SUB-ANTARCTIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SouthMAC)
CHAIR: Mr Peter Neville
Date: 25 February 2015
Venue: Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, Hobart

Attendance

Members
Mr Peter Neville, Chair
Ms Lihini Weragoda, Australian Antarctic Division
Mr Martin Exel, Industry Member
Mr Jon Bryan, Conservation Member
Ms Jo Fisher, AFMA Member
Ms Sarah Kirkcaldie (Executive Officer)

Observers
Mr Malcolm McNeill, Industry
Mr Rhys Arangio, Industry
Dr Rich Hillary, Scientist
Mr Trent Timmiss, AFMA
Ms Kerrie Robertson, Department of Agriculture

Introduction
The thirty third meeting of the Sub-Antarctic Fisheries Management Advisory Committee (SouthMAC 33) was held in Hobart on 25 February 2015.

The primary objectives of the meeting were to discuss:

- Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery stock assessment and total allowable catch (TAC) recommendations;
- the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery (MITF) Direction regarding fishing methods;
- the Fishery Assessment Plans for the sub-Antarctic fisheries; and
- the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) New and Exploratory Fisheries 2015/16 expression of interests.

Agenda item 1 - Preliminaries
SouthMAC 33 was opened at 8.45 am on 25 February 2015 by the Chair, Mr Peter Neville.

Mr Neville welcomed the attendance of members and the observers, Mr Trent Timmiss from AFMA, Ms Kerrie Robertson from the Department of Agriculture, Mr Rhys Arangio from Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd and Dr Rich Hillary from CSIRO and Mr Malcolm McNeill from Australian Longline Pty Ltd who attended the meeting in the absence of Dr Malcolm Haddon and Mr Les Scott, respectively.
1.1 Declaration of interests

The AFMA member stated that as outlined in the *Fisheries Administrations Act 1991* and AFMA Fisheries Management Paper No. 1, all members (but not permanent observers or invited participants) of SouthMAC must declare any pecuniary interest in the Fishery at the commencement of the meeting and also at the commencement of each agenda item. The Committee noted that if a member discloses an interest in an item, the member must absent themselves from the meeting before the item is considered and the MAC must make a decision as to whether the member can participate in the discussion and in making of a recommendation or remain absent from the meeting for the item. The AFMA member stressed that the MAC must fully comply with these requirements in relation to conflicts of interests during the meeting.

Members acknowledged that AFMA has members on the consultative groups such as MACs because of people’s expertise in areas that are relevant to discussions.

Mr Neville declared that he was the Principal of a fisheries consulting business (P.J.Neville & Associates) but had no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Mr Exel advised that he is the General Manager, Environment and Policy, Austral Fisheries P/L. Austral Fisheries P/L owns Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs) in the Australian sub-Antarctic fisheries and waters under the jurisdiction of Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Mr Exel also declared that he is a Director of the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, Member of the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA), member of the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA), Member of the Great Australian Bight Industry Association, Member of Coral Sea Fishers Association and Chair of the Coalition of Legal Toothfish Operators. He was not aware of any investigation or prosecution action by AFMA against his Company or of any legal action taken by his Company against AFMA.

Ms Lihini Werogoda advised that she is an employee of the AAD and her colleagues conduct the HIMI stock assessment. Ms Werogoda attends international meetings related to Antarctic fisheries and no pecuniary interest in Antarctic fisheries and that her salary is not dependent on AAD, industry and other research collaborations.

Mr Jon Bryan advised he is an employee of the Tasmanian Conservation Trust and also a member on AFMA’s Small Pelagic Fishery RAG and Scallop MAC. Mr Bryan stated that he is a member on a number of Tasmanian fisheries advisory committees including recreational, scallop, abalone, crustacean and scalefish but has no pecuniary interest in Antarctic fisheries.

