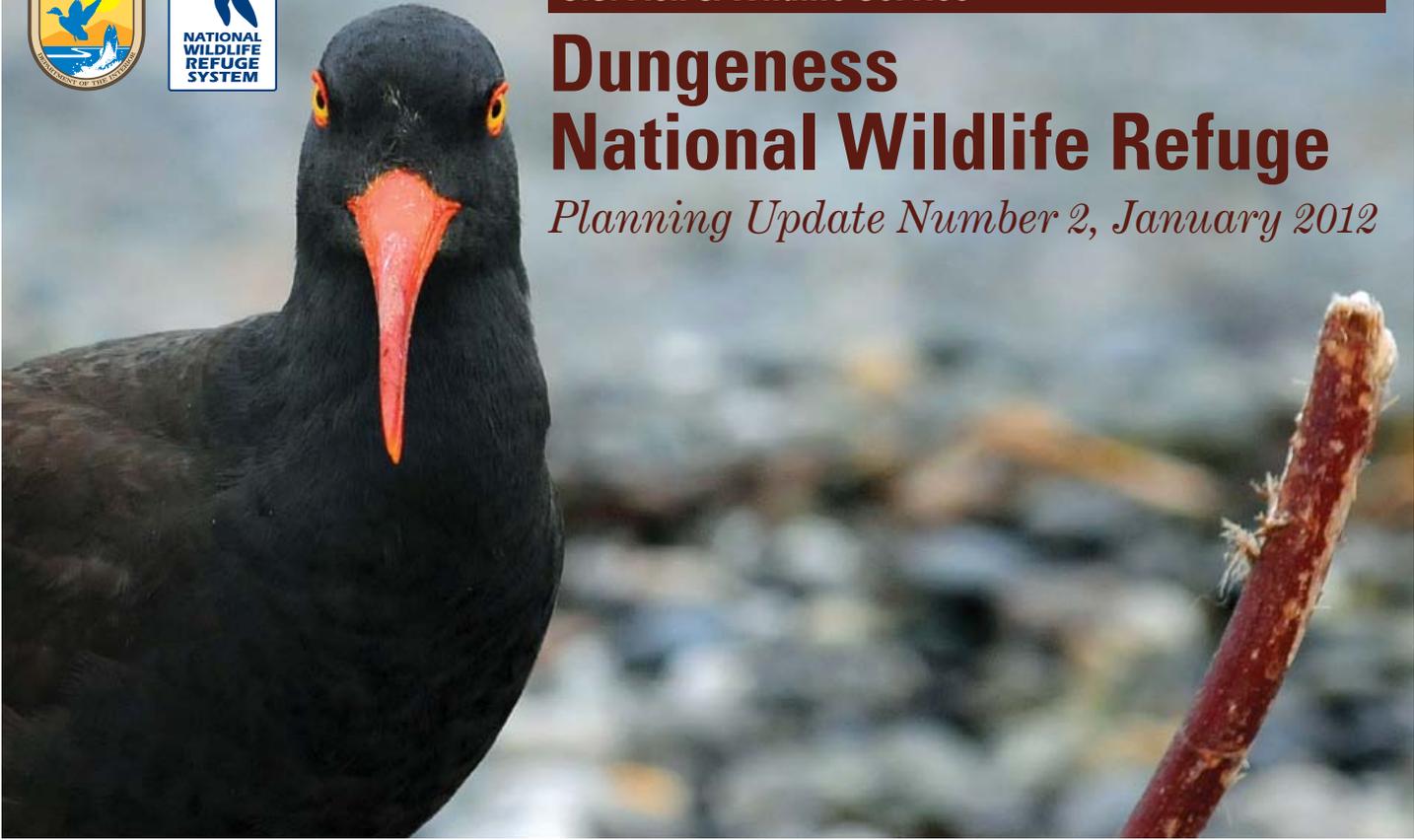




U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update Number 2, January 2012



Black oystercatcher

Peter Davis/USFWS

Thank You for Participating

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is moving forward with the development of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge. This Planning Update is the second in a series of updates intended to keep you informed about the status of our planning process. In our last update, we invited you to get involved by providing your input on our management issues, concerns, and opportunities.

