

14 March 2013

CMS Submissions

Department of Conservation,

Private Bag 3072,

Hamilton 3240

BIKE TAUPŌ SUBMISSION ON THE WAIKATO CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

1. The following is Bike Taupō's (BT) submission to the Waikato Conservation Management Strategy (CMS). BT is mainly interested in the treatment of mountain biking by the CMS and in particular how this will affect mountain biking opportunities in the Pureora's. BT's submission promotes the positive opportunities associated with mountain biking in the Public Conservation Estate (PCE). The matters raised are based on our working understanding of building and managing mountain bike tracks in and around Taupō (including the PCE) for the last 10 years.
2. In summary, BT's submission demonstrates that there is little to no environmental and social effects of mountain biking being undertaken on formed tracks within the PCE. Mountain Biking is a growing sport and one that will bring more people into the PCE. BT submits that the CMS should take a more permissive and facilitatory stance on mountain biking within the PCE in recognition of its positive attributes that align with the Conservation Act.
3. Bike Taupō would like to be heard in support of its submission.

Who is Bike Taupō

4. Bike Taupo is a cycling advocacy group, which was formalised in October 2002 to create a community representation for Taupo cyclists.
5. In the Taupo District the group aims:
 - To promote cycling as a healthy, environmentally friendly and convenient form of transport

- To work for improved conditions and image of cyclists and cycling To encourage the use of cycles for transport and recreation
 - To educate cyclists and other road users to order to improve safety and awareness of cyclists
 - To present the case for cycling in public debate and to relevant authorities
 - To advocate the implementation of the Taupo District Council Cycle Strategy document
6. The group has a dedicated committee and has been formed to provide the Taupo community with a voice for cycling. We work along side the Community in promoting education and awareness and changes to infrastructure to encourage Taupo as being the most cycle friendly town and District in New Zealand

The Great Lake Trail

7. BT is currently building the Great lake Trail as part of the NZ Cycleways project. This cycle trail, also able to be used by walkers, extends from Waihaha River Bridge on SH 32, 40kms to Waihora Bay on the shores of Lake Taupō. Trail then starts again at Whangamata road, heads to Kawakawa Bay, to Kinloch and then to Whakaipo Bay and will be near 100kms once finished. Those parts of the GLT which are open are already experiencing high volumes of cyclists and walkers and we expect this to increase.
8. In the future BT would like to extend this trail up the existing Waihaha track (although this will require some upgrading) and then up over the main range to connect to the Timber Trail. This would mean that cyclists and walkers could feasibly ride or walk from Ongarue to the shores of Lake Taupō. Currently the draft CMS does not allow this vision to be fulfilled.

The benefits and effects of Mountain biking

9. To date there has been a number of studies undertaken in New Zealand on the effects of mountain biking on trails and other trail users. These reports are referenced in Appendix 2 to our submission and they both concluded that there was no more effect from mountain biking than other track uses. The report did note that other track users were more aware of a potential conflict between them and bikes.
10. As stated above, BT managers and maintains nearly 200km of track. Of this, approx. 55km is shared use and experiences high volumes of riders, walkers and runners. For example the

W2K trail between Kinloch and Whakaipo Bay is 100% on DOC land and had over 18,000 walkers and cyclists use the trail last year. We hear of very few incidents where there is conflict between the users, and it is generally accepted that track users share them with others. BT promotes the care code to share with care.

11. This usage reflects the increase in the number of mountain bikers in NZ. Mountain biking is a well accepted and legitimate way to experience the out doors. Bikers are no-longer restricted to younger competitive racers with many people of all ages and capabilities heading out in search of adventure in the great outdoors.

12. Section 6e of the Conservation Act requires the Department to:

“to the extent that the use of any natural or historic resource for recreation or tourism is not inconsistent with its conservation, to foster the use of natural and historic resources for recreation, and to allow their use for tourism:”

13. BT submits that if there is not any adverse effects to the natural or historic values of the area then mountain biking should be promoted and facilitated in the PCE by the draft CMS.

14. It is noted on page 17 of the CMS that certain activities are to be limited or managed to maintain the quality of the visitor experience, reduce conflict, minimise site degradation and/or ensure public safety. With the growth of cycling and the number of people that this activity can bring to the conservation estate, and the fact that when undertaken on existing tracks then there are next to no physical effects, the activity should be promoted and facilitated by the department within the Pureoras.

