# Map of threatened ecological communities in Greater Sydney



April 2021

Version 1.0

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Summary

An ecological community may be listed as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered under the New South Wales *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. Collectively these listed communities are referred to as threatened ecological communities (TECs). TEC mapping is used in a wide variety of conservation planning and assessment processes and informs a range of processes under New South Wales legislation.

The map, *Threatened ecological communities Greater Sydney*, identifies the location of 35 TECs. This map is published by Department of Planning, Industry and Environment – Environment, Energy and Science (DPIE-EES) and is available on SEED – the portal for Sharing and Enabling <a href="https://datasets.seed.nsw.gov.au/dataset/threatened-ecological-communities-greater-sydney">https://datasets.seed.nsw.gov.au/dataset/threatened-ecological-communities-greater-sydney</a>.

A subset of data from this map are in use in the Biodiversity Values Map, Native Vegetation Regulatory Map and Rural Fire Service 10/50 tool (herein 'regulatory maps'), as outlined in Section 3.

#### 1.2 Study aims

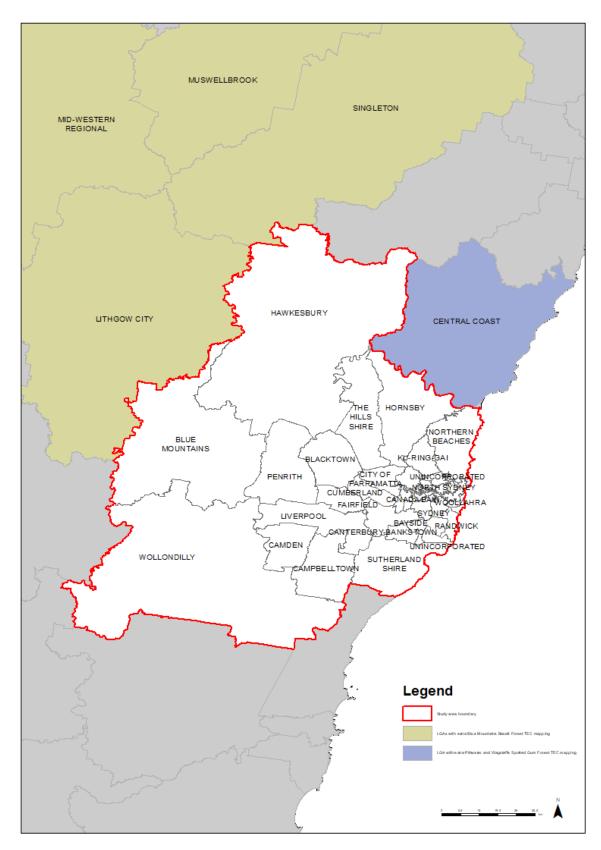
The aims of this project are:

- to develop a map of TECs occurring in Greater Sydney, by collating best available existing vegetation mapping within the project study area and incorporating expert input, and
- to update the map on an ongoing basis, as possible.

#### 1.3 Study area

Local government areas (LGAs) define the Greater Sydney study area boundaries (Figure 1). LGAs on the boundary of the study area include Northern Beaches, Hornsby, Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains, Wollondilly, Campbelltown and Sutherland. The study area is almost 1.1 million hectares and is located within the Sydney Basin bioregion (SEWPaC 2012).

Many of the TECs mapped in this project also occur outside of the study area. For example, the Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains TEC has an extensive distribution north and south of the study area. For such TECs, their occurrence beyond the study area was not identified as part of this project. The exception to this is the full distributions of two TECs - the Blue Mountains Basalt Forest and the Pittwater and Wagstaffe Spotted Gum Forest TECs – have been included in this map, to inform regulatory maps. As a result, outside of the study area, occurrences of these two TECs are identified in Lithgow City, Mid-Western Regional, Muswellbrook and Singleton LGAs (Blue Mountains Basalt Forest TEC) and Central Coast LGA (Pittwater and Wagstaffe Spotted Gum Forest). It is important to note that other TECs which occur in these LGAs are not represented in this map.



