



Gate/King Industrial Project Does the City really have an Oak Ordinance?

July found SCOPE joining the Santa Clarita Oak Conservancy and the statewide California Oak Foundation in filing suit against the City's approval of the Gate/King Industrial project.

We sincerely regret having to take this drastic step, but it is time that the City follow its Hillside and Ridgeline Ordinance," said President, Lynne Plambeck. At a time when industrial and commercial occupancy is at a low, it is inappropriate to approve another project like this, especially when it doesn't even follow our ordinance."

The Hillside and Ridgeline Ordinance was the second ordinance (the Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance was the first) approved by the City of Santa Clarita after its formation in 1987.

Members of SCOPE participated on the panel which helped formulate the ordinance.

Although many projects have come before the City that should have been subject to reduced units to preserve ridgelines, the City has always found a loop hole to grant approval in spite of the ordinance.

Cynthia Neil Harris, Board Member of the Santa Clarita Oak Conservancy expressed her group's concerns over the number of oaks permitted for removal. We have never had a project in the history of the City of Santa Clarita that allowed this many oak removals. Oaks are well-known for their value in sequestering (capturing and using in photosynthesis) carbon from the air. At a time when our air quality is the worst in L.A. County, we

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*'Old Glory' Oak in Pico Canyon, 1999.
See update on page 3*

SUPERVISORS APPROVE NEWHALL RANCH AGAIN

What good is a house if you don't have a tolerable planet to put it on?

- Henry David Thoreau

On May 27th The LA County Supervisors approved the 21,000 unit (yes, that's **3 zeros!**) Newhall Ranch Project again. This time it was a 4-1 vote with Supervisor Yaraslavsky voting against it due to unsolvable traffic problems.

The project received considerable press earlier this year over grading which seemed to violate the Kern County Court order and

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Another 1000 units on the Santa Clara River?

With questions still looming over the adequacy of water supplies for the huge Newhall Ranch project and the West Creek project set aside by the Court over water reporting, Newhall/Lennar Homes is now proposing a thousand more units on the Santa Clara River just east of the junction of Bouquet Canyon and

Newhall Ranch Rd. Why are we still building in the flood plain? What will this mean to our water supply? What will this do to traffic and air pollution? Why is there no elementary school site proposed for this project?

Will it take down a hillside and expose existing residents to noise from the eight lane Newhall Ranch Rd? What about the wildlife corridor and the many critters that live in this area?

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What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die of a great loneliness of the spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts soon happens to man.

Chief Seattle, 1854

When We Meet: We meet on the third Thursday of the month, at 7:30 PM. Location to be announced.

For more info call 255-6899. Or check us out on the web at www.scope.org

WATER RIGHTS and.... WATER WRONGS

Dry rivers in the west all have their own rugged and individual beauty. Our Santa Clara River is no exception, although it is not as dry as many others. Its banks are often lined with shimmering cottonwoods and dense riparian vegetation filled with the joyous chatter of birds. Many areas have enough year round surface water to support the last populations of an endangered fish, the unarmored three-spined stickleback, which appear as tiny flashes of silver light in the shallow water. In other areas the water sinks beneath the sandy, windswept surface only to reappear as an unexpected raging torrent during infrequent winter storms.

But beneath their desolate countenance, western dry rivers usually store large quantities of groundwater in their alluvial soils. These soils often stretch as much as a 100 feet on either side of the surface river bank and form a bowl or reservoir for the underground water. This water is pumped by local water companies, providing a reliable and clean source of water to the community.

SCOPE President, Lynne Plambeck



DRY RIVER

Scrabble of pencil marked it on the map.
The Road, the blunt-nosed monster,
Thrust at the arching grasses
blown the wind's way,
Shouldered fence-posts, ate up miles,
exhaling
Dust and the stalks of grasses,
smoke and thistles:
Riding its back I came to the Dry River.

It was my river. My spirit's destination.
Abstract of water, a dried depression,
Holed and bouldered and
raked with fissures
Where the idea of water channelled
Irresistably over and under
Endlessly forcing down to the sea.