15. The Waihaha Track has been used by bikers for over ten years. It is a popular short ride that allows easy access into the Pureoras, and includes the opportunity of overnighing at the Waihaha Hut. There has been mixed messages from the Department as to whether or not this track can legally be ridden by bikers. At the Waihaha Hut its self is a sign stating that no bikes are allowed past this point, which infers that bikes are allowed up to that point. Previous DOC publications signal the Waihaha Track as a mountain biking track (Appendix 2) The Waihaha Hut track featured in the latest edition of the SPOKE (Appendix 3) magazine, which highlights the rides popularity.

16. In any case this is a great track that, until it fell into disrepair, enabled the use of the PCE by those who would have not otherwise done so. Page 120 of the Draft CMS document includes the following statement:

“A route has been identified but it may not include the Waihaha Track (due to the damage caused by unauthorised mountain bike use, unless this could be resolved).”

17. Not only is this statement confusing (i.e. what can be resolved the damage or the unauthorised use?). Prior to drafting this submission, BT asked the Department for evidence that the Department has collected that led them to making this statement. The response received was that the statement was based on anecdotal observations only, meaning there is no real or reliable data that has led to this conclusion.
18. It is BT’s qualified view that the current state of this track is due to a lack of maintenance of the track by the department. Our own observations of the track are that lack of water management has seen significant scouring and track loss. Trees have fallen onto the track and have not been cleared. Like any tracks for walking, cycling or any other purpose, they are required to be maintained. BT spends considerable time maintaining all its tracks, including track surface management, structure management as well as pest and weed control around our tracks.

Proposed changes to the CMS

19. BT submits that the Department should take a more permissive stance towards Mountain Biking within the PCE. Mountain biking is a legitimate and healthy way to experience and enjoy the outdoors and is undertaken by a wide cross section of New Zealanders. At its best mountain biking can not only lead to an increase in the use of the PCE, but also lead to environmental and potentially economic benefits for local communities.
20. BT submits that all existing tracks within the Pureoras become available for mountain bike use, including the Waihaha Track, and promote the development of new opportunities where it does not lead to any adverse effects on the natural and historic values of the area. Specifically BT submits that the CMS should promote the development of a shared walking and cycling route, up the Waihaha track and over the main range, connecting up to the timber Trail. Given the effort required to access some of the tracks in the Pureora’s by bike, the majority will not experience high use. Those that do experience a significant increase in use will therefore enable more people accessing and recreating in the PCE without any noticeable effects as if it was an increase in walkers using such tracks.
21. Similarly, given the time and effort required to develop and maintain a quality biking track, there is little risk of such a stance leading to a large number of tracks being developed. It is

BT's experience that such tracks will only be developed where they are likely to attract a large number of people to make the build worthwhile.

22. Specifically BT seeks the following changes to the CMS Document:

a. Page 16: Amend the second to last paragraph to read as follows:

“Walking, tramping and Mountain Biking also provide access for recreational users to enjoy activities such as fishing, picnicking ...”

b. Page 17: add an extra sentence at the end of the fourth para to read as follows:

There is potential in the future that this trail can be extended eastwards to connect to the Great Lake Trail at the Waihaha River Bridge on State High Way 32.

c. Page 120: Please refer to our submission above, BT would like to be involved in the development of a potential route to connect the Timber Trail to the Great Lake Trail. BT submits that the best route will be single track, either purpose built or upgrading existing tracks. Reliance on existing gravel roads will not create a desirable riding experience nor promote concessionaire activities and investment in the Pureora's. It is our view that such a trail can easily be developed in a manner which will not have more than minor adverse effects on natural, cultural, Recreational, historical or any other conservation value of the place. The Great Lake Trail is a real example of this. Bike Taupo is more than happy to host Departmental staff and the Waikato Conservation Board on the Great lake Trail to demonstrate how trail development can occur in a pristine part of the Conservation estate.

d. Page 120: remove reference to damage caused to Waihaha track by unauthorised mountain biking

e. Page 123: Amend policy 2.8.17 as follows:

~~Should Allow independent mountain biking, and may allow guided mountain biking or mountain bike events in the Pureora's, only at the locations shown on Map 7.15 and listed in Table 3, in accordance with Policies 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.3.5 to 3.3.9 in Part Three.~~

f. Page 123: Add new policy as follows:

Explore and facilitate mountain biking opportunities in the Pureora's provided that they are consistent with the natural or historic values of that place.

