

MAKARA PEAK MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK SUPPORTERS INC.

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011

1. Welcome and Acknowledgements

MPS is in its 13th year of operation! Here's to many more successful years. This year we were delighted to be awarded 'Most Outstanding Park of the Year' by the New Zealand Recreation Association.

The most important thing to do is to thank those who were involved this year.

Thanks to all those who served on the Management Committee and sub-committees. There were some new faces on the Committee this year: Steve Wallace took over as Chairperson in August along with Tony Offord as Treasurer and Peter Barnes as Secretary. Steven Peters took over as WCC liaison during the year and we thanked Joby Mills for his assistance and dedication. Rob Lawrence resigned as Tracks representative in early 2011 and was thanked for his enthusiasm and efforts. Simon Kennett expertly managed Conservation and Don & Hugh McLeod and Ian (Zac) Pearson were dedicated Committee members. On the Tracks Sub Committee we had great assistance and enthusiasm from Mark Harris, Bryan Taylor, Jono Wood, Ian O'Donoghue, Matt Wootton and Roel Verschueren. On the Conservation Sub-Committee we had valuable help from Andrew McLellan, Alison McPherson and Karl Yager. Euan Galloway gave us the benefit of his extensive experience at stages throughout the year.

Special thanks to the many volunteers who dug, built, maintained, upgraded and planned tracks and who planted, weeded and controlled pests. Many thanks to the great team of Rally and Festival helpers.

Many thanks to those who paid their subs, donated money and materials and bought MPS merchandise. Thanks to our sponsors Mud Cycles, Rocket Bikes, Floe, Floyd's Café, Bicycle, Revolve, Burke's Cycles, and MTB Skills Clinics who donated spot prizes for the Rally.

Lastly, our wholehearted thanks to the Wellington City Council, particularly Steven Peters and Dave Halliday. It is a valuable and special relationship and we are very lucky to have a Council which supports and assists us in our endeavours.

2. Financials/Funding/ Membership

Many thanks to our Treasurer Tony Offord for steering the financial ship and for taking over the membership management duties during the year.

Last year our operating deficit was \$4,634. A key aim was to develop a system of budgeting and forecasting. This is essential for the long term future of the organization and if we are to persuade organisations to give us funding. We have ended the year with an operating deficit of \$1,505 which is not ideal, but does put us in a better position for the coming year.

MPS currently has a term deposit of \$31,245. The current Committee are of the view that MPS should maintain a term deposit which can be used mainly as a buffer for unforeseen liabilities, and for capital projects and land purchase. We are aware that the funding situation from WCC may change in the coming years and it is important for the survival of MPS that we are able to weather differing funding environments. Some of the assets in the Park (particularly retaining and bridges) are getting old and we must expect that some will need to be renewed in the coming years. The Canterbury situation must be a warning as to how Council priorities can change suddenly if there were to be unforeseen events. The term deposit provides security for such eventualities.

In future years, the Management Committee is of the view that we should continue the aim of funding each year's operating costs from the current year's revenue.

Membership figures have been increasing and are now up slightly at 353. Tony instituted a system of gentle reminders about membership which has been successful in attracting renewals. With regards to membership, we are aiming to create a culture where regular Park users should feel a moral obligation be members of MPS. \$20 per annum is a very reasonable amount when compared with other local activity fees e.g. swimming pools, gym membership and particularly snow sports.

Donations were up markedly from 2010 and the good number of events attracted donations for use.

In late 2010 we successfully applied for a \$5,000 grant from Meridian Energy towards a storage garage. We must now decide how to fundraise for top up funds to build the garage.

We also entered into a partnership with Floe clothing. Floe designs and sells short and long sleeve jerseys with the MP logo and a percentage goes to MPS. This will be a small but hopefully regular income over the next few years while supporting a local business.

A major challenge for the future is funding. MPS has not had dedicated funding people for a while and it is difficult for existing members to fit in around other Committee responsibilities. This must be a priority for 2011 -12

3. Tracks

Thanks again to our Tracks Sub-Committee and many volunteers that have helped out throughout the year.

