VERMONT YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS 1949 EAST MAIN STREET RICHMOND, VT 05477 WWW.VYCC.ORG

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2014 ANNUAL REPORT

30 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

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Dear Friends,

When I started this organization thirty years ago, I was motivated by an incredible Corps experience that had changed my life — the lessons learned have guided my work ever since. I learned that change comes from individuals taking personal responsibility for their own actions — what one says and what one does. Simple, yet powerful.

My goal was to create an organization that would allow as many young people as possible to have similar life-changing experiences. I am proud of what has been accomplished.

The legislature had no idea that the one dollar appropriation back in

1985 would be leveraged many times over — to more than \$50,000,000 in high priority work on public lands, completed by nearly 6,000 alumni. However, the greatest accomplishment has been teaching personal responsibility, developing leaders, and supporting the personal and professional development of our staff and Corps Members.

Now, three decades later, I am moving on. To have a vocation for 30 years where I pinched myself every day to make sure it was not a dream, is really something quite special. It has been an extraordinary adventure and honor to build and lead the VYCC, and serve Vermont.

VYCC is a robust organization with a clear mission and powerful model. My dream of changing lives, and through them the world, is now in the hands of a strong, talented staff. I look forward to seeing this amazing organization continue to grow and impact more individuals in even more profound ways.

See you on the trail! Cheers!

— Thomas, President Emeritus

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FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



From 1933 - 1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps helped pull our nation out of the Great Depression by putting three million unemployed young men to work "against destruction and erosion of our natural resources."

During that time, Vermont was fortunate to have the leadership and vision of Perry Merrill, Commissioner of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. Merrill recuited over 40,000 men to build Vermont's state park infrastructure — forests, ski areas, camping areas, trails. Vermonters still enjoy these public assests.

The state of Vermont established VYCC to perpetuate the work of the CCC. Things are different today, but the need remains. Our public lands require maintenance and stewardship, particularly with destructive storms on the rise. We have work to do to improve the health of Lake Champlain.

In addition, Vermont is uniquely positioned to lead the nation in sustainable agriculture. We are ranked number one in the nation for locally sourced food. Yet, 85,000 Vermonters are food-insecure.

It is the passion of VYCC to address these problems today, using the power of young people; and at the same time, prepare those people for the work ahead. These are among the challenges and opportunities facing today's youth as they move into adulthood. We need to instill in them the skills and values to continue improving the health of our wild places and communities.

Meanwhile, VYCC's incredible network of friends and supporters are Vermont's current leaders. Your commitment to, and investment in, young people is critical to our shared future. Thank you for making our work possible.

The young people who come through our programs give us great optimism and excitement for our future. We trust that over the next 30 years and beyond, VYCC will continue to shape our next generation of leaders, workers, parents, and citizens.

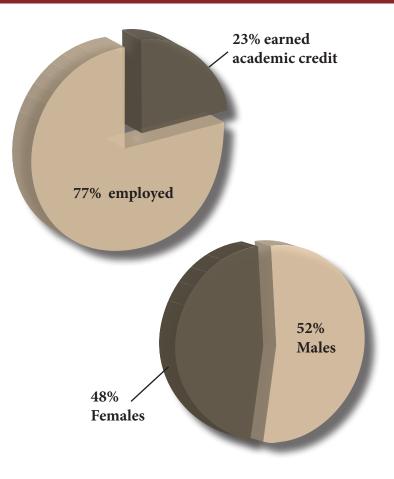
Sincerely,

Linda McGinnis Board Chair

BY THE NUMBERS

In 2014, VYCC served 305 youth and young adults.
Of 190 participants in the Conservation Program,
140 were employed in Vermont, and 50 in our
North Carolina / Michigan expansion sites.
73 Conservation Corps Members' participation was
6 months or longer.







Corps members completed **112** work projects with **46** project partners. **81** miles of trails were maintained or constructed and **32** acres of parks and public land were restored.

78,215 pounds of fresh produce and poultry were donated to **1,228** food insecure Vermonters.

2 cafe training sites for blind/visually impaired in Burlington; and 4 internship sites.



