



**IDITAROD 2021  
MEDIA GUIDE**

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race**

The sled dogs that run in the Iditarod are some of the greatest athletes on the planet and providing the best care available is the top priority of the Iditarod Trail Committee. The Iditarod takes every step to ensure the canine athletes are given first-rate care and treated with respect. Their stories about racing across the wilds of Alaska deserve to be told.

You can't compare it to any other competitive event in the world. A nearly 1,000-mile race over the roughest, most beautiful terrain Mother Nature has to offer, it throws jagged mountain ranges, frozen rivers, dense forests, desolate tundra and miles of windswept coast at mushers and their dog teams.

Add temperatures far below zero, winds that can cause a complete loss of visibility, the hazards of overflow, long hours of total darkness and treacherous climbs to hundreds of miles of jagged terrain and you have the Iditarod – a race extraordinaire only possible in the Last Frontier. From the city of Anchorage in Southcentral Alaska traditionally to Nome (the race will not finish in Nome for the first time in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic) on the western Bering Sea coast, each team of 12-14 canines and its musher cover more than nearly 1,000 miles in 9-15 days.

It has been called the “Last Great Race on Earth” and has won worldwide acclaim and interest. It's not just a sled dog race; it's a race in which unique men and woman compete. Mushers enter from all walks of life. Fishermen, lawyers, doctors, miners, artists, Alaska Natives, Canadians, Swiss, French and others; men and women each with their own story, each with their own reasons for going the distance. It's a race organized and run primarily by thousands of volunteers.

### **“THE LAST GREAT RACE ON EARTH”**

The race puts man and animal against nature; against wild Alaska at its best. As each mile is covered, a tribute to Alaska's past is issued. The Iditarod is a tie to a commemoration of that colorful past.

The Iditarod Trail, now a national historic trail, had its beginnings as a mail and supply route from the coastal towns of Seward and Knik to the Interior mining camps at Flat, Ophir, Ruby and beyond, to the west coast communities of Unalakleet, Elim, Golovin, White Mountain and Nome. Mail and supplies went in, gold came out – all via dog sled. Heroes were made; legends were born.

### **THE BEGINNING**

The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race first ran to Nome in 1973, after two short races on part of the Iditarod Trail in 1967 and 1969. The idea of having a race over the Iditarod Trail was conceived by the late Dorothy G. Page. In 1964, Page was chairman of the Wasilla-Knik centennial committee. Her task was to find projects to celebrate the centennial year in 1967.



She was intrigued that dog teams could travel over land that was not accessible by automobile. In the early 1920s, settlers had come to Alaska following a gold strike. They traveled by boat to the coastal towns of Seward and Knik and from there, by land into the gold fields. The trail they used is today known as the Iditarod Trail, one of the national historic trails designated by the U.S. Congress. In the winter, the only means of travel was by dog team.

The Iditarod Trail soon became the major thoroughfare through Alaska. Mail was carried across the trail, people used it to get from place to place and supplies were transported. Priests, ministers and judges also traveled between villages via dog team.

All too soon, the gold mining began to slack off. People began to go back to where they had come from and suddenly there was less travel on the Iditarod Trail. The use of airplanes in the late 1920s signaled the beginning of the end for the dog team as a standard mode of transportation, with the final blow to the use of the dog team came with the appearance of snowmobiles.

By the mid-60s, most people in Alaska didn't even know there was an Iditarod Trail or that dog teams had played a very important role in Alaska's early settlement. Page, a resident of Wasilla and self-made historian, recognized the importance of honoring the use of sled dogs as working animals and of the Iditarod Trail as well as the important part they played in Alaska's colorful history. She presented the possibility of a race over the Iditarod Trail to an enthusiastic Joe Redington Sr., a musher from the Knik area. Soon Page and Redington began promoting the idea of the Iditarod Race to the extent that Joe and VI Redington moved to the Knik area at Flat Horn Lake, just 30 miles out of Knik, and never moved back.

