

## **10.5. Community at Risk: Colton Rural Fire Protection District #70**

Colton Rural Fire Protection District #70 has been identified as a Community at Risk (CAR) by the Oregon Department of Forestry. The District has participated in the Clackamas County CWPP planning process to evaluate capabilities to prevent, prepare for and respond to potential wildfire events.

### **Colton Fire District Description**

With over 50 years of tradition, the Colton Rural Fire District is made up of men and women (primarily volunteers), who serve the citizens of Colton. The Colton Rural Fire District was established in 1956 and covers 46 square miles between Molalla and Estacada. Colton Rural Fire District protects the community with both Fire Service and Emergency Medical Care.

### **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)**

This area is an excellent example of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) because it is characterized by steep slopes with residential homes surrounded by heavy fuels. In addition, many of the neighborhoods here have only one way in and one way out with narrow, steep driveways and poor address signage. Water is limited throughout the District, especially in the Communities at Risk.

Heavy and continuous fuels dominate this area, and forests are actively managed for lumber and Christmas trees. Land ownership includes a variety of rural residential, private forest land, large industrial forests and public lands (Bureau of Land management). There are also many small woodlands that are not actively managed that are littered with dead and dying trees and ladder fuels that could take a fire from the ground into the crowns of the trees. Many local youth illegally access these forest landholdings to build campfires, use All Terrain Vehicles (ATV's) which increases the likelihood of potential ignitions. Fires that begin on public land or on smaller private residential lots can quickly threaten the communities and natural resources that thrive in the Colton Fire District.

### **Colton Fire District Wildfire Hazards**

The Clackamas County CWPP wildfire hazard assessment assisted Colton Fire in identifying areas that may be at higher risk to potential wildfires. Map #10 illustrates the overall wildfire hazard risk in the Colton area and will be used to help target areas for wildfire prevention activities.

### **Structural Ignitability**

Colton Fire promotes the creation of defensible space, use of fire-resistant roofing and building materials, and community preparedness in the WUI. Colton Fire works with the Clackamas County Department of Transportation and Development to provide input on access and water supply for new lots of record. Colton Fire provides alternatives to property owners who cannot meet the requirements for access and water supply. There are some opportunities to improve coordination between Clackamas County and Colton Fire. First, Colton Fire is not notified of development that occurs on existing roads and/or lots of record. Second, Colton Fire is not being notified of homes that are being remodeled that require new access and water requirements.

In addition, Colton Fire is not receiving notification of occupancy permits through monthly emails and does not have access/training in using the Velocity Hall system. Colton Fire is particularly concerned with about new developments such as the one on Rolliewood Road. As new homes are built, the District should be notified because no parking signs are required to be posted on all narrow roads.

## **Emergency Response**

Emergency response is challenging in the Colton Fire District because staff are almost entirely volunteer, 1.5 paid staff. A major wildland urban interface fire in Colton would quickly exceed the resources and capabilities of the District. For this reason, Colton Fire has Mutual Aid agreements in place which allows for the sharing of resources across the county in the event of a large scale disaster including wildfires.

Although the District is able to support annual wildland fire training (S-130 and S-190), the lack of live fire experience makes it difficult to retain wildland qualifications. Colton Fire would like to work more directly with the USFS and ODF and other land managers to take advantage of opportunities to participate in live fires.

Burning of yard waste and debris is unique in the Colton Fire District because it is outside of the DEQ boundary, which means that residents can burn throughout the winter. Colton Fire adheres to the Open Burn Policy adopted by the Fire Defense Board and tries to be consistent with neighboring jurisdictions in regulating the Backyard Burning program, but lack staff and resources make it difficult to catch every illegal fire.

Radio coverage is generally good throughout the District using VHF, but the equipment CCOM has for VHF is antiquated. It is not likely that CCOM will update their equipment because the federal deadline for county-wide narrowband by Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> 2013. Also, there is a county-wide migration to 800 MHz, which presents issues in rural areas where VHF works much better than 800 MHz. (county-wide issue).

Colton Fire has not been successful in acquiring RFA and VFA grants to purchase wildland PPE (nomex shirts, pants and fire shelters), and is in need of new PPE including the new fire shelters.

Because Colton Fire does not have an extensive hydrant system, it is important to begin identifying and improving potential water sites. This is especially important for homes that have long narrow driveways that will not support water tenders. ODF has been working with Colton Fire to improve address signage in the many of the most vulnerable areas and potential water sites could be added to these signs.