FIRST JOBS (16-18 year olds)

"Young people **need** first jobs that open their eyes, provide real-work experiences, challenge them, and enable them to make a contribution. Meaningful summer jobs for teens do that."

- Greg Voorheis, Department of Labor

Partnerships with the Georgia Conservation Comission, Green Mountain Club, National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, Vermont Agency of Transportation, and the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation enabled us to serve 31 individuals, 12 of whom are young women and 18 of

whom are Vermonters.

This included three nonresidental crews. In Woodstock, Rutland, and Burlington, youth completed projects in their own communities.

Corps Members Gained employment skills including: being on time and fully ready for work, respecting tools and equipment, problem-solving, communicating effectively with others, staying aware of safety at all times, and focusing on high quality products. They also took turns leading each other on the worksite and in group discussions.

The members of this crew had no prior work experience. They gained basic employment skills and learned to take responsibility for their actions. For example, in the first week, one crew member didn't show up for work one day. He didn't call to say he wasn't coming. He had no idea that was an expectation. For this 16-year-old, punctuality was a persistent issue. He would be late and blame his mom.

We held him accountable for his actions and helped him understand the impact he had on the rest of the crew. He was holding up his team and the day's projects. He changed his behavior, and by the end of the session he was consistently the first to arrive for work each day. He became proactive in offering to help the team, once he understood the effect his actions had on his peers.

- Crew Leader Stephen Cohen reflects on a Community Crew



In Turn, these Corps Members completed 21 high-priority conservation projects on Vermont's public lands. Some examples: Construction of new wooden foot bridge at Wheeler Nature Park in South Burlington; Forestry work and trail maintenance at Marsh Billings Rockefeller National Historical Park; Appalachian Trail improvements in Killington and Shrewsbury; Construction of the Deer Brook Park Trail in Georgia, VT.

NEW SKILLS (18 - 22 year olds)

"Vermont State Parks' partnership with VYCC enables us to enhance recreation opportunities for Vermonters and our visitors. VYCC crews provide additional labor to construct **needed** park facilities that our Park maintenance staff is hard pressed to build with all the other priorities during the busy park season.

What's more, we are able to turn young people onto careers in the Natural Resource field, including State Parks, Park Service, the Forest Service and more. The experience opens up doors for them. Many of my coworkers, myself included, have had Conservation Corps experience."

> — John Medose, Maintanance Supervisor, Vermont State Parks

Partnerships with Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Vermont Agency

of Transportation, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, and the Vermont Women's Fund supported sevenweek residental crews.

These included traditional crews, a Leadership Development Crew and an all-female Leadership Development Crew.

Corps Members Gained more advanced leadership and technical skills than their younger counterparts. Challenging projects enabled Corps Members to gain experience with power tools, problem-solve in remote backcountry settings with limited resources, and complete large-scale projects.

Sam Haab of Stowe completed the Female Leadership Development Crew (LDC). Her twin sister, Kim, completed the co-ed LDC.

Sam reflected early in the season:

Three times a week we do LDC activities....Last night's workshop was about self-reflection. It's important to understand yourself and know how you lead. We've also done a leadership style test, [and workshops on] how to motivate, and conflict resolution.

The crews worked together on Mount Hunger completing challenging work for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. They hauled lumber from the road to the work site, which was a two-hour hike up steep and rocky terrain; then built and installed two ladders. Kim and Sam are currently studying at St. Lawrence University.



In Turn, Corps Members completed seven high-priority conservation projects on Vermont public lands. Some examples: Installation of 40 stone stairs on the Ballard Trail in Norwich; Trail work and construction of ladders at Hunger Mountain; Watershed and trail improvements at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge.

YOUNG LEADERS (Crew Leaders)

"VYCC's relevance is the same today as it was when I was in the Corps. Corps programs provide an opportunity for youth to develop skills, resiliency, personal awareness, and leadership. There is clearly a **need** for the Corps."

—John Zaber Crew Leader in 1987- 1989. Sterling College, Professor in Outdoor Education **Crew Leaders** are essential to the success of each crew. They also experience significant training and personal growth. After a three-week residental training program, 20 pairs of Crew Leaders took crews into the field to live and work for the 2014 season.

