



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Ottawa RIVERKEEPER®
GARDE-RIVIÈRE des Outaouais

Welcome!

Dear friends and water lovers,

What an extraordinary year it has been for Ottawa Riverkeeper! 2023 has been filled with exciting new adventures, projects, partnerships, and transitions. Your support and passion propels us as we journey together towards a healthy Ottawa River for all species and all generations.

The exceptional work featured in this report is a testament to your dedication, and we hope you take great pride in it. From incredible feats of community-based monitoring to collaborative efforts in confronting the challenges facing our freshwater ecosystems, you have helped Ottawa Riverkeeper accomplish so much this year!

As you may have heard, Ottawa Riverkeeper has a new home right on the river's edge! River House has opened its doors, and in doing so, opened a wealth of new opportunities for collaboration, education, science, conservation, community building and more - including an amazing Riverkeeper Gala venue! This is your space, a place to connect with the River directly and to connect to your work in protecting it. As you delve into this report, we invite you to share in the excitement for what the future can bring. The accomplishments and impact that you have helped make possible this year give an inspiring glimpse into what more we can achieve in 2024.

It remains an absolute pleasure to paddle down this river and on this journey alongside you. Thank you, merci, and miigwetch!

In the river spirit,



Geoff Green, C.M., C.Q.
Chair of the Board of Directors



Laura Reinsborough
Riverkeeper & CEO

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Ottawa Riverkeeper acknowledges and honours that the watershed of the Kichi Zibi, known by many as the Ottawa River, is located on the unceded territories of the Anishinābeg Algonquin Nation, whose people are the traditional and ongoing stewards of these lands and waters.

Science

Watershed Health Assessment & Monitoring

The Watershed Health Assessment and Monitoring initiative continues to grow, deepening our understanding of the health of the Ottawa River through fourteen indicators. Our community-science-led monitoring programs have expanded, including looking into phosphorus levels, water temperature, algal blooms and invasive species. This year, our science team also advanced research studies on other indicators by digging into publicly available data, such as a deep look into mercury levels in the watershed, and further exploring the changes to flow in our river. We are finding new ways to share and report our findings with you, and providing them to decision-makers and the general public. These include uploading data to our open data portal to our first-ever comprehensive Watershed Report Card, which will be released in early 2024.

24,118

visits to our Open Data Portal

Recreational Water Quality Monitoring

The rivers of the Ottawa River watershed are, by and large, swimmable rivers! And yet, urban swim sites can become contaminated and rendered unswimmable at times. Ottawa Riverkeeper monitors recreational water quality so that you can know the latest status of your local beaches. This year, we added a new swim site to our testing: the docks at River House! Over 35,000 people visited the swim docks in the first open season. In 2023 we took new steps to improve our water quality monitoring program. In addition to posting “pass/fail” results on Swim Guide, we added the full numerical values to our Open Data Portal.



773 water samples processed

Beachgoers checked water quality on Swim Guide 248,145 times



10

years of community-based monitoring!

Community-based Monitoring

2023 marks 10 years since we began working with community scientists to monitor the health of the Ottawa River watershed. The Riverwatch network continues to provide valuable insights that help us understand the overall health of the watershed, and we have been able to expand some of our existing community-based monitoring (CBM) programs, such as our Total Phosphorus monitoring program. The data collected through CBM goes beyond Ottawa Riverkeeper’s own use and has been shared with several local groups and municipalities that have expressed an interest in the results. This is all thanks to the dedication of the amazing volunteers who make this work possible!

in 2023

121

Community scientists

117

monitoring locations

230

samples collected

370

reports and observations

Education & Outreach

Shoreline Cleanups

The power of volunteers is never more evident than when new and experienced Ottawa Riverkeeper volunteers come together for a community shoreline cleanup. Participants included families, high school students completing volunteer hours, professionals, retirees, and everyone in between, showing that the desire to keep the river clean has no age limit! We hosted 12 cleanups this year, both with the public and with community partners, and participants collected 2,220 kg of trash. At each event, we were blown away by the dedication of folks across the watershed to take care of local waterways.



