatch in 24-48 hours. In less than two months the rapidly developing tadpoles metamorphose into juvenile toads complete with their own shovel - a hard, dark, wedged-shaped spade on each back foot designed to help the toad dig down into sandy soil and wait for the next rain party.

## STEWARDSHIP

### Summertime Stewardship By Andrew Schurr

Friends of the Inyo once again had a very successful, challenging, and rewarding summer of work on the public lands of the Eastern Sierra this year. To celebrate International Migratory Bird Day, we began the season with a clean up and bird walk at Convict Lake. Thanks to a matching grant from the National Forest Foundation and a project partnership with Inyo National Forest, Friends of the Inyo spent eight weeks rebuilding the trail around Convict this summer to improve safe access to the lake. In addition to the professional expertise of our Stewardship Crew, this trail benefitted from several volunteer days throughout the summer that brought over 90 people out to help. A special thanks is due to all our great volunteers and to Convict Lake Resort for generous support and delicious pizza donated to the cause.

In addition to Convict, the Friends of the Inyo Stewardship Crew and Mammoth Lakes Trail System Stewards continued facilitating projects, improving trails, and assisting visitors throughout Inyo

and Mono counties. Working with the June Lake Trails Committee and the Inyo National Forest we hosted the 5th annual June Lake Trails Day on June 21st, and our crew spent a week in the June Lake loop removing trees from trails and improving conditions for foot and equestrian travel.

At the same time, Friends of the Inyo returned to the Mammoth Lakes Trail System for the 7th year to steward the trails and help visitors and locals alike get out and give back. Our Stewards were out walking and maintaining the trails, leading interesting interpretive walks (with help from some amazing volunteers), and providing a wealth of knowledge to all who ask. In addition, working alongside MLTPA and Inyo National Forest, the Summer of Stewardship Trail Days between June and September were a resounding success. The Coldwater Trail Day alone drew 84 volunteers out for a morning of stewardship. A special thanks is due to the programs sponsors including the Town of Mammoth Lakes, Southern

California Edison, Bleu Handcrafted Foods, Mammoth Brewing Company, Old New York Deli & Bagels, and Mammoth Sunrise Rotary, and to Inyo National Forest's Jessica Dixon and Heidi Roerdink who provided invaluable help and great smiles at every event.

After all that it might look like there was no room for more, but keeping busy is a way of life at Friends of the Inyo. In partnership with the Inyo National Forest, the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest, and the Bishop BLM, we assisted with a number of monitoring and stewardship projects. In addition to monitoring the health and use of front country recreation routes on the Inyo National Forest, we are actively monitoring wilderness character in the South Sierra and Boundary Peak Wildernesses and surveying Wilderness Study Areas in Mono County. And, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, we installed a new wilderness trail head kiosk at Virginia Lakes thanks to a special grant from the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance.



Casey and Pete build reinforcing structures to counter erosion problems on the trail around Convict Lake. Photo: Laura Beardsley

Volunteers helping spruce up Minaret Vista.

Photo: Ursula Esser



## STEWARDSHIP

## My Season as an MLTS Steward By Matthew Paruolo

I first came to Mammoth Lakes on family fishing trips from Southern California and well remember the awe it inspired in me as a small child—and continues to inspire in me today. As one of two Mammoth Lakes Trail System (MLTS) stewards this season, I had the pleasure of hiking the Mammoth Lakes Basin and exploring its many hidden treasures and wondrous, one of a kind, vistas. My daily work functions varied from standard trail maintenance, organizing and working with volunteers for our Summer of Stewardship (SOS) volunteer days, and leading a series of interpretive, educational programs and hikes.

Perhaps the most essential component of my daily work involved standard trail maintenance and use of simple hand tools. Visited annually by flocks of fishermen, front-country campers, and wilderness explorers, this nexus of trails deserves and demands upkeep and improvement. This season, we removed several fallen trees from trails using crosscut and hand saws, reestablished foot tread, completed much needed erosion repair work, and improved signage throughout the MLTS. The reward of accomplishing a task with the “minimal tool” has been an overwhelmingly positive experience, and one which has been an absolute pleasure to share with our numerous, invaluable volunteers throughout the season.

