



June 2009

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Parks, Conservation & Lands Rural Programs Report

Lease Offers in the Naas Valley (Districts of Booth and Tennant)

A number of Naas Valley rural lessees have recently received long awaited lease offers from ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA), with more to arrive shortly. Julie Palmer; recently employed to support ACT rural landholders on Land Management Agreements (LMA) issues, has hit the ground running. There are a number of draft agreements close to sign off, with a number having been already completed, enabling landholders to complete the process of obtaining further leases.

As rural landholders would be aware, all LMAs are required to be reviewed at 5 year intervals. Julie is currently working with one rural Landcare Group, cooperatively looking into the review of their existing LMAs. Individual agreements will continue, though in many cases there would appear to be advantages in landholders coming together to discuss the process, identifying common issues and supporting each other. If you would like to discuss getting a group together, or for any other query relating to your LMA, please don't hesitate to give Julie a call, 6205 9661.

Stock returns

The annual stock return will be sent out shortly to all ACT rural lessees. Please keep an eye out for this document, and return the completed form before the 14th of July 2009. As has been mentioned in the past, accurate livestock number and location records are important and could be vital in the case of an exotic disease outbreak. Please support us by cooperating with these and other similar return paperwork.



Other Changes within Rural Programs

Simon Katz will be on temporary transfer to another area of Parks, Conservation and Lands until 31st of July, Sam Price will be acting in the Rural Programs Coordinator. Sam will continue to provide the service to lessees in addition to handling the majority of the Rural Program Coordinator's responsibilities with Julie Palmer's assistance.

Your District Manager remains the first port of call with day to day rural / lease queries or concerns. (Contact details below) However, please don't hesitate to give Sam or Julie a call if your query is specific to information circulated by rural programs.

Regards and best of luck to all for a decent Autumn.

CONTACTS

Parks, Conservation and Lands

District Contacts:

Rural District: Manager, Brett McNamara, Ph: 62072900.

Canberra Nature Park North: Manager, Daniel Iglesias: Ph: 6207 2925

Canberra Nature Park South: Peter Galvin, Ph: 62053179.

Rural Programs.

A/g Coordinator: Sam Price, Ph: 62050855

Rural Programs Officer: Julie Palmer, Ph: 62059661

Simon Katz
Rural Programs Coordinator
Parks, Conservation and Lands



Reflecting on the history of the Rural Landholders Association

I was reading an old edition of the *Queanbeyan Age* the other day when an item stood out at me: "This morning (7th April, 1911) at dawn a large animal was seen in the garden of Mrs. F. Warren, Cooma Road It is being inspected by numbers of persons who never before had an opportunity of seeing this specimen of Australian fauna. There are no wombat haunts near Queanbeyan, and it is a mystery where it could have come from."

The article reminded me of what it was like out here at Tharwa when I arrived from "Gulla Gulla", further up the Tuggeranong valley, in 1972. There were no wombats on "Gulla" and only one family of wombats on my four kilometre stretch of the Murrumbidgee. It was lovely to have them here. Today however we have possibly thousands of the little beasts and the attraction has somewhat paled. I have lost count of how many cows have died from falling into wombat holes, how many times I have accidentally ridden into a hole on the motor bike, or how many times the ute and even the tractors have fallen peril to the wombat hole - all with pretty costly consequences.

But more importantly why was I looking at the old *Queanbeyan Age*? Well, about six months ago I started a project to write a history of the ACT Rural Landholders' Association, which I want to complete in time for Canberra's 100th birthday in 2013. A few days earlier I had read in a 1938 edition of the *Canberra Times* about the establishment of the Vigilance Association, which was the ancestor of today's ACT RLA.

The *Canberra Times* only started up in 1926 so I thought I'd check in the *Age* and sure enough, there was a 1,300 word account of the first meeting, at



Byrne's Royal Hotel on Saturday afternoon April 1st 1911. They started the meeting wanting to call themselves the "Defence Association" but Mr. C.H. Emery suggested forming a "Vigilance Association" and that name was adopted.

