

Wairakei Forest MTB Tracks

Policy on Development and Maintenance

Background

Wairakei Forest (the land and the trees) are owned by The Crown. Bike Taupo has been granted a "Recreation Permit to Use Land under the Land Act 1948 for non-commercial Mountain Bike Activities in Wairakei Forest" within specified zones only. The permit is non-exclusive (that is to say, The Crown may grant other parties the right to also use MTB tracks built by Bike Taupo). The Crown can revoke the permit at will, if Bike Taupo does not fully comply with the Permit conditions. Bike Taupo is not permitted, and must not allow, the removal of vegetation or the building of any track without the express permission of The Crown. The permit was granted in 2004, for a term of 12 years.

The Permit is a 14 page document, with many terms and conditions.

Bike Taupo established a sub-committee to manage the development and maintenance of MTB tracks within the Permit framework.

Bike Taupo is committed to complying with the spirit, as well as the "word" of the permit, because MTB rider access in Wairakei Forest is too important to put at risk.

Track Development

- Tracks will only be built in the forest blocks covered by the permit.
- A track will only be built after obtaining the required specific permission from the Crown, and built within any additional requirements then set.
- Track design is of utmost importance, given the fragile nature of the local pumice soils. Control of rain water and control of rider speed are two key design considerations. Tracks will be designed in accordance with international best practice.
- The pumice soils are not suitable for steep downhill inclines. However, within this constraint, a range of track types will be constructed to appeal to the widest possible rider base.
- All tracks will be designed, built and signed as one way if possible, to reduce the risk of head-on rider conflict.
- Tracks will be designed and built to a grading appropriate to their location. That is to say, tracks suitable for beginners will mostly be located near to the Powerline Road car park base, and tracks suitable for intermediate and advanced riders will mostly be located some distance away from the Powerline Road car park base.
- To assist riders, and to comply with relevant legislation, all tracks will have appropriate signage including their grading.
- Any track construction work requiring the use of machinery will be carried out only by people suitably trained and experienced, to achieve safety and to comply with relevant legislation.
- Track construction may be carried out by contract, by appointed volunteers or by working bee, or any combination of these, but always under the control of Bike Taupo.

Track Maintenance

There will be an annual programme of vegetation control on all tracks, to keep them open at optimum width for riding and line-of-sight, whilst preserving forest aesthetics.

Vegetation control may be by mechanical means, or by weed spray, or a combination of the two.

Any track maintenance work requiring the use of machinery or weed spray application will be carried out only by people suitably trained and experienced, to achieve safety and to comply with relevant legislation.

Proper records of weed spray application will be kept.

Grade 2 tracks will be maintained to have a generally smooth track surface and smooth flow. Roots and ruts will be allowed to remain only if they can be easily avoided by riders.

Grade 3 tracks which are “feeders” in the track network, or which are close to the Powerline Road car park base, may also be maintained to have a generally smooth track surface and smooth flow.

Tracks of Grade 3 (non “feeder”) and higher will have their surface maintained consistent with their grading. That is to say, ruts, roots, stumps and obstacles will be permitted to remain, and are desirable consistent with track grading, provided they are visible during approach and provided also that the “fall area” is free of hazards.

Track maintenance may be carried out by contract, by appointed volunteers or by working bee, or any combination of these, but always under the control of Bike Taupo.

Track Grading

The track grading system used is as follows:

Grade 1: Fairly flat, wide and smooth track or gravel road. Suitable for all first time riders.

Grade 2: Gentle climbs and easily avoidable obstacles such as roots, stumps and ruts. May include some very short steep sections. Most beginners will still enjoy these rides.

Grade 3: Challenging riding with steep slopes and or tricky obstacles, possibly on a narrow track with poor traction. Requires riding experience and some fitness.

Grade 4: Long steep slopes, loose track surfaces, gnarly obstacles to avoid or jump over. Some sections may be easier to walk. Drop offs less than 1 metre high.

Grade 5: Killer climbs or downhill, drop-offs greater than 1 metre high, sharp corners, numerous tricky obstacles. Some sections are definitely safer and easier to walk for most riders.

Grade 6: Trials skills essential to clear many huge obstacles. High risk level. Only a handful of riders will enjoy these rides.

Or simply stated:

Grades 1 and 2 are Beginner or Easy.

Grade 3 is Intermediate.

Grades 4 and 5 are Advanced.

We Need You!

Do you want to have some input? Have you got some good ideas? Would you like to help with track building or maintenance? If so, we would love to hear from you!

Drop us a line at trackcrew@biketaupo.org.nz