

POLICY

GOVERNING MOUNTAIN BIKING ACCESS TO

KAINGAROA TIMBERLANDS

FOREST ESTATE

Prepared with the assistance of:





Dep Te P

Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai



July 2004

Dear interested person/s

Kaingaroa Timberlands is pleased to announce the release of its Policy governing mountain biking access to our forest estate, primarily Whakarewarewa Forest.

We believe the Policy expresses a balanced and realistic approach taking into account all of our obligations as managers - to our company, the Crown, local authorities, all recreational users and the wider Rotorua Community, and hope it will receive wide endorsement.

The Policy reflects many of the comments received during the consultation process regarding the draft policy and we would like to thank all of the participants for their interest in this process.

We welcome the involvement of anyone who has an interest in mountain biking and recreation to see that the Policy's goals are achieved to the benefit of all recreational users of the forest.

If you have any questions or would like to be involved in the implementation of the Policy, please contact the undersigned or Kaingaroa Timberlands main office.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Julianne Wilkinson Manager, The Redwoods Forest & Visitor Centre



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MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE WHAKAREWAREWA FOREST

POLICY INTRODUCTION

Objectives

• Develop and implement a policy governing mountain biking access to Kaingaroa Timberlands (KT) managed forest estates, in particular Whakarewarewa Forest, as part of a greater recreational policy.

Participants

- Henry Colbert
- **KT Community Liaison Manager** KT - Land & CFL Manager
- Doug McNab Michael Walker
 - KT Health and Safety Manager
- Julianne Wilkinson KT - Manager, The Redwoods Forest & Visitor Centre

RDC - Parks and Recreation Manager

Rotorua Mountain Bike Club - President

RDC – Director Corporate Services

- James Chilton Department of Conservation RDC – Parks and Recreation Planner
- Alison Ellery
- Garry Page
- Jack Shallard
- Gary Sullivan
- Michael Lee
- Rotorua Mountain Bike Club Vice President Dave Donaldson Rotorua Mountain Bike Club - Past President
- Rick Todd
- Rotorua Mountain Bike Club Track Liaison
- Rotorua Mountain Bike Club Treasurer Carolyn Scherger
- Hugh Blackburn Rotorua Mountain Bike Club & Planet Bike

Key facts and assumptions about Whakarewarewa Forest:

- It comprises 5667 hectares of native & exotic forest which is owned by Kaingaroa Timberlands on Crown Forest Licence (CFL) land.
- It is an operational forest, which means that the trees have a commercial value and to realise that value the trees must be extracted. Therefore from time to time large scale forestry operations take place, including use of large machinery and trucks.
- Within the forest there are areas that are of natural and historical significance. including Waahi Tapu and conservation areas.
- The forest is inhabited by many species of animals and birds.
- Within the forest there are areas set aside for ongoing forestry trials and areas where irrigation systems are in place to spray treated effluent.
- · Public access by vehicle is not permitted. However relevant people access the forest by vehicle from time to time.

- Eight Mile Gate Road, which is a private service road to the Waipa Sawmill used by large logging trucks, runs through the forest.
- It is a commercial forest, but is also a multi-purpose recreational resource with a public right of access by foot or bicycle for recreational use. Recreational user groups include walkers and runners, mountain bikers, horse riders and from time to time 4WD motor bike tours and specific events.
- It adjoins the recreational area known as "The Redwoods". It is also within close proximity to Rotorua city and has an existing mountain bike trail network that is world class. The terrain and scenic value are attractive to recreational pursuits. These factors contribute to the very high usage of this forest estate by mountain bikers.
- It is the most popular mountain bike facility in the central north island. (mountainbike.co.nz poll)
- It is the only free of charge mountain bike facility currently in Rotorua.