Why Vigilance? Because; their objective was to watch over the interests of landowners and other citizens, whose rights and property were in the Federal Territory. At that time the first farm had just been resumed, without any notice and this had naturally alarmed all the other landowners. John Gale summed it up when he wrote in his editorial on June 2 of 1911 that "... By far the immediately most engrossing subject, however, is that with regard to the land owners and rights of owners and occupiers. A very great deal of work lies before the Association before it can be hoped that this matter will be satisfactorily settled. Hitherto the people have been subject to the state laws - abominable as they are - but suddenly the exigencies of the situation demanded that the interests of all the people who hold land in the 900 square miles that are ceded to the Federal authorities should be handed over to the Commonwealth without, as far as we know, any conditions at all ... "

Anyway, to cut a long story short, I am now very engrossed in the task and have more than 1,300 files on disc - Maureen would say something more like compulsive obsessive. But if anyone reading this shares any passion for the subject; or has any old yarns, papers or strong views, please contact me and reveal all. Better still, join in the task.

Geoff Hyles
President of the Rural Landholders Association (RLA)
Email: geoffhyles@bigpond.com

Guide to taking soil samples that best suits your paddock

Choosing a paddock

The importance of paddock selection when taking soil tests is often overlooked by producers. Before taking soil tests producers should ask themselves a number of simple questions to ensure your farm production system will benefit from the investment of time and money required to attain accurate soil tests.

1. Has the area been fertilised within the last six months? It's best to allow at least six months between fertiliser applications and subsequent soil tests.
2. Can I afford to apply fertiliser to the area if required? Soil tests can be expensive; try to limit soil tests if your fertiliser program is deferred due to reduced income or drought conditions.
3. Could fertiliser be more beneficial elsewhere on the property i.e. an area where the producer is planning on establishing a new pasture or crop?
4. Has the weather been very wet or very dry? Avoid taking soil samples when the soil is very wet or very dry, or immediately after an unseasonable dry spell.

Taking the soil sample

When taking soil samples it is important to ensure the sample provided for testing best reflects the area which will be treated once the soil test results have been received. For paddocks comprising of numerous soil types, varying topography, differing management techniques, or varying pasture growth it is more beneficial for the producer to undertake soil sampling for the individual groups based on these criteria; although this may cost a little extra in the testing process it will allow the producer to more effectively and economically match each soil type's nutrient requirements to the amount of fertiliser applied.



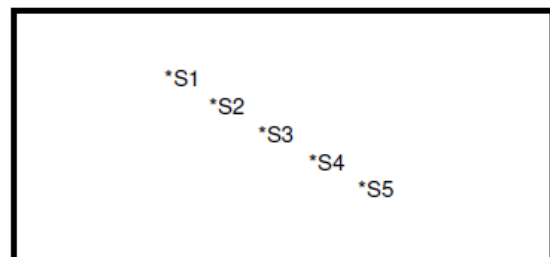
See picture 1 showing a paddock being divided into individual sampling areas.



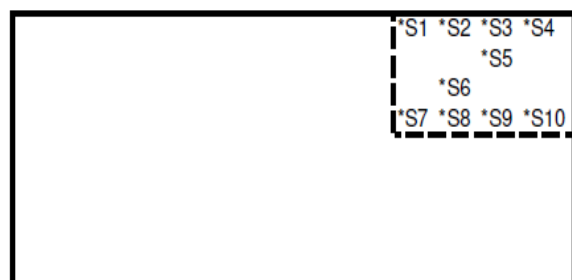
Picture 1.

There are two main methods of soil sampling used commonly across the agricultural sector

1. Representative – is the most common soil sampling method used. This method will take soil samples from a designated transect across an area.



2. Targeted – are used occasionally within cropping enterprises to investigate problem areas of reduced production. Targeted soil sampling is conducted in a zig zag pattern across the area of interest.



For best results producers should take soil samples along the same line/transect each time soil tests are to be conducted.

Producers will benefit from establishing defined transects across every paddock, and mark them using either a GPS or by ramming painted fence posts at either end of the transect. These transect lines can then be followed whenever the paddock is sampled.

The depth to which soil is sampled to will be dependant on what type of soil testing is to be conducted. i.e. Top soil 0 – 10cm & Subsoil 10 – 20cm. In the ACT the majority of soils will be acid More often than not; if the tests show that the 0-10 cm sample is acid then you will need to know the pH of the 10-20cm layer before planning a liming program. If you expect your soils to be acid, you should collect the 10-20cm sample at the same time as the 0-10cm sample.

