

WAIMEA CREEK.

Gold-workings in the bed and valley of the Waimea Creek have been carried on for the last thirty-six years, and very rich auriferous deposits have been found, not only in the valley but on the terraces, which have been worked by hydraulic sluicing for the last twenty-four years. The tailings from these workings have been deposited in the creek and on the adjoining low-lying land until, in many places, there is now a depth of from 10 ft. to 20 ft. of tailings on the original surface.

There are two townships in the valley of the creek—Stafford and Goldsborough. The former township is situate about three miles from the ocean and the latter two miles higher up. The majority of the business people in these townships are directly interested in mining, and entirely dependent on the mining population for their livelihood. The creek has been so raised opposite these townships that in some places it is several feet above the level of the floors of the buildings, and the side of the creek has had to be banked up with logs and stones to prevent the water overflowing the townships.

Your Commissioners have examined the land in the valley of the Waimea Creek, about 200 acres of which are held in fee-simple outside the township sections. The land-tax value of this land is £346. The most of it is covered with silt from the creek, the bed of which is almost on a level with the land. The land-tax value of the sections and buildings in Stafford is £2,404, and in Goldsborough £2,195; the total valuation of the property affected by the creek thus being £4,945. The freehold sections in the townships, without buildings, have very little value, and a great many of the buildings, if removed, would cost as much as, if not more than, they are worth to re-erect them on higher land.

Seeing that these are purely mining townships, and the creek-bed and valley have been used for the deposit of tailings since the early gold-workings on the West Coast, your Commissioners do not think mining operations would be facilitated by the proclamation of this creek; and therefore recommend that the Waimea Creek be not proclaimed a watercourse into which waste water produced by or resulting from mining operations may be discharged.

GREY RIVER

(Including the tributaries—Ahaura River, Orwell Creek, German Gully, Noble's Creek, Stillwater Creek, and Callaghan's Creek—specially mentioned in the schedule to the Commission).

The Grey River takes its rise at Lake Christabel, and flows through an auriferous belt of country from its confluence with the Robinson to near the ocean. This belt also extends to the source of the Little Grey, and crosses many of the other tributaries at nearly right angles.

The principal tributaries on the south and eastern side of the main Grey and Little Grey Rivers in which mining operations have been and are still being carried on, are: Stillwater, Twelve Mile, Red Jack's, Nelson, Callaghan's, Orwell, Duffer's, Waipuna, Snowy, Blackwater, Adamstown, Antonio's, and Slab Hutt Creeks, together with the Ahaura and Arnold Rivers. No gold of any consequence has been found higher up the Ahaura River than its confluence with Big Gully Creek, about five miles above the junction of the Orwell Creek and Kopara Roads. On the north and western side of the main Grey River the principal auriferous tributaries are: Langdon's, Woolly's, Alluvial, Ruby's, Bray's, Ford's, Blackball, Moonlight, and Caledonian Creeks. No gold of any consequence has been got in any of the other main tributaries on the western side of the Little Grey.

The fact that rich auriferous drifts have been worked in a large number of the tributaries feeding the main river indicates that auriferous gravels may be found in the valley and bed of the Grey River which can be worked by dredges, should the depth of gravel be not too great for them to cope with.

The banks of the river, as well as those of many of its tributaries, are generally very low, and all the low-lying lands in the valley, which varies in width from three-quarters of a mile to three miles, have always been subject to be flooded. At some points the surface of the land is not more than 18 in. above the water in ordinary weather, and in time of floods the water covers large areas of landed property, cuts away the banks, and destroys portions of holdings. The river-bed is being gradually raised by natural causes and tailings from hydraulic-sluicing operations, which have been discharged into the river and its tributaries during the last thirty-four years.

Some of the land has already been damaged to a considerable extent; indeed, in some instances, it may be said, it has been rendered valueless. This process of gradual destruction and depreciation of the land will continue should no mining operations whatever be carried on, for the beds of all rapidly running rivers which flow through plains become raised by the accumulation of shingle from slips and erosion of the banks. Ample exemplification of this is afforded in the case of the Haupiri and Otututu Rivers, along which mining has never been carried on. Properties along these rivers, which some years ago were free from river overflow, are now being covered with water during ordinary floods.

Many of the settlers are apparently under the misapprehension that, in the event of the river and tributaries being proclaimed, they will receive compensation for damage already done to their lands, as well as for prospective damage, and are therefore anxious that such proclamation be issued. The railway from Greymouth to Reefton is constructed up the eastern side of the Grey Valley, and its embankment is above the flood-level, and consequently affords protection to the land on that side. Your Commissioners are consequently of opinion that no compensation for prospective damage should be awarded to land so protected.

Your Commissioners have carefully examined the land for which compensation is claimed, with the exception of Sections 2 and 6, Block VI., Haupiri Survey District; Sections 1 and 40, Block IV., Kopara Survey District; Sections 1 and 30, Block XII., 1 to 7 and 31, Block XI., 33