The Aurora Dog Musers Club, along with men from the Adult Camp in Sutton, helped clear years of overgrowth from the first nine miles of the Iditarod Trail in time to put on the first short Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in 1967. A \$25,000 purse was offered at the race, with Joe and VI Redington donating one acre of their land at Flat Horn Lake, adjacent to the Iditarod Trail, to help raise \$10,000 toward the purse. Contestants from all over Alaska and even two contestants from Massachusetts entered the first Iditarod race. However, it was newcomer Isaac Okleasik, from Teller, Alaska, who won the race with his team of large working canines. The short race – approximately 27 miles – was put on again in 1969.

The goal was to have the race go all the way to the ghost town of Iditarod in 1973. However, in 1972, the U.S. Army reopened the trail as a winter exercise and in 1973, the decision was made to take the race over 1,000 miles to Nome. Redington and Page were instrumental in getting the first long Iditarod on its way to Nome in 1973, amidst comments that it couldn't be done. There were many who believed it was crazy to send a bunch of mushers out into the vast uninhabited Alaska wilderness. But the race went! Twenty-two mushers finished that year.



The late Dorothy G. Page, who is considered the “Mother of the Iditarod,” is quoted in the October 1979 issue of the Iditarod Runner on her intent for the race: “To keep the spirit of the Iditarod the same. I don’t ever want to see any high-pressure people getting in and changing the spirit of the race. We brought the sled dog back and increased the number of mushers. It is really an Alaska event. I think the fact that it starts in Anchorage and ends in Nome opens up a whole new area for people in Alaska. I think they appreciate that. It puts them in touch with the pioneer spirit.”

### **IDITAROD TODAY**

The race has started in downtown Anchorage since 1983. The 49<sup>th</sup> Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race will begin on Saturday, March 6, 2021. The teams will leave the start line at the corner of Fourth Avenue and D Street at two-minute intervals starting at 10 a.m. About 60 teams are expected.

The mushers follow streets and bike trails through Anchorage to Campbell Airstrip. From there, the canines are loaded into trucks and taken home for the night. While the race actually starts in Anchorage, in 1995, the rules were changed so that the Anchorage to Campbell Airstrip – originally to Eagle River – portion does not count in the overall time to Nome.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year’s race will look a little different. On Sunday, March 7, 2021, mushers will line up at the restart area in Deshka Landing. At 2 p.m., the first team will depart on its way to the historic mining town of Flat before turning around and ending back at Deshka Landing.

It is impossible to predict the exact day or time that the first musher will cross the finish line. However, we typically expect it to be between eight and 10 days, making it on Tuesday or Wednesday. In 2021, that may change as the mushers are running a course they have never before taken for the Last Great Race on Earth.

### **BEHIND THE SCENES**

It takes so much more than a field of willing mushers and excited sled dogs to run the Iditarod, and the Iditarod depends on a hardworking force of volunteers and supporters to raise the necessary money all year around. Our race sponsors supply more than \$2 million in cash donations and/or goods and services. A semi-annual raffle is held as well as an IditaRider Musher Auction, where bidders place bids of \$850-\$7,500 on entered mushers to ride in their sled at the Anchorage ceremonial start for the first 11 miles. Iditarod gift shops in the Anchorage and Wasilla area sell Iditarod merchandise year-round. Merchandise is also sold at the Alaska State Fair and on other special occasions during the year.

Race headquarters are set up in Anchorage in 2021 to disseminate information and race standings to the public. Volunteers man each of the 20 plus checkpoints, including some who spend their vacations on the trail. A complex communications net covers the course, offering logistical support, emergency communications and an information source for race officials. The Iditarod Air Force is a fleet of small, privately-owned bush planes flown by



volunteers that shuttle dog food and mushers' supplies to each checkpoint, moving veterinarians and race officials up and down the trail, and more. A group of veterinarians from around the U.S. and the world take time out from their busy practices to assist with canine care duties along the trail. Trailbreakers on snowmachines precede the field, cutting, marking and packing trail in windswept areas, trying to give each team a safe path to follow.

Without these volunteers, there wouldn't be a race. Their efforts save the committee thousands of dollars, which would be nearly impossible to raise otherwise. Their dedication and involvement is what this historic Alaska event is all about.