Education

Ottawa Riverkeeper nurtured a growing education program, providing workshops, school presentations, and loaning out educational materials about the watershed to schools and community groups. This year, we developed two new guides for teachers to bring full lesson plans and learning experiences around road salt and plastic pollution into their classrooms.

Over
600
shoreline cleanup participants
helped pick up
2,220 kg
of garbage from shorelines
throughout the watershed

Over
2,600
people of all ages participated
in our educational activities and
workshops
655
people experienced our
learning library resources

Learning Lab

Our first summer at River House was a huge success! We were thrilled to open Ottawa Riverkeeper's Learning Lab to the public for regular open hours throughout the swimming season, with opportunities for those stopping by the building to learn more about our incredible river and watershed.

Visitors of all ages had the chance to get hands-on with our stormwater model and check in on turtle hatchlings. Younger visitors and their parents could relax in our reading nook, colour up a storm at our colouring table, or measure themselves to determine their age in Sturgeon years! Meanwhile, visitors could explore a map of the watershed, share stories of their experiences in the watershed, and ask questions of our staff and incredibly dedicated volunteers. Thanks to everyone who stopped by this summer!

In the fall, the Learning Lab hosted an Indigenous youth-led birch bark canoe-building project. Pinock Smith, an Anishinābeg Algonquin knowledge holder from Kitigan Zibi, led the building workshops and a trip to the forest in Kitigan Zibi to harvest materials. Thanks to A7G and all the participating youth for the hard work and fun times building this fall. We can't wait to see you back in the spring!

Nearly
1,700
people visited our
Learning Lab during open
hours this summer



Indigenous youth spent

288 hrs

working on the
"Canoeing
Together"
project



Road Salt

We launched Road Salt Reduction Week early in the year, an exciting new way to encourage watershed residents to use less of this common pollutant. Ottawa Riverkeeper's community-based monitoring program has collected ample evidence that road salt is entering our local streams and creeks at dangerous levels. Our week-long campaign turned that knowledge into action by sharing our data and giving residents tips and tricks for reducing reliance on road salt.

We also took a new step in our monitoring this year, asking volunteers to sample their sites during the summer months, and discovered that negative impacts on waterways persist long after the salt has stopped being spread.

Advocacy

Per and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Together, the Ottawa Riverkeeper community took action on “forever chemicals” in our waterways! This summer, we launched a public awareness and action campaign around PFAS. These substances are a collection of over 4700 toxic chemicals used in everyday products such as food packaging, non-stick cookware, clothing, and cosmetics. They are found almost everywhere, including in freshwater ecosystems. Called “forever chemicals” because they do not break down naturally, these substances have significant negative impacts on both human health and aquatic ecosystems.

Our campaign asked the community to sign on to our submission to the Canadian Government’s review of these substances. We included calls to properly list PFAS as toxic, monitor and mitigate their spread, and follow the actions of other jurisdictions such as the United States, which have begun to crack down on these dangerous chemicals.

325

concerned watershed community members signed our letter to the federal government with our recommendations for PFAS policies



American Eels

We took a new step to help the American eel, which was once the most abundant fish in the Ottawa River. In August, Ottawa Riverkeeper sent an open letter to Hydro-Québec officially requesting the installation of an eel ladder at the Carillon Generating Facility. An eel ladder will aid the eel’s migration into our watershed, which has been blocked by dams for many decades leading to a 99% decline.

Our call was further echoed in even stronger terms by a letter from the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council, which called for an eel ladder as part of reparations to Indigenous Nations, for whom the American eel is a culturally important species. We subsequently met with Hydro-Québec to learn more about the research they are doing on the American eel. We continue to await and push for a meeting with Hydro-Québec more focused on the inclusion of an eel ladder at the Carillon Generating Station. We remain eager to continue collaborations with many stakeholders and Rights Holders to help ensure the future of this fascinating and iconic species.



Community members submitted

32

reports through our Pollution Hotline

Nuclear Waste

2023 saw the release of Canada’s new Radioactive Waste Policy, something Ottawa Riverkeeper has been pushing towards for the last several years. While we are pleased that this policy now exists where there was previously little regulation, the final policy does not meet our expectations. Despite taking some steps in the right direction, we do not believe the policy lives up to the level of freshwater protection that residents of the Ottawa River watershed, and Canadians more broadly, desire or need. We will continue to engage with Government regulators and departments to push for more robust rules as part of the implementation of this new policy.

