



— NIAGARA PENINSULA —
CONSERVATION FOUNDATION



ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Nature for All, for Always





MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

With a strong Board and a well-established *Memorandum of Understanding* with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA), 2022 was an extremely rewarding year for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation (NPCF). We successfully steered the organization forward with a solid plan to establish the NPCF as a charity of choice for environmental giving for the important work of NPCA.

One of the Foundation's greatest achievements in 2022 was the development of a fundraising strategy for our *NATURE FOR ALL, FOR ALWAYS* campaign. Four critical priorities have been established: Ecological Restoration, Land Securement, Conservation Parks and Green Infrastructure, and Education and Stewardship.

We acknowledge our board members and staff for their ongoing contributions through our Director's Donation Challenge. We applaud the continued support of our community partners like Ontario Power Generation, Knight Archives, Regional Chair Bradley's Charity Golf Tournament, Kevin Ripski for his boardwalk donation to St. Johns Conservation Area, and local wood-working artisan Marvin Enns. Marvin crafts exquisite pens from the more than 400-year-old Comfort Maple sugar maple tree and the Foundation has sold more than 350 of his unique keepsakes.

This incredible work has been a team effort, and I would like to acknowledge and thank our 2022 NPCF Board of Directors for their vision, energy, and support. This includes Dianna Huson, Donna Cridland, Barbara Greenwood, Mike Balsom and NPCA Board Chair Rob Foster. We would also like to thank our many donors, volunteers, and sponsors for their incredible support.

In closing, I would like to urge our community to give for Nature and the important work of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. We look forward to a successful 2023.

Sincerely,

Tom Insinna, Chair
Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Tom Insinna
Chair



Mike Balsom
Director



Barbara Greenwood
Vice-Chair



Dianna Huson
Director



Donna Cridland
Treasurer



Rob Foster
NPCA Chair

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION



Founded in 1969, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation is a registered charity, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors who are dedicated to raising funds that aid in the conservation of our natural environment for present and future generations. When you donate to the Foundation, you help support the critical work of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA).

The NPCA leads conservation projects and programs throughout the Niagara Peninsula that contribute to improving our conservation parks, watershed health, and hazard management programs to build greater resilience and reduce risks to people, property, and infrastructure. These vital programs and services have a direct impact on water quality, enhancing access to greenspaces, wetland and habitat restoration, hazard management, and environmental research and education.

MISSION

A leader in providing resources to support conservation work throughout the Niagara Peninsula watershed.

VISION

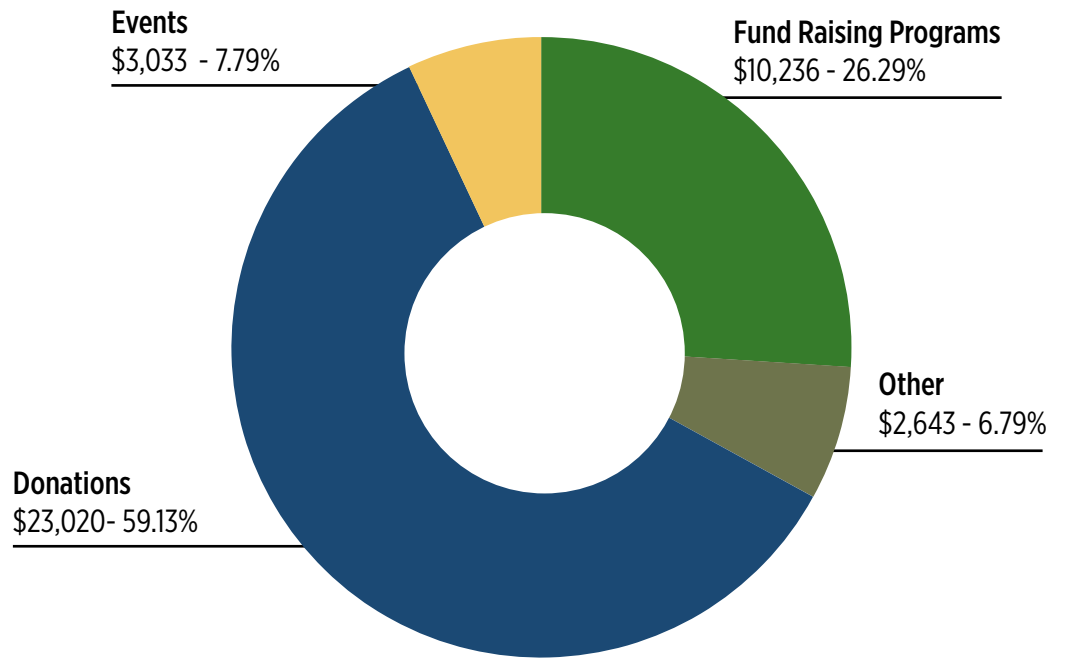
It is our mission to raise funds toward environmental endeavors that include increasing green space, improving water quality, habitat restoration, environmental research and education and conservation programs and projects, including museum projects.

