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VilasCounty

LAKES AND RIVERS ASSOCIATION

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VCLRA.ORG

WINTER 2022 - 23

CELEBRATING A YEAR OF IMPACT; LOOKING FORWARD TO A YEAR OF GROWTH AND NEW POSSIBILITIES

THE President's message

It was a year for increasing program initiatives, establishing new partnerships, advancing technology, and leveraging ways to reach an even broader community relevant to protecting our lakes and waterways.

One of the great strengths of VCLRA is our members, and VCLRA needs your help to grow even stronger in 2023. We aim to significantly boost our membership! If you are a member, be sure to renew. If you, your business or your lake association is not a member, now is the time to step up! Check out the insert in this issue and add to our strength!

Back together again

The effects of enhanced waves from wake surf boats have been the topic of much concern and research in recent years. In addition, the issues surrounding short-term rentals of lakefront homes and cabins and how they affect lake water quality, lake crowding, and the integrity of lakefront neighborhoods have also been of great concern to our members. These and many other topics were the focus of the 2022 Six-County Lakes & Rivers Conference held in conjunction with our VCLRA annual meeting on July 15, 2022. In case you missed it, all the presentations from this event may be viewed on our website. Find it in <https://vclra.org/news-and-articles/>.

These topics must have resonated well with our lake community as we saw a surge in attendance not seen in many years. Or perhaps it was the joy of being back together again after two years of Zooming! One thing is certain – the energy felt from being back together again was unmatched. We laughed, hugged, and caught up on what was missed over the last couple years and some months, in addition to having a great time of learning and discussion.

New partnerships and initiatives

We have continued partnering with different organizations to expand our reach and effectiveness, and provide more benefits to our members. VCLRA has been working closely for a couple years with Jeff Meessmann and the Last Wilderness Alliance regarding wake surf boat regulation and have an article in this newsletter detailing some of the progress made on pursuing regulation on multiple fronts, both state and local. We have also partnered with Northwoods Land Trust (NWLT) on a Shoreland Protection Legacy initiative in Vilas County, and Carrie Rasmussen of NWLT has contributed a newsletter article highlighting some of the ways lake associations have supported this work. A new VCLRA webpage has been developed for the Legacy initiative here: <https://vclra.org/legacy/>. Finally, VCLRA board member and UW scientist Susan Knight has written an extensive newsletter article on ways to prevent AIS in our lakes and rivers. We will follow up with a series of blog articles on our website with more in-depth coverage of AIS prevention strategies.

Continued on next page

President's Message, continued from page 1

Looking ahead

We will continue to leverage technology and innovate in ways that help us grow our outreach and better accomplish our mission to protect lakes and rivers. We are proud to note that during the summer our website was receiving about 1000 views per month, nearly double the year before. And, according to Google, our website is the leading source of information on protecting lakes in Vilas County.

Having a robust membership and reaching a much broader community beyond our membership are vital; protecting our waters requires everyone's understanding and cooperation. Please join our efforts to protect Vilas County's beautiful lakes and rivers by renewing or becoming a member today!

Enjoy our lakes and rivers responsibly.



Tom Ewing, VCLRA president

VCLRA Initiatives & Resources

Browse our initiatives and other useful resources and tools at vclra.org/initiatives/. Popular choices include: [List of Vilas County Lake Associations](#), [Northwoods Businesses for Clean Waters](#), [New Shoreland Owners Initiative](#), [GREET Initiative](#), [Shoreland Protection Legacy Initiative](#), [Vilas County AIS Map](#), [Blue Heron Shoreland Stewardship Award Program](#), and [VCLRA Youth Scholarship](#).

VCLRA also has a news and article blog that you can view at vclra.org/news-and-articles/. Subscribe to blog news/articles from our VCLRA homepage at vclra.org/#gotosubscribe to be notified automatically by email when new articles are posted.

Back issues of our newsletter can be found at vclra.org/newsletter-archive/.

Finally, join VCLRA or renew your membership online at vclra.org/join-or-renew/.

