

Conservationists embrace technology not just trees

Auckland, 26 October 2011 – Project Tongariro in the central North Island has launched New Zealand's first interactive smartphone application for a National Park – just in time for the busy summer walking season.

Called the Pocket Ranger, the free to download app is designed to offer an interactive and multi-media experience that provides interpretation, maps and images of the unique natural features of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing while at the same time conveying important safety messages.

The Android version is available now and the iPhone version will be released shortly.

The Tongariro Alpine Crossing is rated as the best one-day trek in New Zealand and listed by many in the top 10 day treks in the world. Over 80,000 tourists walk the crossing each year.

Conveying information without cluttering the landscape with signage posed a problem, until the idea of the Pocket Ranger app was developed.

“Now people can download as much information as they want, right there on the track,” says Karen Williams, President of Project Tongariro. “It also allows visitors to research the area before they arrive and make sure they're prepared for the changeable weather conditions the region is known for.

“We've been involved with producing books and brochures about the park for years, but the Pocket Ranger is a real breakthrough.

“With ever increasing smart phone ownership, it made sense to move with the times,” adds Karen Williams.

“We've already had significant interest from other parks and organisations in New Zealand that are keen to use our template, to provide a more interactive and informative experience for their visitors.

“It's early days yet but we're looking forward to feedback about the Pocket Ranger and refining the information we're providing,” says Karen Williams.

Visitors can download the app from www.tongariro.org.nz/pocketranger

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Pocket Ranger images attached.

About Project Tongariro

Established in 1984, Project Tongariro is a non-profit organisation that has been active in the region for more than 25 years. It's a community group who works in partnership with the Department of Conservation on many projects and whose goal is to promote a wider knowledge and appreciation of the unique natural heritage, historic, educational and recreational values of Tongariro National Park and its environs.

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