

**Nomination Form for the
NZRA Outstanding Award 2010**

Category: Outstanding Park

Organisation: Wellington City Council and Makara Peak Supporters

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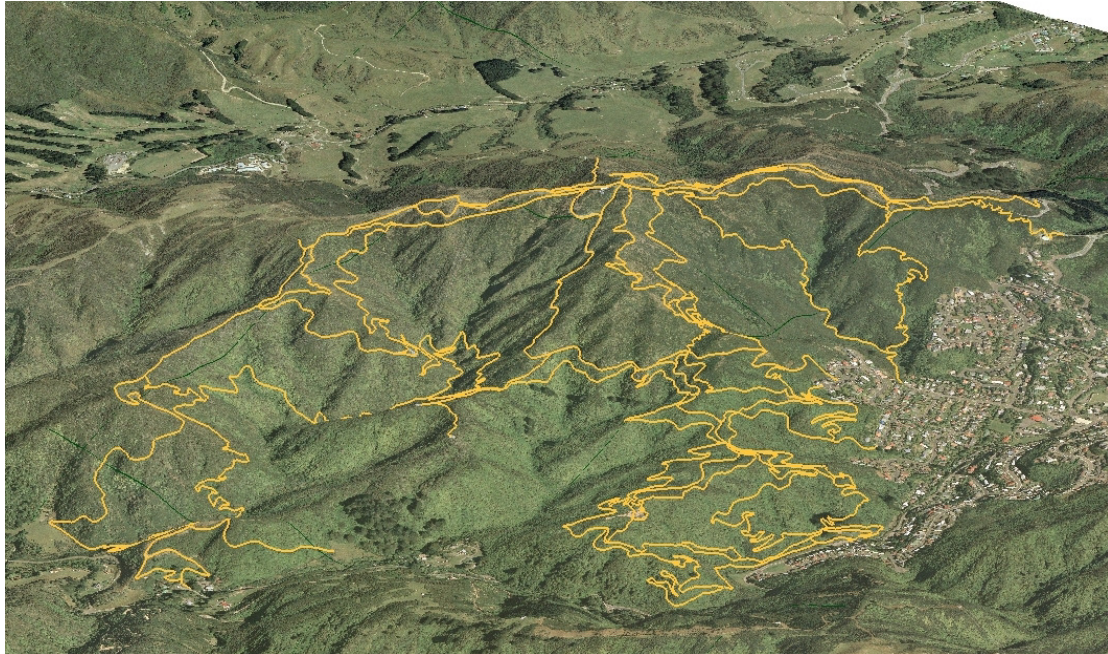
Date: 26/8/2010

Name of the project nominated: **Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park**

Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park

Introduction:

Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park – listed by an international travel website as one of the top 10 places in the world to bike – is situated in South Karori, Wellington. This 230 hectare park is part of Wellington City Council's Outer Green Belt reserves network. Since 1998 the reserve has been developed by a group of enthusiastic volunteers developing a long term plan, building tracks, planting native trees and eradicating destructive pests – the Makara Peak Supporters.



At the beginning of this project, Makara Peak was essentially a run down gorse-covered farm. Volunteers have transformed it into a significant recreational facility, one of Wellington's most visited reserves, an area of ecological importance, and soon to be protected as Scenic Reserve.

Community engagement:

A unique partnership exists between the Makara Peak Supporters and Wellington City Council. Without question, the development and vision of the park is lead by the Makara Peak Supporters, with Council supporting and contributing funding on key maintenance areas, and some capital development. The rationale behind this partnership is that mountain bikers are the experts in mountain biking so it is sensible that they lead the development of a premier mountain bike park. This is supported by the Council's Outer Green Belt Management Plan (2004).

The Makara Peak Supporters executive committee oversee the development of the park and the relationship with Council, and separate committees manage tracks, conservation and communications.

The Supporters group is made up of local residents, mountain bikers and conservationists – ordinary people who enjoy the outdoors and want to give something back to their environment.

All tracks within the park and many surrounding it have been designed and built by Supporters. The Supporters also take care of the majority of maintenance work on the tracks. The latest track development project, *North face*, has seen 2.5 kilometres of track built within

six months with another 650m piloted. This impressive build across such a short time frame was achieved through 75 work parties in the park with up to 20 people in each work party.

The Supporters have also continued to provide an immense amount of conservation work in the park with over 31,000 seedlings planted and cared for. Their pest control work has increased with time and is now a major component of the restoration story of Makara Peak. There are over 100 bait stations and several Timms traps managed by volunteers. Five stoat lines cover most of the park and are managed by the supporters. Both Greater Wellington Regional Council and Wellington City Council have continued to assist and support with volunteer efforts and carry out specialist control such as goat and pig hunting – all of which is significantly enhancing the indigenous biodiversity of the park.

The Supporters also coordinate other community input to help develop the park, including local schools, corporate volunteers, global volunteers, and Corrections Department.

The Supporters are now extending their hands to help a newly formed neighbouring community group 'Friends and Residents of Karori Stream' (FROKS) to help restore the Karori stream which is part of the Makara Peak catchment.