After an extended consultation period, the final hearing on the application for the Near Surface Disposal Facility, a planned nuclear waste storage facility at Chalk River on the banks of the Ottawa River, took place in August this year. This hearing focused on the concerns of many Anishinābeg Algonquin Nations who had not been sufficiently consulted in previous hearings. The three communities who hosted the off-site hearing delivery invited Ottawa Riverkeeper staff to observe in solidarity.



River House

Grand Opening

The NCC River House opened its doors to the public on July 25th! This was a monumental moment for Ottawa Riverkeeper, as it is the first time we have been able to offer programming from our own space directly on the Ottawa River.

The new Ottawa Riverkeeper Learning Lab, our first-ever public-facing facility, welcomed visitors to come by and learn about the river during the summer months. Meanwhile, our Science Lab provided a space to test recreational water quality, including the official results for the River House swimming area itself! Being so close to these amazing swimming docks reinforces the message of how great the Ottawa River is for swimming, and what a bounty we can be grateful for!



Convening

With our own spaces directly on the river, we now have an elevated platform from which to celebrate and protect it. This means we can convene people, groups, and communities from across the watershed like never before.

We were honoured to convene an Anishinābeg Algonquin Advisory Circle to set off our educational programs in a good way, including a smudging of River House before it opened to the public.

To mark World Environment Day, we hosted the federal Minister of the Environment for a roundtable on a wide range of environmental and water issues.

We also brought together many of the National Capital Region's Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations for "River Recharge", an opportunity to convene, connect and discuss the issues we are all working on and the challenges we face.

We have held many more meetings and events with the community and through them all we strengthen collaboration and cooperation for the sake of the Ottawa River.



Partnership with Petrie Island Turtle Project

River House is not only the new home for Ottawa Riverkeeper, but for two months this summer it was also home to over 400 turtles! We partnered with the Petrie Island Turtle Project, which collected eggs from 3 different turtle species (snapping turtle, northern map turtle, and painted turtle). Our science lab then became a turtle nursery, as the eggs were safely housed in an incubator until they hatched. Eager volunteers helped to release the newly hatched turtles back to their natural habitat at Petrie Island. This process helped the survival of these turtles, as predators consume around 90% of the eggs left out in the wild. Ottawa Riverkeeper is proud to be a collaborator on this important project.

The turtles were also amazing educators and ambassadors, attracting hundreds of visitors to the Learning Lab where they learned about the biodiversity of the watershed and how to help protect it!

3 turtle species' eggs

Map turtle
Painted turtle
Snapping turtle



373

turtle eggs hatched at River House & released at Petrie Island

290

visitors to the Learning Lab on "Turtle Day"



Events

Riverkeeper Gala

For the first time ever, the watershed's biggest and best party of the year happened at River House! Presented by Insurance Bureau of Canada, the 2023 Riverkeeper Gala - our 10th annual - was a powerhouse fundraiser, raising more money for river protection than any before! The evening was MC'ed by Evan Solomon, the weather was perfect, the sunset was breathtaking, and Jully Black had us dancing up a storm. Earlier in the evening, guests were moved by an inspiring speech from Claudette Commanda, who was awarded the title of Honorary Riverkeeper. There was a live and silent auction featuring amazing work and items generously donated by local artists and businesses!



363

Gala guests

\$ 345k

raised for river protection

Riverkeeper Gala Sponsors

Presenting Sponsor



Music



Chair's Reception



Wave Maker



Oyster Bar



Gold



Silver



Bronze



Special Thanks



Events



Sunset Soirée Celebrating Ottawa Riverkeeper's Donors and Volunteers

Every year, your donations help fund our pollution hotline, Riverwatch network, outreach and education programs, work protecting endangered species like the American eel, and so much more! Volunteers pitch in with everything from photography to water quality monitoring to grant writing, data entry, shoreline cleanups, outreach, and turtle releases.