## **Community Outreach & Education**

Colton Fire is dedicated to fire prevention, and uses a variety of forums to promote defensible space, fire-resistant building materials, and safe burning practices. Colton Fire partners with ODF to have wildfire prevention programs in local area schools. The District also holds annual events at the main fire station that are paired with prevention messages. The District would like to be more proactive about educating the public about the need for access, water and defensible space and plans to partner with the Molalla Pioneer to create a driveway outreach program designed to advise people about lack of access and promote creation of turn-around space.

## **Local Communities at Risk (Strategic Planning Areas)**

Colton Fire also recognizes that there are smaller-scale Communities at Risk or Strategic Planning Areas (per the 2005 CWPP) that have unique wildfire hazards to be addressed at the more local scale. Communities that have been identified as being particularly vulnerable to wildfires are illustrated in Map # 19 and listed in Table 10.5-1. Colton Fire Professionals considered the following factors to determine the local CARs including:

- Need for defensible space

- Access limitations (narrow driveways, lack of address signage, one way in/one way out)
- Steep slopes that can hinder access and accelerate the spread of wildfire
- Lack of water available for wildland fire fighting
- Heavy fuels on adjacent public lands
- Potential ignition sources from recreationists and transients
- Agricultural and backyard burning
- Lack of community outreach programs to promote wildfire awareness
- Communications difficulties

**Fuels Reduction**

Fuels reduction projects can and should be accomplished at the local scale, which is the creation of defensible space around homes, as well as the landscape scale to extend vegetation treatments onto adjacent forested land and natural areas. Colton Fire will continue to facilitate cooperation between public and private organizations and local area residents to ensure that fuels reduction work occurs strategically and benefits homeowners as well as adjacent public and private lands.

To ensure that landscape-level treatments are paired with projects to create defensible space around vulnerable communities, priority fuels reduction projects have been overlaid with the Communities at Risk Identified by Colton Fire (Map #19).

Fuels Reduction Priorities include:

Fernwood/Young Road Area  
 Dhooghe Road

Hult Road  
 Hunter Road

**Colton Fire District Action Plan**

Colton Fire has developed a list of actions to build capacity at the Department scale and has identified actions that can help to make the local CARS more resilient to potential wildfires. The action plan for Colton Fire and the local CARS therein is provided in Table 10.5-2.