### **ON THE TRAIL**

The rules of the race lay out certain regulations. There are pieces of equipment each team must have: an Arctic parka, a heavy sleeping bag, an axe, snowshoes, musher food, dog food and booties for each dog's feet to protect them against nature's elements.

Whether they run during the day or night, each musher has a different strategy on and off the trail. In addition, each has a different approach for dog care, dog diet, dog stamina as well as their own personal ability. Mushers spend an entire year preparing for and raising the money needed to get to finish the race. In addition to planning the equipment and feeding needs for three weeks on the trail, hundreds of hours and miles of training have to be put in on each team.



## IDITAROD BOARD OF DIRECTORS, STAFF & COORDINATORS

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Vice President.....	Danny Seybert
Secretary.....	Mike Jonrowe
Treasurer.....	Ryan York
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IOFC Director.....	Andy Angstman

### **STAFF AND VOLUNTEER RACE COORDINATORS**

Chief Executive Officer.....	Rob Urbach
Chief Operations Officer.....	Chas St. George
Race Director / Race Marshal.....	Mark Nordman
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Assistant to the CEO.....	Starre Szlag
Digital + Constituent Engagement Manager.....	Krystin Bogan
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Associate Director of Education.....	Jane Homes
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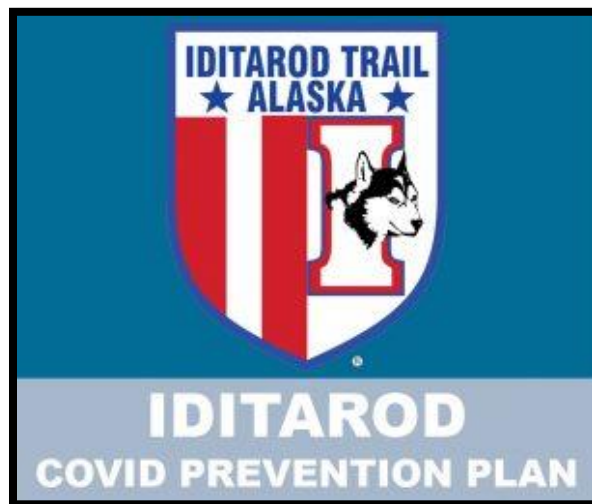
## COVID-19 MEDIA INFORMATION

The Iditarod is encouraging media, in light of the COVID-19 mitigation protocols, to not travel along the trail for news coverage of the 2021 race. However, the Iditarod knows and depends on the value of the media coverage, and wants to ensure media are provided with access to b-roll footage and stills available for media use.

For the 2021 race, there will be no media credentialing of news outlets looking to cover the race with the exception of Partner Media, who are already taken care of under separate partnership agreements.

In order to answer questions ahead of the race, the Iditarod will be holding a media briefing in mid-to-late February. During this briefing, the Iditarod will further explain the details of the assets available to media for usage, and go over the daily briefing with Iditarod officials planned for the duration of the race. The Iditarod media coordinator will be in touch with more details on the February media briefing as they are confirmed.

Projected Finish Date: **Tuesday, March 16, 2021**



For the most recent version of the COVID-19 mitigation plan, visit [iditarod.com/plan-your-visit](https://iditarod.com/plan-your-visit)

This is a living plan that may change, based on circumstances. Please stay connected to Iditarod news through its free newsletter by signing up as a free user [here](#), if you have not done so already. We will be updating everyone on any event changes that take place via our newsletter, social media, and website.

For additional information from the Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, please visit <https://covid19.alaska.gov>.



## MEDIA FAQ

**Can I use Iditarod logo, videos or pictures from the website?** Use of the Iditarod logo in news coverage is permitted but the Iditarod Trail Committee (ITC) does not permit use of the logo in promotional or commercial use unless specific approval is authorized by the ITC in advance. Please note that use of pictures or video from Iditarod.com will most likely require a license agreement and fee for defined use. Iditarod Insider footage is available for sale and cost is determined by how much footage is needed. For information on purchase or license of items on the Iditarod website, please email [chas.stgeorge@iditarod.com](mailto:chas.stgeorge@iditarod.com).