The online process is streamlined and easy to use, saves us work processing manual entries, plus handles payment by check or credit card! If paying by check, just mail a copy of the member registration acknowledgement you will receive by email along with your check.

A mail-in membership form is also available online at vclra.org/mail-in/ and as an insert in this newsletter.



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VCLRA Presents Two Blue Heron Shoreland Stewardship Awards in 2022



Mark & Andrea Spears, Susan Knight (VCLRA), Debbie Millar, accepting on behalf of Anne Millar.

The Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association awarded two Blue Heron Stewardship awards to two properties on Ballard Lake at the annual meeting of the Ballard - Irving - White Birch Lakes Association meeting on August 6, 2022.

The VCLRA Blue Heron award was established for a threefold purpose; first to provide lake associations with the opportunity to nominate and recognize property owners on their lakes who have worked hard to maintain their shoreline property in a more natural state with minimal environmental impacts. Second, to inform lake property owners about the many ways that lakeshore properties can be developed to minimize shoreline disruption. And third, to educate lake property owners about how important shoreline biodiversity is to the overall health of their lake. The award criteria are divided into five sections: driveway and parking areas, structures and septic areas, yard and recreation areas, shoreline area and an overview of the entire lot area.

In our review, Ballardwood received a very high score. The property is truly extraordinary — the living quarters are outside of our usual review area (150 feet of frontage by 300 feet back) — an exceptional situation! The Spears Family, also on Ballard Lake, has a spectacular home and property, and exceeded every recommendation for a healthy shoreline stewardship. These conscientious homeowners are living lightly on their property, and they set an excellent example for other homeowners and visitors on Ballard Lake who can see and learn about the beauty and ecological value of careful shoreline stewardship. Deb Millar accepted the award on behalf of Ballardwood and Mark and Andrea Spears were present to accept their awards. Thanks to these families for their careful and stewardship.

These families are among several on Ballard Lake who have previously won this award, including the Millar family, the Sandman Family and the Heitz family. The Millar family was awarded a Healthy Lakes grant to restore their shoreline and won the Blue Heron award two years ago. VCLRA was pleased to award Ballardwood (and the Millar family) and the Spears Family a painted rock, our traditional token of recognition for their excellent stewardship. They have our heartfelt thanks for their exceptional stewardship and our deep appreciation for the extraordinary example they are setting for their neighbors and visitors to Ballard Lake.

The Blue Heron Shoreland Stewardship Award — be part of a grand tradition!

Do you know someone who makes a conscious effort to preserve an outstanding natural shoreline? **We want to recognize them for their effort!**

To obtain more information about the Blue Heron Shoreline Stewardship Award program or to access an online application, visit <https://vclra.org/blue-heron-program/>, or contact Susan Knight at seknight@wisc.edu or 608-890-4722.



VCLRA and Last Wilderness Alliance (LWA) are Working Together to Inform the Public and Address Hazardous Wake Issues

VCLRA's President Tom Ewing's letter to the membership in the 2021 summer Newsletter, followed by the Six-County Lakes & Rivers Conference jointly-sponsored by VCLRA and OCLRA in July with presentations by LWA's Jeff Meessmann and others, put the issue of Hazardous Wakes squarely before the lake community. Since then, LWA and VCLRA have continued to work together to respond to requests from local communities and lake associations for information and examples of local ordinances and the results from recent research studies.

LWA is actively pursuing the regulation of these Hazardous Wakes on two fronts: through local efforts and state-wide. Supporters of LWA submitted six resolutions to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) regarding the regulation of these Hazardous Wakes. The resolutions were resoundingly approved as a next step in the development of a DNR regulation.

Additionally, LWA leadership has appeared before the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (NRB) to provide testimony about the safety and environmental concerns that Hazardous Wakes pose to Wisconsin lakes. Action by the NRB could lead to DNR regulation and possible state-wide legislation.

The LWA website <https://lastwildernessalliance.org/wakesurfing> now offers an extensive collection of research, videos, local ordinance information and other resources. This information is available free to the public.