In order to avoid contamination soil cores should be taken using a stainless steel sampling probe which are simple to use and samples a desired core of soil with each use. However if a corer can not be attained a clean spade or auger can be used to take the samples. Before beginning sampling producers should be aware that the use of galvanised pipe or dirty tools will result in significant contamination of the sample and unreliable results.

When taking samples across an area the producer should take approximately 2 cores/ ha ie in a 20 ha paddock take 40 cores for an 80 ha paddock take 160 cores. These cores should be spread out evenly across the transect (i.e. take 20 from the first half of the paddock and 20 from the second, spread out evenly along the transect).

Individual topsoil and subsoil cores should be mixed in clean buckets marked “top soil” and “sub soil” this will avoid confusion when preparing the sample for testing. Once collected the individual samples should be mixed in



their respective buckets, once this has been achieved collect a sample representative of the mix and placed in a clean soil sample bag; labelled clearly with “sub soil” or “top soil”, the paddock name and date the sample was taken.

Keep the samples cool (use an eski to store them in) and send to the lab ASAP

A final word of advice

No matter what method you use to collect your soil samples, always ensure the sample is representative of the paddock you wish to test; it is important to avoid small atypical areas in the paddock, including

- changes in soil type,
- breaks in slope,
- fence lines,
- waterlogged patches and
- obvious stock camps.

For further information or assistance, please phone:

Sam Price
Rural Programs Officer
Parks Conservation & Lands
Email: samuel.price@act.gov.au
Phone (02) 6205 0855



ACT LANDCARE AWARDS – NOMINATIONS OPEN

MONDAY 18 MAY

The Awards are open to farmers, Landcare and Parkcare groups, businesses, schools, youth groups or individuals who are involved in helping the Territory manage the environment.

The ACT Landcare Awards are part of the 2009-2010 National Landcare Awards with State/Territory winners from each category automatically becoming finalists in the National Landcare Awards in 2010.

This year there are nine categories of Landcare Awards for the ACT:

- Australian Government National Landcare Program Individual Landcarer Award
- Young Landcare Leader Award (a new award in 2009)
- Urban Landcare Award (a new award in 2009)
- Landcare Community Group Award
- Local Government Landcare Partnerships Award
- Australian Government Landcare NRM Region Award
- Rural Press Landcare Primary Producer Award
- Landcare Education Award
- Alcan Landcare Indigenous Award

In addition the ACT Government is sponsoring two awards:

- The Minister for the Environment Quiet Achiever Award.
- The Minister for the Environment Community Support Award.

For detailed information or to download brochures and nominations forms visit www.actlandcare.org.au or www.landcareheroes.com.

For the first time, the public get to choose each state's first winner of the People's Choice Award category. Decided by your votes, the inaugural ACT People's Choice winner will be announced alongside the judged winners at the awards ceremony. Voting will be on the Landcare Heroes website www.landcareheroes.com after the closing date of nominations.

Closing date for entries is 10 July with the winners announced during Landcare Week in September.

For more information contact Esther Duffy on 02 6205 2913 or

Wild Dog Baiting at Blue Range

Parks, Conservation and Lands (PCL) carries out poisoned baiting for wild dogs and foxes within designated control zones on public land including areas of Namadgi National Park, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Pierces Creek. Dried red-meat baits contain 6 mg of 1080 poison and are buried at marked stations at 0.5 km intervals along management tracks. Baiting is conducted monthly with additional more intensive weekly baiting during spring and autumn to coincide with the times of year when wild dogs are most active.

This Autumn PCL have included a new bait run within the Blue Range Reserve to collaborate with wild dog control conducted by NSW Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW State Forests and landholders working under the Brindabella and Wee Jasper Cooperative Wild Dog and Fox Control Plan. Twelve bait stations were established on 17 April along Blue Range Road from the powerlines at Thompsons Corner running north via Uriarra Hill and Mount



Blundell to the junction with Genges Trail and then along Genges Trail to the NSW border.

The Blue Range bait stations will be checked for six weeks after which any remaining baits will be removed. 1080 poison warning signs have been placed on all tracks leading to the baited sections of road. The signs will remain in place for one month after baits have been removed to account for baits that may have been moved by dogs or foxes. If bait takes indicate wild dogs are active in the area, baiting will be reinitiated for a six week period in spring.

