



# 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT



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# GET TO KNOW US

## WHO WE ARE

The IERCD is a public agency headquartered in the City of Redlands but serving nearly 1,300 square miles of southwest San Bernardino and northwest Riverside counties. District personnel focus on a range of conservation work, including preserving open spaces, elevating forest health and fire resilience, uplifting wildland areas, supporting sustainable agriculture, and engaging the community through education & outreach. IERCD is governed by a seven-member board of directors who are appointed by the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors in cooperation with the Riverside County Board of Supervisors. Board members set direction; from there, staff collaborate internally and externally with a range of public and private stakeholders on advancing mutually beneficial projects in shared service areas.



"I love working as part of IERCD's Education Department with like-minded people. I like being able to be creative on projects to present to students and being able to help them to connect with the world around them in a positive way. Seeing that moment when a child learns something new about nature always gives me such a warm feeling. I feel very proud to be part of something so important as helping to better our environment for future generations."

—Shari Tindall, Conservation Educator



"One project I've been really proud to work on was a partnership with the US Forest Service, where our team helped contribute to data needed to develop USFS fuel reduction modeling and planning. The work was both physically and mentally exhausting but in the end it was all worth it! Contributing to increasing forest health and fire resistance in the San Bernardino Mountains has been an incredibly satisfying part of my job at the IERCD."

— Jocelyn Perez, Forest Ecologist



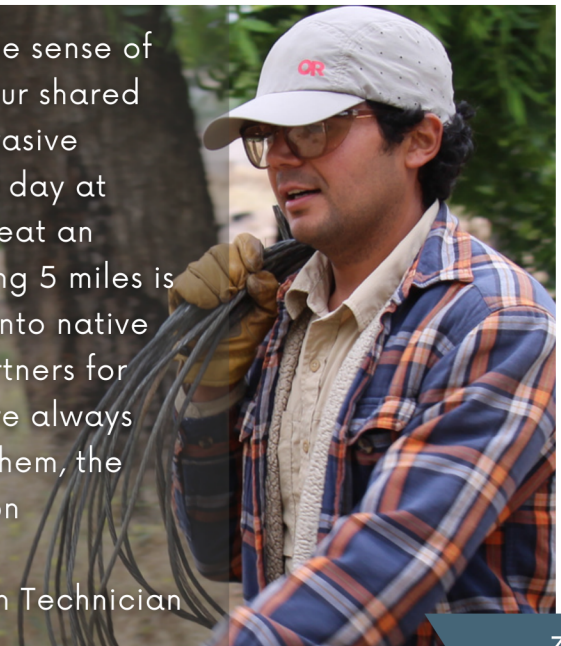
"I love working on the IERCD Sustainable Agriculture Team because I can support our farming community, especially the underserved producers. I enjoy being a primary point of contact for connecting producers with technical and financial assistance opportunities. Helping to change producers' perceptions of working with a government agency is meaningful to me because they are often hesitant to work with us at first. Therefore, building strong relationships with producers in our community based on respect and trust is what I am most proud of accomplishing at the IERCD. This continues to be fundamental in my work, outreaching and assisting more producers and helping to remove barriers to participation in technical and financial assistance opportunities."

-Malu Huerta, NACD Conservation Planner



"What I find that I enjoy the most at IERCD is the sense of community amongst coworkers and partners. Our shared sense of purpose to restore habitat, remove invasive species, and love for the outdoors makes every day at work a great one! The ability to identify and treat an invasive the size of a half dollar coin after hiking 5 miles is well worth the effort if it helps stop its spread into native habitat. I want to thank our community and partners for everything they provide for the district. They are always there for our outreach events and because of them, the IERCD is able to fulfill the purpose of our mission statement."

-Chris Casillas , Restoration Technician







## OUR MISSION

The purpose of the Inland Empire Resource Conservation District is to promote the understanding that the quality of the environment determines the quality of life. In cooperation with landowners, local, state and federal agencies, the agricultural community, environmental and community groups, we will promote good stewardship of our soil, water, and other natural resources. We will provide strong education programs that will encourage today's youth to accept the responsibility of conserving our natural resources for tomorrow's generations.

