

Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park Supporters' Annual Report, 2007

John Randal

9 August, 2007

It has been yet another busy year for the Makara Peak Supporters' committee. We began by welcoming new members Antony Rhodes and Ben Wilde, who both quickly made their presence felt. While Makara Peak is a Wellington City Council facility, the Makara Peak Supporters, largely through the committee, play an important role in the maintenance and ongoing development in the park.

Advocacy

The Supporters met regularly throughout the year with Mike Oates, Manager, Parks and Gardens, Stu Bailey, WCC Ranger, and other council officers as required. This open dialogue is valuable for both parties as we strive to make Makara Peak a world-class facility.

Last year we announced the imminent arrival of a toilet block at the South Karori Road carpark. The installation process continued and soon after the new year, the toilet was open for business. Alongside this project, a general upgrade of the carpark was done with large rocks placed around the gardens to protect them from cars, and the carpark resealed. A new mapboard was also installed as part of this upgrade, with additional maps placed around the park.

The Supporters have been consulted by WCC on the review of the city's Mountain Bike Policy, with a council officer attending a committee meeting as part of the consultation. We were also pleased to host Tryfan Ephraim who has led the development of tracks in Wainuiomata. A Supporters' repre-

sentative contributed to an oral submission in favour of Hutt City Council allocating funding for that facility. Porirua City Council have also shown interest in Makara Peak, with the Supporters hosting a walking group of Porirua residents, and a council officer who were interested in the dual-use, purpose built single track the park boasts. These interactions are testament not only to the quality of our park, but also to the maturity of the Supporters as a group, and the esteem with which we are held in the wider community.

We were also thrilled to have the Mayor, Kerry Prendergast visit the park twice in the last year. She officially opened the Skills Area, and also spent a very pleasant afternoon being shown around the park a month later.

Tracks

At a time when growth in the tracks network at Makara Peak would have been predicted to slow, 2006/7 has been a huge year.

Jenifer Silva successfully coordinated the completion of the penultimate phase of the Skills Area revamp. After the initial earthworks done prior to last year's AGM, teams of volunteers, including David Free and his team of builders, built and installed various sections of track (including Ricky Pincott's technical challenge around the perimeter), boardwalks, drop-offs, jumps, Dave Fowler's see-saw, a picnic table, and general planting and landscaping. The opening of the Skills Area was very well attended, and it was a great celebration of the efforts of all involved.

Member Ben Conway produced a marvellous video record of the event. Installation of instructional signage and some beginner level challenges remains.

We would never have predicted the huge progress made on Lazy Fern in the last twelve months. This time last year we had a name for it, rushed through for the new maps, but barely a design. Grant Preston-Thomas and his team of "retirees" (actually track-building machines) followed Jonathan Kennett's design to quickly form a walkable track. Over the following months, temporary bridges were installed, and to date 600m of the 2km track have been widened and gravelled so that they are now at beginner level. WCC are contracting out building of the permanent structures, and we will continue to widen and gravel over the next few months. Follow the progress on the blog <http://lazyfern.blogspot.com/> or first hand by getting your hands dirty!

At another extreme, *T*³ leads from the top of Vertigo to the top of Trickle Falls. Five of the 16 planned stunts on this track have been built, including the very impressive Skink - 10m long, and lined with recycled MTB tyres - an impressive feature that met with mayoral approval. Watch for more stunts appearing on this track over the summer. Follow its progress on the blog <http://t3track.blogspot.com/>.

Another surprising addition to the park's network, and a challenge for the conservation team, in terms of a seedling planted per metre of track built, is the Rimu trail. This track will link the Allington Rd road-end with the St Albans Ave road-end, with a connector track to the picnic area on Lower Ridgeline. While being built with a very wide bench so to be suitable for families, this will also provide an excellent way back into the park after a descent down Vertigo or Trickle Falls. Currently 500m of the 700m track has had its first cut, done by Grant Preston-Thomas and his team, volunteers and local residents.

All in all, the park's track network has fared very well over a reasonably wet year, and ever increasing use. In particular, the

Supporters' and WCC's dedication to preventative maintenance, including the massive gravelling operation on Koru last winter, are paying dividends.

Conservation

In the last 12 months, we have planted approximately 2300 seedlings around the streamside area, summit, Ridgeline Extension, the NW boundary, Zac's and Trickle Falls. We also continued our pizza releasing evenings and kept spreading mulch throughout spring and early summer.

This year's planting was boosted by 450 flaxes from the Balance of Life Trust, and an \$1100 grant from the Ron Greenwood Environment Trust for climax species (totara, kamahi, rimu, rata, miro, tawa) which go towards re-establishing a mature native forest in the park (these will be the big-uns)!

We were very grateful to receive IBM funding again this year, although NZ's rampant dollar meant the US dollar grant didn't go quite as far. Nonetheless, the money was well spent on additional flaxes for the summit/NW boundary. These were put in, as well as other plants, at the largest work party ever held at Makara Peak. A stunning 60 people heeded the call to arms, and close to 750 plants were in the ground by lunch time.

Invaluable helpers this year once again included Salvation Army Conservation Corps, Global Volunteers and Tinakori Lions. In addition, we supervised corporate volunteers from AMP, Transit NZ and Price-WaterhouseCoopers.