VALUES

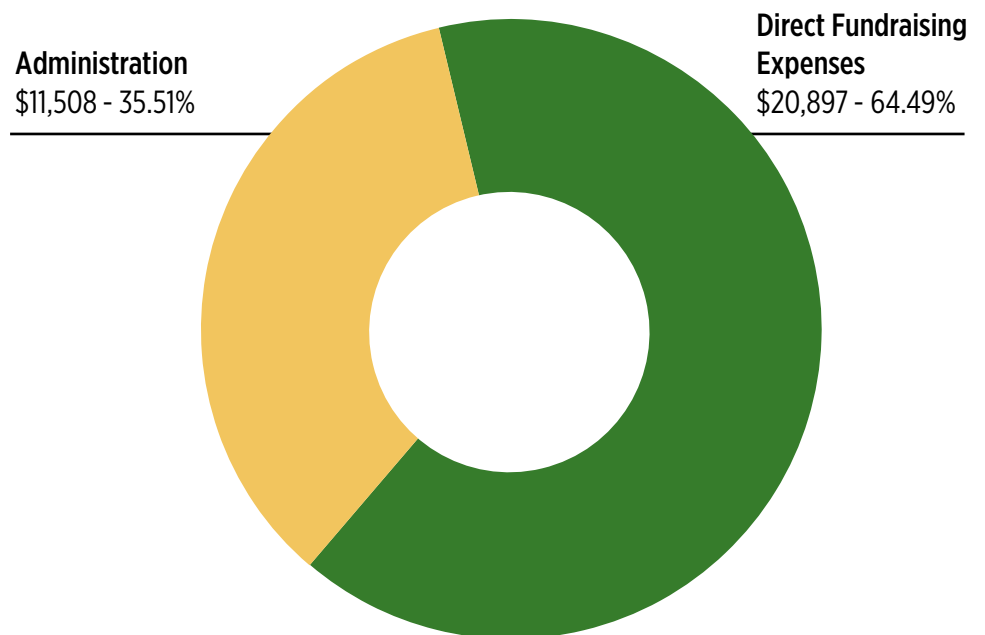
- **We are trustworthy and transparent by engaging in practices with our donors and partners that are accessible, accountable, fair, professional, and timely and that are built on a foundation of respect, integrity, and honesty.**
- **We are responsible stewards through our communication to and relationships with our donors, and through our stewardship of the financial support directed to environmental initiatives.**
- **We enable, engage, and collaborate by funding environmental initiatives and bringing community organizations together to consult and form partnerships based on the respective strengths of each organization to focus on key environmental initiatives.**
- **We have sound governance and management by adopting best practices and policies to ensure that full fiduciary and management responsibilities are achieved.**

FINANCIALS

WHERE NPCF DOLLARS COME FROM



WHAT NPCF DOLLARS SUPPORT



NATURE FOR ALL, FOR ALWAYS



In 2021, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) approved a 10-year strategic plan with a vision of *"Nature for All"* to chart the next generation of work needed to address the critical issues of climate change, growth, conservation, restoration, and the need for green infrastructure across the Niagara Peninsula. The plan outlined an ambitious, sustained, and multi-pronged stewardship effort to affect consequential, long-lasting improvements to the health of the Peninsula's watershed ecosystems.

In 2022, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation initiated a significant green giving campaign to help support the next-generation conservation work of NPCA. The Foundation will be an essential partner in securing funds to sustain this monumental and transformational initiative through its *"NATURE FOR ALL, FOR ALWAYS"* campaign. As more and more people come to recognize the importance of preserving and protecting our natural environment, that same human ingenuity responsible for creating these environmental threats is being tasked with solving them. Accountability for our environment falls on all of us.

We invite our community to join in this movement to help us reach our ambitious goal of five million dollars over three years.

When you donate to **Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority** through the Foundation, your contributions will be used to:

- **plant trees, build trails, and enhance green infrastructure**
- **educate youth and the next generation of environmental leaders**
- **secure and protect publicly accessible greenspace**
- **improve climate resilience across our watershed**





ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

The Niagara Peninsula watershed's current level of forest cover (18 per cent) does not meet ecological needs and falls within the Carolinian Zone, where less than three per cent of the land is protected. The Carolinian Zone fosters an unparalleled level of biological richness. At just one per cent of Canada's landmass, Ontario's Carolinian forests support an estimated 25 per cent of our country's species at risk.

