

SOIL CONSERVATION RESERVES : DEMONSTRATION AND EXPERIMENTAL FARMS

In pursuance of its policy of combating soil conservation problems on a practical farming basis, the Council has acquired several badly-eroded farms typical of large eroded areas.

As lack of proper management has been one of the chief causes of the conditions, practical modifications of management are being employed on these farms, along with comprehensive soil conservation measures, to determine the feasibility and cost of controlling erosion and restoring these areas to permanent productive use.

Much of the work is necessarily of an experimental nature, designed to evolve practices that will achieve the desired result. Experiments designed to solve local problems have been undertaken in methods of management, determination of types of plants, including trees, that are most useful, cultivation practices, and structures ; and, finally, comparative run-off and soil-loss measuring devices are being installed progressively and results recorded.

The demonstration value of these farms is already being reflected in the number of farmers attending field-days arranged, and in their requests for assistance to adopt similar measures from interested farmers.

In all cases local Advisory Committees advise and assist directly in the management of these farms, and the Council acknowledges this service, which effectively develops district interest in conservation work done.

Ihungia, Poverty Bay

A reserve of 192 acres was put under conservation management to stabilize eroding slopes and reduce the active gullying which was threatening the highway. The vigorous growth of grasses has had such an effect on infiltration and stability that the gullying has become quiescent, while the poplars and willows located on future dam-sites are establishing satisfactorily.

Waerenga-o-Kuri, Poverty Bay

Considerable improvement in the general appearance, the pastures, and in the carrying-capacity of this 998-acre eroded hill-country farm has been effected during the past two years. Top-dressing and oversowing has developed much stronger swards to combat erosion, and as a result of prudent grazing the reserves of feed on the steeper slopes provide greater protection of the soil. The provision of adequate supplementary feed is making possible the renewal of run-out pastures and the control of rushes, and at the same time relieving the grazing pressure at critical periods on the steeper land.

Gully- and slip-control work is being proceeded with in conjunction with subdivision fencing, making better management of the catchments of gullies possible ; and the top end of the large gully has been very successfully stabilized with planting of poplars, willows, and "shipmast" locust. Further, management trials in comparative catchments are made possible by this fencing. Pampas-grass tillers and trees useful for space planting are being raised in the nursery.

The comprehensive conservation work done on this demonstration farm has a wide application over some of the most productive but at the same time some of the most erodible pastoral land in the country.

Tangoio, Hawke's Bay

After a recuperative period of two years, during which top-dressing, oversowing, spelling, and cattle-grazing were undertaken, this 450-acre farm has now been taken over as a full working unit. Further work in subdivision fencing, top-dressing, seeding, water-supply, and tree-planting has been undertaken, and 220 bullocks have been