Since then, we have considered your comments and conducted analyses to develop preliminary versions of three alternatives intended to guide refuge management direction over the next

15 years. The preliminary draft alternatives have been designed to achieve Refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and the vision for the Refuge; and to meet various policy requirements while also addressing the issues and ideas raised during the public scoping process.

In this update, we summarize the feedback we received from you during public scoping, present an overview of the three alternatives that we are considering, and invite your continued participation by attending an upcoming open house meeting (see page 6). Our next step is to prepare a Draft CCP/EA that will include information about the Refuge, its resources, and its purposes.

We will conduct an analysis of each alternative and determine their effects on key environmental, community, and socio-economic resources. This information will be combined to form a Draft CCP/EA. We anticipate the Draft CCP/EA will be available for public review and comment in the summer of 2012. Once the draft is published, we will again formally invite your input through an open comment period.

In this update

- Summary of Public Scoping Comments*
- Summary of Preliminary Draft Alternatives*
- Public Use Preliminary Draft Alternative Maps*
- Who to Contact for More Information*
- Public Open House Meeting Information*



Least sandpiper

Dow Lambert/USFWS

Summary of Public Scoping Comments

Public involvement in the development of this CCP/EA began in October 2011 with the distribution of Planning Update 1 to a wide range of individuals, organizations, and government agencies. Planning Update 1 provided background information on the Refuge, including Refuge purposes, goals, and maps; identified preliminary issues to be addressed in the CCP; and invited public review and participation in the process.

Some comments received during the scoping period were about broad or long-range issues, while others suggested very specific or detailed strategies that could be used to achieve biological or public use objectives. The CCP planning team reviewed and categorized the comments under eight major planning issues. The eight categories are summarized below:

Threats to Refuge Resources

Many people expressed concern about threats which impact refuge wildlife and habitats and urged the Service to address them. Climate change impacts; human-caused disturbance to wildlife; spit and bluff erosion; active shoreline erosion control and bank protection measures; water quantity; and oil spills, other contaminants, and marine debris were the most frequently mentioned threats.

Wildlife/Habitat Management

Several comments specifically addressed the need to protect refuge wildlife and habitats, including eelgrass beds and mudflats for use by brant and shorebirds; upland/shoreline roosting and nesting areas for migratory birds; haulout areas for pinnipeds; and dune/strand habitat. Some commenters supported active management of tidelands in Dungeness Bay. Many people supported management of the forested units towards old growth characteristics. However, some expressed concern that within the time frame of the CCP, it may not be practicable to expect resulting habitat for old-growth dependent species. Some people discouraged the use of fire suppression within the forested units. Other comments discouraged managing the Dawley Unit impoundment as a deep water pond and instead advocated for maintaining wetland characteristics for native amphibians (e.g., fluctuating water levels). Several comments supported invasive species management. Many commenters offered support and suggestions for a robust inventory, monitoring, research, and assessment program, particularly for measuring climate change related variables and trends.

Wildlife-Dependent Public Use

Many commenters suggested improvements to Refuge public use programs or facilities, including the following: increasing the amount of interpretation, docent talks, and interpretive programs focused on Refuge natural history and wildlife; including climate change information in environmental education and interpretive programs; encouraging additional collaboration with partners to enhance the Refuge's education programs; and adding new signs along Refuge trails. Other comments included the recommendation that group size on upland trails at the Dungeness Unit be limited no more than ten. Some supported continuing to prohibit hunting on the refuge.

Non-Wildlife-Dependent Public Use

Comments regarding horseback riding within the Refuge were mixed. Some comments did not favor horses on the Refuge while others supported the current horseback riding policy and use areas with no further changes. Comments regarding jogging were similarly mixed. Some commenters were opposed to jogging on the Refuge. Others supported the current jogging policy and use areas with no further changes. Still other commenters supported jogging on the trails through the forested areas and on the beach heading west but not at all on Dungeness Spit (i.e., the elimination of jogging on the first 0.5 miles).