Working with the town of Mammoth Lakes, the USFS, and the MLTPA, our SOS volunteer events set record numbers this year and accomplished in a few short hours what would require weeks of work for us to accomplish on our own. We would like to extend our enormous gratitude to each and every volunteer who chose to



Volunteer Alex Ertaud reads excerpts from John Muir's exploits in the Eastern Sierra with Banner, Ritter, and the Minarets in the background.

Photo: Mathew Paruolo

dedicate their weekends to caring for our public lands and expansive backyard.

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act this year, which designates wilderness as a place “untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who

does not remain”, it occurs to me that the most crucial component of conservation is undoubtedly education. Leading a number of educational interpretive programs ranging from weekly consolidated mine tours, geology hikes at Inyo Craters, wildflower walks, tree hikes, “sticks and stones” exhibits, and orienteering seminars, it has been my distinct privilege to share my knowledge of the Eastern Sierra, and to learn more of the natural and cultural history of the area in the process. I would again like to extend my thanks to our volunteer docents who volunteered their time and experience to sponsored interpretive events throughout the summer.

My experiences as a MLTS Steward this season with Friends of the Inyo has been one of the best experiences of my life, and one which I will forever cherish. It has been my pleasure and honor to work alongside visitors and volunteers to protect and preserve this great gem of the Eastern Sierra. I first came to Mammoth Lakes as a knee high toddler, and it has been my wish this season, to preserve similar experiences for future generations. Made possible by a partnership between Friends of the Inyo, the USFS, and the Town of Mammoth Lakes, my efforts were but a small contribution to ongoing conservation in the Eastern Sierra—and one which I feel serves a great and lasting purpose.

### What's Happening in the Bodie Hills By Jeff Hunter

The Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership, a coalition of 15 organizations that includes Friends of the Inyo, continues to make progress in our effort to secure lasting protections for the Bodie Hills.

In the past four months, with assistance from Friends of the Inyo, we completed three successful stewardship projects including a cleanup of the old shooting range at Travertine Hot Springs on May 22, the removal of a 2-mile section of electric fencing along Bodie Creek on August 16, and the removal of a half mile section of fence from inside a Sage Grouse strutting ground on National Public Lands Day.

If you would like to learn more about the work of the coalition, please consider joining an outing or stewardship project this October. On October 18, the Partnership and California Native Plant Society will be joining the BLM to plant Bitterbrush in the footprint of the 2012 Indian Fire. Re-vegetation projects like this are crucial to restoring wildlife habitat and to provide forage for mule deer and pronghorn antelope. On October 25, you can join a short but steep 3-mile hike to the summit of Mt. Biederman. The summit offers extraordinary views of Mono Lake and the Eastern Sierra. Hike leader Jeff Hunter will discuss Sage Grouse conservation and read excerpts from Aldo Leopold and John Muir.

For more information about the Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership or to register for an upcoming event, please visit [BodieHills.org](http://BodieHills.org) or email [info@bodiehills.org](mailto:info@bodiehills.org).

## EXPLORATION

# Get Out...Into the Bodie Hills By Paul McFarland

The ease of simply wandering - walk this way, that way, over here, maybe over there - is one of the main things I love about the Great Basin desert. Largely lacking in pesky thickets of trees or impenetrable swamps, the low sagebrush steppe, clear-edged aspen groves, and open pinyon-juniper woodlands invite you to just wander. You can see where you're going, you can see where you've been, and you can see for hundreds of miles to millions of other places you've loved and would love to visit.