Given the common interests shared by LWA and VCLRA, the two organizations are working together to inform the public and work for the regulation of the hazardous effects of these intentionally magnified boat wakes. Partnering with additional organizations, individual lake associations and other like-minded organizations will help demonstrate the need for local and/or state-wide regulation to address the threats that Hazardous Wakes pose to our natural resources and the safety of other lake users.

Contact Jeff Meessmann (lastwildernessalliance@gmail.com) or Tom Ewing (president@vclra.org) for more information.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WAKE SURFING

Wake surfing is one of the fastest growing on-water recreational sports in the country. Wake surfing requires the generation of a large, potentially hazardous wake. A hazardous wake is defined as a boat wake that is intentionally magnified through the use of ballast, design features or operational procedures to amplify the wake's height and consequently generate large, dangerous waves.

The boat operates at about 10 mph plowing through the water, never reaching an on-plane position. The bow is up and the stern is down causing forward visibility problems. The propeller is angled downward about 40 degrees below horizontal which causes propeller wash to scour the lake bottom to a depth of at least 20 feet. The untethered surfer rides the wake directly behind the boat.

These wakes, up to 4 feet high, can travel for more than 700' before they diminish to the size of an ordinary wake caused by a ski boat. Consequently, they readily damage shorelines, piers, docks, boats, capsize other watercraft and damage wildlife habitat. Because the ballast systems cannot be completely emptied, as required by DNR regulations, wake surf boats also become transporters of invasive species when moved from lake to lake.

Few lakes in Vilas County are large enough and deep enough for these boats to safely operate. Yet, more and more of our lakes are experiencing this activity. The Last Wilderness Alliance (LWA) was formed in 2021 as a non-profit organization, in part, to address these concerns. There are now five communities in Wisconsin which have passed local ordinances to address the safety and environmental issues caused by these hazardous wakes. Both LWA and VCLRA are receiving numerous requests from Vilas County communities and lake associations for help in addressing these concerns.

FOR FURTHER BACKGROUND ON WAKE SURF BOATS

SEE OUR WINTER 2021-2022 NEWSLETTER ISSUE, PAGE 6, FOR A MORE COMPREHENSIVE ARTICLE ON WAKE SURF BOATS WITH REFERENCES TO STUDIES AND RESEARCH FROM SEVERAL STATES, [VCLRA.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2022/01/JANUARY-NEWSLETTER-FINAL.PDF](https://vclra.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/JANUARY-NEWSLETTER-FINAL.PDF)





Let's protect our lakes and waterways! Join VCLRA *now* so we can all work together!

If you're as concerned about wake boats, short-term rentals and aquatic invasives (like eurasian water milfoil) as we are, we hope you'll join us to support our advocacy and education work. In fact, we need you to join us. VCLRA helps individuals and lake associations make wise decisions about their lakes and gives them a voice in preserving and protecting our unique lakes and waterways.

From its inception in 1994, VCLRA has maintained strong working relationships with the Wisconsin DNR, UW Extension, Wisconsin Lakes, and town and county officials and administrators in Vilas County. This allows VCLRA, a lake conservation and education organization, to provide the benefits below to lake associations and their members as well as individuals who do not have a lake association:

- Information and assistance on lake related problems and issues
- A bi-annual newsletters rich with insightful information addressing key challenges that impact Vilas water
- Help with forming new lake associations
- Connecting with and interacting with partner organizations and government agencies
- Assistance with and sponsorship of grant applications when an association may not qualify

VCLRA is a constructive citizen group that has earned the respect of the local and state community. Our members are an important part of what we do. Support our mission. Become a member and help protect our beautiful lakes and rivers. If you are already a member, now is the time to renew your membership.

