

# KAHO‘OLAWE

KO HEMA LAMALAMA | Newsletter of the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission | Fall 2024

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Welcome to *Ko Hema Lamalama*, the newsletter of the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve. Uncle Harry Mitchell interpreted this name as **the southern beacon**, which served as a source of light to weary travelers voyaging beyond the pillars of Kahiki. Let *Ko Hema Lamalama* aid us in sharing a source of light from Kaho‘olawe and the restoration of Hawaiian culture across Hawai‘i nei. *This issue is made possible by supporters like you. Mahalo for helping us share Kaho‘olawe.*

# FROM THE DIRECTOR



Executive Director  
Michael K. Nāho'opi'i

The other day, after a DLNR Administrator's meeting, one of the other division administrators asked me about KIRC strategic goals and performance metrics. I could have responded with the first part of our vision statement where:

"The kino (physical manifestation) of Kanaloa is restored. Forests and shrublands of native plants and other biota clothe its slopes and valleys. Pristine ocean waters and healthy reef ecosystems are the foundation that supports and surrounds the island."

Where our metric is how much of the desolate hard pan is being restored and the number of native seedlings planted or acres restored. I could have also answered by referring to our community based "I OLA KANALOA" strategic plan that list eight program areas that we are focusing our efforts to accomplish our goals of:

1. Pilina 'Āina, Renewing Connections: Honoring the natural environment and revitalizing relationships through Kanaloa Kaho'olawe.
2. Paepae Ola, Live Sustainably: Cultivating and utilizing the resources of Kanaloa Kaho'olawe in a responsible and sustainable manner.
3. 'Ike Kūhohonu, Elevating Knowledge: Refining, mastering and expanding Hawaiian skills and practices nurtured by Kanaloa Kaho'olawe.
4. Kūkulu Ea, Realizing Identity: Affirming the sacredness of Kanaloa Kaho'olawe as a foundation for the Hawaiian nation.

But I answered this question by talking about how the journey accomplishing the individual steps to achieving these goals are much more important than the actual goal itself. The second part of our vision for Kaho'olawe states:

"Nā po'e o Hawai'i (the people of Hawai'i) care for the land in a manner, which recognizes the island and ocean of Kanaloa as a living spiritual entity. Kanaloa is a pu'uhonua and wahi pana (a place of refuge, a sacred place) where native Hawaiian cultural practices flourish."

As the KIRC brings volunteers to the island to help restore and accomplish our vision for the island, they are learning how to work together to help heal the land. Since we bring a diverse group of people from many walks of life, they are also learning how to work together for a common cause. The lessons our volunteers learn on Kaho'olawe about healing, cooperation and the connection to the 'āina (land) is something that they will take back to their own communities when they return home. It's this experience with Kaho'olawe that is just as important as the actual work that is being done on island.

## 20th Anniversary: The Reunion of the Early Warriors of Kaho'olawe and Voyagers of Hōkūle'a



October 2004 - 2024

Wa'a Hōkūle'a and Mo'okiha O Pi'ilani arrival in Honokanai'a Bay, Kaho'olawe in October 2024

October 22nd 2024 marked the 20th anniversary of the historic gathering that took place on Kaho'olawe in October 2004 to welcome back the original activists of the 1970's protests. The 2004 gathering celebrated 14 years of the end of the bombing by the U.S Navy. The original activists, or "Early Warriors" including Dr. Emmett Aluli and Walter Ritte of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana ('Ohana) returned to the island, some for the first time back in 30 years. Joining the Early Warriors of Kaho'olawe were the "Early Voyagers" of Hōkūle'a, modern Hawaiian seafarers who lead the way in re-establishing ancient Hawaiian open ocean navigation. The histories of Hōkūle'a and Kaho'olawe are both stories of Hawaiian Renaissance that began in 1976. Members of the 'Ohana and representatives of the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) gathered in anticipation of receiving the canoes and their crews on Kaho'olawe and to give blessings to the canoes and the voyagers as they departed on their next voyage.