**Figure 1.** The study area, and those LGAs outside the study area where mapping of the Blue Mountains Basalt Forest TEC and Pittwater and Wagstaffe Spotted Gum Forest TEC has been incorporated.

#### 2. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

#### 2.1 Selection of source maps

Existing vegetation mapping provides the basis for the mapping of 33 of the 35 TECs in Greater Sydney. Eleven vegetation maps were identified as the best available source maps for the purpose of this project, based on their spatial and thematic accuracy (Table 1). These are herein referred to as the 'source maps' for this project. A reliability hierarchy was also established, to guide which source map would be used where spatial overlaps occurred.

An additional 11 vegetation maps were cross-referenced during the development of the spatial data (Table 2). In some instances, data from these source maps was also incorporated into the TEC mapping.

**Table 1.** Vegetation maps defined as best available for the purposes of this study. Hyperlinked to the dataset and associated reports in the Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data Portal, www.seed.nsw.gov.au)

The Native Vegetation of Yengo and Parr Reserves and Surrounds, 2008. VIS ID 3845.

The Native Vegetation of South-East Wollemi National Park, 2010. VIS ID 4184.

The Native Vegetation of Northern Hawkesbury LGA, 2008. VIS ID 4167.

Bushland Survey - Baulkham Hills Shire, 1991. VIS ID 2236.

Native Vegetation Communities of Hornsby Shire 2017 Update. VIS ID 5065.

Native Vegetation Mapping in the Blue Mountains City Council, 2002, with 2017 updates. VIS ID 2239.

Draft Native Vegetation of the Woodford and Erskine Ranges, Kings Tableland and Narrow Neck Peninsula in the Blue Mountains NP, 2007. VIS ID 2262.

Remnant Vegetation of the western Cumberland subregion, 2013 Update, 2013. VIS ID 4207.

The Native Vegetation of the Sydney Metropolitan Area – Version 3, 2016. VIS 4489.

The Native Vegetation of the Warragamba Special Area, 2003. VIS ID 2380.

Native Vegetation of the Woronora, O'Hares and Metropolitan Catchments, 2003. VIS ID 2387.

#### **Table 2.** Additional vegetation maps used in this study.

Hyperlinked to the dataset and associated reports in the Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data Portal, www.seed.nsw.gov.au)

The Native Vegetation of North-west Wollemi National Park and Surrounds: Including Nullo Mountain, Coricudgy and Cudgegong (Draft) 2012. VIS ID 3863.

Gosford LGA Vegetation 2009. VIS ID 3908.

Mapping and Assessment of Key Vegetation Communities across the Ku-ring-gai Local Government Area, version 3, 2011. No VIS ID.

Hawkesbury City Council Vegetation Mapping, 2007. VIS ID 3958.

Native vegetation of southeast NSW: a revised classification and map for the coast and eastern tablelands, 2010. VIS ID 2230.

Hornsby Local Government Area Threatened Ecological Communities, 2008. VIS ID 4470.

Remnant Trees in the Urban District of Hornsby Shire, 2008, VIS ID 4472.

Vegetation Survey of Marramarra National Park, Muogamarra Nature Reserve & Maroota Historic Site, 1991. VIS ID 2322.

Smith, P. & Smith, J. (2000) Survey of the Duffys Forest Vegetation Community. Unpublished Report to NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Warringah Council.

Assessment of Bangalay Sand Forest TEC on NSW Crown Forest Estate, EPA NSW 2016. No VIS ID.

NSW Estuarine Macrophytes (2018).

#### 2.2 Construction of spatial data for individual TECs

Thirty-three of 35 TEC maps were individually constructed by:

- 1. analysing map unit descriptions and spatial data in each of the source maps and identifying those map units that meet the NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee determination
- 2. documenting the fit between the determination and the map unit in a standard report template, in accordance with the principles outlined in Table 3.