Dave Fowler has kept the possum control program ticking along. There are about 120 bait stations in the park, and these are filled by about 10 volunteers. We go through about forty 10kg bags of bait per year - this is supplied to us by the Greater Wellington Regional Council. The stoat lines along Koru and Sally Alley have netted seven stoats, and 37 rats among other critters. We plan to extend the network in the next year.

Barberry and gorse control has been continuing, thanks to a Wellington City Coun-

cil environment grant which paid for labour and herbicide for treating the stumps. This work has focussed on the summit area, and these pest species growing alongside the single tracks.

It has been a bittersweet year for goat control in the park. Last year this was flagged as a concern, and while kill rates have been much higher in the last year than in the few years prior, sightings of goats have been a regular occurrence. While we feel more needs to be done to eliminate goats from the Park, we are not alone in thinking this, and hope to work with the landowner WCC to solve the problem.

Fundraising

The Makara Peak Rally was once again a wonderful celebration of Makara Peak, and a handy source of funds for the year. The Wellington bike shops really come to the party with prizes, and the support from the MTB community is also good with volunteers and riders coming out of the woodwork. Ben Wilde and Dave Fowler put in a huge effort organising volunteers and the courses, and maintenance crews ensured the tracks were in great condition. About 150 riders turned up to enjoy the best Makara Peak had to offer, and I had the pleasure of my six year old daughter Kaitlyn's company on her trailer bike for the first lap of the Creek to Peak relay.

Our strong relationship with Port Nicholson Ponoke Cycling Club has continued this year. PNP again used Makara Peak for two of their Spring Series races last year, as well as their club champs. They donate \$5 per rider from these events, and when possible, these funds are put directly into pre-race maintenance for the events. PNP's Hawkins Hill event pitting mountainbikers against roadies, and runners, once again ran, and all proceeds went to Makara Peak. This year, we donated a perpetual cup which was engraved with this and last years' winners, and look forward to a long future with the event and the club.

Regular Skills Clinics have been held in the park, and \$5 per rider is donated to the Supporters. These funds went into the Skills Area budget. There was also a small mountainbike orienteering event in the park, from which we received a donation.

Aside from Events, Euan Galloway has once again shouldered the task of making funding applications for the Supporters. We successfully obtained two Wellington City Council environment grants totalling \$5000 to further develop the park. In addition to the barberry control project mentioned, one grant provided supervision for volunteer groups to plant and nurture native trees and flaxes. We also gladly received grants already mentioned: \$1100 from the Ron Greenwood Environment Trust, \$1351 from IBM, 450 flaxes from the Balance of Life Trust.

We were beneficiaries of free use of hire equipment throughout the year from Hirepool. David Free, a qualified builder and mountainbiker, with a team of his work mates, provided free (highly-skilled) labour for the Skills Area project. Brumby's in Karori provided discounted food for the work party lunches.

In September last year, the Tinakori Lions organised a screening of Wah Wah with proceeds to the Supporters. This evening not only gave us \$1500, but also a good night out.

Hot off the press is receipt of a further \$5000 from the Pacific Development and Conservation Trust for the next three years of the streamside restoration project.

Farewells

Sadly, four committee members are standing down this year. Jo McKenzie, treasurer for the past two years, and Andrew McLellan, past chair of the committee, have recently doubled the size of their family. The twins thoughtfully stayed put until just after Jo had finished the Financial Report! Jonathan Kennett is also taking a break from the committee after many years service. He will continue to be involved in the park - the Kennett Bros do a huge amount of work, both contract and

volunteer, and this will no doubt continue due to the amazing value for money both the Supporters and WCC get. The coming year will be the first that no Kennett has been on the committee, but fear not, we have been listening and learning. Finally, Jenifer Silva is stepping down to focus on university studies, after successfully delivering the Skills Area to us. She was a great example of someone coming on board with a specific project in mind, and having the tenacity and dedication to see it through.

Membership

General membership has had a boom year. Tama Easton at Vorb kindly set up an on-line sign-up facility for us, and this led to an influx of new members, renewals, and donations. This facility has since been closed, but not until we were able to set up our own via the Supporters' website. Thanks to Tama for his efforts, and his donation of transaction fees.

We also produced a limited run of Makara Peak Supporters riding jerseys. There are 50 green shirts out there with our name and logo

on them, and they look stunning. These were an exclusive members-only offer, and we will look to do a second run this summer. All in all, a more proactive approach to membership, including awesome newsletters put together by Antony Rhodes, has led to the number of members more than doubling in the last year. We look forward to high retention and further growth in the future.

I'd like to end on a positive note by thanking the standing committee members: Euan Galloway, Zac Pearson, Hugh Macleod, Mark Kent, Antony Rhodes, Dave Fowler, and co-opted members Simon Kennett and Stu Bailey. Rob Lawrence is relinquishing the role of Secretary to me, after two years' in the role, and is staying on the committee as a hard-working member of the tracks team. Ben Wilde has agreed to be chairman for the next year, and I am very pleased to hand the job over to him. He will no doubt report on new additions to the committee in next year's report.

So much good stuff goes on in the park, I'm sure I will have forgotten something, but thanks for reading...