Together, we must increase our efforts to preserve the area's precious biodiversity facing the threat of climate change, loss of nature, and human activity. The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) relies on research, science, and restoration practices to create conditions needed to support the diversity of biological species, aiming for more sustainable natural resources and land use in the future. As part of the national 'Two Billion Trees Program', NPCA is committing to planting nearly two million trees across the watershed over eight years to strengthen biodiversity and resilience. Building on past successes, with more than one million trees and shrubs planted from 2000 to 2021, this significant addition of trees will reinforce measures to prevent runoff, improve water quality, buffer against flooding, increase tree canopy, and create green corridors to improve habitat and help wildlife at risk.

LAND SECUREMENT

The distinctive characteristics of the Niagara Peninsula watershed shape its remarkable biodiversity. The unique microclimate and rich soils support a wide variety of native and unique plant and animal species. To safeguard the watershed's biodiversity, we must ensure that communities have sustainable access to protected conservation lands, parks, and natural areas along

river valleys, stream corridors, and Great Lake shorelines. Natural areas also serve an essential role by sequestering carbon and this absorption helps to reduce the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere.

For these reasons, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) has an increasingly vital responsibility to acquire and preserve natural areas. Two significant property acquisitions in recent years have added more than 44 hectares to protected lands in public ownership, including a critical stopover for migratory birds and butterflies at Morgan's Point in Wainfleet. The NPCA has set a goal to continue procuring land at a rate of 20 hectares annually to incrementally secure at least 180

hectares over the next 10 years. Land acquisition is a targeted and effective conservation strategy to secure ecologically significant lands and NPCA will pursue donations and the purchase of easements to acquire the property needed to meet its natural heritage goals.

NPCA is committing to planting nearly two million trees across the watershed over eight years...



CONSERVATION PARKS & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) owns and manages 41 conservation areas and more than 2,800 hectares of landholdings – the equivalent to more than eight New York City Central Parks – within 15 municipalities across the Niagara Peninsula watershed, which includes the Niagara Region and portions of the City of Hamilton and Haldimand County. In 2021, day-use admissions to NPCA sites increased 16 per cent and its *NaturePlus* Membership Pass program had an 80 per cent increase in sales, indicating the importance and demand of access to natural spaces for community well-being.

However, NPCA’s conservation parks and connections with inter-regional trails are in desperate need of enhancement and repair to better serve visitors. Conservation areas also require upgraded and accessible parking, boardwalks, staircases, and other amenities to ensure visitor safety and proper access. Improved signage, educational kiosks, and online materials will augment these improvements to enhance the user experience and attract more visitors. Park admissions, which have been steadily on the rise, as well as successful public and private funding partnership agreements, will continue to be directed to infrastructure maintenance as NPCA embarks on this accelerated land care initiative.

EDUCATION & STEWARDSHIP

It’s been shown that cultivating a connection to nature leads to a prevailing mindset of appreciating and respecting the environment, wildlife, and habitats. Encouraging the relationship between people and nature not only promotes awareness, adventure, and discovery in the present, but also plants the seeds for conservation-minded behaviour in the future.

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) offers many exciting and rewarding education, outreach, and volunteer programs for the community

Cultivating a connection to nature leads to a prevailing mindset of appreciating and respecting the environment, wildlife, and habitats

to get involved in the watershed, including day camps and nature schools, community litter clean-ups, planting events, and interpretive nature walks. The fact that interest and participation in these offerings have been trending exponentially upwards is a positive sign that nature conservation is moving to the forefront of our collective priorities. With added funding, NPCA can bring a whole new dimension to outdoor education, ensuring that future generations are eager and equipped to take on environmental stewardship.

THE COMFORT MAPLE PEN FUNDRAISING PROGRAM



The Comfort Maple Conservation Area is home to what is believed to be the oldest sugar maple in Canada. This tree is a designated heritage tree under the Ontario Heritage Act and is estimated to be 400-to-500 years old. The land where the tree is located was purchased by the Comfort family in 1816, and later entrusted to the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) to conserve this 'old growth' tree for its historical and biological significance.

Since 2016, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation has offered to purchase beautiful, handmade pens created from the trimmings and fallen branches of this historic sugar maple. This fundraising program was developed out of a shared interest between retired NPCA staff Michel Germain and local woodturner Marvin Ens.