**Table 10.5-1 Colton Fire District Local Communities at Risk**

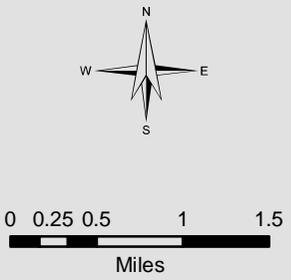
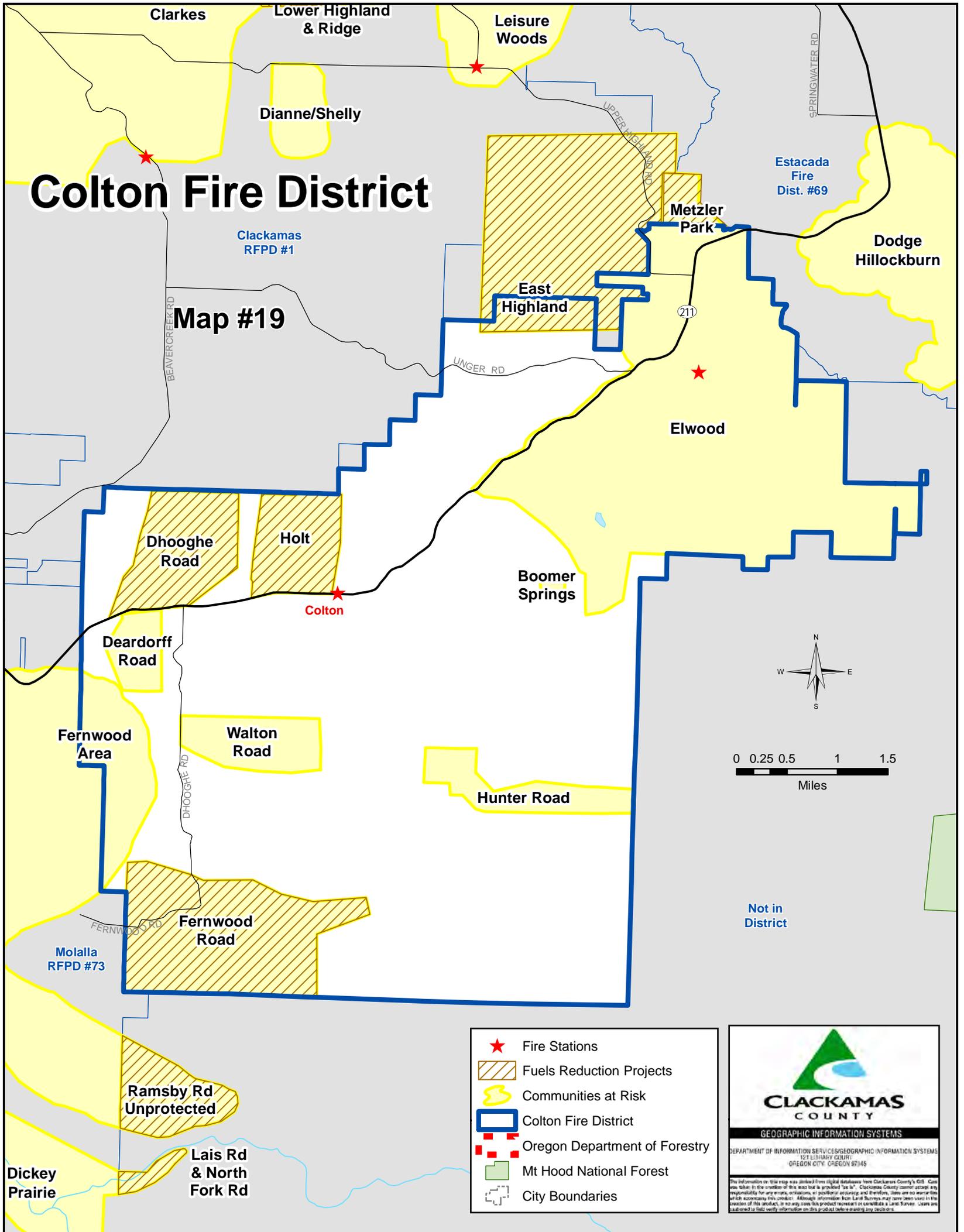
| Community At Risk                            | CAR Priority | Defensible Space | Access | Water | Public Forest Lands | Private Forest Lands | Recreators/<br>Transients | Protection<br>Capabilities | Burning | Preparedness | Communications | Steep Slopes | Description   |
|--|--------------|------------------|--------|-------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------|--------------|----------------|--------------|---|
| <b>Colton Fire Local Communities at Risk</b> |              |                  |        |       |                     |                      |                           |                            |         |              |                |              |   |
| Deardorf                                     | High         | X                | X      | X     |                     |                      |                           | X                          | X       | X            |                | X            | This community has only one way in and out with very narrow, steep roads and driveways. There are many homes in this area that have dense vegetation and need defensible space. There is no water here. People in this community are not aware of the high wildfire risk here.  |
| Boomer Springs/Schieffer                     | High         | X                | X      |       |                     |                      |                           | X                          | X       | X            |                | X            | There are not many homes in this community, but those that are located here have long, narrow driveways with no turn around. There is no water here and there are very steep slopes.  |
| Walton/Tiffany                               | High         | X                | X      | X     | X                   | X                    | X                         | X                          | X       | X            |                | X            | This community has many have long, narrow driveways with trees overhanging and encroaching. There is no water here and homes are in great need of defensible space. Industrial forest lands surround the community and could be potential ignition sources.   |
| Fernwood/Young Road Area                     | High         | X                | X      | X     |                     | X                    | X                         | X                          | X       | X            |                | X            | This Community has very limited access with many roads being one way in and out and access is very narrow. Rounds Road is a very narrow, gravel road. Water is limited. There is a creek with a pond but they are difficult to access. The community is adjacent to Port Blakey and Weyerhaeuser industrial forest operations. ATV's illegally access the Weyerhaeuser land where there is a great deal of slash from previous timber operations. Residents here burn all year, so they a great deal of fuel around homes is removed during the winter and spring, but there are some people who wait until summer to burn. OSU also has a managed forest here. ODF crews plan to brush out end of Odeen. |
| Dhooghe                                      | Medium       | X                | X      | X     |                     | X                    |                           | X                          | X       | X            |                |              | This area is relatively flat, but access is still difficult because many homes have long, narrow driveways. There is also a very narrow bridge that is one way in and out. Frank Road is in very poor condition. There is no water here. There is active logging in the heavily managed, private forest lands adjacent to the community. This forested area has a lot of ladder fuels on the western portion and could be targeted for Fuels Reduction.   |
| Holt Road                                    | Medium       | X                | X      |       |                     | X                    |                           |                            | X       | X            |                | X            | The access in this community is extremely limited because Holt Road is now closed, making it one way in and out. It is also very steep. There is a good creek at the bottom, and about half of this community has hydrants. There are small, private forest lands surrounding the community. The managed woodlands look good, but the unmanaged woodlands have heavy fuels loading.   |
| Hunter Road                                  | Medium       | X                | X      | X     | X                   | X                    | X                         | X                          | X       | X            |                | X            | This community only has one way in and out and it is very steep. There is a cluster of homes that need defensible space. Port Blakely and Weyerhaeuser own industrial forest lands that surround the community. Many local youth illegally access these areas to hang out, smoke cigarettes and start campfires.  |
| Ellwood Engstrom/Area                        | Medium       | X                | X      |       |                     | X                    |                           | X                          | X       | X            |                | X            | This community has good water with creeks and ponds from which pumps can draw. There are many homes here with narrow driveways. there is also a small bridge that fire apparatus cannot access. Gillet is a one way road that has no turn-around which is a very big issue. Port Blakely manages industrial forest land adjacent to this community.   |

