Sustainable Strides

A Newsletter for the Eco-Conscious Athlete
From Happy Planet Running

We can make your race leave no trace!

happyplanetrunning.com

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Recent HPR Events

- January's RF Events Bigfoot Snowshoe Race in Traverse City lived up to its legend. With freezing temperatures, lots of snow, and even two Bigfoot sightings on the trail, runners fully embraced winter's wild side. After braving sub-zero temps, runners were welcomed back with a warm bowl of post-race chili (with compostable bowls and spoons) while the Green Team kept warm by sorting. Landfill totaled just 1.7 lbs. of soiled seasoning bags, a shop towel, and some tape. Total race waste came in at 47.1 pounds resulting in an excellent **diversion rate of 98.3%!** Want the full breakdown? Read the full sustainability report here.

- Super Bowl Sunday isn't just for football! In Novi, it's for fast feet, Honolulu Blue, and whole lot of race-day spirit. At this year's RF Events

Super 5K at Novi High School, more than 300 runners bundled up and proudly came decked out in Lions gear to run, despite the Lions not making the big game. At the finish line, runners refueled with classic Super Bowl favorites including pizza, wings, and breadsticks. Our Green Team was MVP of this event, carefully sorting compostables, race bibs, snack bags, Gu wrappers, and collecting hand warmers which are recycled at TerraCycle. Just two races into the year, this event is already setting the bar for 2026 with an outstanding **diversion rate of 99.8%.** Want the full statistics? Read the full sustainability report here!

Dan Campbell would love the grit of these runners!

- For more about what we do, check out our full set of sustainability reports, which covers every event we've done since 2017. They're good reads!
- Check out our Instagram or TikTok for event updates and content!

Volunteer Spotlight

- Special thanks to Sue for being a regular volunteer and helping the Green Team at the Bigfoot Snowshoe Race and Super 5K. At this year's Bigfoot she completed her first ever snowshoe 5K! Sue and Jeff are also longtime friends, and their families have camped up north together for many years, where (of course) they recycle and compost.

This Issue's FAQ

- ***Q: What does HPR recommend to make an event more sustainable?***
- A: Less is more! First, avoid or reduce as much waste as possible. Then reuse whatever you can. Finally, repurpose (recycle or

compost) what you have left. Here are some examples from events HPR has served and/or Jeff has participated in.

  - When I (Jeff) started racing, everyone automatically got a T-shirt, hat, or other swag, and often got mugs or pint glasses at the finish. Now, many races have turned them into extras (even medals!) you pre-order and pay for. This not only cuts down on stuff not everyone wants, it reduces packaging significantly.
  - Some events put out reusable silicone cups at the water stops. After the event, they are collected and washed for future events. She Runs Grand Rapids and the Dexter-Ann Arbor Run, among others, do this by "renting" cups from Hiccup Earth.
  - Most trail races have become cupless! Runners are expected to bring their own hydration containers. "Even a gas station water bottle duct-taped to your hand," one recent race (half) joked.
  - Post-race food used to be served on Styrofoam, waxed plates/boats, or plastic, all of which must either be landfilled, or washed prior to recycling. Now most HPR events use compostable containers and utensils, making cleanup easy.

- These steps make it possible to divert over 90 percent of event waste from landfill, making the events "Zero Waste" as defined by the Zero Waste International Alliance.

The Latest in Sustainability News

- New Biodegradable Packaging that Rivals Plastic Performance: Researchers at Georgia Institute of Technology have developed a

high-performance biodegradable film designed to match the durability and protective qualities of conventional plastic without the long-term environmental cost. Made from renewable materials that come from plants, mushrooms, and food waste, this innovative packaging matches plastic in blocking oxygen and moisture and composts without leaving microplastics or residue behind. To learn more about the process of this research, its benefits, and how it can compete on the market, read this article from HappyEcoNews.

Photo by John Cameron on Unsplash.

- **"From Fishing Nets to Furniture: Turning Ocean Plastic Into Usable Products"**: Many people know about the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a concentrated patch of plastic floating between California and Hawaii that is over twice the size of Texas. This patch includes a huge number of old fishing nets, which also litter the ocean floor everywhere. In 2019 a brother and sister in Spain started Gravity Wave, a company that collects these nets and turns them into furniture, decorations, and plastic pellets.

Their goal is to not only clean up the ocean, but to create value through impact. To date, the company has worked with dive teams to collect 1,400 tons of plastic and fishing nets, more than 700 tons of which has been processed. To learn more about the company and their efforts to clean the ocean and give plastic a second life, read the New York Times article at the link below, and see this story from the European Commission.

https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/09/business/gravity-wave-conservation.html?unlocked_article_code=1.OVA.Mcm5.AEhMuhgyVL-M&smid=url-share

Source: Adobe Stock

Zero Waste Fun Fact: Going Cupless

- Did you know that over 50 billion single use coffee cups are thrown away each year? This has resulted in many coffee shops

doing a “bring your own cup” campaign. Bringing a reusable travel mug can get you discounts at many local and chain coffee shops as well as help eliminate waste. Using a reusable water bottle can also help eliminate cup and plastic waste. Research shows that a $20 reusable water bottle can help save an individual over $6,000 in the span of 5 years and well as cut down on 156 plastic bottles every year. Plastic has a finite lifespan, so help cut down on plastic use by bringing a reusable water bottle to race events!

Get Involved!

Join the Green Team!

- Get in on the action and join us at our upcoming events! Look up an upcoming Zero Waste event on our calendar, click on the event’s logo to go to its website, and sign up to volunteer for the Green Team.
- Know someone who’d like to get more involved in sustainability? Have them apply to be an HPR team member! Hourly pay for event work and special projects, and HPR-paid opportunities to further their education in composting, recycling, and more. Just email Jeff!

Run Into Us!

Sun. March 8	Shamrocks & Shenanigans 5K	Ann Arbor
Sat. March 14	Pi Day Run	Ypsilanti
Sun. March 15	Corktown Races	Detroit

- Click here for the full 2026 schedule!

Questions? Comments? Concerns?

Reach out here or email jeff@happyplanetrunning.com!

Thank You!

- Thanks for reading and supporting sustainability! If you enjoyed this update, please consider sharing it with others who care, too — together, we can grow a more waste-free future.

Follow us on Social Media!

- To learn more about sustainability and zero waste, and to stay up to date with all Happy Planet Running news and events, follow us on social media!

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This issue was produced by Marilyn Harbin and edited by Jeff Jackson.