During the October 2004 gathering, Micronesian master navigator Mau Piailug watched Hawaiians on voyaging canoes arrive to re-establish Kaho'olawe as the departure point for native vessels. Kealaikahiki, or pathway to Kahiki, is the piko (navel) of the main Hawaiian islands and the traditional training ground for ocean navigators. Just after dawn the next day, the kūpuna of Kaho'olawe were called upon to give blessings to the canoes and the voyagers. 'Awa was offered to Kanaloa, deity of the open ocean, to open the pathway for the canoes to depart. A small wa'a, representing the voyaging canoes, was launched into Kealaikahiki Channel bearing gifts for the voyagers: cups of 'awa, soil from Pu'u Moiwi adze quarry, a moi fish and coral from the shores of Kealaikahiki. Piailug was represented in the circle at Kealaikahiki by the 'aha (coconut fiber) cord he presented to the 'Ohana in 2004.

(continued on pg. 3)



Around 250 participants helping transport offerings from the canoes to Honokanai'a beach on Kaho'olawe. October 2004. Photo: Gary T. Kubota



Among the people on Kaho'olawe was traditional Pacific Island navigator Mau Piailug. He spoke about the spiritual importance of starting Hawaiian voyages from the island. October 2004. Photo: Gary T. Kubota

# 20TH ANNIVERSARY

The Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana welcoming members of the Polynesian Voyaging Society and Hui O Wa'a Kaulua at Honokanai'a beach on Kaho'olawe. October 2024



*(continued)* “The cord has been symbolically sent to sea with the Hōkūle‘a crew,” added Aluli, “and will pull them back home when the journey is complete.” It was at Kealaikahiki in October 2004 that Piailug gave the charge to all the canoe families to begin each long distance voyage by paying respect to the kūpuna there. Aluli explains, “We’re fulfilling the kuleana given us by Papa Mau to ask our ancestral navigators to guide and protect our voyagers as they launch and until they return home safely.” Craig Neff, cultural practitioner with the ‘Ohana stated “We’re here to send aloha for the voyage”. While on island, the Early Voyagers retold the story of Hōkūle‘a and explored the deep connection and similarity to the story of the Early Warriors. The two groups reconnected and addressed a painful divide that occurred in the formative years of the Native Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance. “They come here with blessings and when they leave, the spirit of this place goes with them,” Neff said.



PVS Master Navigator Bruce Blankenfeld pointing to Kaho'olawe while sailing over on Hōkūle‘a on October 25th, 2024

## Hōkūle‘a Returns and Mo‘okiha O Pi‘ilani Welcomed

Fast forward twenty years later, on October 25th, 2024, captain and crew members of the Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS) and Hui O Wa'a Kaulua departed from Mā'alaea and sailed to Kaho'olawe. Members of the 'Ohana, KIRC staff and contractors, and Kamehameha Schools - Maui volunteers welcomed them on Honokanai'a beach. A ho'okupu of niu (coconut tree) was presented by Kapena (Captain) Timi Gilliom of Mo'okiha O Pi'ilani on behalf of Hui O Wa'a Kaulua. The KIRC was honored to welcome the PVS Moananuiākea Voyage and the Pae 'Āina Statewide Sail to Kaho'olawe. “We are honored to sail to Kaho'olawe. We do so with deep respect and gratitude for this special place and all who have worked to reclaim, restore and heal the island.” said PVS CEO Nainoa Thompson.



Hui O Wa'a Kaulua crew members sailing back from Kaho'olawe on Mo'okiha O Pi'ilani on October 26th, 2024

# 20TH ANNIVERSARY



A crew member and escort boat captain overlooking the wa'a's in Honokanai'a Bay on Kaho'olawe.



Crew members planting 'aki'aki on Honokanai'a Beach



'Ohana members Derek Kekaulike Mar and Wendell Figueroa educating the current cohort of navigators and crew members at the Kuhike'e.



'Ohana and PVS member Atwood "Maka" Makanani speaking to the group about his vision for the future of Kaho'olawe.