The Bodie Hills - a high plateau broken by volcanic ridges, cut with aspen choked canyons, and blanketed with sagebrush meadows - presents some of the best wandering country in the Eastern Sierra. Blessed with charismatic megafauna - the speedy pronghorn antelope, mule deer, and even a bear or two - as well as a rich diversity of feathered friends - from the strutting Sage Grouse and resident Golden Eagles to gaudy Western Tanagers, the Bodies combine outstanding wildlife watching with abundant cultural history. The mining town rusting away in a state of arrested decay at Bodie State Historic Park may be the most well-known history here, but the Bodies also house a rich and living Native American story.

While an extensive and inviting network



Exploring the flora in the Bodie Hills.  
Photo: Jora Fogg

of mostly rough roads criss cross the Bodie Hills, there are no designated hiking trails. Thanks to the volcanic soils, this road network presents some of the best mountain biking in often-sandy Mono County, and with light traffic, these same roads make for great walking, as well as 4wd exploring.

There are few ways to get a better handle on a place than to climb to the highest point, catch your breath with a tasty beverage and some cheese, and have a good, long look around. Here in the Bodies, those perching places would be Bodie and Potato Peaks.

### Getting There

From Highway 395, turn east onto State Route 270 - the part paved, part gravel seasonally open route to Bodie State Historic Park. This designated scenic byway meanders along sprightly Clearwater Creek for about 5 miles before climbing out onto a broad sagebrush plateau. The high, conical, classic treeless peaks - Bodie at 10,168' and Potato, just 69' higher, to the north - are now visible to the northeast. Here's where your journey becomes your own.

### Being There

Remember, this is wanderin' country! There are as many ways to climb these great peaks as there are sagebrush plants between Mormon Meadow and Murphy Spring. Get a map! Not just to understand that joke, but to get yourself to the peak. I recommend the old classic - the USGS Bodie 7.5 minute topographic quadrangle. From the south, you can park along State Route 270 and head northwest along a rough fenceline road to just below the peaks. From the east, you can wander up the Rough Creek draw to the watershed divide at the gentle saddle between the peaks. From the north, you can walk along a high ridge from the Aurora Canyon Road. While from the west, you can take your time and walk from Bridgeport.

However you choose to get there, please respect the wildness of this place. In a world shrinking and growing at the same time, places like the Bodie Hills become more valuable every day.



Taking a break while exploring the Bodie Hills by bike. Photo: Paul McFarland

### National Conservation Lands: Hidden Gems of the BLM

Established as the National Conservation Landscape System as part of the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Management Act, our National Conservation Lands strive "to conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations." These places emphasize conservation, heritage, and community on lands managed by the BLM.

Our National Conservation Lands include: National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, National Scenic and Historic Trails, components of the National Wilderness Preservation and Wild & Scenic Rivers Systems and other areas designated to be managed for conservation.

Nearly 40 of California's 171 units of National Conservation Lands lie in Inyo and Mono counties and hold innumerable possibilities for recreation, learning, and scientific research.

**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

## EXPLORATION

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall is here, and we're celebrating cooler days with a full schedule of excellent opportunities to get out and explore your public lands. Visit [friendsoftheinyo.org](http://friendsoftheinyo.org) or call us at 760-873-6500 for more information on any of the events listed below, or "like" us on Facebook to stay up to date on the latest details.

**1 NOVEMBER LOWER COTTONWOOD CANYON EXPLORATION**

Experience this unique oak and cottonwood gallery forest that is rich with natural and cultural history.

**7-9 NOV FALL HIGBALL IN BISHOP**  
with The Access Fund And The American Alpine Club

Join us for events both days with a special stewardship project the morning of November 9th.

**5 DECEMBER WILD & SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL IN MAMMOTH LAKES****6 DECEMBER WILD & SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL IN BISHOP****12 DECEMBER WILD & SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL IN LONE PINE****10 JANUARY SNOWSHOE AND XC SKI- WINTER BIRDS OF THE INYO**

Location TBD based on snow conditions.

