

Collaborating to protect WEST ARNHEM LAND AND KAKADU

Protecting West Arnhem Land and Kakadu from invasive species and threatening processes (2018-2023)

Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) is working collaboratively with land managers, ranger groups and other organisations across the West Arnhem and Kakadu region to protect environmental assets from the negative impacts of invasive weeds, feral animals and destructive fires.

Project objectives:

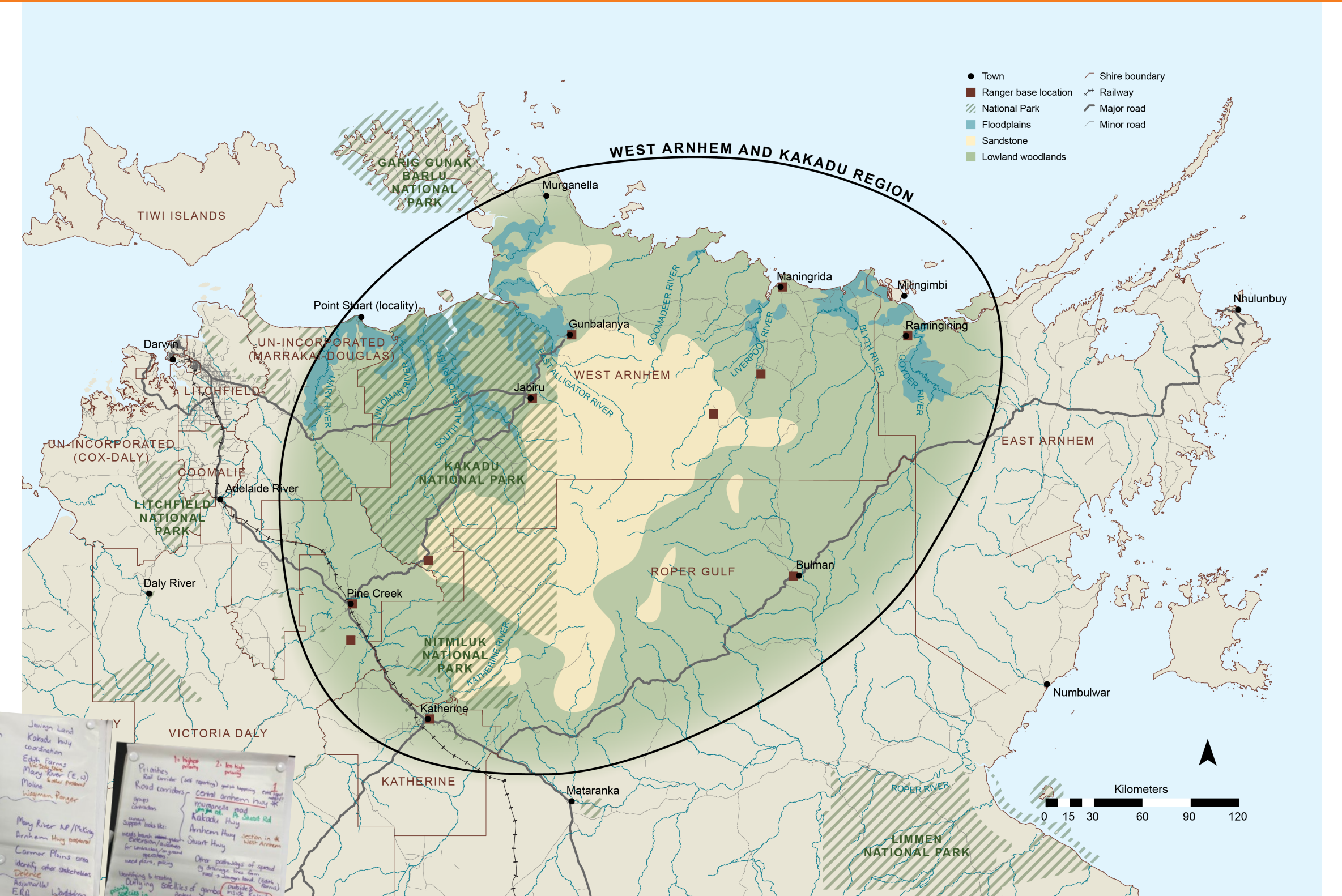
- Prevent spread of gamba grass and other priority weeds into the West Arnhem and Kakadu (WAK) region - target: treatment across 40,000 ha of land adjacent to Kakadu
- Manage buffalo and other priority feral animals to reduce impacts on the WAK region - target: management of 50,000 ha adjacent to Kakadu
- ▶ **Support fire management to improve the condition of 5,000 ha of Arnhem Land Sandstone Plateau**
- Increase community awareness about priority threats (i.e. weeds, ferals) to World Heritage Area, Ramsar wetlands and Arnhem Land Sandstone Plateau values
- Support collaborative planning and action to manage threats

Participatory planning to work out what needs to happen and where:

Project activities were determined using participatory planning processes. Many groups took part in workshops to determine what needed to happen and where. At the end of this process we had many lists of activities. We divided activities into three categories (weeds, ferals and fire), and two priority levels.

Activity lists from participatory planning workshop March 2019

Many groups contributed to the participatory planning process



The project region is vast, covering approximately 9 million hectares of the Top End of the NT



FIRE

Fire activities undertaken for sandstone heath include reducing fire size, protecting areas from late season fire, raising awareness and increasing capacity

Through this project, TNRM is supporting land managers to increase their knowledge and capacity to protect the fire-sensitive stone country habitat known as the sandstone shrubland complex.