**Can I call the mushers? Will Iditarod give me their phone numbers?** First, refer to [each musher's bio](#). You will find that they contain valuable information about the mushers and their kennels. Most bios also have a website listed for contact information. We are only able to provide additional contact information for those mushers who have indicated they want this information distributed. The best time to reach these mushers is usually prior to the start of the Iditarod.

**How many mushers have completed the Iditarod?** As of the finish of the 2020 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, 812 individual mushers have completed the race. If you count all finishers from 1973 through 2020, the number is 2,428.

**Does the Iditarod race route change?** Yes, in odd years the race follows the [southern route](#). In even years the race follows the [northern route](#). The board decided unanimously in 2017 that the race course would follow the southern route in 2018 and 2019. In 2021, the race will have its restart and finish at Deshka Landing. It will follow the traditional southern route to Iditarod and then onto the historic mining town of Flat before returning back to Deshka Landing. This trail is called the Gold Trail Loop and is approximately 860 miles.

**What is the length of the race?** In 2012, ITC published trail mileage using data gleaned from GPS mileage (southern route = 998 miles, northern route = 975 miles) calculations. While this data gets us close to the actual mileage, it is not exact as the units do not include a sufficient number of data points to account for all full twists, turns and elevation changes in the trail. Also, we know that the trail is not the same distance as it may be “set” or “broken” and “marked” somewhat differently in certain areas from year to year. Because of these factors, we often continue to use the symbolic figure of 1,049 miles, a number first used in the very early years of the Iditarod: 1,000 miles of trail and 49 to identify Alaska as the 49<sup>th</sup> state.

Permanent changes to the start – running only from downtown Anchorage to Campbell Airstrip instead of to Eagle River – and the change of the restart location from Wasilla to Willow – loss of mileage from Wasilla-Knik-Yentna River runs – has eliminated approximately 35 miles from the race.



## IDITAROD FACTS

- The Iditarod ceremonial start is currently scheduled for downtown Anchorage, Alaska, on Saturday, March 6, 2021, at 10 a.m.
- The Iditarod restarts at Deshka Landing, on Sunday, March 7, 2021, at 2 p.m.
- As of Jan. 7, 2021, 53 mushers are signed up for the 2021 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, including 38 veterans and 15 rookies. Entrants hail from four states – Alaska, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin – and from five countries – United States, Canada, Denmark, France, and Norway. The record number of mushers starting the race was 96 in 2008.
- The Iditarod traditionally pays the highest purse in sled dog racing. The 2020 purse was approximately \$501,120, distributed between the top 20 finishers with \$1,049 paid to each additional finisher.
- The Iditarod changed the minimum number of dogs starting the race for 2019. Each musher can start with a maximum of 14 canine athletes and must have at least 12 on the line to start. A team can finish with as few as five sled dogs.
- The race crosses two mountain ranges, including North America's largest mountain range, the Alaska Range, and runs along the Yukon River and over the frozen Norton Sound.
- A portion of the southern route will be used in 2021. The mushers will travel out to Iditarod and then on to the historic mining town of Flat before returning back to Deshka Landing on the Iditarod Gold Trail Loop.
- The 2021 race has more than 40 veterinarians responsible for caring for canines along the race course.
- There have been 812 individual team finishers for a grand total of 2,428 teams to cross the finish line as of 2020. Mushers hailing from 23 states, five continents – North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Australia – and 22 foreign countries – Argentina, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom – have finished the Iditarod since 1973, including 144 women.
- Mushers can be shy about talking about themselves; however, they will usually talk your ear off about their sled dogs.
- The first Iditarod race began on March 3, 1973, with 34 teams; 22 teams finished 32 days later.