The full length of the North Face/JFK/Smokin' route (a great intermediate downhill track network from just below to the Summit to Ridgeline Extension) was completed this year. Some ongoing work will still be required on these tracks to increase sustainability and to keep them at the graded level. Especial thanks to the JFK tweaking team (led by Rob Lawrence) and the magical trail pixies who are doing the upgrading on North Face at present. This route is a popular addition to the Park and opens up more possibilities for novice- intermediate riders.

Apart from the seasonal work required all over the Park such as line-trimming, bush trimming, weed spraying, drainage, re-benching, bio mass clearing – a massive amount of work – there was a particular focus this year with aligning trails with the New Zealand standards. We have set these out on our website after an approach from the WCC.

Koru was widened subtly through tree-clearance and along with Aratihi/Missing Link was re-benched in some areas deemed above grade.

There is ongoing upgrading work with the Skills Area and Livewires. The Makara Lake (aka the skills area bowl puddle) was drained by Bryan and his snorkel recently after several failed attempts by other parties (the Chairperson included!).

A trail adoptee programme was commenced earlier in the year. Many thanks to those volunteers for the work so far (Peter Barnes and family, Owen Hughes, Andy King, Lazy Fern crew). There were people interested but the feeling now is that Adoptees need a better level of guidance and assistance in what they are to do. Better organization and guidance of adoptee work is to be a project for this year.

We'd like to acknowledge the regular volunteer maintenance work done by Zac Pearson and the paid and volunteer maintenance work done by Don McLeod. Both are a huge part of keeping the Park going, particularly in the winter months.

The Committee, after ongoing discussion with WCC, is of the view that the priority for the coming year needs to be maintaining and upgrading our awesome existing track network so we have a **sustainable low maintenance world class MTB park**. Looking back in the minutes and annual reports, the history of the establishment of the Park and Committee discussions in the last few years, the feeling is that we are reaching the limit of what we can currently successfully maintain to a high standard. We now have over 30km of singletrack in the Park, part of an extensive single track network which includes the Skyline, Wahine, Deliverance, Salvation, Scout Hall, Cemetery Track and the Karori Park Kids track.

Further, we are reaching a stage where some of the Park's assets e.g. bridges, geo-matting, retaining have been in place for a considerable amount of time. In consultation with the WCC, a full survey is currently being undertaken and upgrades and repairs will be done as necessary.

Traditionally, it is much easier to attract volunteers for trail building rather than work on existing trails. We must seek to engage people's interest in such work. We are currently working on a guide to set out standards for track adoptees to adhere to make it easier for them and us to focus on what needs to be done.

There is huge scope for tweaking and upgrading of existing tracks (particularly given the increase in knowledge of sustainable trail building techniques in the last few years) to keep the trail network fresh and interesting for riders.

Completion of the track network at the Peak will be a priority. There has been huge discussion on this throughout the year and we feel we have reached the best possible decision for future proofing the Peak and the development of the Park.

4. Conservation

Thanks again to our hard working volunteers and sub-committee members and to Simon Kennett who managed Conservation.

The Park is now protected by 'Scenic Reserve' legal status, making the risk of re-zoning (which could lead to sale and/or building development) close to zero. This does not affect our ability to develop tracks.

Planting has continued, with about 500 seedlings secured for planting this winter. Last year we focused on North Face, top of Koru/SWIGG, bottom of Zacs and top of Nikau. Those seedlings were weeded last spring and appeared to be doing well. This winter we are directing our efforts to the top of Nikau/Upper Leaping Lizard, JFK, Aratihi/T3 and the grassy reserve at the corner of South Karori Rd/Hazelwood. Most of these seedlings have been given to the supporters by Wellington City Council. Thanks to the mild climate over the last year, the plantings from previous years have continued to thrive. Our thanks to Forest and Bird and Project Crimson for donating northern rata for planting in the Park.

Possum control and has continued with our network of over 100 bait stations being well maintained by volunteers. And Mustelid control has been expanded to cover most of the park - as a result we caught a record number of stoats (almost 30) along with several rats. Thanks to a generous donation by Dave Rudge, we have dozens of new traps ready for deployment this spring. Thanks also to Greater Wellington Regional Council for supply of possum control stations, traps and bait. Little in the way of targeted weed control has taken place in the last year, with the notable exception of *pinus radiata*. That species has now been eliminated from the upper slopes of Makara Peak. Many thanks to Karl Yager and Andrew McLellan for managing the pest control side of things.