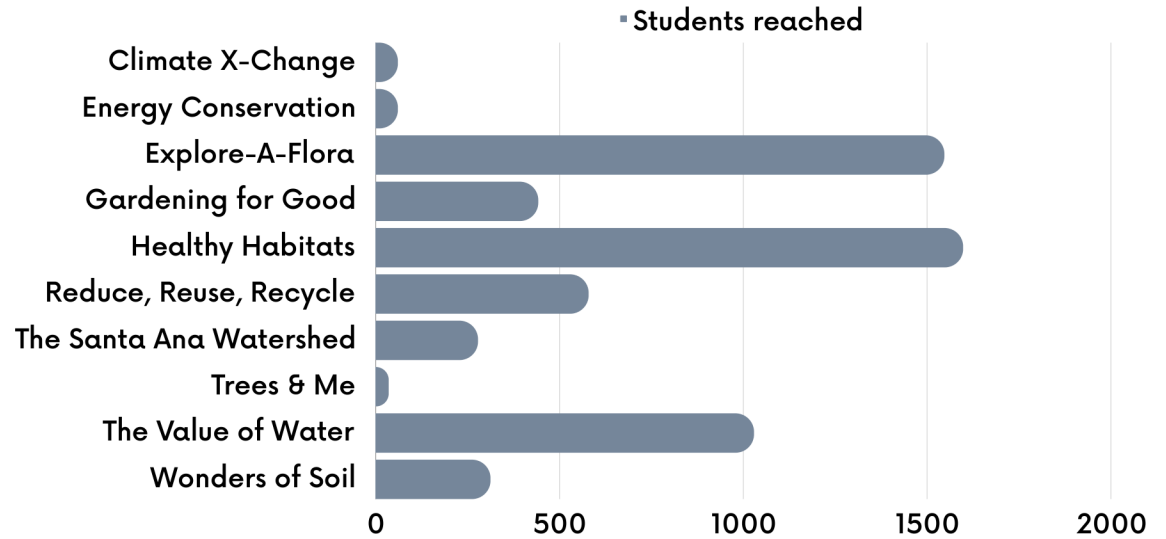


## WHO WE SERVE

Our district serves 1,286 square miles of northwestern Riverside and southwestern San Bernardino counties, more broadly defined as the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed.



# EDUCATION



## CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS

A total of **339 classroom presentations** were completed this year by the IERCD in our service area. Of these, **242** were natural resource-focused classroom programs offered by IERCD from our 10-topic catalog of programming. The remaining **97** were completed in collaboration with area water provider partners and designed to elevate community understanding of everyone's role in preserving short and long-term water supply for all those who depend on it. More than **8,450 students** were impacted by these programs in both English and Spanish-speaking classrooms.



Students reached:

