

The absolute need of a thorough reform in existing regulations on this important subject will be obvious on a perusal of the following statement of regulations in force in different parts of the South Island only:—

In Southland, timber on Crown lands may be cut on payment of 3d. per 100 superficial feet on converted timber.

In Otago, on payment of £1 1s. per acre, in three annual instalments.

In Canterbury, on purchase of the land at £2 per acre.

In Nelson, on payment of an annual rent of 4s. per acre.

In Marlborough, on payment of a royalty of 6d. per 100 superficial feet, measured in the log.

In Westland, on payment of a fee of £5 per annum for, say, 100 acres or upwards; practically, an unlimited quantity of logs might be cut on payment of this amount.

The following important points have been kept in view in preparing the new regulations:—

1. To afford a sufficient area to insure a certain degree of permanence to the operations of the licensee, and yield a fair return for the capital sunk in buildings, &c.

2. To give the licensee a direct interest in preventing wasteful conversion, and diminishing the risk of fire.

3. To prevent unnecessary injury to young growth, and insure the natural renewal of the forest.

4. To facilitate efficient supervision.

The Chairmen of County Councils have been requested to act as local Conservators, and in most instances have willingly consented. The great advantages afforded by this ready co-operation, combined with the local knowledge possessed by these gentlemen, cannot fail to prove of great assistance in carrying out the provisions of the State Forests Act.

Advantage has been taken of the knowledge and experience of the Chief Surveyors of the provincial districts who have been appointed Inspectors of State Forests, and as Commissioners of Crown Lands will be intrusted with the duty of issuing licenses for cutting timber. They will also exercise a general supervision over the Forest Rangers. The field Surveyors will be instructed to report any cases of trespass or injury to State forests that may come under their observation.

The working staff of the department will consist of the following officers: The Chief Conservator, who will be intrusted with the control of the State forests and the management of all details, the employment of the officers and labourers in the forests, plantations, and reserves, and generally to conduct the practical work of the department, subject to the approval of the Honourable the Commissioner of State Forests; Assistant Conservators, who will be two in number, and who will work directly under the instruction of the Chief Conservator; Foresters, who will act as valuers, and exercise a general supervision over the Rangers in their respective districts; Nurserymen, who will have charge of the permanent nurseries, and the formation and supervision of new plantations; Forest Rangers, whose duties will be to protect the forests from depredation and fire, and who must be continually in the forests.

During the present year only three Nurserymen will be appointed, as it is not intended to form large establishments for the growth of young plants. In some localities it is hoped that local nurserymen may be willing to supply one- and two-year-old plants of certain kinds, at sufficiently low rates to warrant the department leaving the supply of plants to outsiders; but this can only be done where there are facilities for transport. In all cases, planting operations must be conducted under the supervision of a Nurseryman, labourers being engaged from time to time as their services are required.

Rangers or Forest Guards will eventually form a considerable body. Their pay will vary from £100 to £150, according to the importance of their work. Where a Ranger is placed in charge of a single compact forest or of a small district no travelling allowance will be required, but where the district is large, a fixed allowance will be made for the keep of a horse and expenses; or, if in a district easily accessible by rail, an allowance specially adapted to the requirements of the case will be made. In certain isolated localities it will be necessary to erect cottages for the accommodation of the Ranger or Nurseryman.

With the gradual expansion of revenue, and consequent increase of the working staff, it will be necessary to extend the means of supervision. The cheapest and most effectual way of doing this will be to divide the colony into districts, and appoint a District Forester for any district in which the forests occupy a certain area. This officer will have charge of all measures for conservation and of all planting operations, with the direct supervision of Foresters, Nurserymen, and Rangers within the limits of his district; but this step will not be warranted in less than three years. In the meantime these duties must be discharged by the Assistant Conservators, with the assistance of the Chief Surveyors.

As far as possible, Foresters will be selected from the Rangers who display the greatest aptitude for their work, and are properly qualified, so that fair opportunities of advancement will be offered to deserving men. In like manner it is proposed to select District Foresters from the Foresters and Nurserymen who may show themselves qualified for higher duties.

During the present year it is intended to appoint one Assistant Conservator, four Foresters, three Nurserymen, and eight Rangers, in addition to a Ranger appointed last year, and another transferred from the Crown Lands Department.