Ms Fisher advised she is employed by AFMA and is the Acting Manager for Antarctic fisheries and has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Ms Kirkcaldie advised she is employed by AFMA, is also the Executive Officer for the Sub-Antarctic RAG (SARAG) and Southern Bluefin Tuna MAC and has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Mr Trent Timmiss advised he is employed by AFMA and is the Senior Manager for Tuna and International fisheries. Mr Timmiss is also a member on the Tropical Tuna MAC and Southern Bluefin Tuna MAC and has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Mr Arangio advised he is employed by Austral Fisheries who hold SFRs in the Australian sub-Antarctic Fisheries. He is also the Secretary of COLTO, the Coalition of Legal Toothfish
Operators. Mr Arangio is not aware of any investigation or prosecution action by AFMA against Austral Fisheries or of any legal action taken by Austral against AFMA. Mr Arangio declared an interest in all agenda items.

Mr McNeill advised he was attending the meeting as an observer and is the Resource Manager of Australian Longline P/L which holds various fishing rights in, and operates vessels in the sub-Antarctic fisheries and waters under the jurisdiction of CCAMLR. Mr McNeill was not aware of any investigation or prosecution action by AFMA against his Company or of any legal action taken by his Company against AFMA.

Dr Hillary advised that he is employed by CSIRO and is the Principal Investigator of the MITF stock assessment project. He also advised that he is a member of AFMA’s Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee (SBTMAC) and Tropical Tuna RAG. Dr Hillary advised that he has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

1.2 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Les Scott and Dr Malcolm Haddon.

1.3 Adoption of agenda

SouthMAC adopted the agenda.

Agenda item 2 – Action arising from SouthMAC 32

SouthMAC discussed the action arising from SouthMAC 32.

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- **SouthMAC 31 minutes** - Executive Officer to circulate amended draft minutes for final clearance

| 2    | SouthMAC noted that AFMA, AAD, Industry and other government agencies had appeared before the Senate Enquiry. A final report was produced and it is available on the Parliament of Australia website. Members noted that government agencies are currently responding to the final report. |

- **Southern Ocean Senate Enquiry** - AFMA to keep SouthMAC informed of Senate enquiry

Agenda item 3 – Correspondence

SouthMAC noted the following correspondence had been received between meetings:

- An email dated 23 April 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie providing the Chair’s summary from SouthMAC 32;
- An email dated 13 May 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie seeking comments on the draft Public Benefit Guidelines for Fishery Independent Surveys;
- An email dated 26 June 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie attaching a joint media release from the Minister for Agriculture and Parliamentary Secretary announcing the new AFMA Commission;
- An email from Sarah Kirkcaldie dated 7 July 2014 seeking comments on the draft minutes from SouthMAC 32;
An email dated 10 July 2014 from Jo Fisher attaching AFMA’s submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Southern Oceans;

An email dated 22 July 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie attaching information for the MSC annual surveillance audit for the HIMI toothfish and icefish and the Macquarie Island Toothfish fisheries;


An email dated 28 August 2014 from Jo Fisher seeking comments on the HIMI Fishery Status Report;

An email dated 1 September 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie providing information from Jonathon Barrington, Australian Antarctic Division regarding the Threat Abatement Plan 2014 for the incidental catch or bycatch of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations;

An email dated 23 October 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie attaching a letter from Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, informing stakeholders that there will be a public consultation process in early 2015 regarding the development of a revised harvest strategy policy, bycatch policy and overarching fisheries policy;

An email dated 1 October 2014 from Jo Fisher seeking comments on the draft Five Year Strategic Research Plan;

An email dated 4 December 2014 from Jo Fisher regarding the recommended total allowable catches for the HIMI Fishery;

An email dated 11 December 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie regarding the consultation on the collection of prices of transferred or leased Statutory Fishing Rights for all Commonwealth managed fisheries; and

An email dated 16 December 2014 from Jo Fisher regarding the Ross Sea accreditation under the EPBC Act.