**FEBRUARY VOLCANIC TABLELANDS EXPLORATION – exact date to be determined****28 FEBRUARY WILDFLOWERS OF SHORT CANYON**

Enjoy spring early with a trip to this Southern Sierra botanical gem.

**21 MARCH "TALLY THE TOADS"**

Help is needed to count the endemic black toad along Birch creek within the White-Inyo Bridge.

**28 MARCH CHOCOLATE MOUNTAIN HIKE**

Join us for this annual favorite with a special treat at the top.

**11 APRIL "SALLY WITH THE SALAMANDERS"**

Discover the canyons and springs of the Inyo Mountains and survey for the endemic Inyo Slender Salamander.

**25 APRIL OWENS LAKE BIRD FESTIVAL**

Join us for the first annual festival to celebrate and explore the spring migration at Owens Lake. Enjoy walks, talks, and exhibits from experts and explore this unique ecosystem near Lone Pine.

# PINE DROPS

## NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE EASTERN SIERRA'S PUBLIC LANDS

By Laura Beardsley, Andrew Schurr, Jora Fogg,  
Drew Foster & Paul McFarland

### SPRING & SUMMER EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Friends of the Inyo kicked off 2014 with a season of great exploration and stewardship outings. This winter and spring, we explored Fish Slough with The Sierra Club, continued our annual tradition of enjoying fine chocolate on the summit of Chocolate Mountain, and worked with local climbers to clean up some popular climbing destinations. A couple highlights from this spring and summer include exploring the human history of the Volcanic Tablelands with BLM Archeologist Greg Haverstock, showcasing wilderness saw skills at Bishop Earth Day, and hosting the 7th Annual Round Valley School Earth Day with the BLM, CalTrout, The Bighorn Sheep Foundation, and the Eastern

Sierra Consortium for Collaborative Education. Over the course of the summer, we've been busy with a full slate of great opportunities to explore and give back to your public lands, including the 6th Annual Summer of Stewardship in Mammoth Lakes, a series of projects at Convict Lake, and several celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. Our first celebration, a Wilderness Walk in Mammoth Lakes proved a great way to share pieces of wilderness with both visitors and residents. To close out the summer, we led a captivating full moon exploration of Glass Creek Meadow to celebrate our local wilderness and participated in a region wide wilderness celebration in Yosemite National Park. See our Upcoming Events page for details on what's happening this fall and winter.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY: Don't Compromise the Treasures of The Eastern Sierra

The mission of Friends of the Inyo is to care for the Eastern Sierra's public lands. This includes the people and other critters that use them, the water that flows through them, the views, the air, and the activities that occur here. These lands do not exist in a vacuum, and we are an increasingly globalized society, dependent on a limited amount of resources on this small blue planet. That said, the current and potential effects of climate change present some sobering realities for the changes of the status quo of daily life. Renewable energy is an essential part of America's clean energy future and independence, and projects are being developed all the time to achieve those goals. As stewards of the land, we have to ensure that any development project does not compromise the invaluable qualities of the Eastern Sierra, even if it's for a worthy cause.

Friends of the Inyo supports renewable energy, as long as it maintains the ecological integrity, habitat values, opportunities for recreation, water and air quality, and the wild open spaces of the Eastern Sierra. Currently, there are projects that propose to identify where and where not to develop renewable energy in the Eastern Sierra. Current projects propose to cover portions of the Owens Valley in solar panels, blanket the Benton Range with wind turbines, and continue drilling wells to harness geothermal energy along the geologically active eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada. It is difficult to say which renewable energy projects are good and which are bad, because they all work



Matt P. sharing his crosscut knowledge at the 50th Anniversary Wilderness Walk in Mammoth Creek Park. Photo: Laura Beardsley

toward an important goal. Friends of the Inyo remains committed to supporting the choices that are the best for the public lands of the Eastern Sierra. We hope that you will as well.