Law Enforcement

Several comments expressed support for improved enforcement of refuge regulations, including more patrols and ticketing. Others suggested using volunteers or additional signage to improve visitors' understanding of refuge regulations and purposes.

Cultural Resources

Support for the identification and protection of historic sites was expressed.

Land Acquisition

There was support for the Service to acquire additional tidelands, shorelines, and adjacent wetlands in Dungeness Bay. Another comment suggested that the CCP should outline a strategy for improving habitat connectivity, maximizing ecosystem resiliency to climate change, and engaging in landscape-level conservation partnerships to ensure that climate change adaptation actions are developed and implemented at the appropriate scale.

Refuge Administration

Several people suggested additional partnerships with local and state agencies and community groups that share common goals for the Refuges' natural resources. Some commenters identified staffing needs while others suggested additional ways to engage volunteers.



For detailed comments, see our Scoping Report at:

<http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning/main/docs/wa/docsdungeness.htm>

Graveyard Spit

Alternatives Considered but Dismissed

Active Shoreline Erosion Control and Bank Protection

Dungeness NWR's shoreline includes two sand spits, the 5.5 mile long Dungeness Spit and the 1.4 mile long Graveyard Spit, and approximately 0.5 miles of bluff-backed beach. These shoreline features are dynamic and affected by the natural processes of sediment erosion, littoral transport, and deposition. Intermittent breaching events have occurred on Dungeness Spit during and after large storms. Additionally, due to significant wind and wave exposure, the bluffs at Dungeness NWR are experiencing erosion and recession.

Traditionally, erosion control and bank protection of the shoreline has been achieved through the use of engineered structures such as seawalls, bulkheads, revetments, and upland retaining walls. However, these structures disrupt natural geomorphic processes, reflect wave energy back onto the beach, and cutoff sources of sediment needed to maintain nearby beaches. Alternative measures such as beach nourishment, where sediment is artificially added to the beach, and bank stabilization actions (e.g., vegetation planting and/or large woody debris placement specifically to

address erosion and slope stability) have also been used to restore or enhance beach functions. None of these strategies are included within the range of alternatives currently presented due their lack of practicability and the refuge's management emphasis upon allowing natural processes to take place.

Features Common to All Preliminary Alternatives

Features common to all alternatives include the consideration of climate change effects in all management actions; monitoring and control of invasive species; fire management; maintenance of existing structures; coordination with state, tribal, and other partners to accomplish goals; cultural resources protection; volunteer opportunities; and the continuation of land protection within the approved refuge boundary. All proposed actions are subject to funding availability.

The New Dungeness Light Station, within the approved refuge boundary, is due to be excecised by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Under all alternatives, the Service will work with the USCG to bring the light station property into the Refuge System either through interagency cooperative management agreement or property transfer. Subsequently, the Service proposes to enter into an agreement with the New



Sue Mayo/USFWS

Dungeness Light Station Association to continue their management and maintenance of the light station facilities.

Appropriate and Compatible Refuge Uses

Appropriate

In order for general public use (e.g. horseback riding, boating) to be permitted on a refuge, the use must first be found to be appropriate in accordance with the Service's Appropriate Refuge Uses Policy. Generally, a use is considered appropriate if it contributes to the public's understanding and appreciation of a refuge's natural or cultural resources or is beneficial to those resources. Hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation are the National Wildlife Refuge System's (NWRS) priority public uses as identified under the NWRS Administration Act. These uses are automatically deemed appropriate on refuges.

Compatible

All existing and proposed public uses must also be evaluated to determine if the use is compatible with refuge purposes and the Refuge System mission in accordance with the Service's Compatibility Policy. Generally, a use would be considered compatible if it will not materially interfere with, or detract from, fulfillment of the Refuge System's mission or a refuge's purpose. This determination includes identification and description of reasonably anticipated impacts of the use. A use may include stipulations (terms or conditions) necessary to ensure its compatibility.