Key facts and assumptions regarding mountain biking

- Mountain biking is a popular and growing outdoor activity which has significant benefits to participants. It attracts people from all age groups and from both sexes, individuals and social and family groups.
- Mountain Bike access to other land within the region is limited and restricted.
- Mountain Biking in the Whakarewarewa Forest provides social and economic benefits to the Rotorua community.
- Research shows the impacts of mountain bikes on the natural environment are minimal in most areas.
- Research shows the impacts of mountain bikes on tracks can be significant, depending on the type of track, but is manageable.
- There is a perceived danger to other forest users, by bikers riding at speed or on joint use tracks/roads or accessing walking only tracks.
- Mountain Biking can be a dangerous recreational pursuit. In particular if riding at speed and/or on tracks inappropriate for mountain biking or at a level beyond ability. Riders are also exposed to the elements.
- The existing inner track network provides tracks for novice through to expert riders. However there are several different categories of riders.
 - 1. Novice riders who want to try a new experience or have just taken up the challenge to improve fitness. They seek easy rides on smooth wide tracks without steep hills.
 - 2. Intermediate riders who seek tracks that can challenge fitness and skill. Undulating tracks that have a wide but varied surface with some fast and technical aspects creating some risk.

- **3.** Experienced riders who seek tracks that can challenge fitness and skill. Steep slopes and down hills, varied surface and track width, fast and/or tight with technical challenges and risk.
- 4. Thrill seekers. Fast and down hill.
- **5.** Experienced local riders and "explorers" seeking more challenging rides, more remote and natural tracks that are less defined than the inner track network.
- Outback trails are being established to cater for the latter category of riders. These trails are currently being established without the consent or cooperation of the land manager (KT). Establishment of these trails without permission compromises KT's ability to meet its obligations under the CFL, legal, statutes, environmental and social responsibilities and to manage forest operations safely for both contracted workers and the public. As a result, the relationship with mountain bikers as a user group could also be compromised.

Management Issues

- CFL requirements and areas with conservation covenants.
- Protection of trees as a commercial resource.
- Easements for effluent spray systems managed by RDC.
- Obligation to protect indigenous remnants and reserves through the Resource Management Act, NZ Forest Accord and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Principles and Criteria. In particular our FSC certification requires the protection and enhancement of biodiversity values within indigenous remnants or reserves through limiting the activities that may impact upon them.
- Respect for areas of historical or cultural significance (Waahi Tapu).
- Health and Safety of contractors undertaking forestry operations according to KT's Health and Safety Critical Rules and various statutory obligations.
- Health and Safety of business partners or stakeholder representatives entering the forest for business or research.
- Health and Safety of those entering the forest for recreation of their own free will. Legal requirements and common law.
- Social impacts due to multi-recreational use. Needs and concerns of all user groups and the community.
- Obligations to adjoining land owners.
- Consideration, as a stakeholder in the Rotorua District Recreation Strategy, of the goals set out in the Strategy, how we can address these goals and work towards achieving the overall vision of the Strategy – Active people, healthy communities.

Desired outcomes/goals

- KT, mountain bikers and local authorities co-operating to find solutions that work for everyone.
- Mutual respect and acceptance is fostered through increased communication and sharing of information between management and all user groups.
- The social, environmental and safety impacts of mountain biking; the building of, maintenance and use of tracks are managed appropriately for the enjoyment of present and future generations.
- Sustainable forest management practices are balanced against and not compromised by public right of access and the wider social and economical benefits of mountain biking.

Actions (not necessarily in this order)

- Map outback trails and overlay onto a forest map which includes effluent spray blocks, conservation areas and notable sites. Identify tracks that are acceptable and not acceptable according to management issues.
- Get tracks GPS'd so they can be added to GIS system and identified by harvest planners.
- Create a track data base to be utilised for further decision making and planning.
- Implement best safety management practices for public notification of operations, including adequate notification by operations to management, appropriate signage by contractors and adequate signage adopted at all main forest entry points.
- Publicise policy and educate users.
 - post policy and forms on MTB Club website, NZ MTB website, KT website, Redwoods website
 - make hard copies available at the Redwoods Visitor Centre
 - send information packs to bike shops
 - article in Daily Post feature and Mountain Biking section
- Adoption of policy by KT and mountain bikers.
 - review and make appropriate changes to trail signs, include regrade of tracks
 - produce new signs for "outback tracks" (simple format)
 - produce warning signs for Eight Mile Gate Road & harvesting
 - produce new maps for core and outback network with ethics included
 - hold bi-annual trail building info and training days, incorporate presentation regarding management and a trail ride.
 - develop a Trail Network group and meet regularly to discuss issues and over all track network plans
 - organise some method of recognising contributions of Network Group, Adopt a trail participants and trail builders.



