

REPORT.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following brief notes on some of the main activities of the Service are quoted for ready reference and general information. Most of the matters mentioned are dealt with in greater detail in the report.

Afforestation.—In round figures the area of exotic State forests now totals 426,000 acres, of which 331,000 acres are located in the North Island and 95,000 in the South.

At the close of the year plans were in train for the establishment of a new afforestation unit in the Bay of Plenty District, to be known as Rotoehu. It is expected that in the meantime about 24,000 acres will be available for tree-planting purposes in this locality.

Sale of Timber.—A busy year was experienced in dealing with the many applications received for blocks of milling timber, and the total volume sold—viz., 107,429,600 board feet—is 5,000,000 ft. greater than the figures for the previous year. The stumpage value of the timber sold was £124,500. To cope with the increase in work, much of which was urgent, as many sawmillers make no move to secure extra bush until their present holdings are practically cut out, the resources of the Service field staff were taxed to the utmost. It is all the more pleasing to record that at the close of the year the work generally was well up to date. The new year commences with a slight easing of the position so far as the demand for milling timber is concerned.

Production of Timber.—An increase in the quantity of timber produced must also be reported, the estimated volume—320,000,000 ft.—being about 20,000,000 ft. greater than the previous year's total.

The quantity cut from State forests (including Wardens' areas) was 111,700,000 ft., or about 37 per cent. of the total cut.

Exports of Timber.—The calendar year's figures showed a reduction of over 12,000,000 ft. in exports, the totals being—1935, 39,642,000 ft.; 1936, 27,026,000 ft. Kauri was the only species to show an increase over the previous year.

Rather unexpectedly the export of insignis pine (box-shooks) dropped by 700,000 ft., but it is believed that this decline is of a temporary nature only.

Imports of Timber.—The quantity of timber imported for the calendar year 1936 (31,126,000 ft.) was practically the same as for the previous year, but the value increased by approximately £28,000.

Whilst the imports of American softwoods increased by 2,300,000 ft., hardwoods from Australia decreased by practically the same figure.

Sawmills.—At the 31st March, 1937, the number of sawmills in the Dominion was 594, or two less than the previous year's total. Of this number, 504 were milling indigenous timber, and 127 were cutting exotic timber. Included in the latter figures are thirty-seven mills which at varying periods throughout the year milled both exotic and indigenous timber. The position of the industry may be gauged from the fact that the number of mills working full time rose from 315 to 345. Sawmills cutting State-forest timber numbered 138, as against 142 for the year 1935-36.

Opossum-trapping.—Opossum-trapping is subject to the provisions of the Animals Protection and Game Act, 1921-22, and the State Forest Service is concerned solely with the right of entry into State forests by duly licensed persons.

To facilitate this activity, and also to regulate the traffic in State forests, permits to enter for opossum-trapping must be obtained before licenses to trap can be granted in terms of the Act mentioned. Such permits are keenly sought in favoured localities, and a uniform system of allocating rights was deemed essential in the interests of all concerned. This has been achieved by subdividing State forests into blocks which are defined by natural features and offered annually for opossum-trapping purposes by public competition. Under this system permits are granted for one season only.

Three hundred and thirty-four permits to enter State forests for trapping purposes were granted for the 1936 opossum-trapping season.

Mining Privileges.—The number of applications for mining privileges in State forests continues to decline, due no doubt to the fact that many miners and prospectors are being absorbed into industries or employment of a more permanent and lucrative nature. The total applications handled by the Service for the year was about 50 per cent. less than for the previous period.

Forest Fires.—The months of summer and early autumn are usually anxious times for the forester, but last year was an exception to the rule, as frequent and well-distributed rains over most parts of the Dominion reduced fire danger to a minimum. One serious fire did occur, however, at Kaingaroa State Forest, spreading from the adjoining country into the growing trees. It destroyed 107 acres of nine-year-old insignis-pine trees, and, but for an excellent save by a large gang of fire-fighters, a major catastrophe might have occurred.

Full inquiries failed to discover the origin of the fire.

General.—At the close of another arduous and exacting year I desire to express my thanks to officers of all ranks for their fullest co-operation in furthering the policy of the Government and promoting the aims of the Service; when, as not infrequently happened, officers were compelled in the execution of their duties to work long hours, this service was invariably given with a good will and cheerfulness which merit the highest commendation.

Without the assistance of such a loyal, energetic, and competent staff the results as recorded in the pages which follow could not possibly have been achieved.