545



490



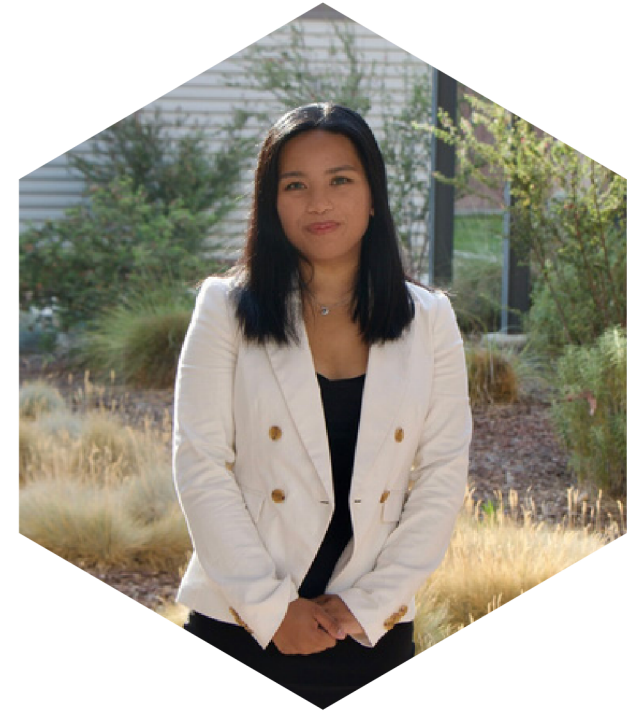
560



915

## SPEAK-OFF 2022

Every year, the IERCD hosts a local Speak-Off competition where high school students are challenged to create a 3-5 minute speech on a rotating topic addressing the role of Resource Conservation Districts in a variety of areas of conservation. In October of 2022, IERCD hosted a virtual local Speak-Off where contestants submitted video responses to a prompt asking what RCDs can do to reduce the effects of California's drought. A panel of three judges awarded first place to Kirsten Cabalunga, a senior from Beaumont High School. Following her first-place finish in the local contest, Kirsten advanced to State. Ultimately, Kirsten took third place during the state competition held in December 2022 at the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts' annual conference.



## COMMUNITY EVENTS

IERCD attended **19 community events** during the 2022-23 fiscal year, outreaching to over **7,473 community members** with critical conservation messaging.





# MONARCH GRANT

The IERCD recently managed a small sub-award of a Monarch Joint Venture funding agreement with the U.S. Forest Service held by the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts. This funding supported youth outreach aimed at increasing engagement in and awareness of the critical need for habitat conservation for both monarchs and pollinators in general. The IERCD Education Team was able to reach **160 students** through **8 programs** presented to schools located in Fontana, San Bernardino, Redlands, and Yucaipa and attend two community events furthering grant messaging. In addition to classroom programs and events, the IERCD also used project funding to create a bilingual comic book that follows the life cycle of Wesley, a monarch butterfly who finds himself in peril while searching for habitat in an urbanized area. Over **2,000** copies of the comic were distributed with the support of partners. They were handed out for free at the Raymond M. Alf Museum of Paleontology's "The Power of Plants" event, the California Botanic Garden's summer milkweed sale, and at the San Bernardino County Museum in support of Pollinator Month. The grant's final project was a small pollinator garden and a temporary exhibit at the Raymond M. Alf Museum of Paleontology in Claremont, which was done in coordination with San Bernardino and Los Angeles Local Agency Formation Commissions.



# INCREASING REGIONAL FOREST AND FIRE CAPACITY

The IERCD is in its fourth year of implementing the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity (RFFC) Program, administered through the California Department of Conservation. This statewide program, which is implemented by 18 separate grantees throughout California, focuses on strengthening regional leadership. It aims to build capacity and develop, prioritize, and implement strategies and projects that create fire adapted communities and landscapes. These initiatives improve overall ecosystem health, community wildfire preparedness, and wildfire resilience. As of the end of 2022-2023, the IERCD received a cumulative total of **\$7.12 million** to build local capacity in the northern San Bernardino Mountains and surrounding foothill communities.



**FOREST HEALTH**

# HEADWATERS RESILIENCY PARTNERSHIP

The IERCD is one of the core partners in the San Bernardino Mountains Headwaters Resiliency Partnership, helping to identify and focus shared resources toward forest health priorities in the region. Using a landscape-scale approach, this partnership helps to advance projects across service areas to support and sustain resilient ecosystems and communities in the mountains and foothills of the Inland Empire. This group has participation from many partners including the San Bernardino National Forest, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, National Forest Foundation, Southern California Mountains Foundation, CAL FIRE, CSUSB, and other collaborating partners with aligned missions to protect the Santa Ana Watershed. As a result of this group's foundational development in 2022-2023, a strategic mission and vision were conceived and collaborative resource sharing was advanced on several large-scale projects.



10  
participating  
organizations

1 million  
acres of public  
& private land  
covered



65  
meetings  
held

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

This year, the IERCD was able to award **\$775,000** to the Southern California Mountains Foundation (SCMF) via the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Block Grant Program. This subgrant supports SCMF's Urban Conservation Corps (UCC) workforce development by funding training for corps members and providing opportunities for hands-on implementation of fuel reduction projects that are prioritized by the San Bernardino National Forest as part of their focus on increasing forest resiliency against wildfires.