POLICY GOVERNING MOUNTAIN BIKING ACCESS TO FOREST ESTATE

Policy Statement

Kaingaroa Timberlands (KT) desires to work in co-operation with all user groups and local authorities to manage both the general and specific recreational user access so as to ensure sustainable forest management practices are balanced against and not compromised by the public right and wider social and economical benefits of those uses, with **safety** first and foremost.

KT recognises that one of the most significant recreational uses of the KT managed forest estate is mountain biking. The proximity of Whakarewarewa Forest to Rotorua city and the world class and world renowned designated mountain bike tracks within that forest contribute to the very high usage of the estate by mountain bikers. The existence and continued use of this forest and these tracks in particular therefore has a significant economical and social impact on the wider Rotorua Community.

In addition, KT has various statutory and best management practice obligations relating to the preservation and conservation of natural and historical resources, and to the protection of Waahi Tapu.

Accordingly, this mountain bike access policy is a key instrument in giving effect to those aims.

1. General Access

There is a public right to foot, bicycle and horseback access for recreational purposes to that land managed by KT under the Whakarewarewa Crown Forestry Licence while the Crown is the owner of the land. That public right is subject to the requirements of public safety, the safety of those people working on the land, and for the protection of trees, buildings, plant and equipment.

In accordance with the terms of the Whakarewarewa Crown Forestry Licence, all other mountain bike access is at the sole discretion of KT as manager under that licence.

Mountain bike entry to any other forest, as part of the KT managed estate shall be subject to the ordinary vehicle permitting procedure. For the purposes of that procedure, a mountain bike shall be considered to be a "vehicle".

2. General Access – Temporary Closure

KT reserves the right to temporarily close any area, identified or otherwise, or track or part or parts thereof for business purposes, including harvesting. In doing so KT will give notice to recreational users by posting details of such temporary closure at the Redwoods Visitor Centre, the designated mountain bike track car park on Waipa Mill Road, bottom of Nursery Road Hill, bottom of Hill Road and at the Green Lake Picnic area.

3. Re-establishment of tracks

Subsequent to forestry operations the re-establishment of tracks within the Core Track Network will be undertaken by KT in conjunction within the KT Mountain Bike Network. An overall plan including a time frame for reestablishment will be implemented prior to any operations taking place. This plan may also include, at KT's discretion, establishing a "replacement" (new) track before operations take place to ensure a similar grade track to that of the one affected is open for use, while the affected track is out of use.

Re-establishment of tracks within the Outback Track Network will be at the sole discretion of KT. A formal application will need to be made in accordance with Section 6.

4. Identified Areas - General

Specific areas within the forest may be set aside or identified by KT as suitable for use by particular recreational user groups only. This may include the establishment and maintenance of tracks for those groups.

Where an area or areas have been identified as for given user groups only, use of that area by individuals or groups who are not of that user type will be treated as a trespass and may, depending on the circumstances, be sufficient cause to deny offending organisations and/or individuals all future access to any part of the KT managed forest estate.

5. Identified Areas – Mountain Bike Tracks

Specific mountain bike tracks will only be permitted in Whakarewarewa Forest. This policy shall not prevent special event tracks being created in other parts of the KT managed estate in accordance with Section 6.

There are three classes of mountain bike tracks within Whakarewarewa Forest, each with different levels of access. Those classes are:

a. Links – tracks between forest roads, forest tracks and mountain bike tracks that build up due to habitual use. These tracks are not maintained to any standard and are open to all forest users. Modification of these tracks (e.g. construction of berms, steps, stunts, etc.) is not permitted. These tracks will not be marked on any official mountain bike track map and are subject to closure at any time by KT without notice to any users.