The 'Ohana has a long-standing history and connection with the canoe. In the 1970's, the stopping of the bombing of Kaho'olawe and the birth of Hōkūle'a to revive ancient Hawaiian voyaging were simultaneously part of the movement of what would become the Native Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance. The coming together and healing of the two groups is symbolized through the joint dedication of a voyaging platform and a contemporary paepae (cultural site) at Kealaikahiki called Kuhike'e. Kealaikahiki, which translates to "the path to Tahiti" is an ancestral sea road that connects Hawai'i to the Kahiki homeland. The Kuhike'e Navigational Observation Platform was blessed and dedicated by Master Navigator Mau Pailug. The location of the navigational platform was selected by PVS navigators Nainoa Thompson and Chad Baybayan. Atwood "Maka" Makanani, member of the PVS since 1975 and 'Ohana oversaw the construction of the platform. The platform was designed to include a star compass for navigation students to learn how to wayfind, utilizing the compass.

While on island, in an intimate ceremony held by 'Ohana members Derek Kekaulike Mar and Wendell Figueroa, the current cohort of navigators and captains drank 'awa at Kuhike'e. The captain and crew of Hōkūle'a and Mo'okiha O Pi'ilani took part in restoring and stabilizing the sand dunes on Honokanai'a Beach by planting native 'aki'aki grass and ākulikuli. This was facilitated by KIRC staff and Dawson contractors. The group then visited Sailor's Hat and heard from Maka share his mana'o and future vision for Kaho'olawe.

In practice, we at the KIRC started a long voyage many years ago to restore and bring life back to Kaho'olawe. Unlike the Moananuiākea Voyage, our voyage still continues and has much further to go. We look forward to the day when our children and grandchildren take up our paddles and man our sails to continue our long voyage of bringing life back to Kaho'olawe.

I OLA KANALOA!



Captains and crew members of PVS and Hui O Wa'a Kaulua, boat escort captains, 'Ohana members and KIRC staff on Honokanai'a Beach.

# RESTORATION PROGRAM



During this past fall, volunteers from Kamehameha Schools (KS) Maui, KS Kapālama Art Department, KS Alum, and the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana assisted the Restoration Program in completing work on the KIRC’s awarded federal grant, the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant. The goal of this project is to enhance the ephemeral wetlands at Lua ‘O Kealialalo (20 acres upland wetland) and Keanakeiki (3 acres coastal wetland). Alien plants such as *Cenchrus ciliaris* (Buffel grass), *Panicum maximum* (Guinea grass), *Prosopis pallida* (kiawe) and *Xanthium strumarium* (kikiana) were removed. After non-native removal, a total of 6,000 plants were planted in these two wetland sites. Polynesian or Canoe plants such as *Aleurites moluccana* (kukui), *Cordia subcordata* (kou) and *Thespesia populnea* (milo) along with native plant species including *Eragrostis variabilis* (kawelu), *Gossypium tomentosum* (mao), *Cyperus javanicus* (ahu awa) and *Cyperus laevigatus* (makaloa) were all planted. Volunteers also assisted repairing roads, fuel reduction around Honokanai‘a Base Camp and the up keep of facilities.

What’s next? The Restoration team will check the status of germination of the seedballs that were distributed in the Kamōhio area in August. Natural Resource Specialist Jamie Bruch along with volunteers made 350 seedballs containing seeds of Ma‘o, A‘al‘i‘i and Pili grass. Seedballs contained native Kanaloa microbes, native Kanaloa red dirt, and compost to bind it together.



Left: Volunteers from Kamehameha Schools and UH filling gravel bags for road repairs. Middle: Volunteers KS - Maui planting from Right: Seedballs before being distributed

## Happy Retirement!



**Lyman Abbott, Natural Resource Specialist III**



After 21 years of service with the KIRC, we bid a heartfelt “a hui hou” to Lyman Abbott and celebrate him in his retirement. Abbott has been an unwavering force on the Restoration team, working to heal and protect Kaho’olawe’s fragile ecosystems. During his tenure with the KIRC, Abbott’s main duties were to oversee the Hawaii Department of Health Watershed projects as well as the Clean Water Branch. During this time, Abbott successfully managed five DOH grants bringing in \$5,000,000, planting over 300,000 native plants, with the assistance of 15,000 volunteers.

