

The XTERRA Green Team

Pitching in for the community

By Trey Garman

Perhaps nobody on the XTERRA planet has a closer relationship with Mother Nature than Barbara Peterson—the Mother of XTERRA. In her rock-hopping, root-stomping, tree-lined six-year career, the 50-year-old Peterson has competed in more than three-dozen XTERRA races in several countries around the world. Along the way she's collected six XTERRA national championships, five XTERRA world championships, a pair of XTERRA European Tour titles and has displayed the utmost respect for the environment in which she's played.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that Peterson, a pioneer and activist in environmental issues surrounding mountain biking since the early '80s, is at the forefront of the XTERRA Green Team movement.

"I see this program as a chance in life, especially as an off-road triathlete doing XTERRA, to race at another level," Peterson says, a Berkeley, California-based writer and jewelry maker.

That level is "competition with sustainability, meaning as competitors we are also conscious of our immediate surroundings and are willing and able to give something back to the local race community and environment where we race."

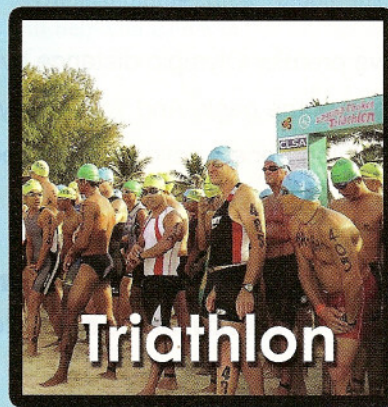
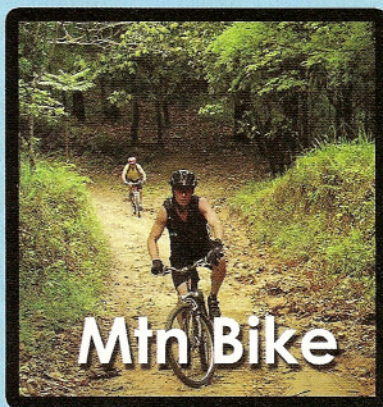
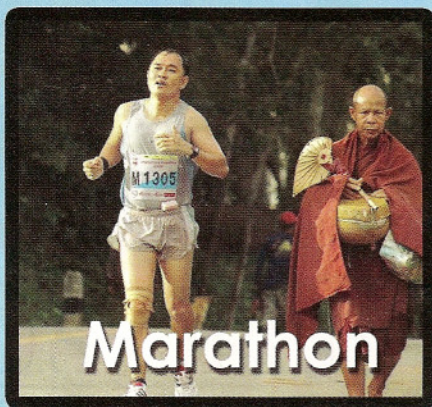
When fellow XTERRA age grouper Yvonne Kraus, a community-outreach and public-involvement consultant based in the Pacific Northwest, approached Peterson with the concept of starting an XTERRA Green Team, the abstract ideal of preserving and protecting the areas in which we race transformed into an organized and straightforward plan of action for the future.

The first project that the XTERRA Green Team is involved with takes place at the XTERRA Vashon Island race in Washington State on July 15. The Green Team has joined forces with BikeWorks, a Seattle non-profit organization (see bikeworks.org) to collect donated used

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gear: water bottles, stickers, bike shoes, clothing, tubes, tires and any bike component still in decent shape.

The second-hand gear is used by BikeWorks to educate children about bicycle mechanics, provide affordable bike services to the community and ultimately build sustainable communities by educating youth and promoting bicycling. For example, Earn-a-Bike is an initiative where kids have the opportunity to master the basics of bike repair in eight fun classes. During Earn-a-Bike time outside of class, donated bikes are used as guinea pigs to practice new skills and as a way for kids to earn their own recycled cycle to take home.

"After the XTERRA world championship in Maui last year I left a few gear items behind. It was the end of the season and I didn't want to bring them back to the mainland," Kraus says. "I had done that at other races before and I'm certain other athletes do it as well, especially the more serious racers or those who regularly receive new gear from sponsors. So, why not tap this resource and help others?"

The next step is to take the bike-cycling idea to every XTERRA venue in the world;

this way, athletes have a legit outlet to drop off gear they would like to donate for distribution to local inner-city bicycle programs, under-privileged area kids and other targeted organizations that help the less fortunate.

The second project is a stream-restoration work party in Incline Village, Nev., home to the XTERRA USA Championship. "Donate your time, your brawny back and your enthusiasm to help restore the banks of the stream we cross multiple times during our run, and show your appreciation to Incline Village for hosting us year after year," urged Kraus. "And if you really love the idea, help us coordinate more work parties at other races this year and next year."

By contributing a few hours of time to local environmental enterprises near XTERRA race courses—and this could be anything from trail maintenance to park clean-up, ecological restoration or tree planting—the XTERRA Green team aims to make a difference from the ground up.

"Honestly, in imagining the mechanics of this kind of program, and how it could be, I thought about Richmond as an example," Peterson says. "The possibilities for XTERRA athletes to contribute

to ecological enhancements or urban beautification in downtown Richmond are tremendous. Goodness, it would be really fun and rewarding and so positive for the general ecology of this city and the same kinds of things could be done everywhere we go."

"The inspiration behind this came primarily from my XTERRA race experience last summer, traveling to various countries, seeing and experiencing incredible natural areas and scenery close to urban areas and meeting inspiring people," Kraus says. "In my work I've specialized in green building and sustainability, and I thought how great it would be to combine my professional experience with my XTERRA passion."

If you've got an idea or are interested in getting involved or coordinating other events, you'll find contact information for Barbara and Yvonne and more information on the program at xterraplanet.com/greenteam.

"I believe sustainability, thinking green, giving back and generosity of spirit are the absolute next steps for everyone on this planet," Peterson says. ▲

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(1) Bassit RA, et. al. Branched-chain amino acid supplementation and the immune response of long-distance athletes. *Nutrition*. 2002 May;18(5):376-9 (2) Brouns, F, et. al. 1992 Rationale for upper limits of electrolyte replacement during exercise. *Int J Sport Nutr* 2:229-38.