> A strong base of support from VYCC staff ensured their success — regular phone calls and visits were opportunities to explore challenges and celebrate success.

As a result of a challenging work experience, **Crew Leaders** left VYCC with significant leadership skills. Personnel management, project management, community building, serving as a mentor and role model, safety officer — these were all components of the job. They also learned quality control and customer service as they worked with project sponsors to meet expectations and deadlines for the final project. Leading a crew with VYCC was the most gratifying work experience I have had. I like to think of it as construction. We stood side by side, rain or shine, and built things: trails, structures, foundations. Relationships, character, a trail family. We built these things to be enduring, stable, and sustainable. I walked away confident that I had helped set stones that would last for decades. I helped develop job skills that would last throughout careers. I helped instill confidence that would last a lifetime. Physical or not, the results of our labor were incredibly palable.

- Christopher, 2014 Crew Leader



In Turn, 39 Crew Leaders provided guidance to 254 Corps Members across all VYCC programs. Leading by example, Crew Leaders helped to teach the importance of taking personal responsibility to all Corps Members.

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

With the baby boomer generation entering retirement, the U.S. — and Vermont — **needs** a green-skilled and career-ready workforce that values conservation and public service. In particular, the U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Forest Service are facing substantial human resource deficits.

Meanwhile, the new phrase "Opportunity Youth" describes 5.8 million young Americans (age 16-24) who

> are neither in school nor working.

2014 was the first year of the Opportunity Youth Service Initiative (OYSI). OYSI is a **partnership** with AmeriCorps and The Corps Network, VYCC, and 11 other Corps across the U.S. Six and ten month positions at VYCC provided 28 Opportunity Youth

> with employment and workforce development. VYCC's partnership with the Conservation Trust of North Carolina made these longer positions possible, as Corps Members completed projects in North Carolina in early spring.

These Crews Completed additional trainings to help them pursue and secure competitive jobs in the natural resources field. For example, all 28 were certified in chainsaw use and wilderness first aid. They also earned an AmeriCorps Education Award to help them pay for additional schooling in their field of choice.

Coming to VYCC, I was very confused as to what/where I wanted my life to go and how to proceed. I had just dropped out of college, feeling insecure about the future with no clear sense of what I wanted. The training course and professional development [at VYCC] have helped me become more confident to find job opportunites. I've met greatly inspiring contacts.

> - Taylor, 2014 AmeriCorps Crew Member, reflects on his experience



In Turn, members of these crews built ten composting toilets, built a woodshed, and restored seven lean-tos at seven state parks. They helped build the Deer Brook Trail in Georgia, VT, removed invasive plants in the Green Mountain National Forest, and stabilized stream banks in Rochester. In spring, while Vermont was still under snow, they completed two high-priority projects in North Carolina.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

"Vermont **students want** creative approaches to learning that honor their interests and curiosities, prepare them for the worlds of college and career, and allow them to improve their communities and the broader world! I have seen VYCC inspire students to express their leadership, take ownership for their learning and design innovative pathways to graduation."

> — Sean McMannon Winooski Superintendent of Schools

Partnerships with U-32 and Mount Mansfield Union High Schools enabled us to serve 38 students. Hands-on projects in conservation and food-security were tied to academic lessons. Individualized and small group learning built confidence, academic skills, and professional skills.

Students Earned full academic credit, and transitioned back to their high school with enhanced academic skills, increased motivation, and a desire to graduate.

I had a lot of trouble sitting in a classroom for six hours a day. Now I wake up and know that I'm going to learn something in a way that I understand.

This is not the only reason I joined. I also like helping the less fortunate, because I know how hard it is to pay the bills and pay for food. That is why here at VYCC we are devoted to helping people. It's cool being part of something bigger than you.

— Matt Melendy was part of the 2014 VYCC High School Leadership Program at MMU



In Turn, Corps Members completed 19 Conservation Projects which included wildlife habitat restoration, forestry, sugaring, and trail building. They helped 307 food-insecure families receive a Health Care Share, and prepared and served a free community meal for 75 neighbors.