Susan Knight

VCLRA membership director



VCLRA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. You can now join or renew your membership online at <https://vclra.org/join-or-renew/> using a credit card or check. You can also use the mail-in form on the reverse side or print the form out at <https://vclra.org/mail-in/>.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

We are a 501(c)(3) organization; membership fees and donations may be tax-deductible to the extent of the law
We encourage you to join or renew online, if possible: <https://vclra.org/join-or-renew/>

Select one: ☐ **Individual or Family \$25** ☐ **Lake Organization \$50** ☐ **Business Associate-Supporting \$75**

Will you consider adding a small donation to your membership? \$ _____

Individual or Family Membership ☐ New or ☐ Renewal

Name(s): _____

Permanent address: Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Email Address: _____ Ph: _____

How do you wish to receive our newsletter? ☐ Print ☐ Email Email alerts on lake issues? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Name of lake or river of residence, or enter "Off-lake": _____

Name of lake or river organization (if established): _____

Other affiliation, if any (e.g., town chairman, county commissioner, etc.): _____

Lake or River Organization Membership (Lake Associations and Districts) ☐ New or ☐ Renewal

Is there a change in the organization's contact person from last year: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Lake or river organization name: _____

Website, if any: _____

Approximate number of individuals represented by lake or river organization: _____

Key contact person: ☐ President/Chair ☐ Vice-President/Vice-Chair ☐ Secretary Other officer: _____

Name: _____

Permanent address: Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Email Address: _____ Ph: _____

How do you wish to receive our newsletter? ☐ Print ☐ Email Email alerts on lake issues? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you wish to receive additional printed copies of our newsletter to distribute? If so, how many: _____

On a separate sheet, feel free to list anyone else in your organization who should receive a copy of our newsletter directly by mail or email and/or receive email alerts.

Associate-Supporting (Business, other non-profit) ☐ New or ☐ Renewal | ☐ Business or ☐ Non-profit

Business or non-profit: _____ Contact name: _____

Address: Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Email Address: _____ Ph: _____ Website: _____

How do you wish to receive our newsletter? ☐ Print ☐ Email Email alerts on lake issues? ☐ Yes ☐ No



Please make check payable to: **Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association (VCLRA)**
Return form with annual dues before **June 1st** to: VCLRA, PO Box 494, Eagle River, WI 54521
Or join or renew and pay online by check or credit card at: <https://vclra.org/join-or-renew/>

Associations Can Help Protect Land to Benefit our Waters

ARTICLE BY

Carrie Rasmussen, NWLT



The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLT), a 501c3 nonprofit organization based in Eagle River, has collaborated with lake associations in the past to protect land to benefit waters in Vilas County. Protecting natural shoreland and up shore woodlands is one of the most effective ways to protect water quality and fish and wildlife habitat. The stories highlighted here showcase how working together can result in a win-win scenario for landowners, lake associations and conservation organizations.

The Wallmann-Holtzer Nature Preserve

Sybil (Wallmann) Holtzer and grew up enjoying summers on Big Portage Lake in Land O' Lakes. After seeing so many lakefront parcels subdivided and developed, Sybil wanted to give back to the lake. She and her husband, Howard, purchased approximately nine acres of vacant land with 750 feet of frontage with the intention of keeping it natural. To ensure that it remain undeveloped, the Holtzers granted a conservation easement on the property to NWLT. The Holtzers later gifted the remaining interest in the land to NWLT as a bequest when they passed away. NWLT then transferred the property to the Big Portage Lake Riparian Association. Dedicated as the Wallmann-Holtzer Nature Preserve, the Association owns and manages the land and NWLT continues to permanently protect it with a conservation easement. The Association creates reasonable rules

about how the land may be used while following the terms of the easement. Today, the property is one of the few remaining large areas of undeveloped natural shoreline on Big Portage Lake.

Snipe Lake Conservation Easement

Willa Schmidt granted a conservation easement to permanently conserve over 1,500 feet of natural shoreland frontage and about 12 acres of woodlands on Snipe Lake west of Eagle River. This highly scenic, privately owned shoreline provides outstanding fish and wildlife habitat, and is one of the last remaining undeveloped large parcels on the lake. The Snipe Lake Association stepped up by contributing funds to NWLT to help Willa cover the costs associated with granting the easement. A few years later, another landowner on Snipe Lake stepped forward to conserve 56 acres of land with 1,000 feet of frontage through the donation of a perpetual conservation easement to NWLT. The Association assisted once again, and donated funds to NWLT to help with the costs. Costs include NWLT's need to have dedicated stewardship funds set aside for annual monitoring.