Where only a subset of the map unit was found to meet the determination, qualifying notes were recorded in the report for the TEC. When candidate map units were not deemed to meet the determination, this was also documented. For example, if the source map identified a map unit as equivalent to a TEC, and using the principles outlined in Table 3 the map unit was found not to meet the determination, the justification for this was documented.

- 3. selecting all of the relevant spatial data from the source maps in geographic information system (GIS) format and merging and clipping them based upon the reliability hierarchy, and
- 4. attributing records with selected source map data and creating new attribute data for each record. A list of fields and their definitions are provided in Table 4.

This process resulted in the development of draft maps for 33 of the 35 TECs listed in Table 5.

# **Table 3.** Principles used to assess the fit between the NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee determination and map units in source map products

Limit the distribution to defined biophysical areas including bioregional boundaries where these are explicit and definitive

Consider the precise wording of location descriptors and administrative boundaries that identify any LGAs by name, as to whether the entity "occurs within" or is "recorded or known from" or has qualifiers that indicate it "may be known from elsewhere in bioregion

Be guided by the species lists presented in the Determination and assess statements regarding the characteristics of the floristic composition

Assess habitat descriptors and whether these constrain or define the limits of the TEC which otherwise may have a broader distribution

Assess vegetation structure descriptors that may constrain or allow a range of structural forms

Ensure that interpretations of distribution are consistent with the threat assessment, including threatening processes, that are documented in the Determination

Assess references to existing vegetation classification sources in the Determination. Note whether the existing classifications are "included within" are "part of" or "component of" the Determination.

Classifications developed using traceable quantitative data will be recognised as primary data upon which to assess floristic, habitat and distributional characteristics. Where data has been sourced and used in alternate regional or local classification studies the results will be considered to assist in the development of the TEC definitional attributes.

**Table 4.** Fields in the feature class table

Field name	Definition	For more information		
TEC NSW	Name of threatened ecological	NSW Biodiversity Conservation		
	community as listed under the NSW	Act 2016		
	Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016			
NSW listing	Listing status of the TEC under the NSW	NSW Biodiversity Conservation		
	Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 as	Act 2016		
	either vulnerable, endangered or critically			
	endangered			
SAII status	Whether a TEC is designated as at risk of	Section 3		
	serious and irreversible impacts (SAII)			
RFS 10/50	Whether a TEC is eligible for inclusion in	Section 3		
	the RFS 10/50 tool			
Source polygon	The vegetation map from which the	Tables 1 and 2		
	record is derived			
Source map unit no	The map unit number in the vegetation	Tables 1 and 2		
	map from which the record is derived			
Source map unit	The map unit in the vegetation map from	Tables 1 and 2		
	which the record is derived			
Version date	Date the version is approved for	Not applicable		
	publication			

This method was not applicable to 2 TECs: Hygrocybeae Community of Lane Cove Bushland Park, and The Shorebird Community occurring on the relict tidal delta sands at Taren Point. As fungi and shorebird communities respectively, vegetation types are not the primary determinant for the presence of these TECs. The maps for these TECs were digitised using information in the determinations, and other data sources including BioNet (<a href="www.bionet.nsw.gov.au">www.bionet.nsw.gov.au</a>).

An assessment was also made of the fit between the map unit descriptions and spatial data in each of the source maps with the Commonwealth-listed TECs. However, this work is not included in this map product.

#### **Table 5.** TECs identified in the Greater Sydney area in this project

Agnes Banks Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Bangalay Sand Forest of the Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions

Blue Gum High Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Blue Mountains Basalt Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Blue Mountains Swamps in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Castlereagh Scribbly Gum Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Castlereagh Swamp Woodland

Coastal Saltmarsh in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions

Coastal Upland Swamp in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Cumberland Plain Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Duffys Forest Ecological Community in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Elderslie Banksia Scrub Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Freshwater wetlands on coastal floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South-East Corner bioregions

Hygrocybeae Community of Lane Cove Bushland Park in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Kurnell Dune Forest in the Sutherland Shire and the City of Rockdale