“Abbott’s background in Geology and Hawaiian Ecosystems greatly contributed to the success of the Restoration Program!” - Paul Higashino, KIRC Restoration Program Manager

“There were many occasions where Lyman took me aside and taught me an interesting factoid about soils or plants while on Kaho’olawe that I was then able to share with our many volunteer groups. His passion for music was also something special. I will miss the guitar sessions we had on the deck outside the kitchen in the evenings. Composing songs that came to our heads inspired by our work and time spent on Kaho’olawe.” -Lopaka White, KIRC Operations Manager

Abbott’s passion and expertise have made a lasting impact on Kaho’olawe. His legacy is etched into the soil and in the thriving native plants that tell the story of his care.

Mahalo nui loa Lyman. Your contributions will never be forgotten!

*“Its been an honor to work in the Restoration department for the KIRC since 2003. I learned so much about the ecology of Kaho’olawe and know our work leaves a legacy for future restoration efforts. Over the years, we out planted native grasses, shrubs and trees into several watersheds, including Kaulana, Hakioawa and Kamōhio. Fortunately, some plant species such as ‘a’ali’i, produced viable seeds that are creating a new generation of native vegetation. It is my hope to see that restorative process continue, so that our efforts in the past persist well into the future. A final note is to thank all the KIRC Staff and volunteers that have contributed their time and effort over the years to bring back the dryland Hawaiian forest on Kaho’olawe.” - Lyman Abbott*

# OCEAN PROGRAM



Left: Volunteers from NALU Studies planting Milo at Keanakeiki Right: Hui O Wa'a Kaulua Captain Timi Gilliom next to the newly planted Niu coconut offering at base camp in Honokanai'a.



During this past fall, the KIRC welcomed volunteers from Kamehameha Schools (KS) Maui, Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, Pacific American Foundation's Nature Activities for Learning and Understanding (NALU) Studies, Polynesian Voyaging Society and Hui O Wa'a Kaulua. Volunteers assisted the Ocean Program in completing work on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant. This grant funds enhancement to a 2.69-acre seasonal wetland in Honokanai'a including planting 10,000 native species, invasive species removal, and reduction of sedimentation and increase water flow into the wetland. A total of 3,000 native 'aki 'aki were planted at Honokanai'a. This brings the total number of native plants reintroduced by the KIRC's Ocean Program since 2022 to over 28,687. Alien plants such as *Cenchrus ciliaris* (Buffel grass), *Panicum maiximum* (Guinea grass), *Prosopis pallida* (kiawe) and *Xanthium strumarium* (kikiania) were removed. Volunteers also repaired roads by shoveling gravel and laying gravel bags down which will help decrease the sedimentation flow into the ocean. In November, the KIRC's Ocean Program underwent Helicopter Safety Training with Windward Aviation. This training is crucial for when KIRC completes future marine debris removal on Kaho'olawe.

What's next? Starting in January 2025, the Ocean Program will begin work on the newly awarded Green Grant to enhance the wetlands at Honokanai'a and Honukanaeae. In addition to wetland restoration, another goal of the Green Grant is to stabilize the sand dunes on the coastline of Kealaikahiki 'ili by introducing over 8,000 native vegetation and removing invasive species, and constructing waterflow control devices and sediment traps.

Left: Ocean Resource Specialists Caroline Sabharwal, Christina Wine, and Dean Tokishi after completion of the Helicopter Safety training. Right: Sabharwal and Tokishi performing a sling load training.





## Volunteer and Staff Appreciation

The KIRC's Operations team is vital in transporting our staff and volunteers to Kaho'olawe and back safely. KIRC staff are also responsible for transporting cargo, including vehicles and bulk fuel, to Kaho'olawe which is a task with many complexities including the challenge of unloading cargo during beach landings, as Kaho'olawe has no dock. The KIRC transports personnel, supplies and cargo by boat, a landing craft cargo vessel, named the 'Ōhua. The KIRC is thankful to our community volunteers and staff, new and seasoned, who crew with our Operations team to safely bring our volunteers over to island to continue our restoration efforts on Kaho'olawe!



