

found at all. These sections have been applied for at different times by different persons during the last ten years who were desirous of settling on them, but all met with the same reply—viz., that the sections in question were included in the gum reserve and could not be opened for selection. Extending from the southern boundary of the above sections lies a big stretch of swamp land that could with advantage have the reserve lifted and be cut up into useful farms, and which I am sure would be readily taken up, and as this is well known to be non-gum-bearing I would strongly advise the lifting of the reserve both from this and other similar areas that exist in this northern district and which are well suited for settlement.

I would also like to call the attention of the members of the Commission to the amount of destruction and loss caused each year during the summer months by persons setting fires in the swamps regardless of what the consequences may be. Some there are who seem to be possessed with a mania for seeing a blaze, and who would, if they saw a clump of dry scrub or brush, walk out of their way for the sole purpose of firing that scrub, and it is a remarkable thing that, as a rule, those who are so fond of firing in this reckless manner will seldom be found digging where they have fired.

During this summer quite a number of swamps have been fired with disastrous results, one swamp, known as Sugar Swamp, containing, I should say, about 40 acres, was fired some time before Christmas and has been burning ever since, is still burning, and at the present time is practically one living mass of burning ashes. Owing to being drained some years ago this swamp does not carry any surface water, and being on an average shallow, of course quickly dried at the beginning of the summer, and there is no question at all as to the depth the fire has gone. Now, it would be hard to estimate the exact value of the gum that has been burned in this swamp alone, but I should say that it would not be less than £2,000. My estimate is arrived at in this way: During late years some of the swamps that were considered by the old-time digger to be worked out have been found to contain riddlings in more or less quantities which have commanded a good price in the market. These swamps have been worked by means of digging down to the layer that contains the riddlings and then washing this through sieves or other contrivances for saving the chips. By this means thousands of sacks of riddlings have been taken from swamps in different places that were otherwise considered worked out.

Almost joining Sugar Swamp is another much smaller swamp, known as McGrath's Swamp, which is only divided by a narrow sandstone ridge from Sugar Swamp, from which there have been taken from time to time approximately 2,000 sacks of chips, and this is considered by many here to be a low estimate of what has been taken from it. These riddlings have been selling at anything from 15s. to £1 5s. and £1 10s. per cwt. according to the way they were got up or the condition they were placed on the market.

Sugar Swamp, it was well known, contained chips and gum in equal quantity, if not more so, than McGrath's Swamp, only that it was found more difficult to work it owing to the nature of the ground in the swamp.

Not a mile from Sugar Swamp is another, known by the name of Green Basin, which was also fired this summer, and is now practically burned from end to end; and there are many other places that I could mention that are simply burned out through this reckless firing, and I certainly think that an Act should be framed making it a punishable offence. If a Ranger were appointed whose duty it would be to visit each district regularly I feel sure it would be found that quite a number of right-seeing men in each district would be ready to co-operate with him and thereby assist in stopping this practice of indiscriminate firing.

THOMAS B. TAAFFE.

The Secretary and Members of Gum Lands Commission.

16th April, 1914.

I, THE undersigned, having been asked to give a statement with reference to lifting reservations on such land as non-gum-bearing and non-payable gum land, I would strongly recommend lifting reservations of the following blocks—namely: Kaikino Swamp, Opoe Block, Mangonui County; also all the land west of this swamp which is non-gum-bearing; and also big swamp between Stony Creek and Macintosh's, in Otaia Block: this swamp would make a few nice farms when drained. I would not recommend lifting reservations of land north of Ngataki Creek, in Muruwhenua Block, as there is not a sufficient area to be worth while cutting up for settlement.

J. M. REID.

SIR,—

Towai, 30th May, 1914.

According to promise I am sending a few remarks *re* manure experiment.

Up to the present phosphates have given best results. I have had the grass eaten off with one cow since the 19th May. She left the slagged grass in places—evidently it was too rank—but she has got it fairly evenly eaten down now. There is a remarkable difference where no manure was used and the manured part.

Plots 2 and 3: Soil lumpy; good growth; bottom not filled. Plots 3, 4, 5, and 6: Better, but patchy. Plot 7 (lime and super.): Fair growth; but open. Plots 8, 9, and 10: Good growth; bottom well filled. Plots 11 and 12: Top part good sward; bottom part in water; grass very much discoloured, nearly yellow; subsoil on yellow grass pipeclay, which will not let surface water away through it. Plot 13: Lower part very good. Plot 9 (slag and super.) is still ahead. Plot 13 (slag): Second best.