To celebrate the amazing volunteers and donors who play such a key role in Ottawa Riverkeeper's work, we invited our dedicated supporters to join us for an evening in the Learning Lab at River House. There was gourmet pizza, delicious drinks, and awesome door prizes! We also recognized two exceptional individuals who went above and beyond this year, presenting Celine Whiteduck with the Watershed Community Impact Award, and Raymond Touchette with the Dan Brunton Outstanding Volunteer Award. Thank you to all our volunteers and donors for your ongoing support!

Riverkeeper Open Water Swim

The watershed's favourite inter-provincial swim was back this summer with the 2023 Ottawa Riverkeeper Open Water Swim, powered by Canaqua Sports. Swimmers from throughout the watershed and beyond gathered on the shore of the Ottawa River to swim either a 1.5km loop, or travel 4km all the way across to the other shore! Swimmers also raised over \$12,000 for river protection through peer-to-peer fundraising leading up to the event.

Thank you to all the amazing volunteer life-guards, paddlers, and on-shore volunteers and our sponsors TOOB and Patagonia for making this event such a success!



175
swimmers
raised over
\$ 12k

295 active volunteers
2.5k hours volunteered

782 individual donors
110 monthly donors

Staying Connected



Ottawa Riverkeeper
was mentioned in the
media

41
times

12k

Facebook

3k

Instagram

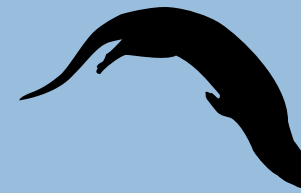


7.8k

X (Twitter)

1k

LinkedIn



8,608

subscribers receive our
newsletter "In Otter News"



28

new blog posts



Our People

Staff

Riverkeeper & CEO
Laura Reinsborough

Managing Director
Dave Rayner

Director of Philanthropy
Chloe Hillier

Director of Science and Policy
Larissa Holman

Director of Education and Community Outreach
Julia Ostertag

Communications Manager
Matthew Brocklehurst

Fundraising Manager
Emily Smith

Communications and Design Coordinator
Mark Bernards

Database and Fundraising Coordinator
Ian Atwell

Scientist
Liam Nguyen

Educator
Maxime Chaumont-Lessard

Operations Coordinator
Naomi Davies

Science Programs Coordinator
Elizabeth Grater

Donor Stewardship Coordinator
Meryem Alami

Seasonal Staff
Leah Smith
Hannah Delion
Oyinkansola Labinjo
Amy Oldfield
Libby Lacroix
Marie Babineau
Maureen Elanga

Outgoing Staff
Katy Alambo
Renée Davies
Matt Fyfe
Kim Holmes
Maddie Perrault

We want to acknowledge and thank everyone who has been a part of the Ottawa Riverkeeper team this year. We have waved goodbye and watched proudly as some members of our team have gone on to new opportunities, all while excitedly welcoming fresh faces to the organization.



Honourees

Riverkeeper Emerita
Meredith Brown

Honorary Riverkeepers
Claudette Commanda
Daniel "Alfie" Alfredsson
Hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell
Rt Hon. David Johnston and Mrs Sharon Johnston

Rt Hon. Beverley McLachlin
Henry Burris
Sen. Murray Sinclair
Sophie Gregoire Trudeau
Kevin Vickers
Stephen Poloz
Mark Carney

Ottawa Riverkeeper Ambassadors
Kathleen Edwards
Claudette Commanda

Water Leaders
Sen. Rosa Galvez
Founders of Ottawa Riverkeeper
Pacte de l'Amitié
Mission 100 Tonnes
River Surf Ottawa-Gatineau
Autumn Peltier
Paul Dewar
de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation
Jim Watson
Gord Nixon

Board of Directors

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Vice Chair
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Treasurer
Margot Sunter

Secretary
Frédéric Boulanger

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Michelle Campbell
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Franklin Holtforster
Elisabeth Ilboudo Nébié
Jason Jacques
Colleen Mooney
David Runnalls, O.C.
Alexandre Van Dierren

Outgoing Directors
Christine Colverson
Phil Rimer
Naomi Sarazin
Robert Slater, C.M.



