Trail Riding Using Mountain Biking: **Good Practice Guide**

The scope for this good practice guide is flat trails to undulating trails, which need peddling, and are non-gravity assisted trails.

Cycle trails in scope: Grade 1 or 2 green trails.
For example:

- Great Taste Trail
- Alps to Ocean Cycle Trail
- Kaiteriteri Reserve – Cruise Control Trail
- Wainuiomata Regional Park – Family Loop Trail
- Whakarewarewa Forest Loop Trail
- Otago Central Rail Trail.

Examples of out-of-scope cycle trails:

- Queenstown Bike Park
- Christchurch Adventure Park
- Mākara Peak Mountain Bike Park
- FourForty Mountain Bike Park
- Flat green areas.

POTENTIAL VALUE OF ACTIVITY

Potential benefits of using a mountain bike include fitness, learning new skills, meeting new people, and travelling through the landscape without using a combustion engine.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Environmental considerations of mountain biking include damage to trails, and littering/rubbish impacting other users. Department of Conservation (DoC) have prepared a useful conduct guide: Mountain Biking (MTB) Guidelines - Department of Conservation.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Land has spiritual significance within different cultures, particularly mana whenua – local iwi/hapū of an area. This should be acknowledged. Be respectful to the place and the people to who it is significant.

Different parts of the land hold spiritual significance to Māori, and other world views. This should be acknowledged and discussed to ensure all parties understand and are aware.

Some things to consider:

- Are there stories of the area that should be shared?
- Who is the appropriate person/s to share these stories?
- Is there spiritual significance of the area that should be acknowledged, for example maunga, awa, urupā, etc?
- Are there any cultural protocols that should be ob served before starting a ride?
- Acknowledge the transition from one place and state into another (e.g., from driving to riding, or from tense to quiet) with a karakia or other form of acknowledge to refocus and calm the group.
- Consider the concept of kaitiaki – guardianship: what this means and how it can help maintain access for the future.
- Maintaining positive relationships with iwi and land owners is essential for maintaining access to areas

where there is mountain biking. Access is a privilege which could easily be taken away.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Before planning a mountain bike trip, ask yourself:

- Is this trail appropriate for our group?
- Do we have permission to access the trail?
- What is the environmental impact of our trip, and how are we going to mitigate it?
- Do we have sufficient skills to manage the group, and deal with an emergency on the trail?

An activity plan helps to maximise an activity's success and minimise risk to participants and the environment.

The MTB Planning Template (to MAKE FOR MTB) provides a useful format.

To supplement generic planning considerations, please refer to General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities.

VENUE

To ensure the trail area (specific trail) is an appropriate trail for the participants and leader, check:

- The leader has the necessary skills to manage a group on this trail, both in normal situations and in an emergency.
- The groups' competence and confidence to ensure the trail matches the group's ability.
- With the landowner to ask permission to access the trails, and about other protocols.
- Whether there are specific protocols that should be adhered to before, during and after the trip? For example, acknowledgement of Māori significance, environmental care, footwear and bike cleaning.
- Weather events - how does different weather affect the trails? How much rain has fallen over the past few days? Check with the local mountain bike club and MTB Trails Trust for up-to-date trail closures.

Other good practices, include:

- A pre-trip visit helps familiarise the leader with hazards, pre-planning of group management, time management and emergency procedures.
- Prioritise maintaining a good relationship with land owners as this can affect future access for other users. For example, ask permission, park vehicles in designated areas, leave gates as found, respect farm animals, take any rubbish with you.
- Ensure participants have access to toilets during the ride.

PARTICIPANTS

Ensure your planned activity match the participants' abilities and needs. In addition to the generic participant considerations (see General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities), consider:

- Assessing the participants' ability and confi dence before starting the ride. Ask questions about their knowledge, experience on different trails. Start small!
- Plan the ride for – and with – the participants. Match the ride to their skill, fitness, and enjoyment. This is their ride, not yours.
- Plan enough time for the ride. Pace the ride so everyone has a good time.
- Ensure participants have the right clothing, equip ment, and attitude for the ride.
- Participants at the back usually need the most support. The most experienced Instructor/Guide should be at the back in a supportive role.
- Progression of skills and or trails to aid the development of confidence and competence.

SUPERVISION (see leader competence section)

Ratios: refer to ASG pg. 70

LEADER COMPETENCE

A leader must have the competence to undertake any

trail ride with a group. Competence can be measured through logged experience and qualifications.

Any logged experience or leaders with no experience should be verified.

Some things to consider:

- Ensure that skills or knowledge not covered by the qualification are verified by other suitable means. Use a measure that suits the degree of safety and responsibility associated with the skills.
- Use a suitable person to verify competence. This person should have a qualification to do so. Alternatively, they could be a technical advisor in the skill to be verified, who also understands national expectations on the standard of competence required. They should also be trained assessors.
- Keep all records of competence verification processes and results.