It was my river by right of recognition.
Kindred and kith by its never-resting
Ever-longing scouring endeavor;
Carrying always the thought of water
From a lost spring dwindled to silence;
This is the burden of the Dry River.
Strange illusion that such a creek-bed
May seem to brim and shine at dew-fall,
Or ripple with shadow,
or sound like water
With the cool, clear notes
of the bell-birds' making.
Mirages deceive: I wait with longing
A flood of poems, a rain of rhyme.
-Rosemary Dobson

Just how reliable is this limited resource? Like all renewable resources, the water we pump from the Santa Clara River is limited by the amount of replenishment, the re-charge it receives from annual rainfall. Just as you cannot cut more trees than you can grow in a certain period of years or the forest will disappear, you cannot pump more water than the basin absorbs, or you will not have enough water.

Like all our natural resources, our ground water is a gift which we must treat with care so as not to lose it. That is why watershed conservation and groundwater management have become the issues of the millenium and a focus point for all of us a SCOPE.

Watershed conservation is a simple concept. It means protecting recharge areas so that rainfall can continue to replenish the aquifer ("aquifer" is the scientific name for soils which hold water). It also means reducing or eliminating sources of pollution in the recharge areas so that the groundwater in the aquifer stays clean.

The Santa Clara River has two sources of recharge, both coming originally from rainfall. One is surface flow on the River itself which sinks into the aquifer. This is the largest source of recharge. The other is the hillsides and floodplain around the river and its tributaries. As we build and pave our Valley, we are reducing recharge to our ground water. When we box

Just as you cannot cut more trees than you can grow in a certain period of years or the forest will disappear, you cannot pump more water than the basin absorbs, or you will not have enough water.

channel an area of the River or a tributary, we **eliminate** recharge in that area. That is why it is imperative for the reliability of our water supply that we do not concrete the River. Narrowing, berming, and building in the floodplain also severally reduce recharge because the surface flood flows pass through these areas at a much faster rate, allowing less time for the water to sink into the ground. It just makes good sense not to build in the floodplains both from a water supply perspective as well as for public safety.

Of course we must not only be concerned with how much water we get back into the aquifer, but we must also think about how much we are taking out. When a community pumps more water out of the ground than can be recharged, it is called "over-drafting." There are several very bad consequences of overdrafting an aquifer. First and foremost, the aquifer begins to collapse and often becomes incapable of being recharged. Thus, the ground water supply is further reduced.

This collapse, called "subsidence" can also have other harmful effects

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MORE WATER WOES FOR NLF (now Lennar Homes)

2300 UNIT WEST CREEK PROJECT IN SAN FRANCISQUITO CANYON ORDERED BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

COURT RULES FOR

In a decision published in late February and upheld by the California Supreme Court, the 2nd Appellate Court ruled that the 1999 approval of Newhall Land & Farming's WestCreek project Environmental Impact Report must be re-done because it did not accurately report the water supplied by the State Water Project.

The West Creek Project was approved in the same year as the huge 21,600 unit Newhall Ranch project. Newhall Ranch was set aside by a Kern County judge in August 2000, also over the question of adequate water supply.

"It is imperative that water supply be reported correctly", said SCOPE President, Lynne Plambeck, "Planners cannot make

good decisions if they don't have accurate information. SCOPE has brought the issue of over-stating water

"An environmental impact report for a housing development must contain a thorough analysis that reasonably informs the reader of the amount of water available. The dream of water entitlements from the incomplete State Water Project (SWP) is no substitute for the reality of actual water the SWP can deliver."

2nd Appellate Court Decision

supply to the County for many years. Now, thanks to this decision and the other Appellate Court decisions preceding it, the public will benefit by review requirements that ensure an

adequate water supply really exists."

Friends of the Santa Clara River joined the suit over concerns of overdraft to the Santa Clara River that would occur if project approvals relied on a water supply that was really not there. "The Santa Clara River provides many resources, both to the communities along its course and to the flora and fauna that depend on it", said Ron Bottorff, Chairman of the group. "We

must use its water sustainably in order to ensure the survival of all its resources. This cannot be accomplished if water supply for housing projects is not accurately reported"

This decision follows on the heels of controversy over the adequacy of environmental impact reports produced by Newhall Land and Farming that failed to disclose the existence of

an endangered flower and confidentiality agreements required of its consultants that may have inhibited proper reporting.