So far for this project, the UCC crew has dedicated **7,720 hours** working on various implementation and training projects. This included a 5-day Basic 32 training where 15 corpsmembers built skills useful for work on future prescribed fires. Completion of this training enables corps members to work directly on USFS road clearance, critical to elevating protection from fire and improving access for fire crews.

Corpsmembers also treated **25** acres of fuels in a high ignition area along USFS road 1N09 that was identified by the San Bernardino National Forest's CFPP (Community Wildfire Protection Plan) as Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). This area, known as the Santa Ana Fuel Break, was established as a fire barrier by the Front Country Ranger District to restrict the spread of fires. The primary objective of reestablishing the fuelbreak is to mitigate wildfire risks to neighboring communities by reducing fire intensity within the fuelbreak, slowing or containing fires as they approach, and providing strategic locations for personnel and equipment deployment during wildfires. Moreover, the project aims to improve forest health in the designated area by removing dead trees and brush, adjusting stock levels to alleviate water stress, and pruning to improve fire resistance. This project minimizes the threat of intense, widespread wildfires and bark beetle infestations.

# HABITAT HEALTH



## LAND MANAGEMENT BY CATEGORY

The IERCD facilitates a growing variety of compensatory mitigation projects within its 1,286 square mile service area. Mitigation requirements are determined by regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over areas impacted by development project work; from there, IERCD assists with a range of tasks designed to result in highly functional, sustainable habitats that provide long-term benefits to dependent, impacted species. The success of this work is highly dependent on internal capacity-building, external partnership development, and ongoing tracking and implementation of the most effective strategies for land acquisition, protection, improvement, and adaptive management in the short and long term.

The 2022-23 Mitigation Program included uplift and preservation of **1,016 acres** across **42 sites**, further detailed in the graphics below.

### Conservation

14

projects totaling

**678.1**

acres

### Enhancement

12

projects totaling

**294.5**

acres

### Restoration

16

projects totaling

**43.5**

acres

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: EL DORADO

The IERCD and the City of Yucaipa have partnered on multiple habitat uplift projects within City boundaries for over a decade. The El Dorado project is located in the **334 acre** parkland in northern Yucaipa where the City is developing recreation alongside a range of in-progress and planned habitat improvement projects. At this site, the IERCD has accepted Grantee interest over a **6.19 acre** ephemeral drainage set aside as compensatory mitigation addressing impacts from three City-sponsored infrastructure projects in Yucaipa. In addition to serving as property Grantee, the IERCD is also completing five years of enhancement on site. An approach based on research on successful reference sites in the region is being used to suppress invasive species and reintroduce native species both passively and actively. While project completion was delayed by damage from the 2020 “El Dorado Fire”, the IERCD has resumed work and it is on track for completion in 2023-24. Benefits from short and long-term property work include reduction in the presence of noxious, fire-prone invasive cover; dramatic increase in diversity of native species capable of providing support to a wider range of wildlife; and legal assurance that this area will remain in conservation, providing these benefits in perpetuity to the surrounding landscape.



## NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

The IERCD native plant nursery was first established in 2018 and served as an essential resource for propagating locally sourced native plants for the projects that our Natural Resource Team manages. Since its conception, the nursery has produced nearly **4,000 plants** that have gone to IERCD restoration and enhancement projects across the region. The nursery has also enabled sharing plants with other organizations, community members, and schools to help to increase the availability of native plants in the Inland Empire.

In June 2023, IERCD built a second nursery structure at the Louis Robidoux Parkland and Pecan Grove in Jurupa Valley. With this more public location, the new nursery can function as a demonstration area for native plant propagation techniques and Best Management Practices (BMPs) for a clean, disease-free nursery. It also adds an additional **768 square feet** of growing space! This location is ideal for hosting educational and hands-on volunteer events. With IERCD's single nursery location having a total output of over **2,000 plants** in the 2022-23 fiscal year, having two spaces will increase the number of plants able to be grown for projects, partners, and for public giveaways.