- g. Page 125: In conjunction our recommended changes to Policy 2.8.17 remove reference to mountain bikes from Table Three, other wise, list all tracks in the Pureora's in Table 3 as being able to be accessed by mountain bikes.
- h. Page 128: Amend the section on Mountain bikes to reflect BTs wider submission and to recognise the opportunities for recreation associated with allowing mountain bikes in the Pureora's. BT submits that the list of management responses to perceived issues associated with mountain biking is unnecessary and shows a lack of understanding of the use patterns of such tracks by mountain bikes. BT submits that further investigation and research is undertaken on this subject with Bike Taupō, with reference to the Great Lake Trail, the upper Waikato River Trails and the Te Iringa track in the Kaimanawa's. The last para of this section is supported however it is unlikely to be actually realised with the wider policy as currently drafted in the CMS.
- i. Page 135 – 136 Policies 3.3

General comments: On review these policies are generally written in a way to restrict the use of mountain biking within the Conservation estate. They are couched in regulatory and directive language and not in a way that recognises the benefits of enabling the use of mountain bikes in the PCE. Given that the effects of mountain biking are no greater than many other legitimate uses in the PCE, it is confusing to see terminology such as 'require', 'enable enforcement' and 'not allow'. Whilst Bike Taupō has suggested a number of specific changes to these polices, we submit that the Department takes an effects based approach to mountain biking in the PCE so that the actual effects are managed in a way that promotes an activity which will lead to a substantial increase in the number of people recreating in the PCE.

- j. Amend Policy 3.3.1 as follows:

~~Should~~ *Allow independent mountain biking, and may allow guided mountain biking or mountain bike events, on the tracks and roads or other areas listed in Part Two – Places and on the Hakerimata Rail Trail, subject to the criteria specified in Policy 3.3.5.*

- k. Amend Policy 3.3.4 as follows:

Promote opportunities for mountain bike use ~~in on tracks identified as being available for mountain bike use~~ on public conservation lands via the Department's website, and through liaison with tourism information providers and cycling advocates.

- l. Policy 3.3.6: Whilst Bike Taupo supports the intent of the policy, we are confused why this consultation this has not happened as part of the development of the CMS instead of leaving this to a secondary process and further time and cost to the Department. As such BT submits that this policy be amended to read with an 'innocent until proven guilty' view as follows:

Will restrict the use of mountain bikes on public conservation lands where it is demonstrated that this activity has lead to unacceptable and unavoidable adverse effects (including cumulative effects) on natural, historic, or cultural heritage values and other recreational users

- m. Associated with the new policy identified in L. above, it is submitted that Policies 3.3.8 and 3.3.9 can be deleted and the following policy be added:

Facilitate further opportunities for mountain bike use on public conservation land after consultation with cycling clubs, adjoining landowners, tramping clubs, Iwi and the public, and in consideration of the following:

- a) the statutory purpose for which the land is held;*
- b) the benefits associated with the proposed use to the conservation estate through the provision of new recreational opportunities*
- c) the desired outcome and policies for the Place where the formed track or road is or will be located;*
- d) any actual and potential positive and adverse effects (including cumulative effects) of mountain bike use on natural, historic, or cultural and heritage values and other recreational users of the track or road can be avoided or otherwise minimised;*
- e) the opportunity to develop facilities, including those that may be associated with overnight cycle opportunities.*

- n. Any further or consequential changes that need to be made to the wider CMS document that will give effect to the points identified above.

23. If you have any queries, or would like to discuss any aspect of BTs submission, please do not hesitate to contact Rowan Sapsford (chair@biketaupo.org or 021 744 957) to discuss further.
24. Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Draft Waikato Conservation Management Strategy, and we look forward to presenting it in person.

Yours Sincerely



Rowan Sapsford
Bike Taupo Chairman

Appendix 1:

Title: *Off-Road Impacts of Mountain Bikes, A Review and Discussion (SCIENCE & RESEARCH SERIES NO.92)*

Author: [Gordon R. Cessford](#)

Published by: Department of Conservation, P O Box 10-420, Wellington, New Zealand, ISSN 0113-3713, ISBN 0-478-01739-1

Date: 1995

Abstract: The current research "state-of-knowledge" of the physical and social impacts of mountain bikes upon backcountry tracks and upon the recreational experiences of other track users is reviewed. Physical impacts of walking and mountain biking, including the effects of foot trampling, and the unique impact potential from wheels are discussed; and the impacts from different types of track use (e.g., mountain biking, walking, horses, motorbikes) are compared. Social impacts of mountain biking are discussed, beginning with description of recreation conflict, and the role played in developing these conflicts by perceptions of other track users of the environmental impacts, safety hazards, and "inappropriateness" of mountain biking. The setting and recreation experience preferences of mountain bike riders are also discussed. The main conclusion drawn from these discussions is that the physical impacts of mountain biking are not a good basis for decisions about allowing access, and that the focus needs to be on the recreation conflict issues, and that the actual environmental impact and safety hazards associated with mountain biking may well be considerably less than perceived by other track users.