- b. **Out back Tracks** tracks outside of the Core Mountain Bike Track Network. They will be marked on official KT maps, but will not be advised on the map of Core Mountain Bike Tracks. Entry and exit points of these tracks will be marked. These tracks are intended primarily for mountain bike use, and other forest users will be discouraged from using them. At the date of this policy the Out Back Mountain Bike Tracks comprise the following tracks:
 - i. Be Rude Not To Track
 - ii. Mr A's Trail
 - iii. Bush Track
 - iv. Buchanan Track
 - v. Chop Suey Track
 - vi. Sidewinder Track
 - vii. No Brains Track
 - viii. K2 Track
 - ix. The Pig Track
 - x. Roller Coaster Track
 - xi. Jeff's Link Track
 - xii. Hot Cross Buns Track
 - xiii. The Tickler Track
 - xiv. Gonna Gotta Track
 - xv. Taniwha Track (Downhill)
- c. **Core Mountain Bike Tracks** these are the principal mountain bike tracks within Whakarewarewa Forest for mountain biking and are intended exclusively for mountain bike use. At the date of this policy, the Core Mountain Bike Tracks comprise the following tracks:
 - i. Haro Track
 - ii. Repco Track
 - iii. Marzocchi Track
 - iv. Avenir Track
 - v. Diamondback Track
 - vi. Vetta Track
 - vii. Funn Track
 - viii. Bauer Track
 - ix. Exit Track
 - x. New Exit Track

In addition forestry roads and old skid roads are open to all forest users. These will be maintained according to use for forestry operations and for recreational use at the discretion of KT, and are subject to closure at any time by KT. Modification of forestry roads or old skid roads is not permitted.

In addition there are tracks that are designated for walking/running only or for horse riding only. These tracks are signposted for their purpose according to specific trail guides/maps. All users should use the information available to ensure they are using the correct track network for their specific use. These tracks will be maintained by KT

6. Track Maintenance

There are two types of maintenance that can be undertaken on the forest tracks. They are defined below:

a) **General Maintenance** – everyday maintenance that does <u>not</u> involve the removal of any undergrowth or disturbance of the track surface or structure. General maintenance includes such things as clearing fallen debris off the tracks, cleaning out drains and trimming back of overgrowth.

General Maintenance can be undertaken on any of the mountain bike tracks by any person whether they are a member of the Mountain Bike Track Network Group or not.

b) **Major Maintenance** – maintenance undertaken from time to time that involves the removal of undergrowth or disturbance of the track surface. Major maintenance includes such things as repairing and digging out muddy patches or creating new drains or creating fixes for problem areas.

Major Maintenance must be undertaken as described below:

Major maintenance of the tracks within the Core Mountain Bike Track Network will be authorised by KT and shall be conducted under the direction of KT in cooperation with the Mountain Bike Track Network Group. Much of the maintenance of these tracks will be undertaken by KT and organised working bees.

Major maintenance of the tracks within the Outback Track Network will be authorised by KT, although KT will not take anything more than a general oversight role in the on-going maintenance of these tracks. Persons who wish to undertake major maintenance of a particular track must become a member of the Mountain Bike Track Network Group by filling out an "Adopt a Track" form (attached).

7. Track Building and Track Modification

Track building is defined as forming a completely new track through an area of forest where a track does not exist or adding to the length or adding another track option to an existing track. This includes the cutting and slashing of undergrowth and any type of earthworks

Track Modification is making changes to the structure of an existing track. For example creating new berms, jumps, steps, stunts etc.

The building of any new mountain bike tracks or any modification of any existing Core or Outback tracks shall be permitted only with the explicit and prior approval of KT obtained upon formal application [refer Whakarewarewa Forest Mountain Bike Track Building/Modification Application].

KT reserves the right to grant or decline any application in whole or in part, including making alterations to any requested track routing, in its sole discretion having regard to the environmental, operational and safety considerations of managing forestry operations and other recreational users within Whakarewarewa Forest.

KT will provide the applicant with a written copy of its decision, including any conditions that may attach to a successful application. Upon undertaking the track building or modification the applicant will automatically accept those conditions. Before the new or modified track will be opened to the public it will be signed off by a selected member of the KT Track Network Group.

If materials or services are required for the construction of any new track or modification of any existing track, a contribution to obtaining those materials or services may be required from the applicant. This shall be determined with the applicant at the time of the application

Every unauthorised cutting or slashing of new tracks and modification of existing tracks, including creating shortcuts will be treated as trespass and will be sufficient cause to deny offending organisations and/or individuals all future access to any part of the KT managed forest estate. In addition, further criminal or civil action may be taken against the individuals and/or organisations for damaging KT owned or managed property.