Rest Lake Conservation Property

The Manitowish Waters Lakes Association (MWLA) recently accepted ownership of a Rest Lake property after the passing of Mark Leis-tickow - a longtime, local resident. He directed his estate to leave his property to a conservation organization so that it would be returned to its natural state and preserved forever. NWLT was unable to accept the property as a permanent conservation area due to its smaller size and need for hands-on restoration and management. The MWLA, a 501c3 organization, was best suited to accept the land, and they gladly did just that. MWLA determined its mission was aligned with owning and protecting shoreland, as doing so would protect the water quality and native habitat of the Manitowish Waters Chain of Lakes and surrounding waters. The MWLA also received funds from the estate to demolish and remove older buildings and clean up the property. Now they are planning for the restoration of native plants and erosion control of the shoreline.

The Vilas County Lakes & Rivers Association is a partner of the Northwoods Land Trust. Together, the organizations are advancing education and outreach to encourage landowners and associations to protect land and water today for tomorrow. To learn more, visit vclra.org/legacy/ and contact us to start a conversation about how you and/or your association can help protect precious natural resources.

Preventing the Introduction of AIS – the Northwoods Way

ARTICLE BY
Susan Knight, VCLRA

One of the most troubling issues for lake enthusiasts is the introduction of unwanted aquatic invasive species. With so many lakes in the state, the WDNR cannot protect every lake. Instead, the DNR and their partners offer information, grants, and workshops to help lake groups learn to help themselves.

The first step is to identify the different invasive species and how to distinguish them from the native look-alikes that belong in our lakes. The UW-Extension Lakes Partnership program, centered in Stevens Point, but deployed state-wide, is the best place to start. There you can find a handbook and videos on monitoring techniques and photos of the species of concern.

<https://www3.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Documents/programs/CLMN/publications/AISEDHandbookFeb22.pdf>

Since it is considered impossible to eradicate an invasive species in a water body, it is best to prevent any invasive plants and animals from getting into the lake in the first place. Lake groups use several different strategies to prevent any introduction of invasive species.

Clean Boats Clean Waters (CBCW)

The CBCW program, developed decades ago by middle school students in Minocqua, is a simple strategy. People (either paid or volunteer) speak to lake visitors at boat landings and remind them to remove all plants and animals on their boat and trailer before and after visiting a lake. Originally, volunteers worked at their favorite landing, but many lake groups have found it increasingly difficult to recruit volunteers. Now, Wisconsin lake groups can apply for a WDNR grant for up to \$4000 to support 200 hours of work for a paid or volunteer CBCW effort. Many lake groups in Vilas County take advantage of a program administered by UW-Oshkosh to hire, organize and pay students to do this work with funds from the WDNR grant program.

Some lake groups opt to pay for a monitor to watch the landing for many more hours than the WDNR grant will cover. For example, Black Oak Lake property

owners pay to have a monitor at their landing from Opening

Day through mid-October during daylight hours. Other groups, such as Big Portage Lake, use both volunteers from the lake and students from the UW-Oshkosh program.

<https://www3.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/programs/cbcw/default.aspx>

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/Aid/grants/surfacewater/CleanBoatsCleanWatersFactSheet.pdf>

I-LIDS

Some lake groups install electronic “eyes” at boat landings. The town of Plum Lake has seven iLIDS (Internet Landing Installed Devices), a “self-contained, solar powered system installed at boat ramps to reduce risk of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) through video inspection of boats and audio education of boaters”. There are two iLIDS system within the exterior boundaries of the Lac du Flambeau Tribe’s Reservation.



Vilas County Land & Water Conservation LTE, Tatum Eigenberger.
Photo by Cathy Higley



Robert Rosner, 2016, at the T-Docks on Yellow Birch Lake, Eagle River.
Photo by Cathy Higley

and audio education of boaters”. There are two iLIDS system within the exterior boundaries of the Lac du Flambeau Tribe’s Reservation.