Relevant qualifications:

- NZOIA Mountain Bike Leader and Mountain Bike 1
- New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Leadership (Level 4) – Mountain Biking (Grade 2)
- New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Leadership (Guiding) (Level 5) – Mountain Biking (Grade 4)

FIRST AID QUALIFICATIONS

A First Aid qualification is necessary for all mountain bike instructing and guiding. The more remote the ride, the more skill and experience is required.

Relevant First Aid qualifications:

- Rides in green belt recreation areas and close to emergency services. Guiding and instructing staff for these activities should hold an Outdoor First Aid qualification at a minimum.
- Remote trails and multi day trips, where there is a risk that injured participants may spend longer without secondary emergency care. Guiding and instructing staff for these activities should hold a more advanced First Aid qualification, which includes training in extended care in remote locations (e.g. Advanced Outdoor First Aid, or Wilderness First Responder).

INDUCTION

Due to variance in mountain bike trail grades, all staff working on a trail riding programme should be inducted into, and have completed, pre-rides of routes/trails prior to using the terrain with a group.

Induction should also include:

- how the riding/grading within the operation differs from that in other regions, and
- how to incorporate this information into the client briefing.

ASSESSING AN ACTIVITY PROVIDER'S COMPETENCE

Are you using an activity provider to run a mountain bike programme? Consider the following questions:

- Is the organisation audited under the Health and Safety at Work (Adventure Activities) Regulations 2016 to run the activity? (Remember to check their audit certificate.)
- Do their Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) establish a supervision structure, which show the maximum number of participants a guide or instructor can supervise for every trip? (Remember – 'maximum' is not a target, nor is it recommended in all situations.)
- Do the operators consider a range of factors when setting the most appropriate supervision structures for their trips? For mountain biking, these factors are likely to include, but are not limited to:
  - purpose of the ride
  - type of group, and age of participants
  - ability
  - trail grades / style
  - activity within a mountain bike park, or not
  - weather
  - duration of the ride, remoteness, and time from medical assistance

- → → experience of the guide / instructor
- → → how well the guide / instructor knows the participants
- → → first language of participants / guide.

Large groups riding together (e.g. ratio of 2:20), consideration should also be given to:

- → impact on / safety of other users
- → group management on confined trails.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

Everyone involved in an activity should have a basic understanding of contact and communication procedures. Having all the information, and responsibility, held by one person is not good practice and can be dangerous in emergency situations.

The type of communication equipment used will depend on the context and the activity, the potential hazards and risks and the emergency response plan in place.

Communication equipment may include:

- → Mobile phone
- → Satellite phone
- → Two-way satellite texting device
- → Two-way radio (e.g. UHF radio)
- → Emergency Position Indicating Radio beacon (EPIRB)
- → Personal Locator Beacon (PLB)
- → Tracking devices
- → Emergency flares.

Good pre-activity briefings will help ensure everyone is aware of the communication equipment, requirements and procedures for that activity.

RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT refer to section 6.1.5 in MTB ASG

Participants and staff should have:

- → A mountain bike appropriate for selected ride, right size for the rider and be adjusted to fit.
- → A mountain bike that is in good working order, including: all running gear fitted to the bike must work
- → Two working brakes (however jump bikes with one may be acceptable if appropriate for the ride)
- → Brakes must be set up on the side the participant is used to
- → Seat posts after adjustment do not exceed the manufacturers specific maximum height
- → Handle bars ends are fitted with end caps/ plugs
- → A helmet designed for cycling (meets NZ standard for bicycle helmets AS/NZS 2063:2008)
- → helmets must be correctly fitted unless an appropriate exception for wearing a helmet is applicable
- → fitting of helmets should consider the safety implications of: head gear worn under the helmet (e.g. a Hijab)
- → the impact of hair and the method hair is controlled or styled (e.g. dreadlocks, sikh turban)
- → Clothing suitable for the ride and expected weather conditions
- → covered footwear that suit the pedals on the bike
- → some method of carrying spare or surplus clothing and snacks and enough water to maintain hydration and energy demands of the ride

Depending on the risk and hazards of the ride, operators may also consider requiring/ providing:

- → Gloves
- → Elbow pads
- → Knee pads
- → Eye protection
- → Adjustable seat post

LEADER

Equipment requirements for guides or instructors are the same as participants, with the addition of:

- clothing sufficient to enable participation in emergency response, e.g. additional thermal layers
- tools and spare parts appropriate to the ride – See Appendix A for suggestions
- a light source that can be helmet mounted in case of emergency
- trail map and navigation aid (e. acq g*+. GPS)
- communication d 5 -324+e - *evice (See Section 7.4.5 Field Communication).

In general equipment should be with the instructor/ guide at all times, however this may vary if equipment is easily available via vehicle support.

FURTHER SUPPORT

Places to gain more information from:

- NZOIA Qualified MTB instructors
- Te Mahi Ako qualified MTB Instructors
- Ara Taiohi- Youth development framework
- MTB trails map, Trailforks
- MTB code
- Technical guidance on MTB which falls under the Health and Safety at Work (Adventure Activity) Regulations
- Adventure Activity Regulations
- Registered Adventure Activity Operators

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