## FROGS AND TOADS

This past spring, the USFWS moved closer to implementing real protections for Sierra Nevada Mountain Yellow-legged Frogs and Yosemite Toads with the designation of "critical habitat" for each species. Critical habitat are those areas identified as essential to the conservation of a given species. Each of us – frog, tree or person – requires habitat with specific qualities (temperature range, water availability, iPhone chargers, etc.) to pursue our own happiness. With critical habitat identified for our local frog and toad, the real work of ensuring we do not lose these species from the Earth can move forward.

For the frogs, recovery will be achieved through an innovative program of re-introduction to fishless alpine lakes coupled with intense monitoring of those few populations of healthy frogs that remain. For the toads, recovery will be achieved through conservation and restoration of high country meadow habitat.

Does saving these Sierran frogs and toads mean that every lake in the Eastern Sierra will have all trout removed and every alpine meadow will be fenced off? Heck no! Fish or frogs is a false choice. We can have frogs and fish; we can have toads and trails, but that takes work. Our real choice – with the frog, toad, sage grouse, bighorn sheep, Owen's Pupfish, and the like – is will we work together with cold facts and honest hearts to make room for the other life we share this place with? Will we remember kids love catching both frogs and fish?

## MORE HOT TOPICS IN PRESERVATION

As mentioned above, renewable energy



Yosemite Toad in Glass Creek Meadow. Photo: Jora Fogg

is an important issue throughout the Eastern Sierra. Inyo County is working on the Renewable Energy General Plan Amendment (REGPA), which will allow for multiple, large-scale solar projects throughout the Owens Valley. In our comments on the REGPA and other projects like the South Owens Valley Solar Ranch proposed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Friends of the Inyo is working to ensure all renewable energy planning contains directives outlining the process of biological and cultural inventories at each proposed location. It is imperative that plans detail a process for not only identifying, but also implementing, meaningful mitigations to address any impacts to recreational, cultural, ecological, or social resources.

Up next, the BLM recently released their Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). This plan may offer considerable protections for desert ecosystems in southeastern Inyo County. Friends of the Inyo will be commenting on this plan, and working with the BLM to implement conservation

recommendations. In addition, the West Wide Energy Corridor (WWEC) which would transmit energy from Nevada to western California, is currently in a holding pattern, with potential project areas still to be determined. As the WWEC moves forward, Friends of the Inyo will continue to watch the identified corridors of concern on public lands, which could be threatened by the construction of new energy infrastructure.

At the same time, the US Fish & Wildlife Service extended their comment deadline on their proposed endangered species listing for the Bi-State Sage Grouse and will be releasing a final decision this winter. As an active member of the Bi-State Working Group, a coalition of local leaders, scientists and conservation organizations, working to protect the species, Friends of the Inyo will keep you up to date with any new developments. Finally, our preservation team continues to follow the Inyo National Forest's quarterly proposed projects, which include the grooming of Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) trails for the next two winters and projects to revisit Travel Management decisions for several motorized routes on the forest's north zone.

## TRANSITIONS

# Thank You

## Steve McLaughlin by James Wilson

For many years Steve McLaughlin has been an exceptional board member of Friends of the Inyo. Recently he left the board for other pursuits. While on the board, whether it was board meetings, public meetings, reading technical documents, or leading members and the public on plant walks, Steve was always there for FOI.

Steve is exceptional in his dedication to our mission to help preserve the integrity of the Eastern California landscape, to make sure it continues to function with a complete suite of creatures, plants, and the beauty we all treasure and enjoy. Walking in a wild place with him is a joy. He knows birds, mammals, and other creatures, but he really knows the plants. From the largest trees to the smallest annual, he can identify them and put them in their environmental context.

Once when we were driving through the Bodie Hills, we were discussing changes in the plant community, and we received a treatise from Steve on how the sagebrush area was changing, and how there is not a single sagebrush community, but many sagebrush communities with different altitudes, aspects, and species. It was fascinating and amazing.