For non-priority public uses, we are required to complete both an appropriateness finding process, and a compatibility determination process.



Sue Mayo/USFWS

USFWS Appropriate Refuge Uses Policy:
<http://www.fws.gov/policy/603fw1.html>

USFWS Compatibility Policy:
<http://www.fws.gov/policy/603fw2.html>

Summary of Preliminary Draft Alternatives

*Refer to Page 5 for
Alternatives Map*

Alternative A

No Action Alternative (Current Management)

Under Alternative A, the Refuge would continue with current management which focuses on protecting and maintaining habitats in their current condition. Fire suppression techniques would continue to be used to prevent catastrophic wildfire. Wetland and forested habitats would continue to be monitored for invasive species, and treated with Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques as funding allows. The water delivery system on the Dawley Unit would be maintained to deliver water to the impoundment. Access on roads within the Dawley Unit would be maintained.

Partnerships would continue to be cultivated for oil spill response, marine debris removal, and to address water quality issues within Dungeness Bay and Harbor. Limited data would be collected on birds, vegetation, invasive species, and marine debris, with no specific effectiveness monitoring conducted for habitats or wildlife. Research would continue under Special Use Permits.

Areas that are open for public use year-round, areas that are open only seasonally depending on the needs of refuge wildlife, and areas that are closed to visitors year-round for the benefit

of wildlife would remain the same. Public use activities currently occurring on the refuge include: fishing (saltwater), shell-fishing (clams and crabs), wildlife observation, wildlife photography, hiking, boating (no wake allowed), horseback riding, jogging, beach use (wading, beachcombing, other recreational beach uses), environmental education, and environmental interpretation. Appropriateness and compatibility determinations must be completed for existing recreational uses. All uses included in this alternative would be allowed only if found appropriate and compatible.

Alternative B

Alternative B would continue many of the activities in Alternative A but would also expand the level of active habitat management and enhancement that the Service would conduct. A forest assessment would be conducted within the Dawley Unit and a step-down forest management plan would be completed by 2018. Active forest management techniques would be employed within a core 40-acre area to promote the development of mature to old-growth forest characteristics. A road inventory and condition assessment for the Dawley Unit would be completed by 2016. The slope along the main road would be stabilized but the overall amount of road maintained

would decrease and unneeded logging spur roads outside of the core area would be rehabilitated. A wetland inventory and hydrological assessment would be conducted by 2015. The impoundment at the Dawley Unit would be managed for optimum water levels and benthic layer characteristics for amphibians. In addition to existing status monitoring and research, data would be collected on a greater variety of flora and fauna. Environmental factors that are stressors, climate change related or otherwise, would be monitored. Effectiveness monitoring of CCP and other step-down plan objectives would occur.

Public use changes would include new limits on boat landing hours and horseback riding season. Boat landings to tour lighthouse facilities would be limited to 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. while horseback riding would be limited to daily use, October 1 to May 14 only. Jogging would no longer be allowed due to impacts to wildlife. Additional wildlife viewing, interpretive, and environmental education programs would be offered. Staff and volunteer time devoted to making visitor contacts would be increased. New orientation, guidance, and regulatory signage and materials would be developed. Law enforcement patrols would be increased.

Alternative C

All additional habitat monitoring and management activities included in Alternative B are also included in this alternative, as are effectiveness monitoring and research identification, and pursuit of partnerships to accomplish these activities. However, forest management within the Dawley Unit under Alternative C would be further expanded to include minimal management activities (e.g., planting

berry-producing shrubs) within an additional 30-40 acres outside of the core area. Unneeded logging spur roads within this area would also be rehabilitated.