Title: *Conflict in recreation: the case of mountain-bikers and trampers*

Author: [Horn, Chrys](#)

Institution: Lincoln University

Date: 1994

Abstract: Conflict in recreation is a major problem for recreation managers who are trying to provide satisfying experiences for all recreationists. This thesis is about conflict between mountain-bikers and trampers. Mountain-biking has grown in popularity in New Zealand over the last ten years, and these increasing numbers have threatened the quality of walkers' and runners' recreational experiences, particularly in peri-urban areas. Conflict is a complex social

interaction process which occurs around times of change. It involves the interplay of perceptions and attitudes, behaviour, and an incompatible situation. This complexity required the use of a range of methods to successfully understand the conflict between walkers and mountain-bikers. Like many other recreational conflicts, the conflict between bikers and trampers is asymmetrical - walkers dislike meeting bikers much more than bikers dislike meeting walkers. A majority of walker respondents disliked or strongly disliked meeting bikers on walking tracks. Walkers' questionnaire answers indicated that their greatest concerns with mountain-biking are (in order of decreasing importance) track damage and other environmental damage, personal safety, and the feeling that bikes interrupt their peace and quiet. Further exploration during in-depth interviews show that the perception of these problems are closely related to the way different users feel about that places that they use, and the way meetings with other users can be incorporated into the experiences of the recreationist. For walkers, meeting bikers is far more intrusive than vice-versa. Political activity aimed at eliminating bikers from many front country areas means that bikers are now developing a dislike of trampers who they see as intolerant and arrogant. Therefore, behaviour affects the escalation of conflict. In addition, wider social change has had an influence on this conflict. Changing economic wellbeing, less regular work hours, a perceived lack of time and a wider choice of activities have all impacted on recreation patterns in peri-urban areas, and on this conflict situation. In addition, this study has indicated that the concepts of specialisation and substitution may need modification. The use of qualitative methods has highlighted the narrow focus that researchers have used when studying these concepts. Both must be seen more broadly in the context of individuals' changing recreational needs both over the life cycle, and in the face of social change as outlined above.



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Appendix 2 – DOC Publication

Volcanic Plateau Mountain Bike Rides

SPRING 1995



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Notes

In winter this track is often covered in snow which makes for an interesting trip. Don't bother riding all the way up if the snow becomes too deep, and on the way down be careful not to stray from the track—you can't tell what rocks and ditches lie just beneath the snow's surface.



3.4 WAIHAHA HUT

Pureora Forest

Grade 3+ 3-5 hours 20 km return

How to get there

Drive west from Turangi on Highway 41. Turn right at Kuratau Junction and continue north for about 28 km. There is a car parking area on your right, immediately before the Waihaha River Bridge.

Ride description

The track is signposted from the northern side of the bridge and heads generally west. After about 20 minutes the track deteriorates as it climbs over a large hill. A fair bit of bike carrying is required, but the views from the top make it worthwhile.

On the other side the track improves markedly, but then gradually becomes more technical as you get closer to the hut.

From the hut simply retrace your tracks. The unwritten lore for back-country huts is that you should leave them tidier than you find them.

Track conditions

80% rideable singletrack, 20% bike carry/push

Other users

Hunters and trampers

Notes

There are a few lethal drop-offs to watch out for on this track. To get the most out of the technical riding involved, this track is best ridden when bone dry. Topomap T18 Kuratau shows the route.

3.5 SOUTH PUREORA FOREST

Northwest of Turangi

All grades 1-10 hours

How to get there

Drive west from Turangi on Highway 41. Turn right onto a gravel forestry road 8 km west of Kuratau Junction (immediately before North Kuratau River). Be prepared to meet logging trucks. After 2 km turn left onto Kuratau Road and park your car out of site.

Ride description

We've only spent one day riding in this area; just enough to get lost, do some bush bashing, find a small loop trip and realise that it's worth going back to. The potential is huge.

The main gravel road through the forest is 15 km long and has dozens of old forestry tracks branching off it. Most are signposted as dead-ends, but that just means you can't drive through.

Try this short loop for starters. It won't take you long. From the 'Kuratau Rd' sign continue down the main gravel road for a few hundred metres. Turn left onto the obvious pylon track and follow it for just over 1 km, then turn right at a major fork in the track and cruise back down to the main gravel road.



