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JAN 24 1930

QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW

OF

FOREST ADMINISTRATION

IN THE

PROVINCE OF ASSAM

FOR THE PERIOD

1924-25 to 1928-29



WITH THE

PROGRESS REPORT OF FOREST ADMINISTRATION

FOR

1928-29.



SHILLONG :

PRINTED AT THE ASSAM GOVERNMENT PRESS.

1929.

[Price 1s. 6d.]

[Price Rs. 3.]

28. A post of Silviculturist and two posts of Working Plans officers were sanctioned and filled in spite of the shortage of staff, as it was considered urgently necessary to take up work of this nature.

In addition to these a Forest Engineer's post has been sanctioned and filled from December 1927.

29. The cadre of the Assam Forest Service was raised from 10 to 16 in the year 1928. Since the close of the period a further addition of 3 posts has been sanctioned.

30. During the period under review additions to the subordinate executive and divisional clerical establishments were sanctioned as follows :—

Rangers	...	...	...	...	...	9
Deputy Rangers	...	...	...	...	...	9
Foresters	...	...	...	...	...	79
Accountants	...	...	...	...	...	3
Clerks	...	...	...	...	...	7

31. Three Provincial Service officers died during the period, viz., Messrs B. C. Sen Gupta, R. K. Das and K. K. Biswas, Extra Assistant Conservators of Forests. Speaking generally the health of the staff has not been good.

GENERAL.

32. *Hollong* in the Lakhimpur Division and *hollock* in the Sadiya Frontier Tract are from a market point of view the most important timbers in the Lakhimpur Division and the Sadiya Frontier Tract respectively. It may be of interest to quote somewhat remarkable figures of outturn of these trees actually recorded. During sleeper operations carried out in the Upper Dehing reserve it was found that 275 *hollong* trees of between five feet and 12 feet 4 inches girth (most of the trees being between 8 feet and 10 feet girth), yielded 36,536 M.G. sleepers, or approximately 133 sleepers per tree. The wastage on the above amounted to 32 per cent. It is not uncommon to find *hollong* with nearly 100 feet clear utilizable bole. I have measured felled trees with 96' of the bole marked for logging. Four hundred and sixty-one *hollock* trees from 5 feet to 10 feet girth and over, felled by the Assam Sawmills and Timber Company, yielded 165,760 cubic feet or an average of 360 cubic feet in the log per tree. Of these, 223 over 10 feet girth gave an average of 472.7 cubic feet in the log per tree.

33. A consignment of 725 *simul* logs measuring 7,772 cubic feet was sent by river steamer flat from Singrighat to Jaganathghat, Calcutta, by the Assam Match Company, the freight charged being Rs. 25 per ton calculated at 25 seers per cubic foot. It is thought that if it pays to send such an inferior wood as *simul* in this way, some of our better woods deserve the attention of Calcutta timber traders.

34. A confiscated rhinoceros horn weighing 40 tolas has been sold by auction for Rs. 600 in Darrang. Almost every portion of a rhinoceros has a ready market value, the dried blood being especially prized. It can therefore be easily understood why poaching is so rife, and if adequate measures are not taken to stop this, it can only be a matter of time for this interesting animal to disappear altogether.

35. Experiments are being carried on to find the maximum yield of timber and fuel per acre in the various types and classes of forest in Upper Assam. One acre of between 2nd and 3rd class *hollong* forest clear-felled and measured in the Burrajan reserve, Lakhimpur, yielded 2,665 cubic feet timber and 6,102 cubic feet stacked firewood. The best first class areas would yield very much higher returns.

F. H. CAVENDISH,

Conservator of Forests, Eastern Circle, Assam.

PROGRESS REPORT
OF
FOREST ADMINISTRATION
IN THE
PROVINCE OF ASSAM

FOR THE YEAR

1928-29.

CHAPTER I.

CONSTITUTION OF STATE FORESTS.

1.—ALTERATION IN AREA—(FORM No. 7).