- The slowest winning time of 20 days, 15 hours, two minutes and seven seconds was recorded in 1974 by Carl Huntington. The fastest winning time was recorded in 2017 by Mitch Seavey with eight days, three hours, 40 minutes and 13 seconds, breaking the previous record by Dallas Seavey of eight days, 11 hours, 20 minutes and 16 seconds.
- The closest finish was in 1978 when Dick Mackey beat Rick Swenson by one second, finishing in 14 days, 18 hours, 52 minutes and 24 seconds.
- The most finishers in one year occurred in 2008 when 78 teams crossed the finish line.
- Rick Swenson is the only five-time winner, the only musher to win in three decades, and only musher to complete 35 of 43 Iditarods.
- Susan Butcher, Martin Buser, Doug Swingley, Jeff King, Lance Mackey and Dallas Seavey have each won four Iditarod championships. Mackey is the only musher to have won four consecutive races with Butcher, Swingley and Seavey all winning three consecutive races.
- Dick Mackey, Rick Mackey and Lance Mackey (father and two sons) have won the Iditarod. All three won wearing bib number 13 in their sixth race. Rick Mackey won the race in 1983 to become the first son of an Iditarod champion to match his father's accomplishment. Emmitt Peters was also wearing bib number 13 when he won in 1975.
- Lance Mackey is the first, four-time Iditarod Champion to win all four races consecutively in 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010. He also won the Yukon Quest in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008, making him the first musher to win both of Alaska's premier long distance races back to back in 2007 and 2008 within weeks of each other.
- Four-time winner, Susan Butcher, claimed Iditarod victories in 1986, 1987, 1988, and again in 1990. Doug Swingley became the second four-time winner in 2001. His victories were in 1995, 1999, 2000 and 2001. Dallas Seavey became a four-time winner in 2016 with consecutive victories in 2014, 2015 and 2016. Butcher, Swingley and Seavey have the distinction of being the only Iditarod champions who have three consecutive victories.
- The youngest musher to ever compete in the Iditarod was Dallas Seavey in 2005 when he turned 18 on March 4, 2005. He also became the youngest Iditarod champion in 2012.
- The oldest musher to ever compete is Colonel Norman D. Vaughan who last competed in 1992 at the age of 86.

- On the trail, canines need about 10,000 calories daily. How that is attained depends on their feeding program, which varies from kennel to kennel.
- The core diet is a premium kibble, specifically designed to have much higher levels of protein and fat than regular commercial pet food. Additional fat supplements (saturated or unsaturated, i.e., animal or plant sources) are needed to attain the 10,000-calorie level. Meats and fish are used to enhance palatability and/or as snacks. Of course, the more fat that is in the meat, the less pure fat supplement needed.
- There has been a huge amount of research into the topic of dog food. Authors include Grandjean (Royal Canin), Reynolds (Purina) and Reinhart (Iams). Knowledge gained by research into the nutritional needs of the sled dog has led to significant improvements in pet food formulations.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

The Iditarod Trail Committee (ITC) takes great pride in its role of providing excellence in canine athlete care, not only during the race but also through an extensive program of pre-race veterinary screening.

- A licensed veterinarian performs a complete pre-race physical examination on each canine athlete within 14 days of the race start. Within 30 days of the race start, each canine receives an ECG evaluation to check for heart abnormalities. Since the implementation of this measure, four canine athletes have not been allowed to race.
- Pre-race blood work (CBC's and Chemistry panels) is performed on each canine athlete.
- All canine athletes are identified with a microchip implant.
- All canine athletes have current vaccinations and are de-wormed within 10 days of the race start.
- Rookie mushers are required to complete qualifying races of considerable distance before entering the Iditarod to ensure that they are experienced in providing the proper care (nutrition, hydration, rest, etc.) for their teams. In addition, the ITC hosts a mandatory two- day rookie seminar in December prior to the race.
- In addition to the high standard of care provided by the mushers themselves, more than 40 licensed, professional veterinarians, volunteer their time on the trail to perform routine evaluations and administer any necessary treatments.
- During the Race itself, well over 10,000 planned checkpoint examinations take place.
- Canine care diaries are carried by each musher and are utilized by the mushers and veterinarians at each checkpoint to serve as a written medical record for each athlete in the race.
- All mushers competing in the Iditarod are members of P.R.I.D.E., which stands for "Providing Responsible Information on a Dog's Environment" and is an organization whose membership consists of a wide variety of mushers, veterinarians and other interested individuals from around the world. Those familiar with sled dogs will appreciate the guidelines established by P.R.I.D.E. as being sound advice for the care of this special breed.