**50**  
volunteers  
helped plant



**50**  
plants given away  
to local families to  
start their own  
waterwise gardens  
at home.

**281**  
plants grown  
in IERCD  
nursery for this  
project!



# IMPACT STORY:

In 2022-2023, the IERCD was part of a multi-partner collaboration focused on development of a waterwise garden at the San Bernardino County Museum (SBCM) in Redlands. The IERCD, SBCM and the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (SBWCD) engaged in planning; from there, SBWCD funded the purchase of plants from IERCD's native plant nursery and all partners contributed to planning a volunteer-oriented installation day. In April of 2023, the site was prepped and all plants installed as part of the first annual Day of Climate Action hosted by 501c3 Accelerate Neighborhood Climate Action and the City of Redlands. Following installation, the California Native Plant Society provided volunteer support to care for the **281 plants** installed, representing **19 different species**. All partners anticipate extending this collaboration into 2023-24 with free field trips to the museum and the garden to continue educating the community on importance of climate-appropriate landscaping.



# SUSTAINABLE AG



## THIS YEAR IERCD AG STAFF...

reached **137** farmers

supported **19** community gardens

hosted **22** workshops & garden-building days for **472** participants

were supported by **94** volunteers

secured **\$151,848** in funding

## NRCS EQUITY GRANT

This year, the IERCD continued active management of their grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) expanding the equitable delivery of outreach and conservation technical assistance to historically underserved producers. Funding enabled the IERCD to provide technical and financial support to **4 community gardens** in disadvantaged communities in the City of San Bernardino. Project work included supporting these urban farmers with translating materials, planning and designing garden spaces, creating garden beds, developing planting guides, installing plants and trees, and arranging conservation workshops, which resulted in **4 garden beds** built, **21 fruit trees** planted, and over **40 members of the public** reached. Supporting community garden spaces and enabling expanded access to resources and support for local food production will continue through these funds 2023-24.

## NACD TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT

The IERCD partnered with the Coachella Valley Resource Conservation District (CVRCD) to apply for another year of Technical Assistance funding from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). The successful grant acquisition marked the third year collaborating on assisting land owners and managers with implementing voluntary conservation practices established by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This funding enabled bilingual project staff to reach **137 farmers** in both IERCD and CVRCD's service areas, with information on financial and technical opportunities and assistance addressing resource concerns such as water scarcity, soil quality, and pest pressure. Project work included translating program materials, assisting farmers with enrolling in NRCS funding programs, providing irrigation water management support, and conducting outreach through workshops and events. IERCD was also able to use NACD funding to create a quarterly farmer newsletter spotlighting local farmers working to implement conservation practices and to announce events and available funding as another level of service to the local agricultural communities.



## PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: UCCE



The IERCD continued its multi-year partnership with the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Program Advisors in a variety of capacities to support historically underserved producers and communities throughout the District's

service area. As with previous years, this work focused on farmer outreach, distributing educational resources, providing technical assistance, and bringing funding opportunities to producers capitalizing on Advisor's specialized knowledge of urban farming, climate-smart agricultural practices, pest management, and specialty crops . Benefits from this partnership included **70 farmers** impacted by joint IERCD-UCCE workshops and events where they received assistance in completing applications for a variety of programs and were able to meet with representatives from multiple funding agencies. As a result of this work, **8 farmers** received more than **\$70,000** in grant funding for drought relief. The year ended with an in-progress application for funding of more than \$1M to be used in direct grants to regional land owners and managers adversely impacted by extreme weather events under the California Department of Food and Agriculture's California Underserved Producer Grant.



# LOUIS ROBIDOUX PARKLAND & PECAN GROVE

IERCD is one of five partners managing the Louis Robidoux Parkland and Pecan Grove (LRPPG) under an agreement with property owner Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District. This **40 acre** property, which was formerly known as the Louis Robidoux Nature Center, was damaged in a devastating blaze known as "The '46 Fire" of 2019. It is now being uplifted through the collective effort of IERCD and partners including Huerta de Valle, Orange County Water District, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, and Sunshine Haven Wildlife Rehabilitation. Since executing management agreements, the partners have been focused on increasing function and value of the property's demonstration gardens, wildland areas, infrastructure including trails, signage and seating, and adjacent Sunnyslope Creek. Highlights of 2022-23 work included advancement of site master planning; facilitating events including October's Stewardship Day and kicking off ongoing monthly workshop series, and establishing a caretaker residence and on-site native plant nursery. At the end of the reporting year, IERCD and partners used ongoing collaborative meetings to create and begin work on action planning designed to expand work in all areas of LRPPG programming and planning in 2023-24. Some of our annual highlights are listed below and on the next page.

