

Other Works.

Bridges.—A settler's access bridge over No. 6 diversion of the river, 120 ft. long, was completed recently by contract. A temporary tramway bridge, 84 ft. long, over the mouth of the D-B diversion, was constructed early in the period, to provide access from the spillway to the dump. Materials are on the ground ready for the commencement of construction of two settlers' access bridges—viz., one, 40 ft. long, over the Mangawhero diversion, and one, 48 ft., over the Mangahahuru diversion—and also a road-bridge, 58 ft. long, over the Okarika diversion.

Surveys.—The new engineering survey of the Wairua River, which was commenced at the end of the previous period, was completed in October. Complete and accurate engineering data for the river is now available. On the completion of the river survey two parties were in the field, one investigating the Otonga arm of the swamp and the other on the Riponui arm of the swamp. Both of these areas were thoroughly investigated, and the main outlet channels located. Plan work for all these surveys is almost completed. During the coming year an engineering survey will be made of the Ngararatunua arm of the swamp, the Waiotu Stream and adjoining swamp area, and the Whakapara Stream.

Compensation Claims.

Quite a number of claims for compensation for loss of land, &c., have been received during the year, and a fair number can be expected to come in during the coming year.

Works Expenditure.

The expenditure recorded for the year totalled £24,272 19s. 10d., of which £12,654 10s. 10d. was paid in wages.

WAIHI DRAINAGE AREA (20,000 ACRES), TAURANGA COUNTY.

It was pointed out in my last report that rates covering both capital and maintenance expenditure had been struck for the 1927-28 rating-year. However, an amendment of the Swamp Drainage Act was passed in 1928 suspending the collection of drainage rates on this area until after the 31st March, 1929. This amendment also provided for a reclassification, giving ratepayers the right of appeal against such classification. The two classifiers were appointed, and they completed their classification of all lands towards the end of the period under review.

The work carried out during the year consisted almost entirely of maintenance and improvement of existing works.

Towards the end of the period a Monighan drag-line was transferred from the Rangitaiki drainage-works in order to carry out the widening and deepening of the Kaikokopu Stream as scheduled, from the East Coast railway-line to the end of the previous dredging, and also minor dredging at the mouth of the Mangatoetoe Stream. This work will be pushed on as quickly as possible, and when completed will afford much-needed relief to an area previously waterlogged in wet seasons. Whilst the dredge is in the locality the opportunity will be taken to remove the accumulation of pumice in a length of the Wharere Canal. It will probably be found necessary to carry the dredging of the Kaikokopu to the north of the main road for some distance in order to remove the pumice brought down by the dredging above mentioned.

Dredges.—The only dredge employed was Monighan No. 17, and the distance dredged by this plant in the short time worked was 11 chains, a total of 12,100 cubic yards of spoil being removed. The American steel dipper dredge hired to the Kaituna Drainage Board was returned by the Board to The Mount Wharf, Tauranga, where it was dismantled and stored.

Maintenance.—This work, which includes the patrolling of stop-banks and flood-gates as well as the general maintenance of hand drains, is now supervised by a working foreman. This man also has the care of the departmental property still remaining on the works. During the year 37 miles 14 chains of drains were cleaned, and 2 miles 26 chains of drains deepened.

Flax Leases.—Milling has been carried on continuously through the season by the company leasing the bulk of the Crown land on the area. The subsidence of much of this country following drainage is making desirable the construction of an increased number of subsidiary drains to prevent the water-stagnation which is fatal to successful flax-growing. Where the areas are provided with sufficient drainage the flax is making a very healthy growth, but the growth is disappointing in places where it is apparent the land lacks internal drainage.

A certain amount of clearing and drainage has been carried out in the small flax leases west of the Wharere Canal, but probably the unstability of the hemp-market is a factor influencing the development of this country for flax-growing purposes.

Fires.—The damage from fires is ever present on a flax area, and only the vigilance of lessees has prevented serious consequences following several outbreaks during the year. As pointed out on previous occasions, it would seem that the necessary legislative authority should be granted empowering the constitution of fire districts on flax-bearing lands.

Buildings.—These consist of a store-shed and workshop, two cottages, and foreman's quarters. The three first named of these are leased to the flax-milling company operating on the area.

Levels.—During the year levels were run over all the drains and canals in the area for record purposes. A total of 68½ miles of levels and 30 chains of traverse were run during the year.

Future Works.—Kaikokopu, Mangatoetoe, and Wharere dredging, and the maintenance and minor improvement of existing works.

Works Expenditure.—The total expenditure for the year was £3,395 9s. 1d.