Nicola Webb
Vertebrate Pests Coordinator
Parks, Conservation and Lands
Ph: (02) 6207 2135
Email: nicola.webb@act.gov.au



FarmReady Reimbursement Grants

Climate Change - everyone's talking about it but are you FarmReady?

FarmReady has hit the ground running with **145 registered courses from 65 training providers** now available. Additional courses are on the way.

More than 1000 primary producers have received FarmReady support to attend training since February.

Eligible fishers, farmers, foresters, eligible family members and management staff could all receive a reimbursement grant of up to \$1500 each financial year to attend FarmReady endorsed training.

FarmReady Reimbursement Grants are also available to eligible Indigenous land managers.

FarmReady, a part of the Australian Government's Australia's Farming Future initiative, offers support to primary producers to learn skills and strategies to help combat the impacts of climate change. FarmReady focuses on issues such as understanding the implications of climate change, whole-farm planning and business and risk management.

To see what courses are available, confirm that you are eligible and claim your reimbursement, visit www.farmready.gov.au or phone **1800 087 670**.

Spread the word

FarmReady is a demand driven program, so let your friends, neighbours and networks know they could be eligible for a reimbursement grant of up to \$1500 to attend training to help their business in a changing climate.

Murrumbidgee River Corridor Revegetation Project Update

As part of the ACT Government's commitment to plant 1 million new trees over 10 years to contribute towards the ACT Climate Change Strategy; *Weathering the Change*, 300,000 trees have been earmarked to be planted in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor (MRC).

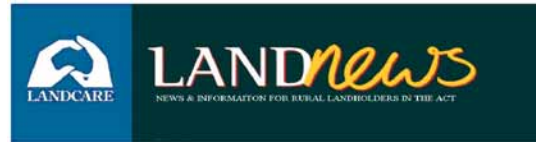
Revegetation efforts are being staged progressively along the targeted areas. The targeted areas of unleased land include; degraded areas of riparian zone and cleared hills and slopes.

Since the commencement of the project three months ago, spot cultivation of approximately 40,000 holes in the Gigerline Nature Reserve and the riparian areas within Ingledene Pines has occurred. Each hole will be planted with a local species seedling in August and September.



Spot cultivation – Gigerline Nature Reserve

A small amount of weed control was carried out prior to spot cultivation – these areas were mainly heavy infestations of African Lovegrass. The removal of several very large stands of juvenile Black Willow just downstream of Angle Crossing has just been completed.



Juvenile Black Willows at Angle Crossing



Angle crossing after the removal of Black willows

As expressed in the previous edition of Landnews; the support of the community and especially those lessees adjacent to the MRC will greatly assist in the implementation of the project.

For further information on this project contact:

***Project Officer: Brian Summers
Parks, Conservation and Lands
Ph: (02) 6205 0764 or 0428 176 440
Email: brian.summers@act.gov.au***





WEED ALERT

Mexican Feather Grass

(*Nassella tenuissima*) Family Poaceae

Do you have a tussocky grass like this in your garden, purchased sometime in the last 12 to 18 months? It may be Mexican feather grass, a prohibited import and listed pest plant or noxious weed.

- This introduced grass spreads rapidly, smothering desirable plants.
- It will have leaves up to 60cm long and with large volumes of small seed. Each seed has a fine 8cm long bristle, creating a feathery or flowing hair like appearance.
- Mexican feather grass was mistakenly sold by nursery outlets in the ACT as either *Stipa capillata*, *Stipa lessingiana* or *Stipa capriccio*.
- **Call Canberra Connect on 13 22 81** if you suspect you have Mexican feather grass. Parks, Conservation and Lands staff will confirm its identity and control it free of charge to residents.



Greening Australia's Whole of Paddock Rehabilitation

Greening Australia's **Whole of Paddock Rehabilitation (WOPR)** offers an innovative approach to combating growing land degradation problems, restoring paddock health and providing multiple farm production benefits. Incentives for large-scale native plant revegetation, coupled with a fixed-term stewardship payment, will assist land managers to better address climate change, biodiversity losses, paddock tree decline, salinity and other land degradation issues at the paddock level. WOPR integrates conservation and production in a practical, cost-effective and user-friendly program.