5. Events at the Park

This year saw more events than ever before and it was great to see a diverse range of users challenge themselves in the Park. Donations for use are also a valuable source of income for MPS.

Our friends at *PNP* held two rounds of their Spring Series at the Park. The first outing was a mud fest but many hardy souls braved the conditions. Round 2 had more salubrious weather.

A small but dedicated bunch of Singlespeeders braved epic weather conditions in October as a warm up for the Singlespeed Worlds in Rotorua.

November saw the ladies of Revolve take over the lower slopes for the inaugural and unique *Women of Dirt 6 Hour Race*. A great time was had by all.

December saw the *Makara Peak Festival*, made possible by financial support from WCC. Mayor Celia kindly attended and spoke. Ashley ably organized a wide range of activities: guided rides, nature walks, stalls, trail building and a Grand Loop race.

The *Makara Rally* took place in March and was a great day. A new format this year saw an orienteering-style Tour de Peak and the inaugural Super D (a downhill/XC race). There was a good turnout for both and Steve's homemade trophies went down well. Thanks to our generous sponsors and to those who helped out, particularly Al Crossling.

Revolve Women's Autumn Series Round 1 took place in March. It was a misty and muddy day but plenty of enthusiastic women took to the trails.

April saw a herd of trail runners take over the Park for the *X-terra* race. Many runners had never been to the Park before and we received a number of compliments on the trails and the Park generally.

6. Website and Communication

A new website makarapeak.org was built and maintained by Steve Wallace over the last 18 months. This was a consuming task but is now in a state where it can be updated by other users. We have someone interested in being Web Administrator for the coming year which will free Steve up for other duties.

MPS receives a large volume of e-mails which is sometimes hard to manage. Tony Offord took over the membership e-mails during the year which has reduced the load somewhat.

A Facebook page was set up which has been very successful in updating members on work parties and news.

The newsletter goes out monthly to a substantial mailing list which is expanding all the time.

7. Co-operation with other groups across Wellington

Mountain biking and trailbuilding has expanded greatly in the last few years across the city and in the greater Wellington region. MPS has been acknowledged as the 'trail blazer' for many of these other groups.

A key aim for the future must be to co-operate and share ideas with these other groups. MPS invited committee members from other groups such as Wellington MTB Club, Miramar Trail Project and Wainui Trail Project to the MPS Committee Christmas barbeque which was the start of some good conversations throughout the year.

Two former MPS Committee members John Randal and Ben Wilde (now of Miramar Track Project) have taken the initiative to set up Wellington Trails Alliance: an umbrella group with the aims of advocacy, education and co-operation. MPS has representatives involved and we look forward to positive and co-operative progress. MPS is particularly interested in the trail building education aspect.

8. Challenges and Aims

The key challenges for MPS over the next year are:

Funding

- We must take a more pro-active approach to funding by applying for grants, building our membership and encouraging donations and sponsorship.
- We must be careful financial managers by budgeting, shopping around and managing our assets for the future.

Tracks

- We must maintain, upgrade and rework our existing network using sustainable techniques.
- We must finalise plans and budget in conjunction with the WCC and begin the construction of the connector trails for the Summit project.

Conservation

- Animal pest control: the eradication of goats will leave us with possums and mustelids as our public enemies number 1 and 2. Expansion of our bait station and trap network will see their numbers dwindle further.
- Weed control: while our weed control was focused on the Karori Stream restoration, we made significant gains. Now that that project is winding down, it is time for us to look at the spread of weeds such as African Club Moss and Tradescantia throughout the park. We also need to keep an eye out for several super -weeds such as Old Man's Beard (which made a brief comeback near the car park a year ago).
- The forest cover in the park has improved dramatically over the last decade. If we can keep fires at bay, we should achieve 90% forest cover in the next 30 years. However, our forest generally lacks diversity. The challenge now is to re-establish the climax tree species which make up a truly healthy forest- northern rata, rimu, miro, hinau, totara, titoki, kamahi, kohekohe, matai, maire, kahikatea, etc. We will be working with Forest & Bird to secure a better supply of rare tree species in the future.

Thanks for all your support and enthusiasm during the year.

Pedal On!

The MPS Committee of 2010 – 2011.