Public use opportunities and programs under Alternative C are similar to Alternative B but smaller and more restricted in some cases. Jogging would no longer be allowed due to impacts to

wildlife. The same restrictions on boat landings in Alternative B would apply in Alternative C. However, horseback riding would be limited to weekdays only, October 1 to May 14. Wildlife viewing, interpretive, and environmental education programs would be slightly more frequent under Alternative C compared to Alternative A but slightly less frequent compared to Alternative B.

To view a comprehensive comparison table of the alternatives, go to:

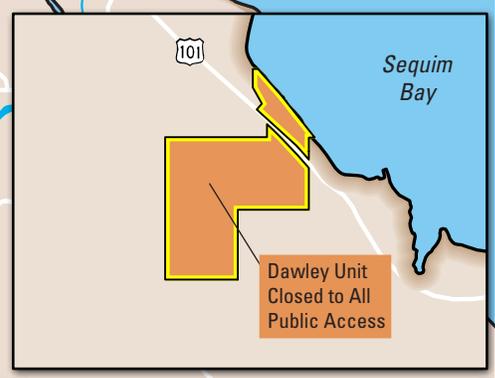
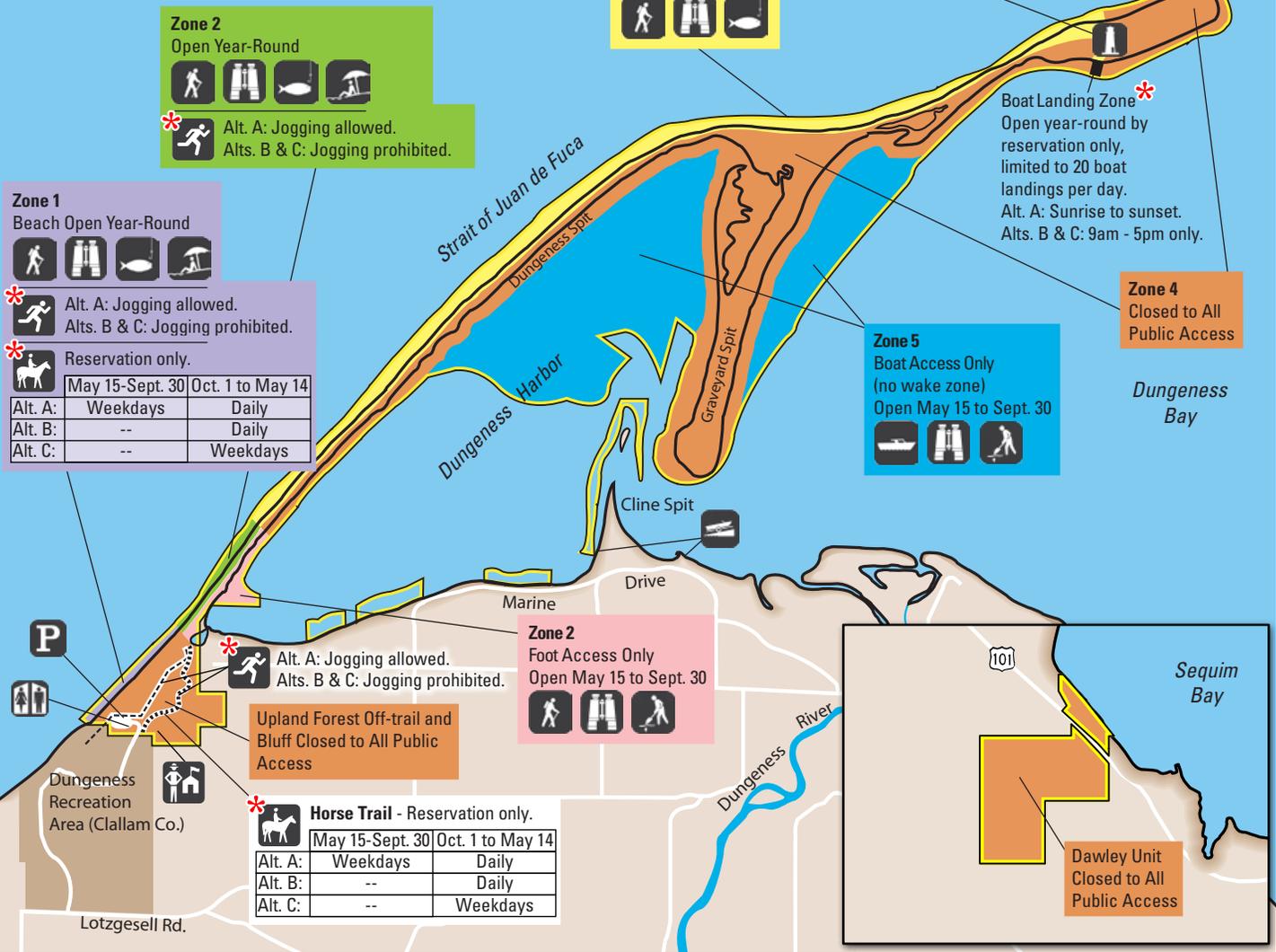
<http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning/main/docs/wa/docsdungeness.htm>

Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge

Public Use Preliminary Draft Alternatives Comparison Map

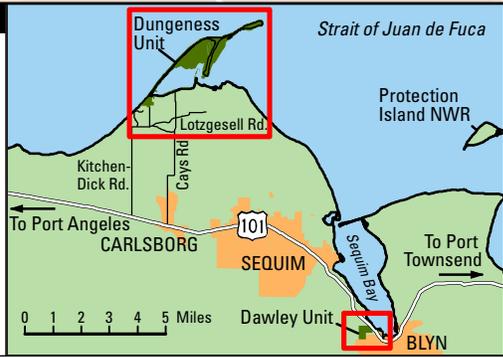
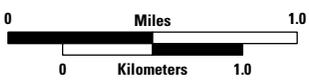
- Zone 1:** Beach in front of bluffs
- Zone 2:** Base of Dungeness Spit out to 1/2 mile
- Zone 3:** Strait of Juan de Fuca side of Dungeness Spit from 1/2 mile to Lighthouse
- Zone 4:** Dungeness Spit from Lighthouse to end of spit and the Harbor and Bay sides of Dungeness Spit and all of Graveyard Spit, including the 100 yard buffer zone below Mean High tide line
- Zone 5:** Refuge waters and tidelands on the Harbor and Bay sides of Dungeness Spit outside of the 100 yard buffer zone

* Denotes differences between Alternatives



Legend

- Hiking
- Wildlife Observation/Photography
- Boating (no wake zone)
- Beach Use
- Jogging (Prohibited in Alts. B & C)
- Clamming, Crabbing
- Saltwater Fishing
- Horseback Riding
- Boat Landing Zone
- Public Boat Launch
- Refuge Headquarters
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Horse Trail
Alt. A: Jogging allowed
Alts. B & C: Jogging prohibited
- Hiking Trail
Alt. A: Jogging allowed
Alts. B & C: Jogging prohibited
- Refuge Managed Lands (Fee Title or Easement)





Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge
715 Holgerson Road
Sequim, WA 98382

OPEN HOUSE

January 19, 2012

12pm–2pm & 6pm–8pm

Please Join Us!

see back page for details

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Come to Our Public Open House Meeting and Learn About the CCP

We invite you to share your ideas with us by attending an upcoming open house meeting:

Date: Thursday, January 19, 2012

Times: 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Place: Sequim Prairie Grange Hall, 290 Macleay Road, Sequim, WA 98382

Directions: 1/4 mile west of the intersection of Macleay and Cays Roads

Do You Have Any Questions or Comments?

Your participation is critical to the success of this effort.

Please send us your comments by February 18, 2012 to:

Kevin Ryan, Project Leader
Washington Maritime
National Wildlife Refuge Complex
715 Holgerson Road
Sequim, WA 98382
360/457-8451
360/457-9778 fax

Email: FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov
Please include “Dungeness NWR CCP”
in the subject line of the message.



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