Starting in high school, Marvin has had a lifelong passion for woodworking and woodturning. Creating unique and beautiful items from wood has always been a creative outlet for him. While visiting the Comfort Maple Conservation Area with his family he inquired about the wood that was being collected by NPCA staff. He was pleased to find out that Mich, whom he already knew from their shared love of music, had been holding on to the wood knowing that it was special and unique. He gave a piece to Marvin to see what he could do with it. When Marvin returned to Mich with a beautiful pen made from the wood of the Comfort Maple, they knew they were on to a big idea.

Marvin makes the pens from branches that have either fallen or have been pruned, by first looking for unique features or colours in the wood. Next, the wood is cut and mounted on the lathe to begin shaping it. Patience and finesse are required while working with the unique features that make the wood both beautiful and challenging to work with. After shaping the wood, it gets sanded, divots are filled, and it is polished to a shine. From there, the pen hardware is installed, and it is ready to be sold.

More and more, people are seeking out these unique items, crafted locally by artisans, in a world where so many things are mass-produced. There has been worldwide interest in owning a small part of this significant tree, including members of Comfort family. These pens allow people to purchase a piece of history from a tree that has both natural and cultural significance. To date, the pen fundraising program has sold more than 350 of Marvin's unique pens, each one coming with a letter of authenticity and a short history about the Comfort Maple tree. Marvin plans to continue turning pens for the Foundation and providing people with an opportunity to purchase a small piece of history whether they are local residents or guests.



KNIGHT ARCHIVES 2022 EARTH DAY SHRED FUNDRAISER

In 2022, the Lincoln-based archives data and records management company Knight Archives partnered with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) via the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation to raise funds from April 22 (Earth Day) to May 20 to support a tree planting and restoration project at Two Mile Creek Conservation Area in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The company's fundraiser raised \$3,000, which supported the planting of 4,500 trees and shrubs at the site by NPCA staff and volunteers, and other partners. The project helped reforest the area with native deciduous and coniferous trees appropriate to the site's conditions to encourage the reestablishment of a healthy, resilient, and diverse ecosystem to support a variety of wildlife and improve overall water quality in Two Mile Creek.





ST. JOHNS POND OPENING RECOGNIZES DOMINIC ‘MICKEY’ DIFRUSCIO

On April 23, 2022, the pond at St. Johns Conservation Area was officially opened for another season of recreational trout fishing, which was the first community fishing day held at the site since the pandemic. The event featured community groups and partners such as the Niagara Chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada and the Niagara River Remedial Action Plan, as well as information from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

The in-person opening of the 2022 trout season at St. Johns was also the perfect opportunity to honour the late Dominic ‘Mickey’ DiFrusco, an avid supporter of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) and its Foundation, who never missed the opening of trout season where he would make the day’s ceremonial first cast. To mark the occasion, his wife Elizabeth DiFrusco, led the first cast in a fitting tribute to Mickey who served on NPCA’s Board of Directors for 25 years as the City of Thorold’s citizen representative and who was also an Honourary Lifetime Member thanks to his lifelong commitment to conservation.



BALL’S FALLS THANKSGIVING FESTIVAL RETURNS!

In 2022, the Ball’s Falls Thanksgiving Festival returned for the first time since the pandemic and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation was there to welcome back visitors. The 48th edition of this event featured more than 150 artisans and craft vendors, local food trucks, and an incredible lineup of Canadian musicians, which attracted a record number 28,000 attendees from October 7 to 10.

The Foundation had a presence at the event to highlight its fundraising efforts as the Niagara Peninsula’s environmental charity of choice, as well as to engage with previous, current, and potential new donors interested in supporting next-generation conservation and the critical work of NPCA across the watershed.