NEW AMERICAN YOUTH

"Student-centered learning is a bold new approach that aims to **reshape education** for the 21st century. The fundamental principle behind studentcentered learning is the belief that different students learn in different ways. By expanding learning opportunities beyond the walls of the classroom, we can make the learning process more relevant to the real world."

— Partnership for Change

The second year of our **partnership** with Winooski and the Partnership for Change enabled us to serve 31 new American youth.

In fall and spring semesters, high school students completed agricultural projects and nutrition education lessons after school. Students earned credit in English as well as Lab Science, or earned honors distinction in their Food Science class.

Students Improved their English, and gained confidence that will make them more successful in the classroom. 31 students received academic credit for their participation.

[Students] learn about the basics of agriculture and food science by planting and raising crops, caring for animals, and cooking food. These practical experiences provide the foundation for understanding key science concepts, such as the flow of energy and matter in organisms and ecosystems. However, the Food and Farm Program at VYCC is more than learning science. It is also about building community.

- Nancy Keller, iLab Advisor at Winooski High School



In Turn, students worked on the Farm's Health Care Share project. This is the primary destination for food grown on the Farm, in which local food-insecure families receive a weekly share of fresh vegetables throughout the growing season at no cost. Medical centers (UVM, Central Vermont) partner with VYCC to deliver food and nutrition education.

BLIND / VISUALLY IMPAIRED

An estimated 70% of all blind/visually impaired individuals are **unemployed** and rely on public assistance their entire lives. The transition out of school is a critical time for this group to gain the skills and independence needed for a productive, and meaningful adulthood.



Our continued **partnership** with the Vermont Department of the Blind and Visually Impaired enabled us to serve 24 individuals. Four local businesses have partnered with us to offer internship placements.

During this immersive four-week experience, the crew worked at ReSOURCE, the Overlook Café, and the Farm at VYCC. Outside of work hours, members learned how to cook, shop, use public transportation, and live independently.

Corps Members **Gained the Skills** needed to become independent, confident, and productive young adults. Corps Members built interpersonal, communication, and basic employment skills in a supportive environment.

December, 2014: I fully moved into my new place almost two weeks ago. I love it. I've walked to the post office multiple times independently to check my mail. I love being on my own with me, myself, making my own decisions instead of being controlled and held back. It feels...normal.

January, 2015: For the past month or so I've been training at the post office as a vending operator. I maintain machines by cleaning, restocking them, ordering products, figuring what's not selling so I can put something new in its place, taking apart coffee machines to clean the inside that are forgotten by other people, and much more. ... Every day I'm staying longer and longer. I love being out of my house and staying busy. This is what I needed and was hoping for all along. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to show I am capable of accomplishing something.

—Jesse (pictured top right), 2014 LEAP Intern



In Turn, Corps Members completed recycling and conservation projects at ReSOURCE and supported food security efforts on the Farm at VYCC.

VYCC ALUMNI: WHERE THEY ARE NOW

1989 Corps Member, *Angelike Contis*, works as the Executive Director at Mt. Mansfield Community Television, and holds a Board member position with Vermont Access Network and the Western Slopes Business Association.



VYCC Crew Leader (1987-1989), *John Zaber*, current faculty in Applied and Social Science at Sterling

College.



"I don't think my experience with VYCC is over. It is still a fundamental part of who I am. My recognition of the resilience and ability of young people goes back to the Corps."



1993 Corps Member, *Becca Stott*, went on to receive a Master's in Acupuncture from the Academy for Five Element Acupunture. She currently resides in Seattle, WA where she runs a private practice, teaches, and volunteers her talents to the residents of the Navaho reserve in Arizona.

1985 VYCC Established

1989 Election of first Board of Directors/ First edition of WoRD 1992 First project in partnership with The Nature Conservancy/ First Serv-A-Thon

1993 Exceed 100 Corps Members per year 1994 First partnership with AmeriCorps 1995-1997 Crew Leader, *Tom Evers*, has been working in non profit management and in 2014 became in the Executive Director of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation.