- The International Sled Dog Veterinary Medical Association (I.S.D.V.M.A.) published The Musher and Veterinary Handbook, a highly regarded resource, which provides important information to the musher and veterinarian alike. As an organization consisting primarily of medical professionals with an interest in and/or experience in working with sled dogs, the I.S.D.V.M.A. actively promotes and encourages their welfare and safety. Many members of the organization have served as trail veterinarians during the Iditarod itself. The I.S.D.V.M.A. also supports and encourages scientific research to further a better understanding of the racing sled dog.
- Over the past two decades, the ITC has been involved with veterinary research studies at Oregon State University, Oklahoma State University, Ohio State University, University of Illinois, Colorado State University and Cornell. The information from these studies, focusing on cardiovascular, muscular, skeletal and gastrointestinal health and overall nutrition of sled dogs, have benefited canines around the world.
- Race policies and rules are written with the greatest emphasis on the proper care and treatment of the canine athletes. Any musher found guilty of inhumane treatment will be disqualified and banned from competition in future Iditarod's.
- The result of these efforts is a level of health care and screening that even an overwhelming majority of the human population will never experience

## IDITAROD RACE HEADQUARTERS CONTACT INFORMATION

The Iditarod Trail Committee operates its primary race headquarters in Anchorage at The Lakefront Anchorage, 4800 Spenard Road. For the 2021 race, media members are encouraged to attend the virtual daily briefing in order to get the latest race information. Details will be provided by the media coordinator and Iditarod officials when the race is underway.

<b>General Information, Updates and Race Business:</b> Anchorage Race Headquarters at The Lakefront Anchorage Hotel, 4800 Spenard Road, Room 1004	907-248-MUSH (6874)
<b>Iditarod Media Coordinator:</b> Bri Kelly, Thompson & Co. Public Relations	<a href="mailto:bri@thompsonpr.com">bri@thompsonpr.com</a>



## 2021 IDITAROD HONORARY MUSER

### **2021 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race Honorary Musher**

The honorary musher is a symbolic designation to someone who has made a significant contribution to furthering the Iditarod's legacy and wears bib No. 1 of the race. The honorary musher is traditionally the first to leave the Iditarod ceremonial start's starting line in downtown Anchorage at the corner of Fourth Avenue and D Street.

\*Recipient to be announced.



## 2021 TEACHER ON THE TRAIL – JIM DEPREZ



Jim Deprez is the 2021 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™. Mr. Deprez teaches 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in Ohio. He is originally from Massachusetts and therefore a big New England sports fan. After coming out to Ohio for college where he met his wife, he started his teaching career after graduating from The Ohio State University, and therefore is also a huge Ohio State fan as well.

He was introduced to the Iditarod in his first year of teaching and saw the huge impact it had on the 2nd graders at the time. He saw how much this age group likes friendly competition, and LOVES dogs, so the Iditarod is a perfect combination!

Since then, he has taught in Raleigh, North Carolina, and three different school districts in Ohio; bringing the Iditarod with him wherever he taught. The result has always been the same; the kids love learning about and following the Iditarod.

He is looking forward to sharing with all of Iditarod Education students some of the things that he has done with his students in the past and also connecting with other teachers on what they are doing in their classrooms.

Feel free to contact Jim Deprez with any questions at [emailtheteacher@iditarod.com](mailto:emailtheteacher@iditarod.com)!

*\*Mr. Deprez will be participating as the Teacher on the Trail from home in Ohio due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

### ANCHORAGE START INFORMATION

Welcome to the 2021 Iditarod. Thanks, so much for your interest in our race. As you are aware, this year's race is going to look very different on and off the trail. The Iditarod is taking this pandemic very seriously and adding additional precautions to help protect and preserve the tradition of dog mushing and the rich culture of the communities along the trail – just like the main mission of why this race is held. Read the Iditarod's comprehensive COVID-19 mitigation plan [here](#).