(i) *Reserved Forests.*

During the year the Lutumai Reserve of 14 square miles in the Nowgong Division was newly formed. Additions aggregating 7 square miles were made to the Habaipur (Nowgong), Luki and Barduar (Kamrup), Harargaz (Sylhet) and North Cachar Hills (Cachar) reserves. Disforestations to the extent of 14 square miles were made from Panidehing Reserve (13 square miles) and Sadiya station reserve (1 square mile) in the Eastern Circle. The adoption of the area figures supplied by the Survey Department, based on the recent Topographical survey caused a reduction of 4 square miles in Goalpara Division and of 6 square miles in the Garo Hills Division.

In consequence of these changes the total area of reserved forests at the close of the year stood at 6,105 square miles as compared with 6,108 square miles last year.

(ii) *Village Forests.*

2. An addition of 192 acres was made to the existing village forests. The remarks made in last year's report as regards utility and management of these forests still hold good.

(iii) *Unclassed State Forests.*

3. The area of the unclassified State forests was reduced by 185 square miles. The figures as supplied by the Deputy Commissioners are shown in Form No. 7.

2.—FOREST SETTLEMENTS—(FORM No. 8).

4. The year opened with a balance of 69 square miles awaiting settlement, of which 21 square miles were finally notified as reserves during the year; preliminary notifications in respect of three areas (Katlikona, Monaikandi and Ranikhai) aggregating 5 square miles in the Sylhet Division were cancelled. Settlement proceedings of 3 square miles were taken in hand during the year.

3.—DEMARCATIION—(FORM No. 9).

5. The total length of boundaries at the end of the year amounted to 4,883 miles showing an increase of 23 miles as compared with the preceding year. During the year, 9 miles of new boundaries were demarcated in Nowgong and Sibsagar Divisions at a cost of Rs. 519 and 1,237 miles of previously existing boundaries were

against Rs. 33,169 in the preceding year. An extension to the Divisional Forest Officer's residence at Kochugaon cost Rs. 2,757 while Rs. 2,685 were spent on special repairs. Special repairs were also carried out on the forest bungalow at Gauhati. The construction of the Divisional Forest Officer's residence at Sylhet commenced in the preceding year, was completed during the year under report. Some progress has been made towards the better housing of the subordinate staff throughout both circles, but much remains to be done in this respect.

(c) *Miscellaneous Works.*

13. To provide good drinking water for subordinates a programme of well construction was continued, Rs. 5,724 being spent on this account. An expenditure of Rs. 4,203 (debitable to the budget of the Public Health Department) was incurred on the sanitary scheme at Kochugaon, for *kutch*a drainage work, jungle clearing, purchase of stores, etc.

The total expenditure on all miscellaneous works including repairs of compounds, fencing, etc., was Rs. 16,538.

3.—PROTECTION OF FORESTS.

(a) *General Protection—(Form No. 13).*

14. There were 1,799 new cases against 1,727 last year. Of 348 cases taken into court, convictions were obtained in 249 cases, and 30 resulted in acquittals, 3 cases were withdrawn and the rest remained pending at the close of the year. The percentage of acquittals to the total number of cases tried was 10 against 15 in the preceding year.

Two cases of rhino shooting in Kamrup were disposed of during the year by fines of Rs. 20 and Rs. 25. The Divisional Forest Officer asked that, in future, Game Sanctuary cases might be tried at Gauhati instead of at the subdivisional headquarter but no orders on this have been received.

Four cases of shooting deer, 3 in Darrang and 1 in Sadiya were detected during the year and compounded.

A poaching case similar to that mentioned in paragraph 20 of last year's report occurred in Nowgong during the year under report. The trying magistrate in this case directed the Deputy Ranger who detected the alleged offence to pay Rs. 50 compensation to the accused for vexatious prosecution. As the case appeared quite genuine an appeal was lodged to the High Court where the magistrate's order was set aside.

(b) *Protection from fire—(Forms Nos. 14 and 15).*

15. Twenty-five acres of the Shillong Pine Forests were burnt, the cause of the fire being unknown.

Nine thousand one hundred and twenty-two acres were burnt out of 31,790 acres protected in the Goalpara Division. Early burning as opposed to rather desultory protection will be enforced next year except in some small areas, such as plantations, which require complete protection.