The environmental groups were

"Old Glory" - Pico Oak Still Standing

On November 1st of last year, John Quigley climbed the sturdy limbs of the huge old Valley Oak, #419, in Pico Canyon to try to protect her from the chainsaw fate that awaited her later that day. After John Laing Homes reneged on its 1999 agreement with SCOPE to save this ancient oak, we felt there was no other way to save this majestic tree. The community opened its arms to this family oriented civil dis-obedience. Children came to the oak and drew pictures for John. Whole classrooms made murals, more than 10,000 people visited the tree and she received world wide press coverage. Seventy-two days later and after all the publicity, John was forcibly removed from the tree so that she could be boxed and moved.



Although moving her was certainly better than cutting her down, arborists and her admirers expressed grave concerns that a tree of her age and size would not

survive the move.

As of 8/10/03 Old Glory was boxed on 4 sides. There is a sign put up by the developer, John Laing Homes that says she will soon have the bottom roots cut that hold her to the ground. She is cabled four ways to prevent her fall in strong winds. The gates and fences are around her with a 24-hour guard. She is weak and her leaves are turning over as her Spring growth was cut short.

There are two 30" high-pressure gas mains very near Old Glory's root system per our engineers who in their professional opinion, state: "It is very dangerous to move that tree over those lines!!!! especially the high pressure lines. "

WHAT GOOD IS A BASEBALL FIELD IF THE KIDS CAN'T BREATHE THE AIR?

It s Time for the City to Play Hard Ball With Air Pollution

SCOPE joins the Center for Biological Diversity to Appeal City Approval of a Car Dealership in the Floodplain of the Santa Clara River

Did you know that the car dealership project will bury the floodplain of the Santa Clara River next to the Hart Pony League Fields with about 30 feet of dirt? The fill dirt for the project is to be moved down Soledad Road at a rate of several trucks per hour. Diesel and particulate emission from all this grading will add to Santa Clarita s' already serious air pollution problems.

SCOPE joined the suit on this project over concerns that the effects of this additional air pollution in an area next to a school and play field



where children would be affected, was not properly addressed. Children are particularly sensitive to air pollution. Asthma rates in children have risen by 50% in Los Angeles, with the suspected culprit being air pollution. The Environmental Quality Act requires that significant impacts such as this be mitigated, in other words, that some means be found of moving the dirt without affecting the children. That was not done.

Last year Santa Clarita had some

of the worst air quality in the entire nation, and this year we are again at record highs for ozone pollution. Ozone is particularly damaging to children s' lungs. A

study by USC researcher ****, found last year that children who play out door sports in high ozone areas are even more likely to contract asthma due to the air pollution

Additionally, the dirt to fill the flood plain will come from an area that is adjacent to lands polluted with industrial chemicals. We were concerned that adequate investigation of the level of pollution did not occur during the hearings on this matter. Again, we can not take the chance of putting polluted fill dirt next to our water supply.

CBD and SCOPE were also concerned about pollution from siting car dealerships next to the Santa Clara River. The Santa Clara River supplies much of our drinking water and is the home to many wild critters that are fast disappearing from the world. Car dealerships are bound to have accidental spills of oil, grease, gasoline, and anti-freeze, not to mention soap from washing all those cars. Even with good house keeping on the part of the dealers, the chance of polluting our drinking water supply and killing the last of our rare wild community is too great. It is not appropriate next to our water supply.

Both the Center and SCOPE want to see the Santa Clara River and its habitat treated VERY carefully. In caring for the River

and its creatures, we also care for our community and our children

Many Hart Pony League Parents have written to us in response to the large sign posted at the League fields by Newhall Land. Thank-you for your concern! We understand the importance of this issue to everyone, because we also want a wholesome and healthy environment both for our children and everyone in the Santa Clarita Valley. Especially the children, because they are our future.