Steve is also a friend not only of the place but also of the people. I cannot count the times when someone would say, we should read that document, and he would say, well I already have, it is in the federal register, I looked it up, and then he would give you a synopsis of what was said, and what he thought was going on.

Quoting a fellow board member, "it is Steve's personal ethics that really made him unique. He was beyond conscientious and highly objective. He would make observations that sometimes were not what we wanted to hear, but reflected reality and the way things are."



Steve McLaughlin exploring the early summer bloom in McGee Canyon. Photo: Maggie Wolfe Reilly

Steve, thanks for all you have done for Friends of the Inyo. Thanks for your love of our place and its residents, your passion, your knowledge, and your insights, and the best of luck on your future journeys.



Drew Foster at work on the Gull Lake Trail.

Photo:  
Friends  
of the Inyo

## Drew Foster

Drew joined Friends of the Inyo as an AmeriCorps volunteers. He spent several summers patrolling and building our presence in the Mammoth Lakes Basin before taking on the role of Preservation Coordinator. As Preservation Coordinator, Drew spearheaded efforts to protect the Bodie Hills and worked diligently to engage Friends of the Inyo and the public in the conservation of public lands in the Eastern Sierra. We will miss his dedication to our local resources and tales of ballooning adventures and wish him well in his new role with the Stanislaus National Forest.

## TRANSITIONS

*Welcome***Ursula Esser**, Community Outreach Manager

Ursula most recently lived in Big Sur and along the Central Coast and is excited to be joining us on the Eastside. She has been visiting this area since the late 80's and loves hiking and canoeing and exploring new trails and backroads. Ursula has an extensive background in the sciences and in the arts, as well as in grant writing and event planning. She is a self-described extrovert who's working hard to expand our relationships throughout the region.

**Jora Fogg**, Preservation Coordinator

Forever altered by the mountains, Jora Fogg joined Friends of the Inyo as the Preservation Coordinator this past April. She has hit the ground running, drawing on her background as a naturalist and her love of the Eastern Sierra. Jora will be guiding Friends of the Inyo through the Inyo National Forest management plan revision process, commenting on public lands projects, and leading exploration outings to special places throughout the region. Jora grew up and went to college in Washington State, moving to California in 2004. Previously she spent four years in Colorado with Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory as a biologist managing state and park service bird monitoring programs. She lives in June Lake with her husband and two year-old daughter. Jora enjoys time "naturalizing" (especially birding), skiing, hiking, and cycling.

**Barbara Kelley**, Board Member

Barbara has lived the Eastern Sierra since graduating from UCLA in 1971. A recently retired teacher, she lives in Bishop with her husband Derrick. Her career spanned 35 years and included several grade levels and subjects. Her best memories involve being outside with her two daughters, teaching outdoor science and instructing English in a remote village in Eastern Tibet. Her involvement with students in Tibet continues through volunteer work with Machik, a non-profit organization that works to strengthen communities on the Tibetan Plateau. She was instrumental in the establishment of Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge east of Death Valley. She's former secretary of the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society and can often be found with binoculars studying birds large and small. "There is no choice for me but to be passionate about the Eastern Sierra. I view the open space here as an international treasure, a place with immeasurable value for everyone. It's an honor to help give back to the land that has done so much for me."

**Sam Roberts**, Board Member

Sam has been coming to the Eastern Sierra since before he could walk. When he was three his family moved to Cartago for two years to be nearer to the mountains, and his father's work. Sam's family loved the outdoors and summer vacations were always spent camping out. Camping trips led to backpacking, then on to rock climbing and mountaineering. His climbing adventures have taken him from the granite walls of Yosemite Valley to the summit of 24,580-foot Noshag in Afghanistan. It was while working as a rock climbing guide in Joshua Tree National Park that he found another passion: photography. He has been a professional photographer for 25 years, first shooting outdoor adventures, then doing commercial and corporate work, and now mainly landscapes with his wife, Karen, a fine photographer in her own right. Sam has been active in several other conservation groups including the Friends of Joshua Tree, the LeConte Memorial Lodge and the National Parks and Monuments committees of the Sierra Club, and the California Wilderness Coalition. "I'm looking forward to giving back to a region that has given me so much in my life."