4

community  
events



1,200

feet of trails  
created and  
maintained



LOUIS ROBIDOUX



**60**  
oaks grown for  
oak grove



**5**  
benches added for  
public  
Recreation



**1,695**  
plants  
installed



**2020**  
lbs of trash  
removed



**3,600**  
Feet of  
irrigation  
installed



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## ASSETS

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$1,697,501
Investments	\$8,760,265
Due from Other Governments	\$64,553
Taxes Receivable	\$30,764
Interest Receivable	\$3,615
Other Receivables	\$746,449
Prepaid Expenditures	\$19,700
Deposits	\$8,486
Investments Restricted for Endowment	\$492,530
<b>Total Assets:</b>	<b>\$11,823,872</b>

## LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	\$460,810
Accrued Payroll	\$23,570
Deposits	\$593,724
Unearned Revenue	\$398,003
<b>Total Liabilities:</b>	<b>\$1,476,107</b>

## DEFERRED INFLOWS OF RESOURCES

Unavailable grant revenue	\$479,728
<b>FUND BALANCE:</b>	
<b>Non spendable:</b>	
Prepaid expenditures	\$19,709
Deposits	\$8,486
Endowment	\$492,530
<b>Restricted:</b>	
Mitigation projects	\$7,069,535
<b>Committed:</b>	
Construction of environmental education center	\$1,824,794
<b>Unassigned:</b>	<b>\$452,983</b>
<b>Total fund balance</b>	<b>\$9,868,037</b>
<b>Total liabilities, deferred inflows of resources and fund balance</b>	<b>\$11,823,872</b>

# BOARD & STAFF

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Rick Gomez - President
- Nancy Sappington - Vice President
- Rod LeMond - Secretary-Treasurer
- Brad Buller - Director
- Lorien Sanders - Director
- David Friedman - Director
- Tricia Reed - Director
- Jim Earsom - Associate Director
- Terry Andrews - Associate Director



# STAFF

- Aaron Echols - Restoration Ecologist
- Adrian Poloni - Forester II
- Alex Chacon - Forest Health Specialist
- Alma Eichman - Conservation Educator
- Ashley Ruiz - Education Assistant
- Autumn Yanez-Jacbo - Sustainable Ag Technician
- Brigit Laughlin - Seasonal Field Assistant
- Christopher Casillas - Restoration Technician II
- Cindy Corhiran - Project Assistant
- Collin Stratz - Field Ecologist
- Crystal Cortez - Education Programs Manager
- Crystal Valenzuela - Community Engagement Specialist
- Gabriela Preciado - Conservation Educator
- Garrett Cartwright - Restoration Technician I
- Gissella Quiroga - Forest Ecologist
- Jennifer Castillo - Administrative Programs Lead
- Jocelyn Perez - Field Technician
- Jose Mora - Mitigation Programs Lead
- Julian Marenco - Restoration Technician II
- Katie Stilwell - Seasonal Field Assistant
- Kayla Thompson - Field Technician
- Kevin Harrington - Field Ecologist
- Kevin Hernandez - Habitat Site Lead
- Liz Avalon - Forestry Programs Lead
- Lucia Ceja - Sustainable Agriculture Specialist
- Lus Gomez - Forestry Technician
- Malu Huerta - NACD Conservation Planner
- Mandy Parkes - District Manager
- Miguel Aispuro - Restoration Technician II
- Nancy Noriega - Sustainable Ag Lead
- Omar Pena - Habitat Site Lead
- Sage Keyner - CSUSB Garden Outreach Coordinator
- Sam Nielsen - Forestry Technician
- Shari Tindall - Conservation Educator
- Susanna Kirschner - Conservation Programs Manager
- Taylor Hollman - Nursery Programs Technician
- Valerie Velazquez - Administrative Assistant
- Xochitl Hidalgo - Project Assistant





[www.iercd.org](http://www.iercd.org)



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