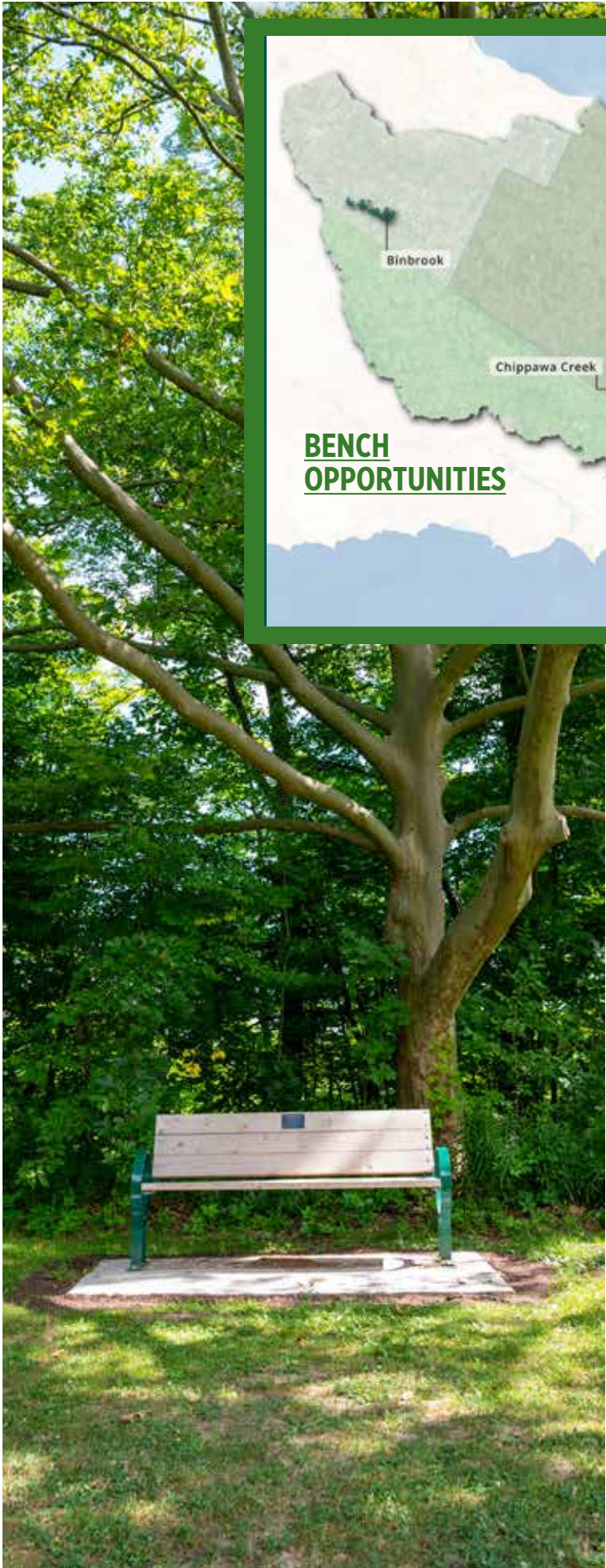
ST. JOHNS BOARDWALK GENEROUSLY DONATED

Kevin Ripski generously donated to the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation to support the construction and installation of a boardwalk named after his trusted companion and pet dog 'Bear' over a low marshy area on a trail at St. Johns Conservation Area. The five-by-30-foot boardwalk is designed to keep hikers on trail to prevent damage to the old growth forest and sensitive plant species found at the site. It consists of a galvanized metal base and frame that supports a deck with a low rail support for solid edges to prevent slipping and features a plaque and personal message provided by Kevin for his dog.

2022 HOLIDAY GIFT GIVING CAMPAIGN

During the closing months of 2022, the Foundation initiated a gift-giving campaign to connect with community members dreaming of a green holiday. The appeal to give the gift of nature by supporting Niagara's Nature Legacy helped to connect thoughtful donors with great causes to create partnerships across our watersheds to help provide solutions to conservation issues of today.





NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION MEMORIAL BENCH PROGRAM

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) have a Memorial Bench Program through which you can honour the memory of a loved one or mark any other type of celebration while also having a positive impact on the environment across the Niagara Peninsula watershed. In 2022, two memorial benches were installed at NPCA sites to commemorate such occasions.

The program provides individuals, businesses, and organizations with an opportunity to adopt a bench at one of our conservation areas that is meaningful to them, while also creating a lasting tribute that enhances the visitor experience at NPCA parks. The program also helps raise funds for the Foundation to support NPCA's current funding priorities of ecological restoration, land securement, conservation parks and green infrastructure, and education and stewardship.

There are memorial bench opportunities at many of NPCA's conservation areas, and this map illustrates sites where there is currently availability.

For more information, or to inquire about a memorial bench opportunity at an NPCA site, please visit: niagaraconservationfoundation.com/memorialprogram



NPCF AND NPCA NETWORKING EVENT AT BENCH BREWING

In June 2022, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation Board Chair, Tom Insinna, and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority Board Chair, Rob Foster, hosted an informal 'Meet and Greet' networking event at Bench Brewing Company in Beamsville.

The gathering was a perfect opportunity for conservation supporters, invited guests, and curious onlookers to exchange ideas and network, as well as showcase and create links to successful NPCA conservation projects.







**PLEASE
CONSIDER
DONATING
TODAY**





— NIAGARA PENINSULA —
CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

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