**Congratulations!**

To Operations Director Autumn Eanes and Jeremiah Eanes who welcomed their daughter, Daphne, this June. She's the newest member of the Friends of the Inyo family and already enjoys exploring her public lands.



## Member Profile: James Wilson

James Wilson has been a dedicated member of Friends of the Inyo since the group came together in the mid-eighties to work on the development of the first Inyo National Forest Management Plan. Enjoying his recent retirement and his new grandson, James stepped down as President of the Board of Directors in February. He remains an active board member, Rotarian, and devoted advocate for the natural world. He and his wife, Kay, moved to Bishop in 1975 to hike, bike, and climb. We are exceptionally grateful for his service.

### What are the biggest changes you've observed on public lands in the Eastern Sierra since you've been here?

One of the things that makes the Eastern Sierra unique is how little it changes in an ever-changing world. But, I think the biggest change is how many people express their concern and work for the conservation of their public lands.

### As a member of the board and longtime president, what are your proudest moments for Friends of the Inyo so far?

I have institutional pride because we started with nothing, no employees and a rag tag group of volunteers, and now we have an office, great programs, and a group of professional employees of the highest quality. Also, our successful work for wilderness designation has been very positive. Wilderness for the White Mountains was a life goal. We didn't get everything we wanted, but we accomplished a lot. When I walk out there it makes me feel good. When I look out my window it feels good. I'm proud just being part of a citizen movement with tremendous volunteers and staff. When there's really a need folks stand up, and that's what the Earth needs. And I think FOI exemplifies what's best in the American experiment - that we can come together and form a non profit to try to influence policy is our right, and it is a precious right.

### Which environmentalists have most influenced you?

Aldo Leopold. My father, Lee Wilson. He was an ardent

birdwatcher. He started the Tulare Audubon Society, and the Fresno, Kern Crest Audubon Societies. He always took us outdoors. He'd come home from work and play this game "guess what I saw today", and it would be a badger or an eagle or a rattlesnake. Also, Gary Snyder, my favorite poet, David Gaines, Mary Dedecker, Sally Miller, and Paul McFarland.

### Are there any conservation or environmental books that stand out as favorites?

A Sand County Almanac, which I've re-read many times. Gary Snyder poems, his book *Axe Handles* is a favorite. *Gift of the Good Land* by Wendell Berry and *The Desert Smells Like Rain* by Gary Paul Nabhan are also favorites.

### What do you see as the top three challenges facing wild places and public lands in the Eastern Sierra today?

Climate change, population increase, and inadequate levels of public land management agency funding. Our priorities are skewed. Our public lands are important. We need to invest in them.

### What do you hope to see in the future?

Stewardship for public lands being adequately funded and implemented, and a continuing increase in consciousness in the value that public lands bring to us locally both economically and as people.

### You've been part of the local landscape for a while. What are your favorite destinations/ activities? Is there anywhere you'd still like to visit for the first time?

I love walking in Bishop Creek. Every trail has wonderful things to see, and they're different every time you go. There are lots of really fine places to walk in the White Mountains - the Methuselah Trail we've walked many times. Death Valley, canyons to explore to your hearts content. I've never climbed Mount Williamson or Mount Russell. I've climbed most of the 14ers. I've been thinking that at 66 it might be a good time to move them up the list, and they're both such beautiful peaks.



James Wilson  
Photo: Kay Wilson

# MEMBERSHIP & SUPPORTERS

## Thank you!

*Friends of the Inyo is grateful for the support of members and donors who help us care for public lands in the Eastern Sierra. We are pleased to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations who made contributions between January and August this year.*

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