

## Parking crackdown at White Rock will limit races

By Charles Clines



If you haven't heard or read the recent article in the Dallas Morning News, then you might not know that the City of Dallas has outlawed parking in grassy areas at White Rock Lake.

This rule was enforced at the DRC White Rock 'n Roll and caused many parking problems. Some participants had to park a mile or farther from Winfrey Point, where registration is and which is near the start and finish lines.

Because of the city ordinance enforcement, more police officers and more volunteers were needed to help with the parking nightmare. The Parks and Recreation Department had waived this ordinance for special events in the past, but no plans to enforce the ordinance. Already event directors are wondering what to do with their events at White Rock.

Dallas Running Club President Greg Hall, for one, is ready to fight city hall, and his views are shared by many, including mine.

“I'm working on something that will go to key city officials to express our feelings on the issue,” he said. “We obviously are concerned how this will impact club events. I'm concerned they will be sacrificing safety for what is really a parking issue. I don't think the issue is parking on the grass; it is the lack of parking at the lake. I respect the idea of protecting grass, but the truth is that people have been using the lake for many generations. I have yet to see any damage that outweighs the good that comes from allow people access to the lake. I also fear they are not thinking through the social impact on such action.

“Our club provides an outlet for those people that are seeking to improve their health and their life. The same can be said for all of the races held at the lake. Their actions risk this venue for a very large population. It will be a shame if a few well intended people take this action without completely considering its consequence.”

James Thruston, who conducts many road-race and duathlon events at White Rock, indicated he might be forced to cancel events.

The Morning News story quoted Run On! owner Bob Wallace as seeing fewer events at White Rock and lower participation. He believes runners won't deal with the trouble and extra time it might take to take shuttle buses to the event from remote locations. Don Lucas of Luke's Locker cited safety issues as participants might be crossing busy roads from remote parking sites in order to walk or jog to the race site.

Lewis George, who also conducts events at White Rock, blamed a small number of nearby White Rock Lake residents for the crackdown because of their complaints about the number of runners and cyclists that events attract. He said the solutions could be worse. "Instead of having a run event that impacts maybe hundreds (of residents), we instead put them (races) on the streets of Dallas and now let's affect the Saturday morning lives of tens of thousands. It just makes not sense."

He believes if runners would ever combine to fight the ordinance, they might have a chance to have it changed.

"I'll probably move the Texas Half to Fair Park," said George, who conducts the Big D Marathon from there. "I had been thinking about doing that anyway. I will not move the Lady of the Lake Relays, and parking will not be a problem with that one, anyway."

He's not sure what to do with the Hottest Half, though. He might keep it there through next year. He also has a grandfather clause that would allow him to keep it there (the city is not allowing any new events there). He could, depending on what everyone else does, be the only one conducting events at White Rock.

The parks department also is trying to help solve parking problems by designating overflow parking lots. According to the Morning News article, the park has 1,685 parking spaces at the lake, which is woefully shy of what's needed for many of the running events.

It should be interesting to see what happens. Though it probably is understandable that the city wants to keep the cars off the grass. However, how much damage is being done or has been done? And are these grassy areas being used for something else?