Unfortunately, developers in this valley, including Newhall Land and Farming are now using a new strategy to try to silence objections to their projects. When we express

concerns about the water supply or the water quality for all the new houses they propose, they tell you that we are trying to stop schools and hurt our children. This is what they did in



San Francisquito Canyon (Rio Norte Jr. High) and in Pico Canyon (Pico Elementary). Now both schools are being built, but the 2300 housing units in San Francisquito have been set aside because an Appellate Court ruled that Newhall Land did not properly report the water supply. (See page 3). Our appeal of the Lennar 850 home project is over not providing the park space required by the development agreement and the destruction of almost one hundred huge old oaks without proper review as required by the California

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Urban Sprawl Threatening Farmland

Growing Central Valley cities overran Don Phillips farm 20 years ago, so he moved his farm several miles into the country.

But urban sprawl is creeping toward his farm again, like an unstoppable concrete tide.

The nation's most productive agricultural region is in danger of losing 1 million acres of farmland to homes and businesses as the population triples over the next 45 years, according to University of California researchers.

Central Valley.... Welcome to Southern California!

For a number of years, growth in Los Angeles was confined to the Los Angeles basin. The San Fernando Valley consisted of orange groves and ranches. The San Gabriel Valley and areas to the southeast supported dairies and vegetable crops. The Santa Monica Mountains was the defile which separated urban from rural.

William Mulholland brought Owens Valley water to Los Angeles, and that set the stage for the urbanization of the San Fernando Valley. Orchards were cut down, ranches graded, and homes and shopping centers, concrete and asphalt filled the entire valley. And the Santa Susana Mountains became the barrier between urban and rural.

The late 60's and early 70's brought the State Water Project - water imported from the Sierra Mountains northeast of Sacramento. Valencia broke ground as a new town plan. Where barley and onions grew, where cattle grazed, the two brothers of Urbantown - Asphalt and Concrete - began to set down roots. And now the Tehachapis are the last stand between Los Angeles and the San Joaquin Valley....

...Except the Valley itself is being eroded within itself.

A new study shows low-density urban sprawl by the year 2040 could fill in most of the gaps between cities stretching 275 miles from Sacramento to Bakersfield.

Urban development is threatening to transform this magnificent valley of farms and natural areas into an urban desert. said Edward Thompson, of the American Farmland Trust, which paid for the study.

The Farmland Trust, a private, non-profit farmland conservation group, is urging more efficient use of land by cities. Higher density growth, in which more development is squeezed into existing urban areas, would greatly reduce loss of farmland in coming decades, the organization said.

SCOPE agrees with this concept. However, execution is difficult.

Higher density growth raises the value of the underlying property. Land zoned for condominiums is worth more per acre than land zoned for single-family residences. Land zoned for multi-story high-rises is worth even more. In the absence of a clearly-delineated and respected urban/rural boundary, and in the absence of planning policy which buffers high-density development from rural settings, landowners often seek to convert their less-dense properties into more valuable, higher-density uses.

Neither the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, nor the Santa Clara City Council have adopted an urban limits concept for the Santa Clara Valley. Without such a concept, sprawl is inevitable.

The first wave consists of single-family homes spreading into former farmland and hillsides. The second wave consists of higher density uses displacing existing single-family neighborhoods. Recently, these waves have been merging; developers have been proposing zero-lot-line homes and townhouses in previously vacant land.

What's the answer?

SCOPE will be sponsoring participants in an upcoming conference on the needs and benefits of sustainable development. Urban sprawl is one of the issues to be addressed here.

Hard Ball...

(Continued from page 4)

Environmental Quality Act..

Newhall Land is regrettably trying this



same tactic on the parents of the Pony Leaguers. We hope that you won't be fooled. For over 15 years, SCOPE has supported the use of the floodplain of the river for recreational purposes, for a greenbelt parkway, bicycle path and other recreational uses. We have promoted this concept at public meetings and wherever it was being considered. We have always supported the Pony League field use as appropriate and good for our community.

We want you to know that this litigation against the City's approval of a car dealership in the floodplain of the Santa Clara River has NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PONY LEAGUE FIELDS. Improvements to the Pony League fields can be made at any time that Newhall Land wishes to pay for those improvements.



Industrial... More on water...

