

Taming Tekapo

The opportunity to ride 30,000 hectares of 'Army No Go Zone' was just too good to miss so when approached by the Offlimits Charitable Trust to be involved with The Tekapo Tamer there was little debate - we at HRCNZ, were as keen as mustard!

Offlimits is a charitable trust recently established by a small band of Army and ex Army officials, including Dave Greenslade who is connected with Honda Riders Club and WOF1 Mike Ross who is an accomplished off-road rider and previous Enduro and ISDE competitor. The purpose of Offlimits is to raise funds for New Zealand soldiers to participate in multisport activities and is the brand under which outdoor action events are conducted for the New Zealand public at the Army Training area at

Waiouru (North Island) and Tekapo (South Island).

The initial recce last October gave us the lay of the land and the opportunity to meet owners of Glenmore, Braemar and Balmoral Stations. By linking the army land with the private land on the neighboring stations, Tekapo Tamer was 'locked and loaded' as a quality event scheduled for 29 - 31 January 2010.

Our plans to include a 90km loop were thwarted when marking out the tracks the week preceding the event with the discovery of a number of 'Blinds' - unexploded bombs, identifiable by the 'odd tail' sticking out of the ground! It was a case of 'stay clear'.

However with seven tracks, a kids loop and over 160km of trails available there was a wide variety



of terrain and tracks available. The Maryburn track was a hit; the views from Simpson's Lookout unbelievable, and the bogs and streams on the Bullock track a challenge. In addition the Off Limits team organised three guided rides up Mt Joseph which gave unprecedented view of the McKenzie Basin, Lake Tekapo, Lake Alexandrina and Lake Pukaki. This ride was a challenge for many with rocks and big drop offs but for those with the skills - a fantastic chance to see unique scenery. Riders on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning also enjoyed the unique feature of a bog-bound 7-ton Unimog that ended up stuck in a very small swamp for 36 hours on the Goldfields Track. Needless to say the driver, who is also a driving instructor, was very red faced and scarpered on Thursday evening to the AC/DC concert - a fine

excuse to escape the embarrassment of the incident.

Timaru Honda was on hand all weekend and were kept busy fixing tyres and punctures and certainly saved the day for a large number of riders who suffered the consequence of rocky terrain and incorrect tyre pressures. John and his team did a great job keeping people on the move and they will be back again next year, helping out at the ride and generously supplying a number of quads and the MUV for the organising team.

The McKenzie Basin, and in particular the land around Tekapo is regarded as very fragile so extra steps were put in place to ensure that the Tekapo Tamer would become an annual event. Of special significance was the need to protect against the spread of Didymo to the waterways and especially the Five Forks stream which the tracks crossed at various points. This necessitated the design and building of the 'Didymo bath' - a vinyl lined pit of approximately 10 metres in length filled with a wash solution that riders were required to ride through before entering the tracks. With high ranking army officers and Environmental officials visiting the event to access the impact of the ride on the area, the need to get this right was paramount and get it right Offlimits did. To the organisers credit everyone was impressed and as a result the future of the Tekapo Tamer looks assured. So if you missed out this year it is all looking good for the last week in January for 2011.

Don't forget Tussock Buster - 27 - 28 March at Waiouru, the home of Off Limits and where it all started - check out www.offlimits.co.nz for more information. An unforgettable experience with a great bunch of people.