Geoff Green Named Chair Emeritus

"It has been an honour to be Chair of Ottawa Riverkeeper for the past 14 years. I'll soon be passing the paddle into the strong hands of new champions to lead this important cause. It has been a passionate journey filled with rapids, portages, hard paddling, good karma, magic moments, and beautiful people. A journey of actively inspiring, educating and protecting our remarkable watershed. Although I am stepping down as Chair, I won't go far, and will stay closely connected with the Ottawa River and Ottawa Riverkeeper."

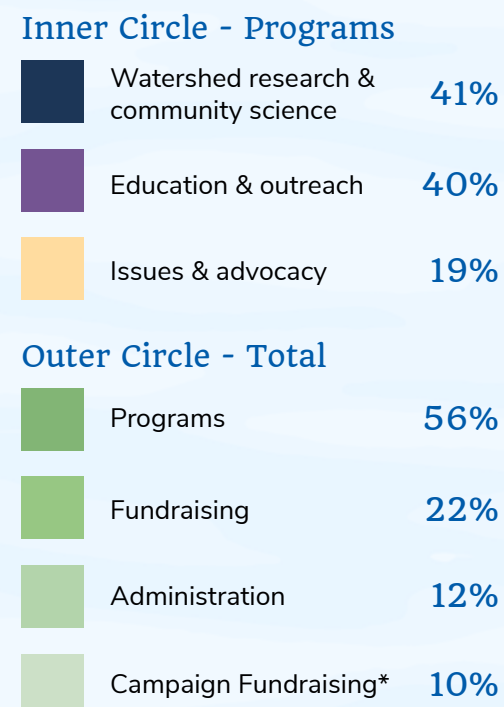
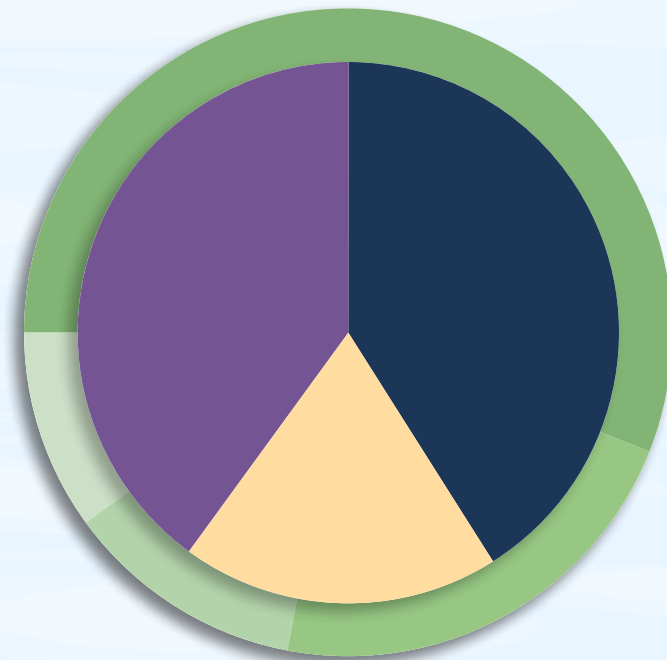
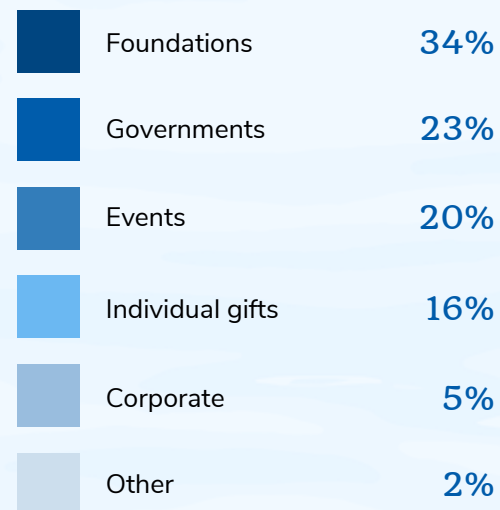
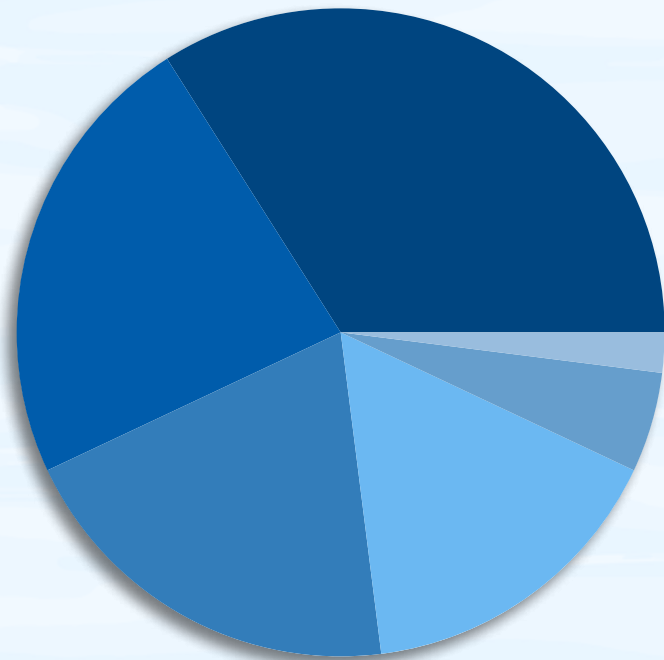
In recognition of his outstanding contributions as Chair of the Board of Directors from 2010-2023, Geoff Green C.M., has been named Chair Emeritus. We are grateful for his leadership, and delighted that he remains deeply connected to the organization's mission and of course to the river itself.