(Continued from page 1)

should not be removing the very trees that will help us reduce our air pollution. ”

Janet Cobb, Executive Director of the California Oak foundation expressed concerns over the loss of this native California tree statewide. She said the pressure on this species from disease (Sudden Oak Death) and destruction for new development is impacting the survival of this unique and beautiful California resource.

Other issues in the litigation are correct water evaluation and preservation of the wild life corridor.

If you want to help with this effort, your contributions to SCOPE or to the Santa Clarita Oak Conservancy will be greatly appreciated. Please note Gate/King project fund on your check. Donations are fully tax deductible.

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such as structural damage to buildings. In areas of severe overdraft, such as Phoenix, Arizona, the ground has dropped as much as 9 feet. Some areas of the Antelope Valley have also suffered subsidence of several feet. Because of the damage to buildings, litigation was brought that held water companies responsible for the damage they caused to structures from over-pumping.

A third undesirable effect of overdraft is a loss of water quality. As the ground water is pumped lower and lower the natural salts and minerals in the water become more concentrated. The flushing action normally performed by surface water becomes less efficient because it does not reach the lower levels. Ultimately, the water becomes undrinkable.

According to hydrologists the Santa Clara River has an annual yield of

between 25,000 and 32,000 acre feet, depending on which study you read. An average family uses about 1 acre foot per year (condos and apartments use about half that much), so this is enough water for 25,000 to 64,000 homes. It will easily supply our current population, except in times of drought. But LA County has already approved over 60,000 **more** homes. Where will this water come from?

Some of it will come from the Castaic Lake Water Agency. Their job is to bring State Project water down the California Aqueduct. from the Sacramento Delta and sell it to the four water purveyors who then supply individual homes. But this is also a limited supply. It is subject to the amount of snowfall in the Sierras. Also, a certain amount of fresh water must continue into the Delta to insure the health of fish and farms.

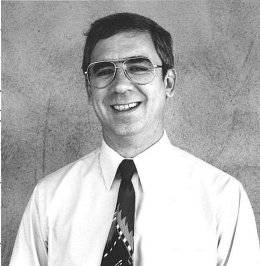
This is where ground water management becomes important. If we use state water in the winter and spring when there are excess flood flows and melting snow, we will allow our ground water to naturally recharge. Then in the summer months, when the Delta needs all the surface flow it can get, we use our replenished and delicious groundwater. Sounds easy and logical, right? Then why don't we have ground water management in this valley!!!?

The main reason is development. Everyone wants water for their project, so they don't like to discuss the realities of supply. We cannot build very much more without severely impacting supply. Like farmers in the Central Valley who cannot grow without sufficient water, we cannot continue to build huge housing developments without water to supply them. Soon current residents will begin to suffer cutbacks to supply this new development. There is a fairness issue here which needs to be aired openly with the community.

We urge all the companies and agencies which supply water to the Santa Clarita Valley to begin open public discussions on water supply and management.

On Aug 11th, SCOPE and Santa Clarita Oak Conservancy held a sunset tree planting ceremony in memory of Michael Kotch in Towsley Canyon Park. He died one year ago at his home in Castaic of an apparent heart attack. He was 52 years old. Mike was an M.I.T. graduate in aerospace engineering who worked for Unysis Corporation for almost 25 years. He was a member of the City Formation Committee that helped found the City of Santa Clarita in 1987, an elected member of Newhall County Water District and the President of SCOPE (Santa Clarita Org. for Planning and the Environment) from 1992 to 2000. He is remembered on the Water District for his careful scrutiny of engineering projects and fiscal matters as well as for donating all his meeting stipends to various non-profit organizations in the Santa Clarita Valley.

As SCOPE many educational Livable Cities Santa Clarita and the Development SCOPE won public fees and established County. He also reporting, and and of our native



President, he organized and chaired events on planning issues such as the Conference and presentations on the Valley's Significant Ecological Areas Monitoring System. Under his watch, interest litigation that increased school library fees throughout Los Angeles fought for accurate water supply protection of the Santa Clara River oaks.

We have planted a Valley Oak (Quercus Lobata) in memory of Mike ,”said Cycthia Neil-Harris, Board member of the Santa Clarita ValleyOaks Conservancy.