**Agenda Item 4 – Report on fishing operations**

SouthMAC noted the verbal report from Mr McNeill on fishing operations in sub-Antarctic waters. Mr McNeill stated that Australian Longline Pty Ltd was the only company fishing in the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery (MITF) in the 2014/15 season. Members noted that the vessel had tagged 3 fish per tonne in the Northern Macquarie Ridge this season which was significantly more than had been voluntarily agreed to.

Mr McNeill advised that the company had finished fishing in the New and Exploratory Ross Sea Fishery earlier than anticipated due to the ice conditions. Members noted that it had been a good season and that the vessel ‘Antarctic Chieftain’ was due back in to New Zealand next week.

Members noted that verbal report from Mr Arangio, Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd, regarding their fishing operations. During the 2013/14 season the Company had 3 vessels operating in the HIMI Fishery – the Southern Champion (trawling), the Isla Eden (longlining) and the Austral Leader 2 (longlining). Members noted that Austral fisheries Pty Ltd had fished its entire HIMIF quota in the 2013/14 season. The Southern Champion had only trawled a small amount of Patagonian Toothfish in the 2014/15 season and has now been sent to the salvage yard.
SouthMAC noted that Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd had purchased a new vessel renamed the Atlas Cove which is currently getting re-fitted to be a dual purpose trawler and longliner. The Company is also currently looking at purchasing another boat that had previously fished in the Ross Sea and South Georgia fisheries.

Austral Fisheries are expected to begin fishing in the 2014/15 HIMIF season in mid-April. The Atlas Cove is expected to complete the random stratified trawl survey in mid to late April.

Members noted that both companies were about 7 tonnes over quota which resulted in a 14 tonne overcatch for the HIMIF Fishery in the 2013/14 season. It was noted that this quantity is deducted from the following season’s quota.

**Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery**

Mr Exel, Mr McNeill and Mr Arangio declared their interests under Agenda Item 6 and 8, and left the room. The remaining members of SouthMAC agreed that Mr Exel, Mr McNeill and Mr Arangio should be allowed to return for all discussions under Agenda item 6 and 8 but should not be present for recommendations.

**Agenda item 5 – Fishery update**

SouthMAC noted that at SARAG 48 industry voluntarily agreed they would attempt to adopt a fishing strategy in the MITF where the toothfish TAC would be taken in approximately the following proportions:

- 250 tonnes from the Aurora Trough (max. 260 tonnes)
- 96-128 tonnes in the southern Macquarie Ridge
- 32-64 tonnes in the northern Macquarie Ridge

Members noted that during the 2014/15 season the ‘Janas’ conducted two longline fishing trips to the MITF and caught around 409 tonnes.

In June 2014, Australian Longline Pty Ltd wrote to AFMA requesting to tag more fish in the Northern Macquarie Ridge as favourable weather conditions allowed them to concentrate fishing in this area rather than the Aurora Trough. Given that this area is a data poor area AFMA and CSIRO agreed to amend the voluntary proportions and 480 tags were released in this area in the 2014/15 season.

**Agenda item 6 – Stock assessment and TAC recommendations**

Members noted that SARAG met on 24 February 2015 and discussed the CSIRO prepared stock assessment of the MITF for Patagonian Toothfish. The CSIRO observer advised that the stock assessment included an extra year of data and included 2013 ageing data.

Members noted that the status of the Fishery was similar to last year with the stock at about 70% of B₀ with similar trends in recruitment.

Members noted SARAG agreed that it is important to maintain fishing across the entire fishery and recommended a TAC of 460 tonnes for the 2015/16 season to be taken in approximately the following proportions: 250 tonnes from the Aurora Trough, 84 tonnes in the Southern Macquarie Ridge and 126 tonnes in the Northern Macquarie Ridge.
SouthMAC noted that the distribution of catches was a voluntary agreement with Industry and the Committee appreciated Industry’s efforts to abide by the agreement. Members further noted that 460 tonnes was the lowest TAC presented and this resulted in the most precautionary approach being adopted even if the effort is not able to be spread as evenly across the Fishery as preferred. SouthMAC noted that spreading the distribution of catch across the Fishery will increase the stability of the stock assessment.

