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PROPOSED SALT INDUSTRY - WALLAROO

by

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PROPOSED SALT INDUSTRY - WALLAROO

Introduction

In response to a request from the Corporation of the town of Wallaroo an inspection was made of swamp areas adjacent to the town boundaries for the purpose of assessing the salt producing potential of these areas.

The request for this inspection arose from a desire by the Town Council to attract additional industry to the town by inviting established salt producing interests to consider the economics of production from the areas under consideration.

Location

Swamp lands embrace sections 927 to 932 over an area of approximately 500 acres two miles North of the town in the Hundred of Wallaroo, and sections 347, 348 and 349 an area of approximately 100 acres two miles South of the township.

Description

These two swamp areas occupy natural depressions which receive the drainage from a considerable area of the surrounding country.

Direct connection with the sea is barred by a low sand dune twenty feet in height fringing the coast.

The swamp areas are covered with a comparatively dense growth of samphire weed and other saline vegetation. The swamp bottom consists of gypseous clay which is apparently fairly impervious to water as a number of pools were still in evidence though no signs of salt deposition were apparent.

The area of particular interest for consideration of salt production consisted of a strip approximately 80 chains long and 30 chains wide on Sections 928, and 929 bounded by the coastal sand dunes on the West and a macadam roadway to Pickers on the East. Visually this area appears reasonably level, but is covered in a fairly dense growth of samphire weed. Elsewhere the swamp bottom appears to undulate to the extent of several feet.

Salt Production Considerations.

Advantages

Geographically the area is favourably situated with a rainfall of 16 inches, evaporation of 60 inches and a nett evaporation of 40-45 inches.

Both sea and rail transport facilities are available close to the production site. Labour presumably is readily available.

Proximity of the site to the coast would present little difficulty in pumping sea water, which in this part of Spencer Gulf may be expected to contain seven ounces per gallon sodium chloride.

Disadvantages

From local statements it is understood that the area is subject to considerable flooding during winter weather. Unless provision could be made by drainage to protect the evaporation area against floods this one factor could rule out any economic possibility of establishing salt production.

The area under consideration, approximately 240 acres, is comparatively small and would yield approximately 7000 tons of salt per annum under the best of conditions. For the capital outlay necessary to prepare the area for salt production it is most unlikely that the project on such a small scale would prove economic.

It would be necessary to clear all land for evaporation areas and crystallisers of vegetation, level and prepare the bottom, in addition to building banks for flood protection and subdivision of evaporating areas and crystallisers.

Conclusions

Summating the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal it does not warrant favourable consideration.

Should however the project be considered further, it would be necessary to draw up an accurate contour plan of the area proposed for evaporation purposes and also construct an experimental evaporation area, embracing several square chains on which tests for pumping, permeability and evaporation could be carried out for one or two salt seasons.

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