This is the largest and most regal of the California oaks. Many of these oaks were cut down in Significant Ecological are 64, the Valley Oaks Savannah, for the Westridge Project. Mike s’efforts helped to reduce the number that were destroyed by over 100 oaks. It is also the same kind of tree as the Pico Canyon old Glory Oak. It’ will be a fitting epitaph for a man whose fortitude and preserverance helped safeguard the natural beauty of Santa Clarita for all of us. said Oak Conservancy President, Ken Buchan.

You can view the oak tree at the Wiley Canyon trailhead. We need help keeping the oak watered. Bring a bottle to pour on it in memory of Mike.

SCV Community Activists

Maria Gutzeit



Meet Maria Gutzeit

As an avid cyclist, Maria Gutzeit spends plenty of time observing our valley at close range. Her travels along the Santa Clara River bike path increased her interest in water and air quality issues. A degree in chemical engineering gives her the technical expertise to understand and devise answers to complicated water and air quality problems. Maria owns her own environmental consulting business.

Phil Hof



Meet Phil Hof

As a member of the Castaic Town Council Landuse Committee, Phil Hof keeps up to date on projects and planning issues in the Santa Clarita Valley. He has had a long time interest in accurate water reporting to ensure that water supplies remain adequate for current residents and businesses. Phil is an engineer with Northrop Grumman.

NEWHALL...



(Continued from page 1)

destroyed an endangered plant, the San Fernando Valley Spineflower, that was recently discovered on the property. Confidentiality agreements between consulting

biologists and the developer seemed to have led to the failure to disclose the existence of this endangered plant, and were also at issue.

The project will now be remanded to the Kern County Court for judicial review. The Judge will decide whether the developer and the County complied with his previous ruling. SCOPE believes there are still serious issues regarding water supply and the Santa Clara River.

Questions regarding the recent acquisition of Newhall Land by Lennar Homes, its affect on the Ranch project and on the Santa Clarita Valley are putting a whole new spin on the ongoing saga of Newhall Ranch. Stay tuned on this one!

PANHANDLE...


(Continued from page 1)

Come to the September SCOPE meeting and find out! Representatives from Newhall/Lennar Homes will make a presentation to SCOPE and answer questions about their proposal.



Hiking the SCV

Sierra Club Hikes
 9/6 Sat. 8AM Los Pinetos Trail
 9/10 Wed. 7PM
 Mission Peak
 9/14 Sun. 9AM
 Towsley –Grotto
 9/28 Sun. 8AM
 Vincent Gap
 Call Henry 284-5613



Placerita Nature Center
 (19152 Placerita Cyn Rd.)
 Hikes Every Sat. at 11 AM. Bird Walk every second Sat. at 9AM.
 Join a docent training program starting Sep. 16
 Placerita.org

Towsley Canyon
 8/16 Sat. 8AM Bird walk
 9/10 Wed 7:15PM Full Moon Hike
 10/13 Sat 7:30PM Family Campfire
www.smmc.ca.gov
 Become a docent or help out with trail maintenance

Official SCOPE Enrollment Form

SCOPE is a forum for all interested people of the greater Santa Clarita Valley. We're residents of this area because we like this Valley, its open spaces, its opportunities. SCOPE is the voice we use to challenge questionable development, to promote a concern for the environment, to promote good planning.

- Regular Single Membership, \$18 Regular Family Membership, \$24
- Sustaining Membership for: \$50 \$75 \$100 \$500

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 PHONE _____
 eMAIL _____

Make checks out to SCOPE.
 Clip or copy this form and mail to
 SCOPE
 P.O. Box 1182
 Santa Clarita, CA
 91386-1182
 Donations are tax deductible

Santa Clara River Action Fund

Your donation for this cause will help us pay court costs and legal fees to challenge projects which intrude on the run of the Santa Clara River, and for Santa Clara River preservation.

- \$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 Other _____ I can offer the following services: _____

**Focus on
SCOPE**



A Quarterly Newsletter of the
Santa Clarita Organization for Planning the Environment
 Post Office Box 1182
 Canyon Country, CA 91386-1182

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 Permit No. 90
 Santa Clarita, CA

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