Five hundred and eight acres were burnt in Kamrup in April 1928 out of 2,768 protected in 1927-28, but between January and March 31st, 1929, only 1 acre was burnt out of the increased area of 5,625 acres, the wet season being favourable and the patrolling system more efficient.

The effect of a few years' fire-protection in Kamrup has been most encouraging, large areas of what was formerly nothing but waste grass land burnt black every year being now covered with dense forests of *sāl* poles.

Some sort of fire-protection should be extended to the Kalingduar Reserve in the Darrang district where a large area of open forest of *Lagerstræmia parviflora* of about 30 years of age is being burnt annually. Early burning along boundaries and block lines laid out through this reserve should prove effective and this is being taken up in connection with the laying out of lines of export from an inner lying evergreen belt which is being worked for overmature timber.

The prejudice against taking quinine prophylactically, though supplied free by Government, is responsible for much malaria, but certain stations in the Garo Hills and Goalpara are undoubtedly very unhealthy.

A Health scheme, carried out at the expense of the Public Health Department was initiated at Kochugaon, but as it will be impossible to exterminate all the mosquitoes it is to be expected that sufficient anopheles will remain to infect those who have to sit about at night clad in shorts or *dhoti*. North Goalpara is geographically and climatically part of the Dooars, and no great diminution of malaria and black water fever is likely to result until, as in the Dooars, buildings are made as mosquito-proof as possible and fans are provided to serve the double purpose of keeping the mosquitoes away and of making it possible to wear comfortably clothing of a fairly mosquito-proof texture.

Range Offices were inspected by Divisional officers as usual.

Relations between Revenue and Forest officials were satisfactory.

CHAPTER VIII.

GENERAL.

70. Two new forest villages were started in Cachar.

One new forest village was started in the Nowgong Division in Lumding Reserve.

Elsewhere, particularly in the Garo Hills, outsiders are being encouraged to cultivate suitable land inside the reserves while still living in their villages outside. Resident settlers inside reserves necessarily utilize in addition to their cultivated fields, a large area for their home-steads and, if these are isolated, as is the custom in Assam, a considerable area of land is wasted that might be under forest.

71. Poaching occurred in the North Kamrup Game Sanctuary on a serious scale. The Cacharis living along the south boundary of the sanctuary in an area that has been very much neglected from the administrative point of view proclaimed that they intended to kill rhino, consequent on the dismissal by the Subdivisional Officer of several minor cases where poachers had been caught practically red-handed, on the grounds that there were no witnesses other than game sanctuary staff. Two cases of rhino-poaching were taken to court and fines of Rs. 20 and Rs. 25 were inflicted on the very men who as had been reported several years before, were willing to put down Rs. 1,000 from time to time for the carcass of a rhino. The word had gone out that the Civil Department would not back up the Forest Department and naturally the Cacharis, who are a fine, brave lot of men, seized their opportunity. It is not known how many rhino were killed, but rumour has it that one man alone disposed of 8 horns.

Poaching also occurred for the first time from the north. A large number of Nepalese inhabitants of Bhutan had been brought the previous year to make a road for the Maharajah and the Political Officer and they had no doubt noted how easy it would be to raid the sanctuary by crossing the Monas near the border.

Phandies who were supposed to be engaged on *mela shikar* operations many miles to the east also trespassed, but they were subsequently identified and dealt with suitably. Since the close of the year a proposal has gone up for the amalgamation of the two sanctuaries on each side of the Monas in order to bring them under unified control and, if this is approved and if the game sanctuary staff can rely upon that assistance from the civil department, which they should have, but upon which they have not always been able to count, it should be possible to keep the poachers under reasonable control.

72. Lac cultivation experiments conducted in Goalpara were unsuccessful for brood-lac obtained from Burma swarmed during transit, while brood-lac sent from the Garo Hills was found unsuitable for infecting hard-barked trees, such as *Acacia catechu*, having been reared on *Cajanus Indica* (*arhal dal*). Further experiments are being made during the current year.