

MARITIME MARSHLANDS REHABILITATION ACT

The marshlands of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are among the more productive soils in Canada when protected and properly cultivated. They are composed of deposits laid down by tidal waters and are, for the most part, adjacent to the Bay of Fundy.

The initial areas were reclaimed as early as 1630 and since that time about 80,000 acres have been protected by dykes and aboiteaux. These structures prevented flooding by tide water and permitted cultivation after drainage had been carried out.

Through a variety of circumstances—loss of cattle markets, loss of hay markets and the increase in labour costs—maintenance of the protective structures was not adequately carried out and, in many cases, deterioration of the structures resulted. Because the marshlands, when protected, can play such an important role in the agricultural economy of the provinces concerned, the Government of Canada and the Provincial Governments of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick passed legislation permitting them to carry on a program of reclamation and rehabilitation of these lands. The federal Act, the Maritime Marshland Rehabilitation Act, was passed in 1948. Complementary provincial marshland reclamation Acts were passed by both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1949. These Acts permitted agreements to be signed whereby the Government of Canada would construct or reconstruct the protective works, normally called dykes, aboiteaux and breakwaters, and also would assume the responsibility of maintaining these works until such time as they could be turned back to the Provinces. The Federal Government is responsible also for any engineering work in connection with the complete program. The Provinces are responsible for the organization of the marsh areas, the fresh-water drainage and acquisition of any land required. They are responsible also for the instigation and follow-up of a suitable land-use program. Owing to the small area of marshland in Prince Edward Island, no provincial legislation was considered necessary in that Province.

By Mar. 31, 1953, the Provinces had asked to have 119 areas considered for reclamation purposes. These comprised 32,547.2 acres of marshland in New Brunswick (including 6,892.2 salt or unprotected marsh), 33,333.8 acres in Nova Scotia (including 5,453.2 salt or unprotected marsh) and 275 acres in Prince Edward Island. It is estimated that the 66,156 acres of marshland in the three Provinces constitute an integral part of 375,000 acres of farm land.

By the end of the 1953 construction season, protective works of a major type had been carried out on 59 projects and 35 areas had been temporarily reconstructed.

Investigations to determine the advisability of constructing a large structure to eliminate the need for many miles of dyke and many aboiteaux were being carried out on the Annapolis River in Nova Scotia and on the Tantramar and Shepody Rivers in New Brunswick. Construction on the Shepody River Project will likely be started in 1953.

Subsection 2.—Provincial Projects

Saskatchewan.*—Crown lands have been administered by the Lands Branch of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture since Apr. 1, 1947. On Apr. 1, 1949, the Conservation and Development Branch was established and made responsible for: (1) the administration of water rights; (2) development of irrigation;

* Prepared under the direction of W. H. Horner, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Regina, Sask.