8. Specific Events Access

"Specific events access", including dedicated mountain bike events and events where mountain biking is a component will be by formal permit only.

Formal application shall be made to the Redwoods Visitor Centre Manager by the Event Organiser no later than 2 months prior to the specific event, which application is to include the following information:

- Organising Body and key Event Officials names, addresses and contact details
- Date(s) of Event
- Estimated numbers of officials, bikers, and support personnel
- Estimated numbers of spectators
- Details of specific access requirements [by map location where applicable], including official event track(s), main spectator viewing sites, forest road network use, type and number of vehicular or other motorised support transportation to be used in the forest, type and location of cooking facilities, sanitation facilities, road and track closures requirements, structures/earthworks to be erected
- Fire Management Plan
- Vehicle Parking Plan
- Road Safety Plan
- Waste Management/Clean up Plan
- Health & Safety Plan, specifically details of chain of communication, biker/spectator recovery/evacuation in the event of serious accident or fire, and spectator viewing site safety

The application is to have appended to it, a declaration formally executed by the organising body and duly attested declaring the salient facts and containing the following statement of discharge:

We, [The organising body] do hereby declare and undertake total responsibility for the health and safety of all persons participating in or attending the event, and that no claim for costs, damage, specific performance or litigation of any kind whatsoever shall lie or be filed against the act of Kaingaroa Timberlands Management Limited granting this application or enforcing its lawful rights or documented company best management practices.

KT reserves the right to attach to its application approval, conditions precedent or subsequent, including levying a charge for the issue of the permit and the imposition of a remediation bond.

A formal application document is available from the Redwoods Visitor Centre Manager.

9. Mountain Bike Track Network Group

KT will maintain a Mountain Bike Track Network Group made up of various representatives from KT and the mountain bike community at the discretion of KT. It will include selected representatives from any local mountain bike clubs, adopt a trail members and those who are building or constructing tracks.

This group will meet on a regular basis to discuss any issues, ideas, maintenance and plans for the overall mountain bike track network. This may include any issues with other recreational activities and concerns with forestry operations or planned operations in the Whakarewarewa Forest. Outcomes of these meetings will aid KT in the implementation of Forestry Operational Plans, as well as management of the track network and general recreation in the forest for the benefit of all recreational users.

1 Dale

Russell Dale General Manager 16 July 2004



Mountain Bike Track Building & Modification Application Form Whakarewarewa Forest

Name of Applicant	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Mobile Number	
e-mail address	
Other people involved	
(please list)	

Name of track(if named)					
Track Type	Downhill	XC	Stunt		
Track Grade	Beginner	Intermediate	Experienced	Expert	Advanced
Track Terrain	Flat	Sloped	Some hills	Hilly	
Likely track construction	Berms	Jumps	Drop offs	Water X -ing	Bridge
or modifications	Stunts	Steps	XXX	Logs rides	Rock armour
	Benching	chokes	ramps		

List equipment used for construction/	
maintenance	
(e.g. slasher, spades, chainsaw)	
Do you need KT for chainsaw work?	

Additional Information to be provided	
Start date for proposed construction (notify when construction is complete)	
Map with proposed track route / estimated location	
showing relationship to other tracks and roads	
➡ showing landmarks for entry & exit	
Evidence of qualifications for chainsaw operator & list protective equipment used	
A brief Health & Safety Plan for those constructing the track	
➡ First aid kit on site at all times	
➡ Signs up warning public of work in progress (supplied by KT)	
Procedure undertaken in case of an accident.	
Vehicle details for forest access permit (one only)	

In the interests of obtaining a prompt response to your application, you are advised to provide as much detail as possible on the above points. KT will meet with you to discuss your application if further clarification is required.

Declaration

I/We, _______ do hereby declare and undertake total responsibility for the health and safety of all persons undertaking the track building and/or modification, and that no claim for costs, damage, specific performance or litigation of any kind whatsoever shall lie or be filed against the act of Kaingaroa Timberlands granting this application or enforcing its lawful rights or documented best management practices. I/we also agree that in undertaking the track building and/or modification no damage whatsoever will be caused to any living native or exotic trees within the forest.