Industry participants left the room, and SouthMAC members agreed to recommend the following TAC limits in the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery, as recommended by SARAG, for determination by the AFMA Commission:

- Patagonian Toothfish at 460 tonnes; and
- 50 tonnes for any other single species taken in the fishery.

Members noted that Industry had requested to have the 2016 stock assessment completed as early as possible in the new year, noting that this is dependent on resourcing issues.

Members thanked CSIRO for completing the MITF stock assessment and noted that the final stock assessment paper, incorporating minor edits, would be circulated in the coming weeks. Members also noted that CSIRO and the Australian Antarctic Division would be working on refining the model over the next 12 months.

**Agenda item 7 – Fishery Assessment Plan**

Members noted that the Fishery Assessment Plan (FAP) is a requirement of the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery Management Plan 2006. SouthMAC noted the draft FAP proposed a tagging rate of two toothfish per tonne caught at Macquarie Island in the 2015/16 season. Members agreed to finalise the FAP with minor editorial amendments including removing the need to conduct the line weighting trials which are no longer a requirement of CCAMLR if the vessel is using integrated weight auto longline gear. The FAP will be finalised and circulated to members once the AFMA Commission has agreed to the MITF 2015/16 TAC.

**Action arising 1:** AFMA to circulate final MITF FAP to members

**Agenda item 8 – Future stock assessment work**

Members noted that the stock assessment for the MITF is conducted by CSIRO on an annual basis. SARAG discussed three options for future stock assessments at their meeting on 24 February 2015 with the aim of reducing cost associated with doing an annual assessment. Members agreed that Patagonian Toothfish are long-lived species and noting the stability of the stock assessment, agreed that the MITF is managed in a precautionary manner via the CCAMLR decision rules. Moving to a two year assessment was the best option and did not incur significant additional risk. SouthMAC supported any additional work required (eg bycatch refinement) to be completed in the years where stock assessments are not being completed. SouthMAC noted that when CSIRO do the assessment in 2016, as per the existing CSIRO project, it will recommend TACs for both the 2016/17 and 2017/18 seasons. A new stock assessment will then be required in 2018 for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 seasons. It was noted that doing two yearly stock assessments is consistent with CCAMLR managed Toothfish fisheries and supported by a Management Strategy Evaluation conducted by CCAMLR.

**Agenda item 9 – Direction specifying gear**

SouthMAC noted that the ‘Direction Not to Engage in Fishing’ prohibiting the use of fishing methods other than trawling or longlining is due to end on 14 April 2016. At SouthMAC 32,
members noted that a similar Direction applied in the HIMI Fishery until the Direction expired in 2010 and was not renewed. Fishing methods in the HIMI Fishery are managed through Statutory Fishing Rights (SFR) conditions.

SouthMAC agreed the direction should not be renewed when it expires in 2016. Instead trawling and longlining should be permitted through MITF SFR conditions. Members noted that if Industry requested to trotline or pot this would need to be done under a scientific permit and would require consultation with the Department of Environment and discussions with AAD seabird experts. Members noted that any applications for a scientific permit would require a risk assessment to be completed including consultation with SARAG and SouthMAC and a data plan developed to ensure the correct information is collect.

**Agenda item 10 – Season dates and longline fishing period**

SouthMAC noted that in November 2014, Industry sent a formal request to AFMA to change the Macquarie Island season date so that it extends from 15 April one year to 14 April the following year. Industry also requested that the longline fishing period be extended by two weeks to run from 15 April to 31 August (currently 1 May to 31 August).

At its teleconference in November 2014, SARAG noted that there were no scientific implications for the stock assessment from starting the season earlier but that any amendment to the longline fishing period would require consultation with the Threat Abatement Plan for seabirds team at the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD). AAD agreed that it is unlikely that the extension would pose any additional risks to seabirds at Macquarie Island.

SouthMAC noted that the AFMA Commission was currently considering the Industry’s request and that the outcomes of the Commission’s discussion will be communicated to members as soon as possible.

