

## *A very nice place for a Trash Dash*

Saturday morning, Nov. 14, was a perfect time for showing off another one of Tallahassee's great venues. When you read Herb Wills' column on the Trash Dash 5K race ([troubleafoot.blogspot.com](http://troubleafoot.blogspot.com)), look at the list of races held this year at the Apalachee Regional Park ("ARP"). The park is unique in that a large portion of it is, first and foremost, a park for running cross country races and as Herb correctly points out that includes meets for all ages and skills from middle school to college championships.

Saturday was the fifth annual Trash Dash 5K, a clever title for Sustainable Tallahassee's efforts to get the word out about its mission and to raise some money to support its operations. It is also a group my wife, Mary Jean, has worked with since the beginning, to provide technical and moral support, on what it takes to put on a successful 5K. Ed Bettinger has been the race director. "Sustainable Tallahassee promotes environmental stewardship and economic vitality in our community through education and collaboration.

We are a catalyst for individual, group, and community-wide actions that save water, energy, and money, optimize the sustainable use of resources, and ensure a place that will still be special for our children and grandchildren."

The park is an excellent example of managing land and trash (at least we hope it is). It is located next to the Leon County Landfill, but clearly is a beautiful place. The transformation from "land next to landfill" to cross country venue was driven in large part by the passion of FSU cross country and track coach, Bob Brahman, and GWTC member, Brian Corbin. While many others contributed (including Brian's wife, Judy), Brian and Bob spent many hours blazing the trails that would become a premier venue in the state for cross country.

In May of 2009 GWTC delivered a check for \$10,000 to become an important community partner to get the project going. The Leon County Division of Parks and Recreation provided the big muscle to turn a dream and a passion into a reality. On Oct. 10, 2009, the Florida State University Cross-Country Invitational became the first series of races contested on the new course. In describing the transformation, Herb Wills said at the time: "If you had come out to the Apalachee Regional Park back in the spring, you would have seen woods, swamps, and old cow pastures adjoining what was once the county landfill." By race day there were beautiful trails around the trees and through the swamps.

In its first two years, the Trash Dash was a part of America Recycles Day and focused more on showing off some of the innovative ideas that helped improve the landfill's compatibility with Leon County's environment. To do that, the race course ran within the confines of the landfill. Again, Herb provided his unique perspective: "Variety is the one word that summarizes the course. There was pavement, grass, and dirt roads; industrial looking landscapes and pristine woods. Some of the best scenery along the route was grassy hills that looked like the downs in England — but were actually vast heaps of household waste covered over with dirt and planted with grass. Only a ventilation pipe here and there betrayed what was below the ground. A few pipes were aflame as methane from below burned. Even though it was all right next to the Apalachee Park Trail, the course was one that not many runners will see again. At least not until the second annual Trash Dash."

After year two however, the Trash Dash found its home on one of the top cross country courses in the country and this year, five, it had the perfect combination of weather and beauty to show just what can happen when communities and local government work together. And if you have any doubts about the Apalachee Regional Park being special, then mark your calendar for Dec. 19, the Tannenbaum 6K and the final race of the year at the Apalachee Regional Park.

And speaking of great venues, don't forget the Turkey Trot Festival on Sunday from 1:30 to 5 p.m. at

# Cascades Park. Music, food, drink and registration for Turkey Trot!!



## Mike Martinez and Jay Wallace, 5K run participants

HERB WILLS



**David Yon**

TLH BLOGGER