One of the changes due to the race's stringent COVID-19 safety protocols (developed in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Health & Social Services) relates to media access during the ceremonial start. **For 2021, the Iditarod will not be credentialing any members of the media for access to race-controlled and permitted areas.**

Part of the Iditarod's COVID-19 mitigation plan is implementing "bubbles" to prevent the potential exposure to coronavirus. To this end, the Iditarod is strongly encouraging members of the media not to travel along the race trail out of the utmost caution. This applies to the ceremonial start. No members of the media will be allowed to access Iditarod-controlled areas in checkpoints.

**You may still attend and travel as a member of the public, but you will not be granted access to areas under permit by Iditarod. This mandate is meant to protect the communities, the mushers, veterinarians, pilots, race judges, and communications personnel on the trail.**

Thank you again for sharing your stories of the Iditarod, the Last Great Race on Earth, with the rest of the world. If you have any questions, please contact Bri Kelly with Thompson & Co. PR at [bri@thompsonpr.com](mailto:bri@thompsonpr.com).

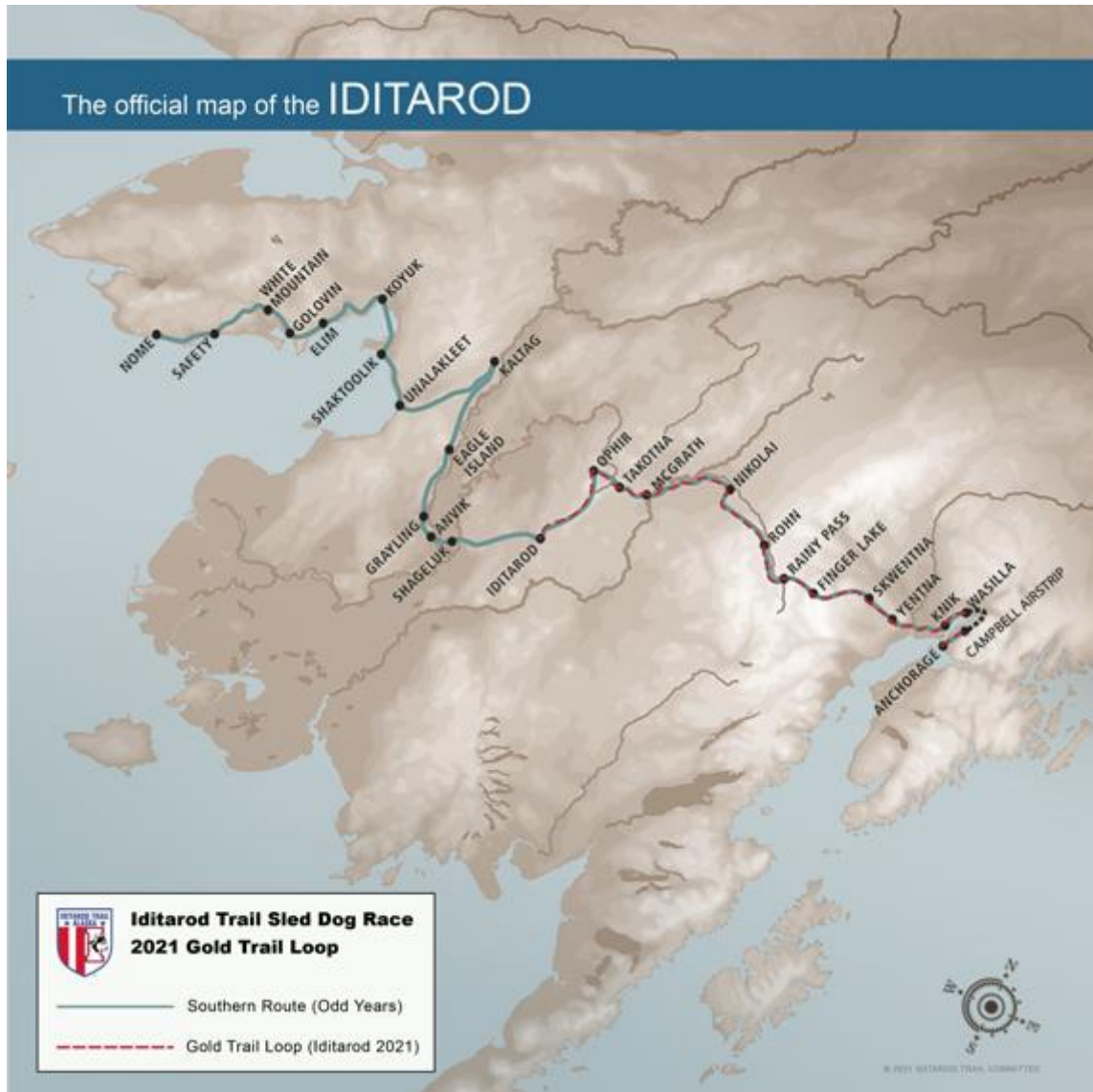


## IDITAROD RESTART MEDIA ACCESS – DESHKA LANDING

The 2021 Iditarod Restart will begin at 2 p.m. on Sunday, March 7, 2021.

The restart will be staged at Deshka Landing, located approximately 7.5 road miles from Willow Lake. The area serves as a year-round access point to the Lower Susitna Drainage consisting of the Susitna River, Deshka River, Yentna River, Alexander Creek and all tributaries

There will be very limited spectator opportunities outside of the secure area where only race essential personnel and participants will be allowed. All race fans will be able to watch the restart and the finish at [Iditarod.com](http://Iditarod.com) and via Iditarod's partner broadcast media outlet, KTUU.



OFFICIAL CHECKPOINT MILEAGES – IDITAROD GOLD TRAIL LOOP

CHECKPOINTS	DISTANCE BETWEEN	FROM ANCHORAGE
