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If you look at constructed deckslists from any big events lately, you'll see a startling similarity among most of them—they're all one color.

I'll be honest—the dual lands we've been printing lately haven't been knocking anyone's socks off. The "taplands" in *Eighth Edition* (originally from *Invasion*) are too slow, the depletion lands from *Champions of Kamigawa* (remakes of the original *Tempest* cycle, which was an improvement on a bad *Ice Age* cycle) are too costly to actually use, and the Talismans from *Mirrodin* aren't what most decks want to be doing on turn two.

Something funny happened on the way to *Ninth Edition*.

I guess the story begins with the design of the upcoming *Ravnica: City of Guilds* expansion. The design team knew the set wanted to have a theme revolving around playing multiple colors (if you didn't know that yet, now you do!), and sets like that need support in the form of good mana fixing. And what better way to fix mana than with some kind of good dual lands?

"Perfect," we thought. "What better time to bring back all ten 'pain lands,'" meaning the original five from *Ice Age*, that have since been reprinted in *Fifth*, *Sixth*, and *Seventh Editions*, and the more recent five enemy-pair lands from the *Apocalypse* set. Players lamented the lack of pain lands in *Eighth Edition*, so we were looking for a good reason to reintroduce them.



So that was that—all ten pain lands were slated to come back in *Ravnica*. "But wait," some genius said (I think it was me), "is Control [*Ravnica's* codename] going to take place on Dominaria? Because if it isn't, how do we justify 'Llanowar Wastes' and 'Karplusan Forest'?"

The creative team kindly reminded us that Control would not be set in Dominaria, and our attachment to pain lands was not reason enough to change that. So there went option #1: **Change the setting of the block to accommodate the pain lands.**

We then discussed option #2: **Rename some of the pain lands.** The pain lands should be jealous of the *Onslaught* fetch lands—the latter are very powerful, playable, and have names that will allow them to come back someday in just about any setting we desire—after all, what world can't accommodate a place named "Polluted Delta" or "Wooded Foothills"? This was a conscious decision by the *Onslaught* naming team, and a good one at that. The pain lands have no such luxury. Let's

assume we wanted to reprint all the pain lands that had names that were "setting-neutral":



Pain lands that could theoretically go in *Ravnica*:

- Underground River (♣♠)
- Sulfurous Springs (♠♣)
- Brushland (♣♠)
- Battlefield Forge (♠♣)

That's it.

Pain lands with setting-specific names:

- Adarkar Wastes (♠♣)
- Karplusan Forest (♣♠)
- Caves of Koilos (♠♣)
- Shivan Reef (♣♠)
- Llanowar Wastes (♠♣)
- Yavimaya Coast (♣♠)

So our wacky plan would involve reprinting four of the ten with no changes, and coming up with new names for the other six, making functionally identical cards. This plan would have some weird ramifications. The most noticeable would be in formats like Extended, where a post-rotation black-green deck would have access to eight pain lands (four Llanowar Wastes and four of the "New Llanowar Wastes"), whereas a black-blue deck would get just the four Underground Rivers. Another big concern was that there are several players out there that have held onto their old pain lands anticipating their return to Standard, and it would be quite a slap in the face to say, "Sure, pain lands are back, but those Karplusans you have there? They're no good. Go out and get four of these new exactly-the-same-as-Karplusans-but-with-a-new-name lands instead." The third strike against this plan was that it wasn't a very elegant solution.

Which leads us to option #3: **Rename all ten pain lands.** This solution is a lot cleaner because it eliminates the disparity in Extended and just looks nicer, but it still would sour people that held onto their old cards. I personally don't like repackaging old stuff under new names when the old stuff probably took time and effort for people to collect. Obviously we have to do that stuff sometimes, but I'm glad it isn't often. If we couldn't use the pain lands in *Ravnica*, my vote was to scrap them and make something new instead.

But Randy Buehler, the Director of **Magic** R&D, and Brian Schneider, the game's lead developer, liked the pain lands a lot. They were clean, fair, and did good things to allow multicolored decks to exist. Their power level was well understood by both players and R&D, and we couldn't get much more perfect than that.

So they suggested option #4: **Put them in the upcoming *Ninth Edition Core Set*.**



Our more regular readers may remember all the stuff we said when we were in the time around. "We want uncommon dual lands so that more people can have them." "We think the *Invasion* ones are cleaner." And the oldie-but-goodie "We don't do enemy color stuff in Core Sets because we want to teach the color relationships to new players."

Eh, so we changed our minds. We do that a lot. I know Mark Rosewater and I both like to write about all these little rules and guidelines that R&D makes for ourselves and how those rules guide our philosophies and decisions. Well, I'll let you in on a little secret:

those rules and guidelines tend to apply fully the day they were created, a little less the next day, then a little less, and so on, until we've changed our minds completely.

We aren't out to craft the perfect "Ultimate Set of Rules for Designing and Developing Cards" that will hold sway over everything we print, although it may seem so at times. We make rules to steer us and justify us as we work, but those rules change from set to set and year to year. This year, out the window went our previous stance on pain lands in the Core Set. Why? The overall needs of the play environment trump the lesser needs of the new player audience. Besides, the cycle of uncommon color hosers will teach them which colors are friends just fine.

The result of our decision? The first set with ten rare duals since Revised. Enjoy them... who knows what rules we'll make for ourselves next time?

By the way, if you haven't checked out Randy Buehler's feature on the new Pro Tour schedule, do so. We've set up a radical new PTQ season—three-person team Standard! So all those pain lands will come in handy... especially with the wackiness *Ravnica* has in store!

Last Week's Poll:

Have you ever played Magic using cards that you or a friend have created on your own?		
No	9169	64.1%
Yes	5146	35.9%
Total	14315	100.0%

I certainly made some of my own cards when I first started playing (and man, were they bad!). It is definitely a fun exercise.

This Week's Poll:

What aspect of the new Pro Tour schedule excites you the most?

- An event in Honolulu and/or a Standard Pro Tour.
- The advent of Team Constructed.
- Plane tickets as PTQ prizes.
- Reorganization from five events to four.
- Something else.
- None of it.

