

1911.
NEW ZEALAND.

WANGANUI RIVER TRUST

(ANNUAL REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

WANGANUI RIVER TRUST.

MEMBERS.—T. D. Cummins (Government nominee), Chairman; T. B. Williams, J. T. Stewart, W. G. Bassett, elected by the ratepayers of the Borough of Wanganui; W. Ritchie, Chairman, Waitotara County Council; D. Mason, Chairman, Wanganui County Council; C. E. Mackay, Mayor of Wanganui; J. T. Hogan, M.P., Wanganui; and G. V. Pearce, M.P., Patea.

REPORT.

SIR.—

Wanganui, 1st July, 1911.

I have pleasure in furnishing you with a report of the operations of the Wanganui River Trust for the year ended 31st March, 1911.

The working season just closed has been a most noteworthy one, owing to the extreme low river-level, consequent on a protracted drought over the whole of the watershed of the river. It is safe to say that within the memory of the oldest Native in the district the water was lower than it had previously been known, many of the streams feeding the river being absolutely dry. The greatest volume of water came from the snow-clad mountains, Ruapehu and Tongariro, while the Ongarue tributary contributed, although to a lesser degree than is usual. Despite these conditions, it is most satisfactory to be able to report that the traffic by steamers and launches from Taumarunui to Wanganui, a distance of 144 miles, was fully maintained. Passenger traffic from Taumarunui down-stream is on an increasing ratio, and a considerable quantity of cargo is being carried from Taumarunui to the settlements down-stream and from Wanganui up-stream, and there is no doubt but this highway has been an important factor in the settlement of lands adjacent to the river.

The main efforts of the Trust during the year have been in the direction of clearing the steamer-channel of large boulders and papa reefs. The exceptionally low river made this very important work less difficult and expensive, and I venture to say that most valuable work was accomplished.

As foreshadowed in my last report, the work of improving the river-channel is drawing to an end. An expenditure of £1,000 per annum for two years should about suffice, after which time the revenue derivable from river dues, rents from the River Trust endowment block now leased, as well as from lands proposed to be leased by the River Trust Domain Board in the near future, should produce a sufficient income to meet expenditure for maintenance.

The necessity for providing a suitable motor-launch for maintenance work has been considered, and estimates have been prepared showing the cost of such to be about £1,000, and I would urge that that sum be placed on the estimates for the purpose indicated. A model of the proposed launch, with copies of specifications and estimate of cost, will be forwarded to you for inspection and approval. By getting this launch much saving would be effected in the work of maintenance, as it would undertake much of the work now being done by the punts, which are costly to move about the river, and require separate crews. If the launch is procured, two of the punts could be laid up and the expenses of their crews saved. The launch would be provided with a winch and derrick sufficient to lift snags and boulders, and much time would be saved in getting to places requiring attention. These considerations amply justify the first cost.

The work proposed to be undertaken next season consists mainly in the construction of training-walls on various parts of the river, and for this purpose I would ask for £1,000, making with the estimated cost of a launch £2,000.

I attach herewith a copy of interim report No. 68, made by me in February, which gives a general indication of the condition of the river, the work in progress or completed, and some proposals for the future.

I have, &c.,

T. D. CUMMINS,
Chairman, Wanganui River Trust.

Wm. C. Kensington, Esq., I.S.O.; Under-Secretary for Lands, Wellington.