

## RESERVATIONS.

The total area of lands permanently reserved during the year was 7,384 acres, comprising 6,704 acres in the Eglington, Te Anau, Mataura (Edendale Settlement), Oteramika, and Jacob's River districts, reserved for scenic purposes; 319 acres for school-sites, scattered over the whole land district; 347 acres for primary education, in the Wakaia district; and 14½ acres for miscellaneous purposes.

## BUSH FIRES.

In the month of January, following upon the long dry season experienced throughout the district during the past summer, several bush fires of greater or less magnitude occurred in various parts of the district over both private and Crown lands and State forests. The first fire brought under my notice, on the 11th January, was one that spread over about 210 acres of State forest at Spar Bush—old sawmill-workings—in the New River Hundred. With your approval, the sowing of this area was immediately put in hand, and completed for a total cost of £97 for grass-seed and labour.

Later in January last very destructive bush fires swept over the large area known as Seaward Bush, in the Invercargill, Campbelltown, and Oteramika Hundreds. The total area which was affected by the fires is estimated at 11,400 acres, part State forest and part Crown land. Of this area a large portion was not considered suitable for sowing down with grass, owing to the quantity of timber still standing and lying upon the ground, but upon examination of the State forest and Crown land it was deemed advisable to sow down estimated areas of about 1,425 acres, and arrangements were made as soon as possible for so doing. The work of sowing was kept up as long as the weather-conditions were suitable, with the result that 897 acres in State forest has been sown at a cost of £469 16s., and 735 acres of Crown lands sown at a cost of £313 3s. 9d.: total area sown, 1,632 acres; total cost, £782 19s. 9d.

The Seaward Bush fires in their ravages destroyed four sawmills and plants—belonging to Messrs. Timpany Bros., McCallum and Co., Broad, Small and Co., and the Southland Sawmilling Company—a considerable quantity of standing and sawn timber, and some miles of tramways. Messrs. Broad, Small, and Co. have again erected a mill and resumed work; Messrs. Timpany Bros. are about to erect a mill on another site, but the other two mills will not be re-erected, the areas having been nearly worked out at the time of the fire.

Besides the destruction of sawmills and timber, the fires in Seaward Bush destroyed many cottages, fencing, and timber and grass owned by Crown tenants and others. A number of Crown tenants applied for assistance, and upon the Hon. the Minister of Lands approving of the supply of grass-seed for the purpose of sowing burnt areas, subject to repayment spread over a period of one, two, or three years, a circular letter was sent to over thirty applicants. However, but eighteen ultimately accepted assistance, and grass-seed to the value of £285 has been supplied to them, the area sown being 433 acres.

## LAND PROPOSED TO BE OPENED.

During the ensuing financial year it is proposed to place in the market for the first time the following blocks of land, should the surveys be completed in time: viz., about 9,000 acres in Blocks VI and XI, Alton District; 6,000 to 8,000 acres in Blocks XXIII and XXIV, Invercargill Hundred; and also some 5,000 acres in various blocks in Longwood District and Jacob's River Hundred. A considerable portion of the proposed area to be offered in Invercargill Hundred was surveyed some fourteen to sixteen years ago, but owing to the land carrying good sawmilling-timber it was never opened for selection, and has since been the scene for many years of active milling operations. Although surveyed some fourteen to sixteen years ago, the subdivisions were made too small, and owing to the milling operations and recent fires very few, if any, of the pegs could now be found, therefore the necessity of a resurvey, and into larger allotments more suitable for the requirements of a successful bush settlement.

■ Menzies's Ferry Domain, the reservation over which has been removed, has now been subdivided into five allotments of about 26 acres each, and will shortly be offered for selection on the village-homestead system, and, I anticipate, will readily be taken up owing to their convenient situation, excellent quality of land, and suitability for working-men with small capital. Greenhills Township will also be placed in the market at an early date, having been recently surveyed, grouped, and valued. Forty-six acres have been subdivided into quarter-acre sections, some of which have been grouped, and the whole will be offered at auction as suburban lands; 221 acres have also been subdivided into ten allotments, classified as rural lands, and will also be disposed of by auction. Besides the above, there is a considerable area of surveyed land now open for selection which will remain available to applicants to select from during the ensuing financial year.

## OFFICE-WORK.

Besides coping with the current work—which increases year by year, as stated in last year's report—a large amount of arrears of work has been done in the way of putting defective records in order as well as the information obtainable permits, and the bringing up to date and issuing of titles, some of which date back to the year 1858; but I am pleased to say this class of work will soon be a thing of the past, and much credit is due to the clerical staff for their assiduous attention to such obscure and complicated investigations, and the able manner in which these arrears have been brought near completion. I would also again place on record my thanks and appreciation of the willing assistance rendered at all times by the officers of this branch of the Department in carrying out the many and varied duties devolving on this local office during the financial year just ended.

JOHN HAY,  
Commissioner of Crown Lands.