

WELLINGTON.

Department of Lands and Survey,
District Office, Wellington, 14th July, 1902.

Preservation of Native Forest.

In response to your circular No. 507, of the 10th March last, I have the honour to report that the preservation of forest in the Wellington Land District has of late years received considerable attention, and extensive forest reserves have been gazetted. These primarily were set apart for climatic reserves, and come under the category of those reserves to be marked "A" in accordance with the above circular. A considerable number of the smaller reserves were also made with the object of preserving the bush on the banks of rivers, the growth of timber, and for the sake of scenery. These have been marked "B" in accordance with your scheme of notation.

Attached please find schedule giving the above reserves in this land district up to date.

						A.	R.	P.
Marked "A" (climatic), State forest reserves, comprising an						471,093	0	39
area of								
Marked "B" (scenic), for preservation of timber and scenery—						63,478	1	39
an area of								
Total						534,571	2	22

As the area of the Wellington Land District is 6,810,958 acres, the forest and timber reserves are 7·85 per cent., or one-thirteenth of the total area.

The whole scheme of forest-conservation for the Wellington Land District was comprehensively dealt with by the late Chief Surveyor in a report to the Surveyor-General dated the 13th October, 1898, paper No. 2401. Unfortunately the Government were not able to see their way to reserve the areas which were affected by the Government Loans to Local Bodies Act, thus detracting from the efficiency of the late Chief Surveyor's scheme.

I will first consider the reserves for climatic purposes, stating what reserves exist on the western division of the Land District of Wellington, with the additions which I consider might be made with great advantage.

Starting in the south from near Cape Taurakirae, there is an important forest reserve which includes the Orongorongo Range; the very rough high country lying between the freehold lands on Wellington Harbour and those on the southern portion of the Wairarapa Valley and the southern part of the Rimutakas, crossing to the north of the Wellington-Wairarapa Railway-line, but not extending over the Main Coach Road.

There is a gap not reserved of about three to four miles wide before the next large forest reserve commences. This embraces the main range of the Tararuas, extending in a width of about eight miles at the southern end, where it covers the head-waters of the Hutt River, and keeping this average width as far north as Mount Dundas, then gradually tapering to about two miles at Tararua Saddle, the northern extremity.

From here the line of forest reserves is not continuous. Several large blocks on the western—*i.e.*, the Wellington—side of the Ruahine Range have been set apart for this purpose. I consider it highly important that these gaps, where possible, should be filled, and the whole of the Ruahines, the continuation of the backbone of the North Island, should be reserved from the Manawatu Gorge to Te Rakinuiakura. To do this it will be necessary to purchase the following native blocks: Part of the Tamaki Subdivision No. 2, 2,637 acres 3 roods; part of the Tamaki Subdivision No. 3, 1,925 acres; part of the Tamaki Subdivision No. 4, 2,724 acres 2 roods; part of the Tamaki Subdivision No. 5, 1,568 acres and 10 perches. The next block is Crown land, Piripi, 5,899 acres 3 roods 24 perches; then Te Ohu, which is now European freehold: as the owners are cutting timber on this block, some steps should be taken at once, or a very undesirable gap will be left on the line of reserves. The area is 6,767 acres. Another block of Native land, between a large reserve and Hawke's Bay boundary, of about 7,000 acres should also be resumed and reserved—7,000 acres. There are two more Native blocks—Awarua 1A No. 3 North, 6,230 acres; and Awarua 1A No. 3 South, 3,420 acres: also parts of Awarua No. 1B, No. 1C, and No. 1DA, the exception being a belt of about a mile and a half back from the Rangitikei River kept for settlement purposes. These blocks include the headwaters of many important tributaries of the Rangitikei River. The reserve should also embrace the famous Mount Aorangi, which is a landmark for miles around, and has most interesting historical associations.

In the extreme northern part of this land district, I am glad to say that a considerable area around the National Park has been reserved, but I consider that this area should be largely increased. The land lies high and is of poor quality. It therefore would be of little value for settlement purposes, while most important for forest conservation. I would recommend reserving the block of Native land north-east of the present reserve on the Kaimanawas, covering the head springs of the Rangitikei River, and the headwaters of the rivers flowing into Lake Taupo; the bulk of the Te Hautu Block, cutting off the outer fringe of say 10,000 acres for milling purposes; the range between Pihanga and Kakaramea Peaks, cutting off all good milling-timber round the base of these mountains; a block of 3,000 acres around Mount Maungaku and part of Taurewa No. 4. I would advise the extension of the reserves eastward of Mount Hauhangatahi as far as the watershed dividing the Retaruke and Kaitieke Rivers from the Waimarino River, starting from the edge of the bush near the Gladstone F.H. Block, and going north to the southern boundary of Native Reserve E, Waimarino, and thence by that boundary to join the present reserves. In the western