

Introduction

The TECT All Terrain Park (the Park) is one of a kind in New Zealand in terms of size, diversity of terrain and its scope to host both motorised and non-motorised recreation activities. Located half way between Tauranga and Rotorua, the 1,640 hectare adventure playground was designed to meet both the requirements for a sub-regional park as well as an area to accommodate displaced or burgeoning recreation groups away from residential areas.

Officially opened in December 2010, the Park now has more than 26 user groups (and counting) who have spent thousands of volunteer hours creating and operating activity sites that offer all manner of sports and recreation including shooting, rallying, model aeroplanes, motocross, four wheel driving, tramping, mountain biking, dog sledding and equestrian. Open year-round during daylight hours, the Park boasts a full-time Ranger and Arrival Centre. Approximately 2.5 million people live within a 2.5 hour drive of the Park.

Community Engagement

Community engagement and collaboration has been at the forefront of the Park's development and continued operation. From the original joint purchase of land by the Western Bay of Plenty District Council (WBOPDC) and Tauranga City Council (TCC) in 2004 through to the formation of volunteer fire crews, conservation tourism and Adopt a Trail initiatives, the Park is a leading exemplar of cooperation and partnership.



Above: The Arrival Centre and Ranger Station

Perhaps the most impressive feature of the Park is its diverse assortment of activities, all of which have been established and operated by local community user groups. From the get-go, interest groups were invited to investigate specific recreation and support facilities, tracks and utilities within the Park to serve their membership and interests.

Interestingly, umbrella organisations of similar user groups have organically formed as similar needs, ambitions and constraints were identified. For example, Piko Piko Trails became an incorporated society to coordinate trail making for non-motorised user groups. Te Matai Motorsport Inc is another example.

Community engagement has extended beyond just user groups:

- Ongoing consultation with *tangata whenua* representatives from two *hapu* within the park boundaries help to inform sustainable practices and cultural resource recommendations. For example, important roads and walking tracks include names such as *Te Ara o Raho*, *Mangakopikopiko*, and *Te Rerenga*. These names carry the Maori history of the Park and denote significant events that took place in the early days of Maori settlement.
- Volunteer programmes providing thousands of support hours to run the park include:
 - A rural fire fighting crew
 - Corporate community service work days
 - School tree planting and environmental educational excursions
 - An "Adopt A Trail" initiative
 - After hours patrol
 - Training workshops including chainsaw safety, trail building and surveying
 - New Zealand Police Youth Search and Rescue Training Group
 - Conservation tourism programmes (Kuaka New Zealand) coordinates international student volunteers to plant, build trails, and provide general clean up
 - Preventative detention crews clear out forestry debris and carve new trails

- An Upper Pyes Pa Community Safety Network was formed through staff, community and police efforts. The Neighbourhood Watch style programme is designed to discuss concerns about community safety and to collectively tackle the vandalism, criminal behaviour and illegal activities experienced as a result of the isolation of the upper Pyes Pa region.
- Park collaboration also includes international internships for three Danish forestry students as well as local students from the Waiariki School of Forestry, Wood Manufacturing and Biotechnology, University of Waikato, Bay of Plenty Polytechnic and local high schools.

Excellence

Successfully establishing and operating the Park is the result of excellence in progressive community-oriented thinking that has seen tangible results, greater connectivity between city and rural communities, and a partnership that defines the WBOPDC and TCC's commitment to open space, recreation and protection of landscapes and cultural features on a sub-regional scale.

In 2000, the Councils adopted a joint regional parks strategy which identified the need to find a site that specifically catered for "noisy activities" that were being displaced by residential expansion. Following a challenging search for a suitable site, a 1236 hectare production forest came on the market in 2004. Prompt resource consent within a tight deadline became necessary, leading the WBOPDC and TCC to work collaboratively, efficiently and openly. In gaining resource consent, other hurdles arose including:

- The need to develop a way forward that factored in the continuing use of large areas of the proposed park site for production forestry until milling rights expired
- Gaining resource consent for a "concept" that allowed enough certainty to all parties as to what the effects of the proposal would be while also providing enough flexibility for a wide range of potential activities and users, not all of which were known
- Addressing concerns of the then Transit New Zealand (TNZ) regarding the potential adverse effects on State Highway 36, which bisects the TECT All Terrain Park
- Securing funding to jointly purchase another 381 hectares that came on the market to ensure the land was not purchased by another party whose activities may not have been compatible with those of the Park, and to make more room for other users.