**Table 10.5-2. Colton Fire District Action Plan**

| Action Item  | Timeframe  | Partners                     | CAR   |
|--|------------|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Colton Fire Action Plan</b>   |            |                              |   |
| Pursue grant funding to purchase Wildland PPE to replace outdated PPE (fire shelters)  | 2 Years    | ODF                          | Colton Fire   |
| Work with Clackamas County to ensure coordination regarding the new development on Rolliewood Road. As new homes are built, the District should be notified because no parking signs are required to be posted on all legal roads. | 6 Months   | Clackamas DTD                | Colton Fire   |
| Work with Clackamas County to ensure coordination regarding development on existing lots and roads of record.  | 2-3 Years  | FDB, SFMO                    | Colton Fire   |
| Work with Clackamas County to use the total square footage of the home including any remodel expansion as the threshold for contacting Fire Agencies for access and water requirements.  | 2-3 Years  | FDB, SFMO                    | Colton Fire   |
| Work with ODF, USFS and other land managers to identify opportunities to participate in Live Fire Training.  | Ongoing    | ODF, USFS, BLM               | Colton Fire   |
| Partner with the Molalla Pioneer to create a driveway outreach program designed to advise people about lack of access and promote creation of turn-around space.   | 1 year     | Molalla Pioneer              | Colton Fire   |
| Work with Clackamas County to receive notification of occupancy permits through monthly emails and request access/training to use the Velocity Hall System.  | 6 Months   | Clackamas County, SFMO       | Colton Fire   |
| <b>Colton Fire Local Communities at Risk Action Plan</b>   |            |                              |   |
| Conduct a Community Meeting to educate the community and solicit feedback on wildfire prevention projects the community would support.   | Ongoing    | ODF                          | Deardorf  |
| Work with CCFD#1 to educate residents of Holt road about the importance of being prepared since response time is increased with the closure of the road.   | Ongoing    | CCFDF#1                      | Holt Road   |
| Begin identifying and improving potential water sites in Communities at Risk.  | Long-Term  | ODF                          | All Car's   |
| Work with Port Blakely and Weyerhaeuser to post signage and develop additional strategies to discourage illegal trespassing on forest land.  | Ongoing    | Port Blakely, Weyerhaeuser   | Walton/Tiffany, Fernwood/Young Road Area, Hunter Road |
| Complete home addressing in Communities at Risk.   | Ongoing    | ODF                          | All CAR's   |
| Partner with the Fire Co-op to create and distribute outreach materials that promote responsible burning, defensible space and reduction of structural ignitability within the Home Ignition Zone.                                 | Ongoing    | Fire Co-op                   | All CAR's   |
| Promote legal, safe and responsible debris burning through public outreach and education.  | Short-Term | ODF, Fire Co-op              | All CAR's   |
| Reduce hazardous fuels in the ROW of potential evacuation routes. Engage residents adjacent to primary evacuations routes to extend treatments onto private land.  | Ongoing    | ODOT, Clackamas County Roads | All CAR's   |
| Seek grant funding to support fuels reduction and creation of defensible space around homes.   | Ongoing    | ODF                          | All CAR's   |

# Colton Fire District

Map #19



-  Fire Stations
-  Fuels Reduction Projects
-  Communities at Risk
-  Colton Fire District
-  Oregon Department of Forestry
-  Mt Hood National Forest
-  City Boundaries



**CLACKAMAS COUNTY**  
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

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