Key Features of WOPR

- **5 -10 year management agreements to utilise entire paddocks for tree and shrub establishment on areas/paddocks exceeding 10ha.**
- **Incentives to establish widely spaced direct seeding belts and patches**
- **A 5 year revegetation period accompanied by a stewardship payment toward production loss**
- **Rotational grazing for the remaining 5 years**

What will WOPR involve?

- Talk to Greening Australia (GA) about your eligibility and if appropriate, organise a site visit with one of GA's WOPR field staff to discuss a management agreement for incentives and stewardship support.
- Identify a suitable paddock of at least 10 hectares (preferably 20–40 ha). Alternatively, a larger existing paddock can be subdivided according to land class to create an appropriate WOPR paddock.



- Prepare the site according to advice provided and the agreed design. GA will organise for the appropriate species of native trees and shrubs to be direct seeded in widely-spaced alleys along the paddock contours (e.g. 3–6 direct seeded tree lines x 30–50m gaps). Alternatively clusters or clumps of direct seeding can be used for rocky sites or to avoid wind funnelling. The project will provide the full cost of seed and seeding.
- Rest the paddock from grazing for a five year period. A stewardship payment of \$50/hectare/year will be offered following seeding, with 50% paid in years 1 and 5 respectively.
- After five years, the trees should be large enough to cope with grazing animals which can then be re-introduced under a rotational grazing system.



Recently direct seeded tree lines

Who is Eligible for WOPR

WOPR is designed to integrate large scale revegetation into a commercial grazing or mixed grazing enterprises. The program aims to attract participation from **primary producers (graziers)** who derive the majority of their income from the farm. Participants taking part in the WOPR program will be required to agree to the following:

- Fill out and submit a WOPR application

- Sign a 5–10 year management agreement
- Commit to the agreement on the understanding that there is no intention to sell the property for the duration of the agreement
- Utilise direct seeding for revegetation wherever possible
- Agree to a strict 5 year grazing exclusion
- Undertake site preparation, fencing and pest management as required
- Host field days or Open Farm days as identified
- Undertake some simple photo monitoring and recording at the site
- Allow for detailed monitoring and evaluation by GA staff and volunteers
- Notify staff of any changes or concerns at the site;
- Participate in surveys as required

What are some of the benefits of WOPR?

WOPR is designed to deliver both production and conservation benefits including:

Livestock Production

- Improved weight gain and performance from increased shade and shelter;
- Reduce mortality of lambs and off-shears Sheep;
- An additional feed source for livestock during summer through the ingestion of acacia pods and foliage;
- Potential for increased resistance to internal parasites (worms) through the consumption of acacia pods;
- The return of pasture to heavily eroded or saline areas;
- Improved soil stability and soil health through nitrogen fixing and nutrient cycling;



Nature Conservation

- Little to no fencing and cost effective revegetation
- Regeneration of remnant vegetation and paddock trees
- Increased native habitat and biodiversity, especially for birds
- Sizable “stepping stones” to connect patches of remnant vegetation
- Future seed sources for further revegetation
- Increased carbon sequestration to alleviate impacts of global warming
- Reduced spread of wind-borne weed seeds
- Less salt and sediment entering creeks and rivers

WOPR agreements represent a partnership toward environmental restoration and are designed to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for both production and conservation.



Direct seeding has revived dying paddock trees

How is WOPR different to other incentive funding programs?

There is currently a number of incentive projects aimed at addressing issues of salinity, water quality and biodiversity. Traditionally these projects offer fencing and revegetation incentives for repairing riparian waterways, remnant vegetation and perennial pastures. WOPR's unique features include:

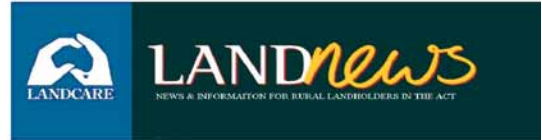
- Whole or sub divided paddock of 10+ ha to minimise fencing
- Fixed term stewardship payments for revegetation
- Incentives for large scale paddock restoration involving direct seeded trees and shrubs.