**Action arising 2**: AFMA to inform SouthMAC of the outcomes of the AFMA Commissions discussions regarding the MITF season extension.

**Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery**

**Agenda item 11 – Fishery Update**

SouthMAC noted the general update for the HIMI Fishery. Members noted that in the 2013/14 season the:

- ‘Southern Champion’ conducted three trips to HIMI including completing the Random Stratified Trawl Survey (RSTS) in April 2014;
- ‘Austral Leader II’ completed two longline trips;
- ‘Isla Eden’ completed three longline trips; and
- ‘Antarctic Chieftain’ completed two longline trips.

SouthMAC noted that the longline catch represented approximately 96% of the total toothfish catch.

AFMA advised that at a meeting in November 2014, the AFMA Commission considered the HIMI TACs for the upcoming season. The HIMI TACs for the 2014/15 season, as determined by AFMA, are as follows:
Target species
Patagonian toothfish 4,410 tonnes
Mackerel Icefish 309 tonnes

Bycatch species
Macrourids 360 tonnes
Unicorn Icefish 150 tonnes
Skates and rays 120 tonnes
Grey Rockcod 80 tonnes
All other species 50 tonnes (for each species)

Agenda item 12 – Fishery Assessment Plan
SouthMAC noted that the HIMI Fishery Assessment Plan (FAP) is a requirement of the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery Management Plan 2002. The draft 2014/15 FAP was provided for comment and members agreed to aim for a tagging rate of approximately two tags per tonne of toothfish caught in all fishing operations. SouthMAC noted that the normal tagging rate in the fishery is two fish tagged per three green weight tonne. However, the tagging rate for the 2014/15 season was increased voluntarily by industry to two fish tagged per green weight tonne to inject additional tags into the fishery. SouthMAC agreed that in the short term, increased tags are important for transitioning the fishery’s stock assessment away from reliance on the RSTS (random stratified trawl survey) and to a tag based assessment. The FAP also set out the timetable for the RSTS. SouthMAC agreed to the FAP with minor amendments. The FAP will be finalised and circulated to members out of session.

Action arising 3: AFMA to circulate final HIMI FAP to members

Agenda item 13 – CCAMLR Fisheries Review meetings
The AAD member noted that as a result of the significant additional work that was required to complete the HIMI stock assessments in 2014, a group was formed to ensure that the work was on track. The meetings were known as HIMI Fishery monthly meetings. It has been agreed that the meetings should continue in 2015 but should not be held every month and should also include discussion on other CCAMLR commitments, including discussions about Australia’s involvement in CCAMLR Exploratory fisheries in the Ross Sea. Members noted that the meetings are now referred to as CCAMLR fisheries review meetings. SouthMAC noted that at its meeting on 23 February 2015, the CCAMLR fisheries review group discussed and agreed to the workplan for the 2015 HIMI stock assessments.

Agenda item 14 – SARAG and SouthMAC in HIMI TAC setting process
SouthMAC noted that SARAG had discussed the HIMI total allowable catch process timeline at the meeting on 24 February. SARAG agreed to hold the next meeting on Tuesday 8 September 2015 where members will be asked to critique the final draft HIMI stock assessment for Mackerel Icefish and Patagonian Toothfish. Members noted the revised stock assessment will then be presented as the Australian Government submission to the Working Group on Fish Stock assessment & CCAMLR meetings in October 2015. In November SouthMAC will hold a teleconference (date to be confirmed) and consider the outcomes of CCAMLR for the Mackerel Icefish and Patagonian Toothfish stock assessment and prepare advice for the AFMA Commission.
CCAMLR New and Exploratory Fisheries

Agenda item 15 – Fishery update

SouthMAC noted that at its 2014 meeting, CCAMLR supported Australia’s application for Australian Longline Pty Ltd’s FV Antarctic Chieftain to fish in CCAMLR Statistical Divisions 88.1 and 88.2 during the 2014/15 CCAMLR fishing season.

