

Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park



Community Newsletter - Number Two

December '98

Thanks to a wet spring and effective goat and possum control, the native forest areas on Makara Peak are looking particularly green and healthy. The park's track development is also progressing well with a number of tracks experiencing significant use already (and receiving very positive reviews). And, media interest in the park has been high with eleven articles published in local papers in the last five months. Here's some more detail on what's happening on the Peak.

Forest Restoration

Four home nurseries have now been set up to propagate native plants for the park and are now accommodating around 1,000 seedlings. In addition 3,800 native plants have been ordered from the Wellington City Council's nursery. Well over 3000 native seedlings have already been planted.

Next winter will see the start of planting of mature forest species in the gullies - trees like kahikatea, tawa, totara, miro and matai. In the long run these should attract kereru (wood pigeon) and bellbirds back to Makara Peak. Thanks to those who donated old wool carpet for weed mats.

During a recent visit to Makara Peak, Mark Te One of the Wellington Tenth's Trust raised the idea of erecting a pou pou (carved pole) near the summit reminding people of the way Makara was before the forest was cleared. We think this is an excellent idea.

Gorse provides shelter for young native seedlings and enriches the soil with nitrogen. However, because of the amount of gorse on Makara Peak, the fire risk will get very high this summer - no smoking in the park please.

Control of possums and goats is a vital part of the forest restoration plan (see below).





Memorial

Eighteen-year-old Johnsonville rider Gareth Varley was killed instantly while crossing the road at the recent Mountain Bike World Championships in Quebec. Gareth was an extremely enthusiastic and talented rider who attended most events in the Wellington area. A memorial in Gareth's honour will be placed on Makara Peak above the top of Makara Hill Road on Sunday 19th December, around 3:30pm. All welcome.

The Track Network

Volunteers have now contributed over 1000 person-hours of labour to the park. As a result there are now three narrow tracks in use by riders, runners and walkers.

The one kilometre 'Ridgeline Track' descends from the summit of Makara Peak back towards Karori. While this track is very exposed to winds, it offers stunning views and finishes with an exciting series of tight sweeping turns. The 'Starfish Track' descends from the TV3 transmitter just above South Karori Road, through mahoe forest to South Karori Stream.

Finally, the 'Pylon 19 Track' descends from the pylon closest to South Karori Stream to the stream itself, largely following an old power line track. This track is punctuated by short steep sections and groves of tree ferns.

A track heading into the park from the top of Makara Hill Rd is now 50% complete and getting some use by runners. It should be rideable by late summer.

Work has also just begun on the skills area at Pylon 19. It should be complete by the end of the month. Temporary maps of the existing track network will be posted at the parks entrances shortly.

Access and Parking

As outlined in the September newsletter there will be at least four access points to Makara Peak: South Karori Road, Makara Hill Rd, St Albans Ave and Allington Road. To ensure park visitors do not compete with residents for parking, a car park has been planned for the South Karori Road entrance. This will be situated on a piece of road reserve between South Karori Stream and South Karori Road (about halfway between the start and end of Hazelwood Ave). The car park has been designed to hold approximately 22 cars. A picnic area will be established on the opposite side of Karori Stream (accessible via a foot bridge).

This car park will be supplemented by the parking space available 300m further down South Karori Road, and the car park at the end of Fitzgerald Place. In addition, an extension of the parking currently available at the top of Makara Hill Road is planned and there is a limited amount of parking space available next to the Allington Rd Play Area.

For the safety of all involved, we are considering options for encouraging safe driving and parking at all the entrances. If you have any suggestions please contact Simon Kennett (contact details below). A site visit for those interested in the proposed South Karori Road car park will be held on site (opposite 103 South Karori Rd) at 6:30pm on 10th December.

Resource Consents

The general everyday use of the new mountain bike park is a recreation activity and as such is permitted under the Proposed Wellington City District Plan. The proposed car park on South Karori Road is also a permitted activity in the Proposed District Plan. Therefore no planning permissions (resource consents) are required for these activities.

However, a resource consent is required from the Wellington City Council in respect of the earthworks and some minor vegetation removal that is required for the *construction* of some new tracks. Resource consents are also required from the Wellington Regional Council for the *construction* of the footbridge over Karori Stream (to access the picnic area), and for the establishment of a composting toilet in the picnic area. Applications for these consents are currently being prepared and will be lodged shortly.

Events

The Wellington City Council has finished developing guidelines for mountain bike events, as a part of their Mountain Bike Policy review. These guidelines lay down rules and restrictions that event organisers must abide by. One of the conditions is that no more than two or three events per year may be held in any one area.

In addition to these rules, the Makara Peak Community Working Group is currently developing additional guidelines to ensure events are of a high quality for participants while having a minimal impact on the park and its neighbours. The group will consider ecological impacts, emergency access, noise limits, and limits to the number of entries. If you have any suggestions please contact Simon Kennett.

Contrary to some rumours, Makara Peak will not be hosting a Mountain Bike World Cup event as it lacks suitable facilities such as ample car parking and club rooms. Mount Victoria is the only venue capable of hosting a World Cup event in the Wellington area.

Pest Control

A small number of goats still continue to plague the park. Jon Rosemergy and the Wellington Regional Council have shot almost 100 goats on Makara Peak since July. We will keep the pressure on them. Two council-sanctioned possum shooters have dispatched over 300 possums in the last 2 months.

A volunteer group has set up bait stations in trees in the park. These dispense blue poison pellets (brodifacoum) to possums. The lethal dose for a possum or rat is 0.2 mg/kg. For a cat the lethal dose is between 5 and 25 mg/kg. The bait stations are filled with enough bait to kill 4 possums - much less than the lethal dose for a cat. The bait smells of aniseed to attract possums (not cats).

Plans to supplement this effort with a small 1080 drop in the inaccessible, southern end of the park have been put on hold. For safety reasons, casual hunting and motor vehicle use on Makara Peak is prohibited.

Working Bees

An incredible amount of work has been completed by volunteers from Karori and further afield. In one weekend alone, a kilometre of fence line was cleared through thick scrub (helping to add 25 hectares to the park and keep stock out). Volunteers are essential to the parks development. Thank you all.

An end of year work party and barbecue will be held at 10am Sunday 6th December at South Karori Road. Working bees will resume in mid-January.

If you have any queries or suggestions regarding the development of Makara Peak, please contact Makara Peak Park Advocate, Simon Kennett, phone 499 6376. Or check out the Makara Peak discussion group on the web:
<http://www.mountainbike.co.nz>