"VYCC offered a job with real responsibility. It stretched my leadership



and management skills, and my ability to work with youth. It created a cohort of people who are amazing — I still keep in touch with my fellow Crew Leaders." 1997 Corps Member, *Kelly DeGraff*, holds the Senior Advisor for Disaster Services position at the Corporation for National and Community Service.

"The VYCC has had a forever impact on who I am. I have made it a priority to teach my boys to take responsibility for their own actions. That sentiment has brought me through some sticky situations, and I truly owe that to my time with VYCC."



1998 Corps Member, *Heather Furman*, is the Vermont State Director at The Nature Conservancy. Her experience also includes Executive Director of the Stowe Land Trust, Co-Founder and past Board Chair of Climbing Resource Access Group of Vermont, and a US Peace Corps Alumna.

19<mark>9</mark>5 First watershed project/ VT Agency of Transporation partnership begins

1999 First Leadership Crew 2001 Reconstruction of West Monitor Barn 2003 "Start Up" (program kick-off) as we know it is born



2009-2010 Parks Educator, *Anthony Christiano*, has recently returned to Vermont after spending the last 3 years teaching English in Peru and Korea. He is excited for his new position as a Park Ranger at Waterbury Center State Park.

a job path that I love, working for the Vermont State Parks."

2004 Alum, *Johanna Weaver*, currently works for the Climate and Land Use Alliance in San Francisco as a Program Associate, where she focuses on international environmental issues, such as deforestration and climate change.

"[At VYCC]Even as a short high school-aged female, I felt empowered to lift heavy rocks and do amazing things....All my conservation work influenced my interest in the environmental field." 2009 Alum, *Anya Rose*, is currently studying Social and Anthropology; and Environmental Studies at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania and anticipates graduating in 2016.

"Looking back at my experience, I realize it was the most empowering summer of my life and gave me

much of the confidence and self-understanding that propelled me to pursue other adventures."



2004 Marsh Billing Rockefeller National Historical Park partnership begins

2005 Deployed crews to the Gulf Coast to assist with Katrina Recovery

2006 First year of High School Leadership Program 2008 East Campus is purchased- 167 acres, including the East Monitor Barn

2009 Launch of the Farm at VYCC 2012 Alum, *Heidi Lynch*, used her experience at The Farm at VYCC to partner with the Rutland Area Food and Farm Link bringing the Farm Share Program

to foodinsecure Vermonters in Rutland County.



2013 Corps Member, *Vanessa Mae*, participated in the LEAP program as a summer intern.

"Probably one of the most important things I learned in those four weeks is that it is okay to be visually impaired, but it is not okay to pretend otherwise. I used to get in my own way because I could pass as a sighted person. No longer afraid to be visually impaired, I am eager to learn as much as I can."

2011 Crews assist with Irene recovery

2012 The Farm at VYCC begins "Health Care Share" donations with Central Vermont Medical Center 2013 Two crews work in North Carolina An alumna of VYCC and Spectrum Youth Services shared the following in a letter:

"When I first moved into the SRO (Single Room Occupancy Lat Spectrum]) I didn't think things could get better. I told staff I would probably get kicked out because I got kicked out of everywhere else. I didn't really have a plan for my life and I didn't really care what happened anymore.

I slowly started to get things together, by getting a job, and taking a couple classes. I worked at one job for about two months and walked out, then another one for two weeks and guit. Then I worked at Vermont Youth Conservation Corps where I found real happiness in life.

I worked really hard that summer, and it really opened my eyes, and I realized how good life could be. My boss at VYCC helped me get my driver's license, and I brought my first car for my 20th birthday with all the money I had saved.

[Today] I work 40-50 hours a week, and it feels great. I'm about to move into my first apartment, and buy a better car. I feel like a new person."

ALUMNI PROJECT

We are searching for alumni

- Are you one? Do you know someone who is?



Please visit <u>www.vycc.org/alumni.contact</u> to let us know you're out there.

Also, we'd love to chat with you on Facebook (/thevycc.com), Twitter (@thevycc), and LinkedIn (/company/vermont-youthconservation-corps)!

Please stay in touch. Help us track long-term outcomes.



