

Sand-dune reclamation works have now been carried on under the control of the Minister of Public Works for the past three years, and during the year covered by this report the programme has been fully maintained. The important areas being dealt with are situated on the west coast of the North Island in the Wellington and Auckland Provinces. Operations are in hand on areas totalling 30,000 acres, and it can be said that by the end of the year 19,000 acres had been planted in marram and lupin, and are quickly reaching a degree of more or less stability. It is intended to follow the stabilization with marram by tree-planting operations as a forestry undertaking, and initial work with this object is in hand. As these bare sand dunes have been a menace to farm lands and to adjoining watercourses for many years, the value of the work thus initiated will be readily appreciated.

Works for the reclamation of tidal flats have been carried on in the Hokianga, Whangaroa, and Kaipara Harbours, and on the Ahuriri Lagoon at Napier. The total area that is included in these operations is approximately 9,000 acres, the bulk of this area being in the Ahuriri Lagoon. The development is being carried on with the approval of the Small Farms Board, and involves a long-range programme aiming at the establishment of farmers who will take over small farms, fully developed with pasture, fencing, housing, water-supply, &c.

The programme for the improvement and control of rivers has been continued. The largest work is that for the diversion of the Tutaekuri River, Hawke's Bay. In this case the work is actually being carried out by the Hawke's Bay Rivers Board, under subsidy from and supervision by the Public Works Department. Another large work is the Ashley River Control Scheme, Canterbury, carried on as an unemployment relief work. Quite a large number of other smaller works are in hand for the clearing of willows and the improvement of streams generally. The willow menace on many of the rivers of the Dominion is a very serious and increasing one, and it calls for the urgent consideration and attention of the local authorities concerned.

Works for the clearing of farm lands have been carried on by the Public Works Department with Unemployment Board's funds, and with the assistance of contributions from the settlers concerned. The work has been of quite a large extent and is of great value, and has been guided with the object of the rehabilitation of farming lands that has seriously deteriorated under slump conditions, and to the provision of cleared areas by stumping, logging, and burning on former bush farms to enable the settler to produce hay, ensilage, and root crops. This work has met with great appreciation in the districts in which it has been carried out.

SMALL-FARM SCHEME WORKS.

These works are, of course, under the control of the Small Farms Board and the Lands Department, but as a great deal of the development work is carried out by the Public Works Department on behalf of the Small Farms Board, it should be briefly referred to here. Generally the work consists of land clearing and drainage, cultivation, the erecting of fencing, farm cottages, milking-sheds, and the provision of water-supply and access roading. The work is carried out by selected prospective farm applicants, and by special single men's camps. The number of blocks on which operations are at present in hand, excluding tidal-flat reclamation blocks, total twenty-six, the bulk of these being in the Whangarei, Auckland, and Taumarunui Public Works Districts, and in the aggregate is giving employment to an average of 740 men.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AERODROMES.

During the year a considerable addition to my Department's activities has occurred in consequence of the demand that has suddenly been made for the establishment of aerodromes throughout the country to serve the Dominion's air transport needs. While this work was briefly mentioned in my last Statement, the expansion that has been necessary to meet the rapidly growing demand has been far beyond what was contemplated last year. The developments that have