

With the completion of that objective substantially assured, however, it is now possible to revert gradually to the compilation of a revised accurate inventory. Preliminary plans to that end have already been laid down, were fully discussed at the recent annual conference of executive officers, and progress will be accelerated to the degree to which qualified officers can be released for that purpose.

Meantime both afforestation surveys, &c., and indigenous-forest reconnaissance are proceeding to the full limits of available resources. These are well ahead of programme, and during the year have included the following major projects: (1) The preparation of land for planting during the incoming year; (2) preliminary surveys and layout of firebreaks and compartments; (3) reconnaissance of 16,683 acres of timbered areas; (4) topographical surveys of 77,516 acres; (5) appraisalment of 8,314 acres of indigenous forest; (6) layout surveys of 87,072 acres for afforestation.

In this respect it is desired to place on record the value of the basic records and progressive co-operation available from the Department of Lands and Survey, which have greatly facilitated progress and accomplishment.

6. FOREST FIRES.

Generally speaking, the last "fire season," in direct contrast to the previous one, was favourable from a forest-protection standpoint, and although during the driest months the usual number of small fires occurred State-forest areas were never in serious danger.

During "burning-off" operations in the vicinity of the Waipoua Kauri Forest (North Auckland) a fire was responsible for the scorching of one kauri-tree, but was fortunately extinguished before further serious damage was done.

In the Kaingaroa Plantation (Rotorua Region) a fire, which is believed to have originated on Native land, spread across the Rangitaiki River, and before it could be extinguished 30 acres of two-year-old drill-sown insignis-pine trees were destroyed. No definite proof of the origin of this fire could be established, as the offender was undetected.

One fire also occurred in the Westland experiment area, by which approximately 16 acres of two-year-old trees were burned.

With these exceptions, the only damage to State or provisional State forests was the burning of some cut-over and second growth on fern lands.

It is hoped that in the incoming year it will be possible to set up hygrograph stations in certain specially selected parts of the country, and so far one such apparatus has been erected at Karioi, and another is kept for special observation at Wellington. By properly considering the relative humidity of the air during the various seasons it should be possible to get the greatest fire-protection results with a minimum of effort and expenditure.

7. FOREST PROTECTION.

Fire Districts.

The fire districts constituted to minimize the fire risks and danger to the indigenous and exotic forests continue to function satisfactorily, and the owners of properties included in the boundaries of these districts recognize the obvious advantages which thereby accrue.

The value of the forest fire district principle, which was a distinct advance in forest legislation so far as this Dominion and probably many other portions of the Empire were concerned, is now being realized in many other parts of the world, and the Service frequently receives requests from overseas for detailed information in regard thereto.

Two new fire districts were proclaimed during the year to safeguard new plantation projects, and the boundaries of one existing district were extended to embrace adjoining lands which had been acquired to extend Balmoral Plantation. Two applications—one from a private afforestation company and one from a local body—for the constitution of fire districts were approved, and the districts duly proclaimed, while three others which come under the same category are now being dealt with. The fire districts now gazetted total thirty-four.

8. TIMBER SALES.

Table 6 shows the quantity of timber sold and cut from State forests during 1928-29, as compared with previous years, and evidences the depression through which the milling industry has been passing. The position is, however, improving, and this is demonstrated by the increased output from areas previously purchased.

TABLE 6.

Fiscal Year.			Number of Sales.	Value of Timber sold during the Year.	Quantity of Timber sold during the Year.	Receipts from all Timber Licenses in Force during the Year.	Estimated Quantity cut from State Forests during the Year.
				£	Feet, B.M.	£	Feet, B.M.
1928-29	..	..	53	44,732	41,465,355	65,213	42,835,500
1927-28	..	..	49	34,000	24,310,100	91,282	36,654,000
1926-27	..	..	52	52,125	43,144,000	103,524	64,639,000
1925-26	..	..	65	80,565	73,659,000	130,132	79,009,000
1924-25	..	..	54	96,158	69,253,000	134,731	102,369,900
1923-24	..	..	61	266,388	212,085,000	68,295	52,297,000
1922-23	..	..	52	95,357	78,830,000	47,462	..
1921-22	..	..	40	38,208	35,669,000	24,320	..
1920-21	..	..	5	17,055	6,987,000	16,815	..

NOTE.—Receipts shown above for the periods 1920-21 to 1923-24 do not include the half-share of receipts paid into the National Endowment Account from State forests on national-endowment lands.