Littoral Rainforest in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions

Maroota Sands Swamp Forest

Moist Shale Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Montane Peatlands and Swamps of the New England Tableland, NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin, South East Corner, South Eastern Highlands and Australian Alps bioregions

O'Hares Creek Shale Forest

Pittwater and Wagstaffe Spotted Gum Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

River-flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplain of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions

Shale Sandstone Transition Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Southern Sydney Sheltered Forest on Transitional Sandstone Soils in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Sun Valley Cabbage Gum in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions

Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions

Sydney Freshwater Wetlands in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

The Shorebird Community occurring on the relict tidal delta sands at Taren Point

Themeda Grassland on Seacliffs and Coastal Headlands in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions

Western Sydney Dry Rainforest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

#### 2.3 Consultation and review of individual TEC maps

DPIE-EES staff were consulted on the draft mapping and associated reports for individual TECs, and their feedback was incorporated.

#### 2.4 Integration of TEC spatial data

Individual TEC maps were merged, and overlaps were resolved by analysing the source data. Where spatial overlaps occurred, the ruleset applied was recorded in the TEC report.

#### 2.5 Excision of large-scale development

Areas subject to large-scale urban development were excised from the spatial data. Excisions were generally only made in areas of large-scale development when impermeable surfaces, such as buildings, carparks and roads, had been constructed (rather than just clearing). Development at the property scale (e.g. individual buildings and roads) in the study area was not excised from the map.

#### 2.6 Additional review of mapping of TECs eligible for inclusion in regulatory maps

DPIE-EES staff conducted further review of the spatial data for the majority of TECs that were eligible for inclusion in regulatory maps at June 2020. Changes made as a result of this expert input were recorded in the internally held version of the spatial data. The TECs subject to additional review are outlined in Table 6.

#### **Table 6.** TEC mapping reviewed in the additional review phase

Agnes Banks Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Blue Gum High Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Blue Mountains Basalt Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Cumberland Plain Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Duffys Forest Ecological Community in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Elderslie Banksia Scrub Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Hygrocybeae Community of Lane Cove Bushland Park in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Maroota Sands Swamp Forest
Pittwater and Wagstaffe Spotted Gum Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Shale Sandstone Transition Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Sun Valley Cabbage Gum in the Sydney Basin Bioregion
Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion

#### 2.7 Limitations

The following limitations should be taken into consideration when using the mapping:

- there are known gaps in coverage due to the lack of mapping in some locations within the study area. These areas include, but are not limited to, the Grose Valley near Wollangambe, Ebenezer, Cattai, west of Mulgoa and west of Thirlmere
- the methodology and scale of source maps vary, with concomitant variation in currency, spatial precision and attribution accuracy. A range of vegetation classifications were utilised in the source maps. The methodologies of source maps range from modelled maps to maps produced via aerial photo interpretation (API) with substantial ground truthing and assigned confidence levels. Modelled maps may vary in accuracy based on the ability of the model to incorporate ecological variation within a rules-based approach, while attribution of API may be open to subjective bias where an interpreter preferentially attributes recognisable or conspicuous species (OEH 2013).

Consequently, the following outcomes are possible:

- areas of TEC may be omitted
- areas identified as TEC may not be, and
- areas identified as TEC may be a different TEC.

Accordingly, property-scale assessments should inform activities, plans and proposals at the property scale.

#### 3. USF IN REGULATORY MAPS

Data in the *Threatened ecological communities Greater Sydney* map informs the Biodiversity Values Map, Native Vegetation Regulatory Map and Rural Fire Service 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement area tool. Appendix 1 summarises the eligibility of the TECs for inclusion in regulatory maps.

Those TECs designated as at risk of serious and irreversible impacts (SAII) are eligible for inclusion in the Biodiversity Values Map. The 'SAII' field in the feature class table denotes the areas of TEC that have been identified as SAII entities.

Those TECs listed as critically endangered under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* are eligible for inclusion in the Native Vegetation Regulatory Map. The 'NSW listing' field in the feature class table denotes those TECs listed as critically endangered.