Following extensive negotiations, substantial crafting of arguments and counter-arguments, creative planning, and an overarching belief in the need for the Park, the Councils were granted resource consent by an independent Commissioner in 2008. Not resting on its laurels, the Council collaboration quickly sought a consolidated planning framework for the Park. Taking advantage of a review of the Western Bay of Plenty District Plan, the Park's planners proposed, and ultimately achieved, the designation of a specific All Terrain Park Zone to replace the previous Rural G Zone. The resulting zoning provided certainty to the both Councils and other parties about future activities.

Excellence also factors in the ongoing governance and operation of the Park. With few precedents for creating a multi-use park involving so many potentially conflicting uses on such a small scale, there have been considerable challenges and a critical need for compromise to accommodate the large range of disparate expectations. In order to resolve this conundrum and to help prioritise Council infrastructure development, an Activity Zone Plan (AZP) was adopted in October 2009. This determined where motorsports, 4WD, shooting activities, motorcycles and non-motorised sports would be best located for the long term development of the Park and the user groups specific requirements. In developing the AZP, various viewpoints and issues raised by the user groups were considered against other recognised physical constraints and recreation planning principles.

Once activity locations were established, the next major challenge was how to work with everyone to ensure no one group's needs were encumbered by another's and how to temper expectations to fit with the limitations of terrain, consent conditions and intergroup tolerances. A User Group Management Plan was developed to address these issues and requires each user group to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU identifies and records areas of common interest, mutual understanding and good faith, and is the precursor to a lease (or other similar agreement). Groups that have signed an MOU are entitled to a seat at the User Group Forum (UGF) which meets six-weekly to share information on developments and issues with Park staff.

Innovation

Innovation has been an inherent feature in every development phase of the Park. This stems from the unique vision and makeup of the Park as well as a desire to future proof it as efficiently as practicably possible. Examples of innovation include:

- A family-friendly/beginner activity must be developed first before advanced features. For a large number of facilities, this allows for wheelchair access
- Traffic counters were installed to easily monitor Park visitor numbers
- The Park has its own radio repeater and channels, satellite communications and weather station
- The Park's website (www.tectallterrainpark.co.nz) provides a useful guide for visitors as well as free articles, templates and checklists for current and potential user groups on marketing, how to fundraise, and host events
- The entire Park was scanned by Lidar technology to produce pinpoint accurate, high-resolution, topographic maps free of charge to all user groups. Digital aerial photography is also available.
- A Cultural and Heritage Assessment was done in 2009 to identify significant cultural resources
- A "pack it in, pack it out" litter-free policy exists and it is completely smoke-free, and all dogs must remain on a leash at all times
- An experienced Track and Trail Coordinator was appointed to design new routes and assist in building trails for any user group. S/he ensures trails are fresh, exciting and appropriate.
- Recognising sport and recreation habits are changing, the Park provides space for non-traditional activities.
- The adventure playground moniker provides innovative tourism opportunities. The Park is now a destination of The Magic Bus Company for overseas visitors looking for something unique during cruise ship stopovers. The third Adrenalin Forest tourism venture in NZ will open in late 2011.