Our Financials

For the fiscal year ending March 31 2023

Income: \$ 1,617,787

Expenses: \$ 1,615,797



*Activities related to the organization's multi-year fundraising campaign

Your Support

For the fiscal year ending March 31 2023

\$ 100,000 +

Canyon Foundation
Canada Community Revitalization Fund
RBC Foundation
WCPD Foundation

\$ 50,000 - \$ 99,999

CN
Echo Foundation
Five B Family Foundation
Franklin Holtforster & Birgitte Alting-Mees
Government of Canada - Canada Service Corps
Insurance Bureau of Canada
The Mosaic Company
Ottawa Community Foundation
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Anonymous

\$ 1,000 - \$ 4,999

Abacus Data
Alterna Savings
Barry Nesbitt Estate
Bill & Margaret Dean Perpetual Motion*
Blattel Family Fund*
Catherine Bélanger
Centurion Conference & Event Center
Colleen & Jeff Westeinde
Drop in Sports
Daniel Brunton
David Runnalls
David & Helen Spence
Dynamic Funds at Scotiabank
Elaine Medline
Frankton-Coffin Family Foundation
GGFL Chartered Professional Accountants
In memory of John Nikiforuk

< \$ 1,000

We recognize and thank the nearly 900 donors who contributed at this level.

* Fund established at the Ottawa Community Foundation

\$ 25,000 - \$ 49,999

Barbara Crook & Dan Greenberg, The Danbe Foundation
Environment and Climate Change Canada
iA Financial Group
Lefebvre-Boulangier Family
Michel & Denise Drouin
Anonymous

\$ 10,000 - \$ 24,999

Bayne Family
Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission - Participant Funding Program
Cement Association of Canada
Chemistry Industry Association of Canada
Dentons Canada LLP
ECO Canada
Government of Canada - Canada Summer Jobs
The Lemieux-Martel Family
Labarge Charitable Foundation
Small Change Fund
Taggart Parkes Foundation
TD Bank Group
Ville de Gatineau
Anonymous

\$ 5,000 - \$ 9,999

Ashbury College
Banu Örmeci
Bass Pro Shop & Cabela's Outdoor Fund
Canada's Forest Trust
Clark-Becker Family
Dominion City Brewing Co.
Emond Harnden LLP
Evolugen
Evripos Janitorial Services Ltd
The GAL Family Foundation
Hydro Ottawa
Level Six
The Metcalf Foundation
Michael & Jacqui Wilson
MRC D'Argenteuil
POP Inc.
Robert Slater
United Counties of Prescott & Russell
Whitewater Brewing Co
Wildlife Habitat Canada
Zibi
Anonymous

Steve Bews
Stewart Family
Susan Rayner
Weider Family
Wilderness Tours
William M. Laidlaw
Anonymous (5)



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