I/We also acknowledge that the tracks being requested to be built are in an operational forest and I/we understand that the existence of and access to a track is dependant on the forestry operations of the Licensee of the land that the track is built on.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Application Procedure

All applications should be submitted to:

Julianne Wilkinson Kaingaroa Timberlands Management Limited P.O Box 1284 Rotorua

KT reserves the right to grant or decline any application in whole or part, including making modifications to any requested track routing, in its sole discretion having regard to environmental, operational and safety considerations and other recreational users within Whakarewarewa Forest.

KT will provide the applicant with a written copy of its decision, including any conditions that may apply to a successful application. By undertaking the track building and/or modification the applicant automatically accepts those conditions.

Tips on track building

When considering where to locate and how to construct a track, take these things into consideration. If you have done your research and your track is well planned, it is more likely to be approved. <u>www.imba.com</u> has some great tips and resources that you can use.

Resource Protection:

- Age of the trees pick an area where trees are between 10-12 years old. This will mean they have had their final thinning and your new track is less likely to be demolished by operations. (Possible 15 years) Likewise don't choose an area where trees are close to maturity (26 plus) as they will be harvested in the near future. Do not plan a track through a recently harvested or planted area.
- *Type of trees* Do not put a track through native trees. Many of the pockets of native in Whakarewarewa Forest are protected.
- *Erosion* Route a track along the contours of a hillside instead of straight up and down the fall line as this encourages water flow down the hill. Think about how your track will affect the environment and how it will be affected by the environment, weather and riders. More work on planning here will result in less major maintenance later on.

User Experience:

- Who is the track for and why is it needed? Is it a multi-use track or solely for mountain bikers? Is it for a novice or experienced rider? This will affect the length, type of construction, terrain and characteristics of the track. Is it filling a gap in the overall track network? We don't want all the tracks to be the same grade. If it is to replace a track that isn't working maybe modification of the existing track would be better.
- *Effluent Spray areas* Do not plan a track through an area where there are spray pipes.
- *Network flow* Does my track flow with the existing network? A new track should work in with the existing network. It should form an additional track that can be ridden in conjunction with a group of tracks and add to the bikers overall forest experience.
- User safety When your track is completed it must be safe for the rider to use no matter what the grade. For example you do not want a long fast section ending in a sharp turn and an alternative route beside a stunt is a good idea the stunts should be well constructed. Remember if your track has good flow, it will likely be a safe track to ride.

Maintenance Value:

- *Difficulty* If it is going to be difficult to maintain because of erosion or low lying muddy areas and poor drainage etc then don't bother building it as it is likely you will get sick of maintaining it.
- *Time* Will it take up all my riding time to do maintenance or just need regular general maintenance to keep it in good shape?
- Costs Remember significant maintenance may result in significant costs!



Adopt a Track Application Form

Name of Track/s	
Name of Applicant	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Mobile Number	
e-mail address	
Other people involved	
(please list)	

Declaration

I/We, ______ wish to adopt a track to undertake regular maintenance of the track/s named above. In doing so I/we do hereby declare and undertake total responsibility for the health and safety of all persons undertaking the maintenance, and that no claim for costs, damage, specific performance or litigation of any kind whatsoever shall lie or be filed against the act of Kaingaroa Timberlands granting this application or enforcing its lawful rights or documented best management practices. I/we also agree that in undertaking the track maintenance no damage whatsoever will be caused to any living native or exotic trees within the forest.

I/We also acknowledge that the tracks being requested to be maintained are in an operational forest and I/we understand that the existence of and access to a track is dependant on the forestry operations of the Licensee of the land that the track is built on.

Name: _____

Signature:

Date:			
Dale.			

Application Procedure

All applications should be submitted to:

Julianne Wilkinson Kaingaroa Timberlands Management Limited P.O Box 1284 Rotorua

KT will provide the applicant with a written copy of its decision, including any conditions that may apply to a successful application. By undertaking the track maintenance the applicant automatically accepts those conditions.