Continued on next page

Preventing the Introduction of AIS, continued from page 6

A small kiosk includes a motion-initiated audio message to remind the public to drain their live well and remove all plants before launching their boat. The unit has a video camera to photograph plants caught on boats and trailers and may capture boat registration numbers. The video is screened by the iLIDS company (or lake groups can review the footage themselves), and they contact a designated lake resident with any problem observations. While it may be possible to identify boat owners, the main objective is to educate lake users, rather than track down violators.

<http://wblia.mnlakesanddrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/I-LIDS-Sensor-Info.pdf>

Boat washing

Ideally, lake users would clean their boat and trailer with a power wash, and preferably a high temperature power wash, between lake visits. Though it seems like a good idea, it is difficult to implement for several reasons, including the need for liability insurance for all involved, a reluctance of many boat owners to have their boat washed, the need for a source of clean water, and several other obstacles. There were no public boat washing units in our area in 2022.

Shoreline Patrol

Some lake groups enlist homeowners to monitor the shoreline for AIS by swimming or boating along a designated length of shore. This strategy assures that human eyes are actively watching for AIS in the lake. For example, both Black Oak Lake and Big Portage Lake have divided their shoreline into sections, so that each volunteer is responsible for about a half mile of shoreline. Volunteers patrol their length of shore throughout the summer and record their findings.

Plant surveys

Many lake groups employ a consulting firm, such as [Onterra, LLC](#) or [White Water Associates](#), to complete a thorough survey of all the plants throughout the lake every five years or so. Though an invasive plant or animal could be missed, this kind of survey can detect changes in the plant community.

Please watch for more information about these strategies on VCLRA [website](#) in the next few months.

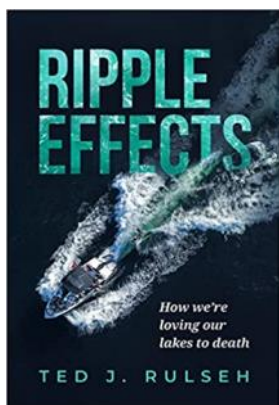


iLIDS instrument installed at Ballard Lake. Photo by Joe Heitz



NORTHWOODS AUTHOR'S CORNER

The Northwoods is fortunate to have many talented authors whose main topic is appreciating, preserving, and protecting our lakes, rivers, and forests. The VCLRA Newsletter is highlighting one book in each newsletter and plans to highlight more on the VCLRA website. It is definitely worth your while to read every one of them!



Our inland lakes are under stress – from invasive species, nutrient pollution, unwise development, defective septic systems, climate change, and more. Ripple Effects looks in depth at these threats to lakes in the glaciated region of the Upper Midwest and outlines potential remedies for them. Based on extensive research and more than 70 interviews with lake scientists, lake association leaders, and other experts, it sounds an alarm about the future of the lakes, while offering affirmative steps all of us can take to help safeguard the lakes for today and generations to come.

TED J. RULSEH WEBSITE: <https://www.thelakeguy.net/>

BOOK LINK: <https://www.thelakeguy.net/books/ripple-effects-how-were-loving-our-lakes-to-death/>

Mark your Calendar

VCLRA booth exhibit venues are marked with an asterisk(*). Some events may not have firm dates as of this publication, so check online for updates.

April 19-21, 2023: Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention, Holiday Inn Convention Center, Stevens Point. Information available on wisconsinwaterweek.org/home/lakes-and-rivers-convention/.

June 17, 2023: Lakes Fest* in Lac du Flambeau, WI. Contact Celeste Hockings at 715-588-4163 or Chockings@ldftribe.com for more information.

July 2023 timeframe: Northwoods Six-County Lakes & Rivers Conference/VCLRA Annual meeting*. Visit vclra.org, or contact Tom Ewing, president@vclra.org, for more information.

Postponed until 2024: Forest Fest*, Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River, WI. See treesfortomorrow.com for updates.

October 7, 2023: Cran-a-rama* in Manitowish Waters, WI. See manitowishwaters.org for more information.

Renew your membership or join VCLRA Today!

Visit our website at vclra.org and register your membership online by check or credit card. Let's work together to keep our lakes clean and beautiful!



Vilas County
LAKES AND RIVERS ASSOCIATION
PO Box 494, Eagle River, WI 54521
Lake County Journal
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vclra.org
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