

Mountain Managers Report 2021

The structure of this report will be a season summary, and the operational direction for 2022, Financials will not be included in this document.

2021 Season Summary. 'Not without its challenges, but a darn sight better than 2020'

A season of extremes and some poor timing. Below are some of the key points/events we experienced.

Preseason and staffing

The preseason set up was excellent. All compliance was complete in good time. Mechanical, and maintenance of the field was in a reasonable position. A large number of returners made life easy. The lack of international workers forced us to become creative with hiring. We trained kiwi ski instructors from scratch and paid for their Level 1 certificate. This worked well, and we are seeing 4 of the 6 who were part of the program return as employees for 2022.

Snowmaking began on the 10th of June. Very little snow was made over the next two weeks due to warm temps. Ok snowmaking conditions began towards the end of the month. A total of 20 days of snowmaking were achieved.

Very little natural snow.

Early season

Planned open day target of the 10th of July was met on manmade snow. We opened tower 4 on the T-Bar. As well as intermediate and beginner areas. A string of good snowmaking temps allowed us to open to Tower 8 on the T Bar the following day. 96hrs of continuous snowmaking was achieved. Our longest in the last 4 years.

On the 15th of July the heavens opened. An estimated 250mm+ of rain fell to the top of the mountain inside 24hrs. The base area would have made for some reasonable white-water kayaking for a time. Damage to the road was significant. The mountain road was impassable due to a major slip at chains 1. Most culverts had run over the road and caused bad scaring to the road surface. The ski trails survived remarkably well. All valley fords were impassable. We cleared a path out with the loader to the main highway on the 17th of July. Over the next few days Edridge Contracting completed temporary repairs to the ski field road. The council cleared the valley fords. Snowmaking resumed and were able to open again on the 22nd of July.

Mid season

A couple of 20cm snow falls got us open to the top of the T-Bar and skiing off piste. Reasonable numbers of people and ok weather persisted. Already far better conditions than the previous year. We required 40cms+ to open out West Bowl. On the 17th of August we got it. 60cm-1m of snow across the hill. Unfortunately, as the snow was really setting in, and Wi-Fi was failing, we heard the news of a snap nationwide lock down.

Not too much to say about the following 3 weeks.

Late Season

We reopened on the 8th of September, as soon as government restrictions allowed. We were ready to roll, and got right back into it. The next two weeks saw a couple of 15-20cms snow falls, and the full field open. First time since 2019. Great turns, great numbers. Towards the end of Sep and into October the temps skyrocketed. Two weeks of excellent spring skiing. Another 100mm+ rain event arrived on the 3rd of October. On the 5th of October we closed for 2021 due to lack of snow.

Key Dates of 2021:

Open for the season: 10th of July

Open to Tower 8: 11th of July

Closed for the July Rain Event 15th of July

Reopen after July Rain event 22nd of July

Open to the top of the T-Bar 28th of July

Lockdown 17th of August (1m of fresh snow at the director's hut the night of the 17th)

Reopening after lock down: 8th of September

Closed for the season: 5th of October

45 days of operation. Approximately 65 days of operation would have been achieved if it wasn't for the lockdown.

2022. Direction and Goals.

Major Capex Project

A reasonable season has allowed us to invest in a major snowmaking project. A new pump has been purchased; this will double our current snowmaking capacity. The aim is to operate 14 snow guns this year, up from 7-8 last year. This upgrade will also allow us to operate both uphill and downhill of the snowmaking tarn at the same time. More guns, across more areas, for longer. This means when we have good temperatures, we will be making more of these opportunities.

Stage 2 of this project will see pipework returned to the top of the mountain in 2023. Top to bottom snowmaking at Rainbow will help secure the future of skiing/riding at Rainbow.

Café

Rainbow Ski Area will be taking over the operation of the café this year. We are working closely with Nic and Manu from the Playhouse Café to set this up. We are incredibly grateful to Lee and Boris for running the café until now. They will be missed by many.

R&M

All plant is operational and ready to roll for 2022. Lower R&M costs due to two seasons of low hours.

Sustainability

This has become a major focus for the field. Tree planting will continue in 2022. Changes to packaging, waste, and recycling policy are likely in 2022. We are beginning the process of working towards being carbon neutral.

Operation specifics

We will be returning to a 7 Day a week operation.

We will continue to try to attract more people to the ski field. Focusing on potential midweek clients. We have engaged with local schools, and potential Wellington customers.

We have a strong returning staff group this year. 60-70% This should help us cut down on training, and mistakes.

The return of working holiday visas has helped us secure a team of instructors and a groomer operator.

Health and Safety of our staff, members, and customers will continue to be one of our top priorities.

All compliance requirements are tracking well.

We will continue to work closely with all our partners.

Personal note:

A huge thank you to the Committee, Members, and Partners. I continue to be blown away by the generosity and passion the community has for Rainbow. It's an honor to be a part of the operation again for 2022. I look forward to all the challenges, and rewards of another season. This time, hopefully with a bit more normality, and plenty of turns.

See you up here,

Thomas Harry - Mountain Manager