LOOKING FORWARD



We believe that every young person should have the opportunity to develop values and leadership skills.

We believe that when young people have transformative experiences, they are then able to envision and pursue a successful future.

We believe that empowered young people can truly change the world.

We are, therefore, committed to expanding opportunities for young people throughout Vermont, and beyond.

To do this requires creative community partnerships, forward-leaning public agencies, and inspired philanthropists. Together we will create significantly more than by working alone.

Our passionate and mission-driven staff and board are charging forward with developing a strategic plan, which will guide our work in the coming years. It is a robust, thorough, and inclusive process, and we expect to begin implementing an inspiring plan this fall.

We can't wait to share our plans with you later this year!

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET

2014 Revenues



Gifts from donors are matched three-to-one through an entrepreneurial fiscal model, in which partners hire crews to complete projects or fund educational outcomes.

Farm sales and rental fees contribute approximently six percent of revenues.

For a residental summer crew in our Conservation Program, the weekly cost per Corps Member is approximately \$1,000; one third of which is wages paid directly to the Corps Member.



(tools, uniforms, camping supplies, food, transportation, education, insurance, and fringe labor expenses)

Cost per Corps Member Conservation Program

Summary of Revenues

Annual Fund	\$ 702,200
Education and Training	\$ 237,200
Fee for Service	\$ 1,819,000
Rentals and Direct Sales	\$ 167,800
Miscellaneous	\$ 50,000
Total Revenues	\$ 2,976,200
Annual Fund Annual Fund Direct Sales Miscellaneous	Education and Training Grants Fee for Service

Conservation Crews, Vermont	\$ 1,263,000	
Conservation Crews, North Carolina	\$ 227,900	
The Farm at VYCC	\$ 257,200	
Outreach and Development	\$ 299,000	
Shared Services	\$ 288,700	
High School Leadership	\$ 134,700	
Blind and Visually Impaired	\$ 237,900	
Land and Facility	\$ 223,100	
Total Expenses	\$ 2,931,500	
Conservation Crews, North Carolina		
Outreach and Development Land and Facility Shared Services Blind and Visually Impaired	Conservation Crews, Vermont High School Leadership	
The Farm at VYCC [*] Summary of Expenses		
	* 1	

VYCC AWARDS

2015 Pyramid Award; Vermont Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics 2014 Project of the Year (National Life Trail); The Corps Network National Honor Award for Promoting Recreation; US Forest Service Best in Show, Best in Class (turnip); Vermont Farm Show 2013 Use of Youth and Conservation Service Corps; Coalition for Recreation Trails Certificate of Provisional Accreditation; The Corps Center of Excellence Promoting Recreation — Advancing Recreation Opportunities in the Mad River Valley; US Forest Service Eastern Regional Honor Award; US Forest Service 2012 Project of the Year (Leicester Hollow/Chandler Ridge Loop Trail); Vermont Trails and Greenways Council Holly D. Miller Award (to Marissa Edwards); Vermont Women's Fund Volunteer Group of the Year; US Forest Service 2011 Expanding Opportunities Through A Community of Collaboration; US Forest Service 2009 Park of the Year (Elmore State Park); Vermont State Parks 2003 Park of the Year (North Hero State Park); Vermont State Parks ERMON 2001 Park of the Year (Branbury State Park); Vermont State Parks 1999 Park of the Year (Silver Lake State Park); Vermont State Parks 1996 Park of the Year (Lake Carmi State Park); Vermont State Parks 1991 Youth Program of the Year; Governor's Award on Excellence in Employment and Training

OUR COMMUNITY

LEAVE A LEGACY

A gift this year supports today's youth. We invite you to also support *tomorrow's* youth by joining the Caroline Wadhams Bennett Stewardship Circle. You can have a significant impact on VYCC's ability to serve young people with a legacy gift.

It is not complicated, and does not require a large sum. For example, you can name VYCC as a beneficiary (or partial beneficiary) of your retirement plan or of an insurance policy.

MEMBERS

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To learn more, please contact Breck Knauft at 434-3969, or visit www.vycc.org/support/ways-of-giving.

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\$20,000 or more

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