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Appendix 3 – SPOKE Magazine Article



THE RECOVERY

FIX

BACKCOUNTRY TRACKS ARE A DRUG YOU CAN'T EASILY KICK

WORDS JONO BADDILEY PHOTOS CALEB SMITH

The shiny new things were packed back in their boxes, the last of the raspberry slice scoffed, and the shuttle bus had departed, leaving us only an evening of beers and plotting.

The Wide Open product launch had been successfully concluded for another year; shop owners were on their way home or sleeping off hangovers that seem inextricably linked to a weekend with mountain bikes in Rotorua.

All that's left is to go for a ride. Fortunately, Rotorua is surrounded by excellent, if out-of-the-way singletrack. Whakarewarewa is deservedly renowned for the trail network that arcs through its pine forest, but for my money the best adventures to be had are found slightly off the main highways.

Matt 'Dogboy' Whitaker from Wide Open had planned a morning ride with a couple of his staff members, sponsored rider Matt Scoles and Karl 'Weasel' Paterson as a bit of a wind-down after a hectic couple of days. Sharing out his fleet of demo bikes, Matt looked after everyone with a van full of Turner 5 Spots and ENVE carbon wheels.

Leaving Rotorua at 7am was difficult; it had been a long week at work, and the drive up from Wellington meant getting up at 4am. But when rides like this are on offer and the weather is still and sunny, lack of sleep is but a mere inconvenience.

Fuelled by steak and cheese pies and with emergency apple turnovers for mid-ride sustenance, we drove the 100km to Pureora Forest, home of the Waihaha track. It's not the first time I've ridden the track; it was a last-minute alternative for an ill-conceived plan to ride the 42 Traverse at night in the middle of winter back in 2004, and I've been back with friends twice since then.

It's a track that gets into your system like a drug, with flowy, technical, natural singletrack, and that perfect grippy soil with which the volcanic plateau is blessed. The track itself follows the Waihaha River, which feeds into the western side of Lake Taupo. It's a perfect introduction to New Zealand's backcountry riding; root infested climbs that you can clean on a good day, amazing rimu forest, stunning views, and all without getting beyond walking distance of the cars if it all goes pear shaped.



Previous spread: Ex Pro Elite downhiller Karl 'Weasel' Paterson had more fun riding up this stuff than down. That doesn't mean he still won't kick your arse on the descents.

This page: Clockwise from top left, Jono Church spots a trout from the first swing bridge; the Waihaha Track is filled with technical surprises. Jono makes it look easier than he has a right to; Weasel and Scolesy cool their heels in the Waihaha stream; Matts Scoles and Whitaker share many happy returns from the hut.

The track hugs the northern banks of the river, gently climbing to the Waihaha Hut. What really makes this ride the dish I come back to at the trail buffet is the sense of achievement in the climb to the top. Matted beds of roots slither across the track like the varicose veins of an elderly aunt, and steps in the trail surface are just big enough to gain appreciative cheers from your riding buddies when you (finally) clean them.

Karl was in his element here. A World Cup downhiller in the early 2000s, he's definitely got the skills. Recently making his home in Palmerston North has led him to National-level Masters XC racing. "Screw Rampage," he said. "I reckon there should be an uphill Rampage, only with none of those trials skills allowed."

The Waihaha Hut is 11km from the road end, and is a welcome spot to sit and have lunch, accompanied by korimako (bellbird) and piwakawaka (fantail) birdsong. We marvel at the size of the rimu around the hut; they're not the sort of trees you find this size close to cities.

The return to the cars is the sprinkles on the ice cream; slippery root beds that were a challenge on the way up disappear under our wheels, steps are launched without a thought, and water ruts that appeared cavernous on the way up are ridden like half-pipes.



Kris 'Grom' Withington lays down tools long enough to rediscover his roots.



Clockwise from top left: Matt Scoles sends a monster singletrack double, no trouble; Spooked by a distant car alarm, Jono Baddiley pins it back to base; Only 15 minutes from the highway to this? Matt Whitaker about to scoop the pool.



The sight of State Highway 32 and our cars arrives all too quickly. Caleb subtly points out how warm it is, and without thinking ahead, Karl and Scolesy decide to jump off the road bridge into the river. I was surprised; it was October, and the water was probably snow only a couple of days before. There was no way I was going to be submerging myself! Complaining about being unable to breathe, they both clamber up the riverbank to find a towel and a drink. Loading the bikes onto the car, we bid our farewells to friends and track. But not for long; there's still some of that Waihaha gold coursing through my blood. **S**



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