"Being the daughter of our Commission Coordinator Terri Gavagan, Kukui Gavagan has been a steady volunteer with the KIRC since she was at least 12 years old. Now as an adult, we have a volunteer staff support member who has been around longer than some of our staff. Her skill sets and contributions to the team have been very helpful, especially in times of need when we have been short handed on the boat. She is a strong swimmer, diver, and an exceptional crew member; not to mention the fact that she can fit in between the engines of the boat when helping with repairs and maintenance. We are very fortunate to have Kukui as a volunteer crew member for our boat operations." -Lopaka White, KIRC Operations Manager

"We are pleased to have added Ross Kamimoto to the team. He has made such a positive impact to our work, as he is a quick learner and comes with a strong back round in conservation coming from MISC. Always sporting a smile and a positive attitude, Ross has become an integral part of the operations team in a very short time. As a bonus, he is an avid photographer and has already captured some amazing, even once in a lifetime (Atlas comet) moments on camera while out on Kaho'olawe. We are grateful to have Ross as our new Volunteer Coordinator. It is an important job as this position makes the first impression of the KIRC and by extension Kaho'olawe, to our volunteers." -Lopaka White, KIRC Operations Manager



From left to right. KIRC's Lopaka White giving a safety briefing to volunteers. KIRC staff transporting supplies over to Kaho'olawe. KIRC staff unloading supplies onto Honokanai'a Beach for a volunteer access.

# KŌKUA KAHO'OLAWE

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## WHAT DOES MY KIRC MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT?



Safety, transport and on-island operations



Research, monitoring and ocean programs



Planting, erosion control and restoration efforts



Preservation and protection of cultural resources



Access, education and community involvement

## ALOHA KAHO'OLAWE

**Aloha Kaho'olawe** is a campaign to support restoration and access. We invite participation via membership, partnerships and legislative support. By building consensus that there is value in the historical, cultural, ecological and community building resources shared through Kaho'olawe, we aim to share this special place now and for generations to come.

**Benefits Include:**

Annual Family Membership to Maui Ocean Center (valued at \$290)

Annual Individual Membership to Maui Ocean Center (valued at \$129)

KIRC Logo T-Shirt or Card Set  
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Subscription to Ko Hema Lamalama	✓	✓	✓
KIRC Logo Sticker	✓	✓	✓
KIRC Virtual Tour QR Sticker	✓	✓	✓



Front of T-Shirt (in Blue)



Back of T-Shirt (In Orange)



The Kaho'olawe Exhibit at Maui Ocean Center



A set of 5 greeting cards



Ko Hema Lamalama Newsletters



Stickers

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Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission

811 Kolu Street, Suite 201 | Wailuku, HI 96793.

Checks may be made payable to Kaho'olawe Rehabilitation Trust Fund. You can also give online at [kahoolawe.hawaii.gov/donations.shtml](http://kahoolawe.hawaii.gov/donations.shtml).

