

[Enclosure.]

EXTRACT.

*Wanganui River Trust Domain.*

SIR,—

Wanganui, 19th February, 1908.

As instructed in your memo. of the 9th November last, I proceeded to Taumarunui on the 4th instant and met there the Chairman (Mr. T. D. Cummins) and two members (Messrs. J. T. Stewart and J. Hogan, M.P.) of the Wanganui River Trust. From there we proceeded down the river in the Trust's motor canoe, and I beg to submit the following report:—

The portion of the public domain from Taumarunui to Tunakotekote Stream should not, in my opinion, be leased. It comprises a rather extensive manuka flat at the confluence of the Ongarue with the Wanganui River. This flat extends some 30 to 40 chains back from the river, then it rises with a fairly easy slope to a ridge some 300 ft. to 400 ft. high. The slope is mostly fern-clad, but there are a few patches of scrub and bush and the whole forms rather a picturesque background to the township of Taumarunui. I do not think the small revenue that would be derived from it, if leased, would compensate for the scenic value, especially if one considers the danger there would be of the patches of native bush being destroyed when the lessee burnt the fern for the purpose of sowing grass-seed.

South of the Tunakotekote Stream to Te Maire Stream there are some 300 acres of open fern land that could be leased without any detriment to the scenery.

There are a few clumps of bush and scrub, which should not be included in the areas leased, and the leases should contain clauses to the effect that these clumps of bush and scrub should be securely fenced off (perhaps the River Trust could see its way clear to defray half the cost of such fences), and on no account should cattle or any stock (except sheep) be allowed in the areas so fenced off. Every precaution should be taken by the lessee to prevent fires from getting into and destroying the bush or scrub.

The terms of the leases should be the longest allowed by the Wanganui River Trust Act, and the upset rentals be 1s. per acre per annum. The leases should be sold by public auction or by public tender to the highest bidder.

From Te Maire Stream downwards is all forest of great scenic value. There are several small areas of flat or undulating land that would be suitable for settlement, but I do not think it would be advisable to lease any land below Te Maire, as by doing so there would be some danger of fires getting into the bush and causing irreparable damage, and I do not think such risk should be run.

H. LUNDIUS,

Crown Lands Ranger.

The Commissioner of Crown Lands, Wellington.

REPORT by JOHN T. STEWART, Member of the Wanganui River Trust, on the Matter of the Preservation of the Bush Scenery along the Upper Navigable Portion of the Wanganui River.

Wanganui, 2nd June, 1908.

The Chairman of the Wanganui River Trust.

In accordance with a resolution passed at a recent meeting of the Wanganui River Trust, I submit the following report:—

Throughout the river-course upwards from Raorikia, which is the commencement of the River Trust District, and about fourteen miles by river from the Town Bridge, Wanganui, and extending to Taumarunui at about 144 miles, I have taken the various rapids as landmarks and as a basis in noting the native bush as an adjunct to the scenery upon both banks of the river, and whether Crown lands or Native lands. Without the bush the main feature and beauty of the scenery would be gone. The importance of preserving this along the river cannot be overestimated, when considering it as a tourist or pleasure route. The accompanying sketch-maps (Sheets 1 to 4) show the approximate positions of the rapids referred to in this report, and will enable the various notes to be located. After giving in detail the notes taken along the river-course I have added a summary dealing with the general question. There is necessarily in so long a river-course, with so many recurring similar natural features, somewhat of what may seem repetition in the details, but this cannot well be avoided. The rapids are numbered downwards, beginning with rapid No. 1 at the junction of the Ongarue River with the Wanganui near Taumarunui, about 144 miles by river above the Town of Wanganui. The mileage by the winding river-course is approximate.

On the 1st February, 1908, in company with Mr. T. D. Cummins, Chairman of the Wanganui River Trust, and Mr. Reaney, District Road Engineer, we left Wanganui and proceeded up-river to Taumarunui. Mr. Lundius, Crown Lands Ranger, and Mr. Hogan, M.P. for Wanganui, joined us at Taumarunui, and accompanied us on the return trip down-river.

*Wanganui to Pipiriki.*

14 Miles: Raorikia.—The Wanganui River Trust District begins here. Native bush on hill-slopes on right bank begins a short way up, and extends upwards some distance. This should, if possible, be preserved from destruction.

17 Miles: Kanihinihi Rapid, No. 238.—Some good native bush on lower slopes on right bank just below the rapid. The upper slopes have been recently burned off. The bush at the narrow point on left bank above this rapid has been burned, but a small lot of the native bush is still left