Excellence:

The 2001 vision of the Makara Peak Supporters was to create a world class mountain bike park, with dual use tracks for all levels of rider, in a restored native ecosystem.

10 years on, and Makara Peak has an international reputation, over 30 kilometres of tracks, and more than 31 000 native trees planted.

All tracks are hand built single tracks for mountain biking which can (and are) also used by runners and walkers. These tracks cater for a variety of abilities and fitness levels ranging from easy to expert. There has been a lot learnt after 12 years of building and maintaining tracks and the park proudly has some of the best riding in the country as well as being of international repute.



The experience gained from the development of Makara Peak for mountain biking has seeded many community efforts in track building in other parts of the city reserve network. There are now significant dual use community track builds being undertaken in Polhill Reserve - Te Aro, Te Kopahou Reserve - South Coast and in Centennial Reserve - Miramar. All of these builds are managed through Memorandums of Understanding with the Council and each makes a huge contribution to Wellington's open space track network.

Achievement:

Makara Peak has become one of New Zealand's most noted mountain park destinations. It is also has international recognition as a mountain bike park that *must* be visited.

Visitor numbers are estimated to be around 50 000 per annum based on a track counter installed at one of the major tracks.

The park is open year round and the track network has been developed and maintained so that winter riding is always achieved. Night riding is also popular at the park – consequently the park is used day and night, year-round.



A skills area was developed in 2007, and was the home for some of New Zealand's first skills clinics.

The Park hosts many community-run events, as well as commercial events; from the annual Fire Service Bike Race, PNP cycle race series, Xterra running, guided rides for beginners, and women's rides.

The ecological achievements have also been significant. The very first working party held by the Supporters was for tree planting rather than track building. This is because they recognised the potential for the Park to be part of the Outer Green Belt ecological corridor and that forest restoration would get extra community support. The first pest animal control was also carried out by the Supporters, because at that stage the Park was not considered a priority for pest control due to difficult access and low conservation values. Kereru and kaka now fly over head and it's just a matter of time before they take up residence in the Park. Regular bird counts show that tui, fantail, grey warbler, shining cuckoo and silver eyes are regulars. Ruru (morepork) have been spotted by night riders.

Innovation:

The initial vision of the Makara Peak Supporters and their sustained passion is innovative in itself. In addition, the Supporters have developed their own website, facebook, track maps and beginners guide. There is even a weather-cam showing non-locals the weather conditions on the Peak.

With Council help, the Supporters have developed a kid's beginner's circuit at the neighbouring Karori Park to assist in getting very young children started in off road riding. This circuit includes a pump track believed to be the first in New Zealand.

Other innovations introduced by the Supporters are ride 'n' release weed control and adopt a track (to help with maintenance).

The commitment of the Supporters to the ecological restoration of the site has been a significant part of the development of the Peak's reputation, and their policy of planting a native seedling for every metre of track developed resonates with the Council's community greening programme which provides free native plants to volunteers to plant into the City's

reserves. Plants also come from commercial nurseries, Forest and Bird and various home nurseries.

The ecological values of the Park are now such as to justify its placement in the Permanent Forest Sink Initiative programme as a regenerating forest area and important carbon sink – this application is currently in process.

Efficiency and effectiveness:

The ownership of the Makara Peak Supporters in the development of the Park, and their expertise, volunteer labour, and success with seeking external funding, have all meant that the Park has developed and is maintained at a very low cost.

The Supporters have also been very successful in accessing external funds and support, including Greater Wellington Regional Council grants, Pacific Development Trust, World Wide Fund for Nature, Tindal Foundation, and Project Crimson.

This means that Council funding for this constantly developing Park is around 10k per annum for track metal supply and vegetation cutting and spaying, as well as additional funding for pest animal control and targeted weed control. Capital funding for the last two years has been at similar levels, and has included bridges, boardwalks, retaining, and signs.

A great example is the development of the newest track this year where the Supporters designed and hand-dug 3.5 kilometres of track, Council funded only the supply of metal (a grand total of \$1k), while Corrections Department labour was used to lay and compact the metal.

Sustainability:

For over a decade, volunteers have manually dug, shifted and compacted soil, chipped out rock, cut back branches, built retaining walls and small boardwalks, and dug drainage channels in the Park. All tracks have been designed and built with permanence and future maintenance in mind, all the time taking care to ensure minimal damage to the surrounding native bush.

The key to this sustainability probably has its heart in the objectives developed by the Supporters and supported by Council: “to facilitate and encourage mountain bike riding in the Park, to develop and maintain mountain bike tracks for riders of all levels of ability, to protect and enhance the restoration of native flora and fauna in the Park, to co-ordinate volunteer activities to develop and maintain facilities in the Park”.

After 12 years, the Makara Peak Supporters are still going strong and constantly growing the Park. Membership numbers continue to increase, tracks are still being built, the area is well maintained, and environmental restoration work is still being carried out; making Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park a true model of sustainability.