Following CCAMLR’s support, AFMA permitted the Antarctic Chieftain to start longline fishing in these areas from 1 December 2014. The vessel commenced fishing in early December but only fished in area 88.2. Members noted that the vessel will soon be exiting CCAMLR waters as the Olympic TACs for Statistical Divisions 88.1 and 88.2, and the TACs for the Small Scale Research Units within these Divisions, have been reached and the areas are now closed to fishing.

Industry noted that it was often difficult to fish in the research blocks as they were close to the shelf and questioned whether the information required to be collected in these areas was necessary. Members further noted that New Zealand had put a request to the 2014 CCAMLR meeting to start the fishing season later to avoid some of the harsher weather conditions. SouthMAC agreed that these issues should be discussed with New Zealand in the upcoming bilateral discussions.

Agenda item 16 – 2015/16 Expressions of Interest

SouthMAC noted that two Australian companies had submitted Expressions of Interest wanting to access CCAMLR New and Exploratory fisheries in the 2015/16 fishing season (areas 88.1, 88.2, 58.4.1 and 58.4.2) by the due date of 20 February 2015.

Members noted that, because both companies had a proven track record in Antarctic fisheries, a decision had been made to go straight to full proposals which are due by 30 March 2015. The CCAMLR Interdepartmental Committee and CCAMLR Consultative Forum are scheduled to meet on 16 April 2015 and will be asked to consider the full proposals.

Members further noted that AAD, with input from AFMA and applicants, will then prepare the research components of the applications, prior to lodging a full proposal with the CCAMLR Secretariat by 1 June 2015.

The AAD member explained that if Industry submit an application to fish in the data poor areas 58.4.1 and 58.4.2 a substantial amount of extra work will be required to develop the research component. Mr Exel noted that Austral had previously trawled in area 58.4.1 so a submission was sent to CCAMLR in the 2005/06 season.
Finance
Agenda item 17 – 2015/16 budget

SouthMAC noted that the internal budgeting process had started at AFMA and it is currently being approved by the executive before overheads are applied. The AFMA member explained that the draft 2015/16 budget is expected be sent out next month for a consultation period. Members noted that for the sub-Antarctic fisheries more staff time has been allocated for the 2015/16 budget based on the current increase in workload as a result of the CCAMLR New and Exploratory Fisheries and the increased HIMI TAC. The observer budget will also increase given the predicted 17 trips to the Antarctic fisheries. Members noted that AFMA has enough observers for the 17 trips but very limited contingency. AFMA requested that Industry inform them of any additional Antarctic trips planned as soon as possible.

Action arising 4: Industry to inform AFMA as soon as possible if they plan on conducting more than the current budgeted 17 observer trips.

Other
Agenda item 18 – Other business

Member noted that current SouthMAC membership expires on 30 June 2015. AFMA has begun the process of appointing a Chair and this process should be finalised by the end of the month. A selection panel will then be formed consisting of the SouthMAC Chair, the Executive Manager fisheries, and an external candidate to appoint the remaining MAC members. Applications for SouthMAC membership are due by 19 March 2015.

Agenda item 19 – Proposed external access by MAC and RAG

SouthMAC noted AFMA’s intention to provide MAC and RAG members with external user access to parts of the system. Members noted that the new system will allow MAC and RAG members and observers to log on and access and provide comment on proposed meeting dates, agendas, meeting papers, sitting fee and travel claim forms, to review correspondence and potentially update contact and banking details online.

Agenda item 20 - Next meeting

SouthMAC agreed to meet via teleconference in November 2015 to discuss SARAG and CCAMLR’s consideration of the HIMI stock assessment. Members agreed the next face-to-face meeting of SouthMAC would be held in Hobart in early 2016 in conjunction with SARAG, unless a need arose to meet earlier.
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<td>MITF season extension - AFMA to inform SouthMAC of the outcomes of the AFMA Commissions discussions regarding the MITF season extension.</td>
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<td>HIMI FAP - AFMA to circulate final HIMI FAP to members</td>
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