Priority fire activities identified by the planning process included making knowledge about looking after the sandstone heath more available, spending more time on ground to reconnect people with the stone country, and undertaking targeted burning to protect habitat. We have now completed year three of the project and most activities have been progressed. Some activities have been completed, and many are on-going.

May 2019: Fire camp to undertake fine scale burning of 1,000 ha in sandstone heath, build relations between Jawoyn Rangers and Kakadu staff, and start discussions around what good fire and healthy heath look like

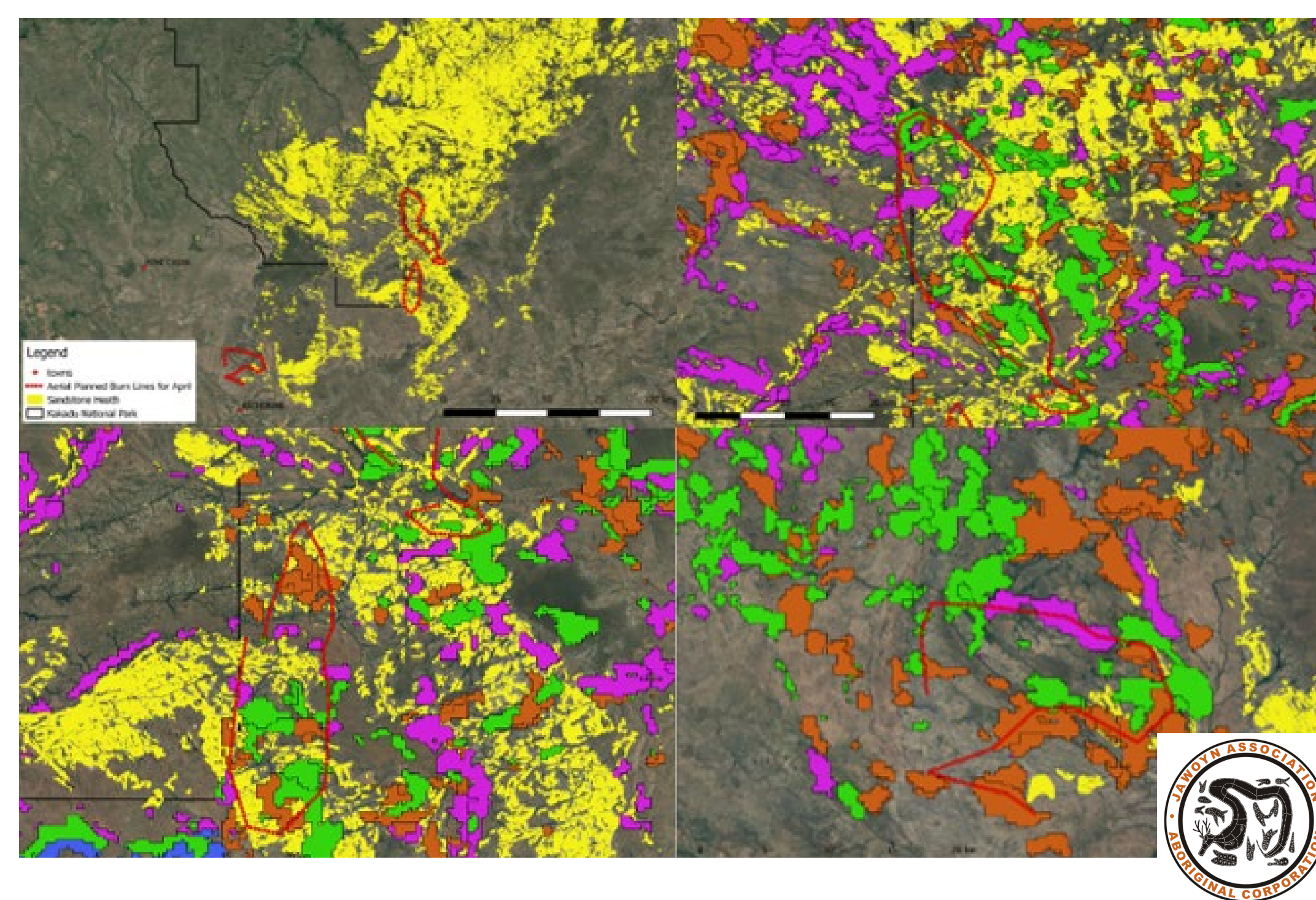


Images supplied by Harry MacDermott

June - Aug 2021: Fire camps to install firebreaks to protect 4,000 ha of sandstone heath, and increase ranger awareness of native species that live in the sandstone heath



April - June 2020 and 2021: To prevent later, hotter fire, early dry season aerial burning was applied to 57,000 ha of sandstone heath, when weather conditions and cured fuel load were not conducive to large or hot fires



June - Aug 2021: Production of a sandstone heath plant guide to help familiarise rangers with species that should be present in healthy stone country



Where to next (activities for years four and five of the project):

- Continue to raise awareness of the Arnhem Land Plateau Sandstone Shrubland Complex and the impacts of fire on this threatened ecological community - there are many fire-sensitive plants which will disappear from an area if burned too often, too hot, or at the wrong time of year.
- Bring stakeholders together to talk about the way people have used fire for living and hunting in the stone country, and how fire was used to keep country healthy.
- Create a management knowledge network between modern day groups who manage sandstone habitats, so that knowledge is easily transferred and people can learn from each other.
- Create tools to assist people assess stone country health and determine whether management approaches are working.
- Support groups to undertake fire work to protect the sandstone heath ecological community.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the many stakeholders, ranger groups and organisations who have been working together to protect West Arnhem Land and Kakadu from invasive species and threatening processes

Image credits: Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation (Djurrubu Rangers), Harry MacDermott



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