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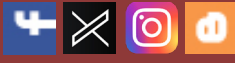
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Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission  
 811 Kolu Street, Suite #201, Wailuku, HI 96793  
 Tel: (808) 243-5020 | Fax: (808) 243-5885  
 Email: administrator@kirc.hawaii.gov  
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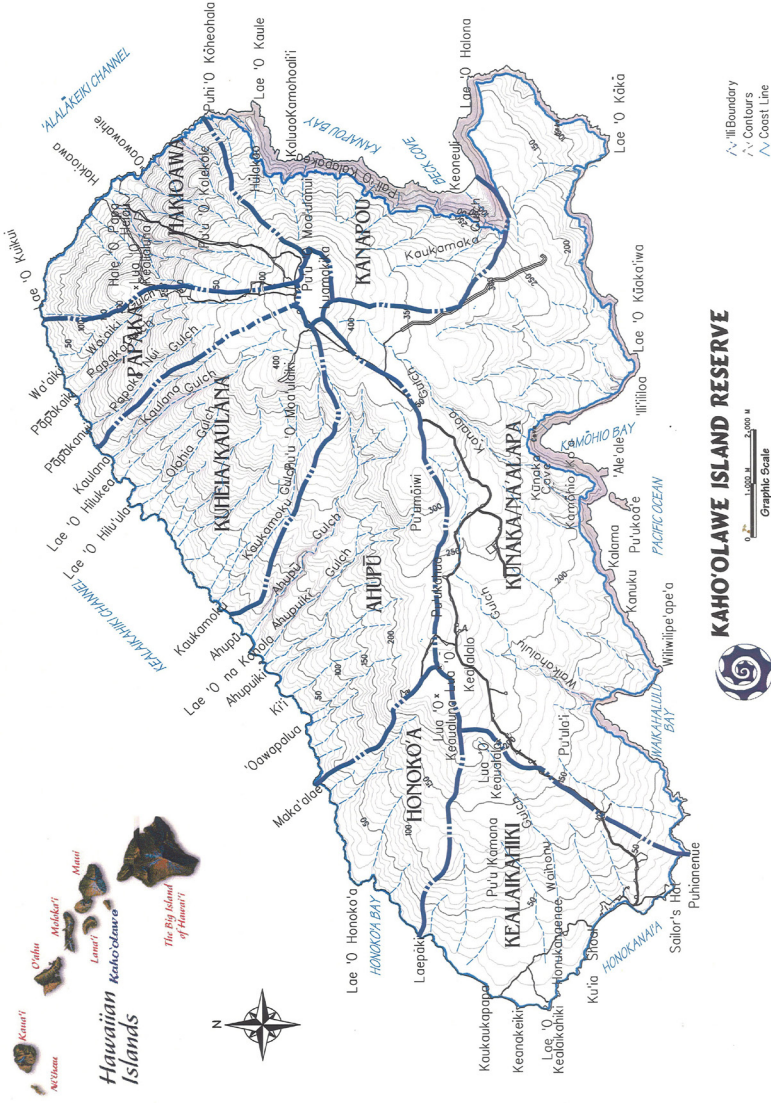
Cover photo: Wa'a Hōkūlé'a and Mo'ōkiha O Pi'ilani in Honokanai'a Bay, Kaho'olawe, October 2024.

## ABOUT THE KIRC

The Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) was established by the Hawai'i State Legislature in 1994 to manage the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve while held in trust for a future Native Hawaiian sovereign entity. The KIRC has pledged to provide for the meaningful and safe use of Kaho'olawe for the purpose of the traditional and cultural practices of the native Hawaiian people and to undertake the restoration of the island and its waters. Its mission is to implement the vision for Kaho'olawe Island in which the *kino* (body) of Kaho'olawe is restored and *nā po'e o Hawai'i* (the people of Hawai'i) care for the land. The organization is managed by a seven-member Commission and a committed staff specializing in five core programs: Ocean, Restoration, Culture, Operations and Administration.

## COMMISSIONERS

- Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana*: **Michelle Miki'ala Pescaia** (Interpretive Park Ranger, Kalaupapa National Historic Park)
  - Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana*: **Faith Kahale Saito** (Native Hawaiian Counselor, Hulili Ke Kukui Hawaiian Center, University College, Honolulu Community College)
  - Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana*: **Ānela Evans** (ʻIke Hawai'i Faculty, Punahou School)
  - County of Maui*: **Saumalu Mataafa** (Deputy Director, Department of Housing and Human Concerns, County of Maui)
  - Department of Land & Natural Resources*: **Dawn N.S. Chang** (Chairperson, Department of Land & Natural Resources)
  - Native Hawaiian Organization*: **Benton Keali'i Pang** (President, O'ahu Council, Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs)
  - Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA)*: **Justin Keoni Souza** (Trustee, OHA)
- Michael K. Nāho'opi'i, KIRC Executive Director



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