



# WAIKATO RIVER TRAILS

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## Popularity of Trails rises with the Taniwha

A total of 1,138 people took to the Waikato River Trails recently for the annual Taniwha event.

This increasingly popular sporting fixture – 300 more competitors than last year – offers the opportunity to either bike, run or walk sections of the 100km River Trails. Taniwha distances range from 7km to 83km to cater for strollers, speedsters and everything in between.

Waikato River Trails general manager Glyn Wooller says for some it is a competitive event, for the majority it is more social.

“The great thing is there is something for everyone. That’s the magic of it. And so we had the young, the much older, the very fit and the not as fit. We had family groups, the NZ Warriors team, and about

120 people from engineering firm Tonkin and Taylor.”

Participants came from various parts of the North Island, with some travelling from as far away as New Plymouth, Palmerston North, Napier, Martinborough, Gisborne, Whanganui and Waiouru, for example. Auckland was well represented with 466 participants. There were also competitors from Christchurch and Australia, and one from Scotland.

The most popular events were the 7km run, 14km run, 21.1km run, 21.1km mountainbike and 80km mountainbike. Waikato River Trails Trust and Total Sport partnered together to present this event, which was launched last year.

Part of each entry fee goes to Shine – a charity striving to prevent domestic abuse.

Organisers say the event has many plusses. It supports a worthwhile charity, encourages people to be active, and helps celebrate the best of the Waikato River Trails. Tracks take in boardwalks over wetlands, swing bridges, native bush, exotic forest, historic landmarks, interesting geological formations, open reserves and even a number of dam crossings.

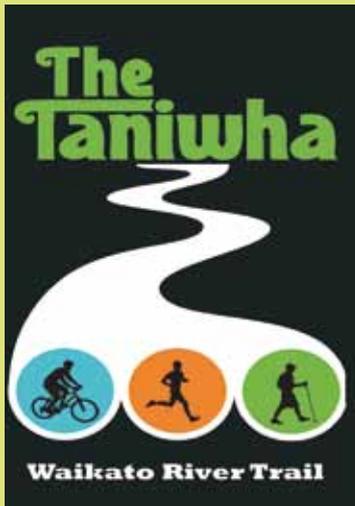
The event is supported by the South Waikato and Taupo District Councils, as well as the Whakamaru Christian Camp (which is where the event ends.) A date has already been set for the 2014 Taniwha event, with November 8 the one to circle. Entries are likely to be taken from May onward.

[www.thetaniwha.co.nz](http://www.thetaniwha.co.nz)

• More on the Taniwha inside



# Come one, come all to take on the Taniwha



*In a league of their own – the Warriors team ready for the Taniwha.*



Not all those who competed in the Taniwha were in quite the same league. Some were sporting heroes ... namely the NZ Warriors. Twenty NZ Warriors players and 10 staff members had an early start travelling to South Waikato for some off season training with a difference.

The team divided into two groups, with the first setting off on the 21km bike ride, and the second tackling the 14km run. Nathan Friend, who was in the latter group, finished in the top 10 with a time of around 1:06. The diversity of the trails

and the picturesque backdrop of the Waikato River provided a great training ground, the Warriors hooker said. "It was so beautiful out there, just stunning." Competing in the Taniwha was a great way to spend the day and he enjoyed being out in the South Waikato community, he said.

It was also an excellent way for the team to support Shine – the Vodafone Warriors charity partner. The Taniwha has raised more than \$7000 for this organisation that stands for making homes violence free in New Zealand.



## Winners will be back again

Megan Dimozantos (pictured below) will be back to tackle the Taniwha 83km mountain biking event again next year.

The Rotorua endurance athlete, who was first woman home in the event this year, has a score to settle. There's a need, she says, to better this year's time of 4:35. It was three seconds slower than her result the previous year at the inaugural Taniwha event. To win three times in a row wouldn't be too bad either, she laughs.

"I'll be going back for more. I really enjoy it. There are people who think that WRT track is pretty easy but you are working all the time. It's a great event in a beautiful part of the world," says this mountain biking enthusiast.

Megan's specialty is endurance events. Only a month ago she returned from the Twenty Four Hour Solo World Endurance Championships in Canberra, which literally involved 24 hours on her bike.

The first man home in the 83km mountain biking event was Graham Norman (pictured below), who was one of the hundreds of Aucklanders who travelled to the South Waikato for the Taniwha.

It was Graham's first time in the Taniwha and he will be back next year. He'll be trying to beat his time of just under four hours, he says. Graham was head of the pack for the first half of the race before pulling away to bike the remainder on his own.

He too commented on the "awesome scenery" and also said the trail was a tougher cycle than many would expect.



## Be sure to make your booking

Keen to incorporate the Waikato River Trails in your summer holiday experience?

Well, we'd love to see you. Some pre-planning is advised, however, if you are wanting to hire Waikato River Trail (WRT) bikes or make use of the shuttle service. Advice from the WRT team is to book early as demand is picking up fast.

The shuttle service involves drop

offs and/or pickups - at different locations along the trails - for up to 11 people plus bikes. Advance bookings are required for this service.

While many WRT users opt to use their own bikes, Avanti Montari mountain bikes are available for hire and come with helmets and puncture repair kits. To hire bikes or book the shuttle service, phone the WRT office on (07) 8833720. Money made from these services goes to the on-going maintenance of the trails.

## Trails staff go on the road to spread the word



The wonders of the Waikato River Trails are being promoted around the country.

Waikato River Trails staff members - including general manager Glyn Wooller - have been spreading the word about the WRT cycle trails and tramping tracks at various events over recent months.

Staffed stalls, geared at highlighting what the WRT have to offer, have had a presence at expos in Auckland, Hamilton, Rotorua and Tauranga.

These events include the Covi Motorhome Caravan and Outdoor Show, NZ National Agricultural Fieldays,

Women's Lifestyle Expo, Rotorua Home and Garden Show, and the Waikato Home Show.

WRT administration officer Shirley McPherson says there were many inquiries made at those events about the trails' terrain and places to stay and things to do, for example.

"The stall certainly attracted interest from those keen to get out and experience the great outdoors. It was a great way to highlight what's available in the district too as we promoted services along the way," she says.

A map of the trails attracted lots of attention too.

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# Maintenance

## A team keeps Trails in tip top shape

Rest assured ... your Waikato River Trails will continue to receive plenty of care and attention from the Trail's maintenance team.

The team of Trevor Stark, Graeme Jones and Wayne Southon do a wonderful job. Recent activity has involved trimming vegetation and spraying the trail surface from end to end. They recognise that keeping on top of this growth early in the season is a must, given the district's temperate climate.



*The Trails maintenance A team of Trevor Stark, Graeme Jones and Wayne Southon have plenty of work to do.*

Spring also involves regular trail inspection, especially after heavy wind when downed trees and branches need to be removed. The team has recently upgraded a piece of the Lake Waipapa section of trail. The gully section – near the trail's mid-point – has been prone to scouring and had become increasingly difficult to navigate safely. The team has tackled this by adding drainage and reworking the surface through the area.

Waikato River Trails general manager Glyn Wooller says the trail is now vastly improved and, as a result, a lot more fun to ride or walk.

It's more than two years since the Waikato River Trails opened and since then they have had ongoing maintenance and improvement to ensure the growing number of visitors have a great time. This attention will continue thanks to the dedicated maintenance team and the support of key stakeholders and members of the public.



**Waikato River Trails also has significant support from:**