Similarly, those TECs listed as critically endangered are also eligible for inclusion in the Rural Fire Service 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement area tool. The 'RFS 10/50' field in the feature class table denotes those TECs.

For more information please refer to the following resources:

- SAII: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/serious-and-irreversible-impacts
- Biodiversity Values Map: <a href="https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/entry-requirements/biodiversity-values-map">www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/entry-requirements/biodiversity-values-map</a>
- Native Vegetation Regulatory Map: <a href="https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/native-vegetation-regulatory-map">www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/native-vegetation-regulatory-map</a>

• RFS 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement area tool: <a href="www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/1050-vegetation-clearing/tool">www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/1050-vegetation-clearing/tool</a>.

#### 4. DATA UPDATES

The *Threatened ecological communities Greater Sydney* map is subject to ongoing updates as new information becomes available. The majority of updates are subject to on-ground data collection.

This occurs via various processes, including DPIE-EES map review processes established for the Biodiversity Values Map and the Native Vegetation Regulatory Map. More information on these processes are available from:

- Biodiversity Values Map reviews: <a href="www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/entry-requirements/biodiversity-values-map/biodiversity-values-map-review">www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/entry-requirements/biodiversity-values-map/biodiversity-values-map-review</a>
- Native Vegetation Regulatory Map reviews: <a href="https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/native-vegetation-regulatory-map/review">www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/native-vegetation-regulatory-map/review</a>.

For more information about the spatial data, please contact the DPIE-EES Data Broker: data.broker@environment.nsw.gov.au.

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## APPENDIX 1. Eligibility for inclusion in regulatory maps, at April 2021

NSW TEC	SAII status	NSW status	RFS 10/50
Agnes Banks Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Critically endangered	Yes
Bangalay Sand Forest of the Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Blue Gum High Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Critically endangered	Yes
Blue Mountains Basalt Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Endangered	No
Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Blue Mountains Swamps in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	Not SAII	Vulnerable	No
Castlereagh Scribbly Gum Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	Not SAII	Vulnerable	No
Castlereagh Swamp Woodland	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Coastal Saltmarsh in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Coastal Upland Swamp in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Endangered	No
Cumberland Plain Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Critically endangered	Yes
Duffys Forest Ecological Community in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Endangered	No
Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Critically endangered	Yes
Elderslie Banksia Scrub Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Critically endangered	Yes
Freshwater wetlands on coastal floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and	Not SAII	Endangered	No
South-East Corner bioregions			
Hygrocybeae Community of Lane Cove Bushland Park in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Critically endangered	Yes
Kurnell Dune Forest in the Sutherland Shire and the City of Rockdale	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Littoral Rainforest in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Maroota Sands Swamp Forest	SAII	Endangered	No
Moist Shale Woodland in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Montane Peatlands and Swamps of the New England Tableland, NSW North Coast, Sydney	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Basin, South East Corner, South Eastern Highlands and Australian Alps bioregions			
O'Hares Creek Shale Forest	Not SAII	Endangered	No

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Pittwater and Wagstaffe Spotted Gum Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Endangered	No
River-flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplain of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and	Not SAII	Endangered	No
South East Corner bioregions			
Shale Sandstone Transition Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Critically endangered	Yes
Southern Sydney Sheltered Forest on Transitional Sandstone Soils in the Sydney Basin	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Bioregion			
Sun Valley Cabbage Gum in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Critically endangered	Yes
Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Corner bioregions			
Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin	Not SAII	Endangered	No
and South East Corner bioregions			
Sydney Freshwater Wetlands in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Critically endangered	Yes
The Shorebird Community occurring on the relict tidal delta sands at Taren Point	SAII	Endangered	No
Themeda Grassland on Seacliffs and Coastal Headlands in the NSW North Coast, Sydney	Not SAII	Endangered	No
Basin and South East Corner bioregions			
Western Sydney Dry Rainforest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion	SAII	Endangered	No
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