Achievement

Since the first major infrastructure projects got underway in 2008, the Park quickly achieved many significant physical milestones to compliment the establishment of critical planning frameworks, consents and management guidelines. Highlights include:

- Key roads were upgraded and made safe for user groups and the public to access most of the Park
- Sub-hubs were built to support the main user group establishment
- Core utilities (water, power, radio and data communications) and facilities are in place to deliver day to day operational support
- A wide range of user groups were actively engaged and supported to fulfil the goal of a community driven recreation development
- The first commercial operator is established in the Park and set to draw 20,000 people into the park each year of which 70% will be local residents
- TECT (Tauranga Energy Consumer Trust) secured naming rights to the Park for \$4.5 million. They also funded \$150K to the first major user group project – the Clay Target Club facility
- \$200K in local business contributions to various projects (target shooting ranges, rally roads, equestrian corrals, mountain bike tracks and signage)
- In kind services and technical advice provided to user group management plans by Boffa-Miskell, OPUS, Tonkin & Taylor, Higgins Construction
- 14,500 hours of PD crew applied in the Park in the last year on weed control, firebreak construction, clean up, planting and trail construction
- Otumoetai College woodworking students designed and produced picnic tables and sign kiosks
- Approximately 10,000 seedlings were planted by schools, local and international volunteers, service groups and local corporate teams
- In July 2011 the first major motorsport event drew 1,500 spectators and raised \$2,000 for charity
- October 23, 2011 2nd major event: Tauranga Boys College Trail featuring the "pay-it-forward" principle of being carbon zero. For each (500) registrants a seedling is planted along with pre-post trail work to mitigate their impact.
- Since opening, the Park has averaged 60-100 cars per weekend day even through the winter.

Efficiency & Effectiveness

In three short years the Park has developed from a weedy pine plantation to a fully fledged sub-regional park with the infrastructure needed to open in December 2010. This was accomplished with only two full-time staff, and one full time volunteer dedicated to the project. The financial burden has effectively split between the two councils at 50/50 for both operational and capital works expenditure, including significant contribution from external funding sources (e.g., TECT \$1.5m and BayTrust \$.5m). Councils also apply revenue from harvesting trees to offset the costs of forestry and site development. ETS credit has been generated by maintaining forest cover and that credit has been made available to offset the penalty from converting forest to other non-forest uses (e.g., carparks, building sites).

Land Acquisition

- TECT	\$2m
- Bay Trust	\$0.5m
- Western Bay / Tauranga City	\$3.05m (each)
- Total land purchase	\$8.6m

Infrastructure Development

- TECT Grant	\$1.5m
- Councils (10 year)	\$12.4m

Plus operating costs \$0.7m/yr average

Sustainability

The Park's vision statement is "To successfully establish and facilitate a regional destination that caters for a wide range of adventure and education activities in a managed sustainable way". Thus, incorporating sustainable practices, energy-efficient and low impact design, and considered use of materials and techniques on the natural surrounding environment are paramount to the continuing development of the Park. Examples of this vision include:

- The Park's core values of Care, Learn, Play and Create. Inclusive in these values is fun, challenge and recognition of the inherent rewards of participating in recreation and education. Further to this though, each value is also designed to present pathways for users to understand the role of the Park and each individual's or user group's role in sustaining it.
- The Park's forestry strategy focuses on sustainable practices such as choosing longer term rotations of 60-80 years using a variety of introduced and native species, while riparian areas and ground steeper than 15% have been retired to native regeneration.
- *Tangata whenua* recommendations advise sustainable practices in the Park's management plan including: the identification of the Park's streams and river to determine their seasonal variability and flow volumes; the construction of formal river crossings for vehicle use; and the development of appropriate riparian margin policies for all the streams and rivers within the Park.
- Solar water heating for the ranger house as well as a high efficiency wood burner/wetback for heat and hot water in the house and Arrival Centre. Rainwater capture used for water supply.
- High standards of double glazing, insulation, and architectural design to maximise natural light and minimise seasonal heating and cooling inefficiencies
- High level use of locally grown wood products (including some grown in the Park) and locally sourced materials in all construction projects. The wood is then milled and treated by local owned independent businesses
- Low impact landscaping and trail construction techniques applied to projects around the Park
- Careful choice of native plants from locally sourced progeny for landscaping
- Recycling centre set up for visitors, contractors and staff
- Wood waste from logging is made available for community firewood gathering or mulched and recycled for landscaping purposes
- Pest control has achieved a significant reduction in possums across the Park using a combination of contract and community fur trappers.