Written by Graham Fifield, Sue Streatfield and Bindi Vanzella

For more information contact Greening Australia:

Greening Australia nationwide:

www.greeningaustralia.org.au



Greening Australia Capital Region:
(02) 6253 3035

Greening Australia's Whole of Paddock Rehabilitation projects are currently being co-funded in the Upper Lachlan and Lachlan Slopes with support from the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority, and as part of the Kosciuszko to Coast program in the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment, supported by the NSW

[Farm Planning for Sustainability – course offered at Goulburn TAFE](#)

Goulburn TAFE is offering a **Farm Planning for Sustainability** course which is accredited under the Australian Government's [FarmReady program](#). The course will be offered in Semester 2, 2009. While the course costs \$775, farmers can access up to \$1500 under the FarmReady government grants program to attend the course as well as to cover travel, accommodation and childcare costs.

The course will be run over a series of 6 one-day workshops.

The course covers:

- farm planning (includes farm visits in the area)
- auditing the natural resources of the property (soil/land capability, assessing native vegetation)
- directions for the business
- monitoring legal requirements impacting on the management of the property
- developing management strategies to address natural resource management issues

The course will enhance participant's skills in SWOT analysis, sustainable land management practices, property planning processes and approaches, land capability, conservation management strategies, legal requirements and risk management.

For further information about the course, please contact:

Leigh Egan
TAFE – Illawarra Institute
leigh.egan@det.nsw.edu.au
(02) 4229 0688
0413 949 309

Last Drinks *Anonymous*

Wherever she flows the Red gums grow. And where the big stags fall and tangles roots entwine, Cod as big as kangaroos will find a place to hide and hunt. Her sheer banks meander for 2000 miles bearing snow melt to the Southern Ocean. She is artery Australia, the mighty Murray River.

When she floods as she used to do so often, sheets of water pour across the country as far from either bank as a good horse could gallop in a day. Wells overflow, green shoots rise and nests fill with hungry chicks. Giant trees with roots sunk deeper than their tallest branches rise, take this chance to drink and drink and drink. They are old and know well that it could be a long time till the water comes again.

She is weak now and barely flows, it rarely rains, and it rarely snows. Where once a few small towns with smaller dreams drew what they needed from passing streams, leaving most to flow as tributes should to do the greater river good. Now these little streams are gone while the greater river battles on. For it must quench a growing nation's thirst through pipes that would suck an ocean dry and make a river run backwards. When we give blood we know to rest but the River Murray is not so blessed. She must give without complaint and without fail, every day until forever.

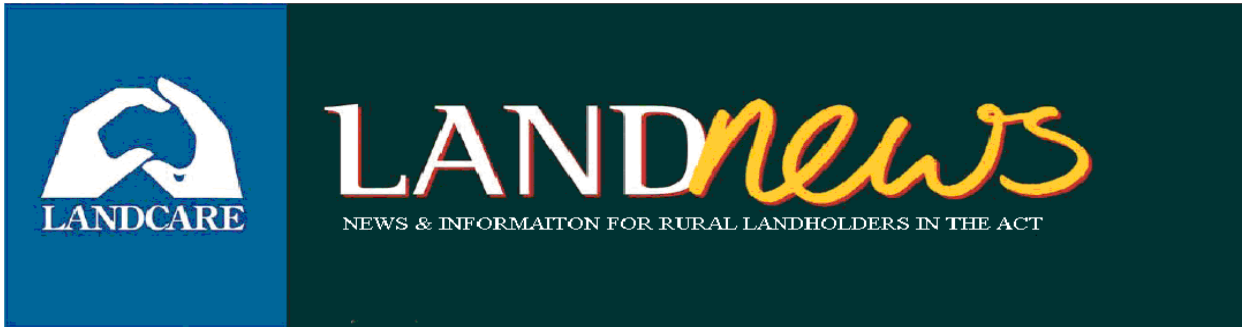


When I was born at the Port of Echuca, eleven million people called Australia home. The number has since doubled and a thousand extra thirsty mouths are added every day. A city the size of Canberra every year, and we are all insatiable.

But the Murray is not the Amazon or the Zambezi; she does not rise from an immense forest where the rain never stops falling. She is a thin thread running through a thirst-land. A mirage in the desert. Perhaps she will never flood again; perhaps she will run dry and stay dry. Her cracked lips swallowing the last precious drop. Perhaps the only moisture she will know will be the tears of those who saw her die and remember how beautiful she once was.

Meanwhile North of the anabranche and West of "where the hell" there stands an old tombstone tree. It has seen 500 summers passed and will take fifty more to die. A tree that has forgotten when it last drank but knows it will never drink again.





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