Anchorage to Campbell Airstrip	11 miles	11 miles
Deshka to Yentna Station	42 miles	78 miles
Yentna to Skwentna	30 miles	83 miles
Skwentna to Finger Lake	40 miles	123 miles
Finger Lake to Rainy Pass	30 miles	153 miles
Rainy Pass to Rohn	35 miles	188 miles
Rohn to Nikolai	75 miles	263 miles
Nikolai to McGrath	48 miles	311 miles
McGrath to Ophir	41 miles	329 miles
Ophir to Iditarod	80 miles	432 miles
Iditarod to Flat	10 miles	442 miles

Note: As of 2012, the southern route distance is approximately 998 miles. In previous years the distance was always over 1,000 miles. Three things factor into this adjustment:

- The change in the ceremonial start running from downtown Anchorage to Campbell Airstrip instead of Eagle River.
- The change of the restart location from Wasilla to Willow (loss of Wasilla-Knik-Yentna River runs).
- The actual year-to-year trail conditions can affect trail routing and the actually mileage will vary somewhat from year to year.
- For the 2021 race, Takotna will not be a checkpoint.

“1,049 miles®” has been a symbolic figure from the inception of the race to signify the 1,000 miles or more of race trail and the number 49 depicts Alaska as the 49<sup>th</sup> state.

**Pronunciation, Population and Facts of Interest**

***Anchorage (ang-ker-ij) – (ANC) Lat 61.12 Long 149.55***

Population: 298,000– Anchorage is Alaska's largest city with a full range of transportation and hotel accommodations. The race starts downtown on Fourth Avenue. Interesting side trips during March include Portage Glacier or downhill skiing at Mount Alyeska, both less than an hour drive south, or head north to Hatcher Pass for cross-country skiing and to explore the remains of Independence Mine.

***Deshka Landing – Lat 61.72, Long 150.19***

The restart will take place at Deshka Landing in 2021. Deshka Landing serves as a year-round access point to the Lower Susitna Drainage consisting of the Susitna River, Deshka River, Yentna River, Alexander Creek and all tributaries.

***Yentna Station -- (YENT-na) -- (YENT) Lat 61.46 N Long 150.41W***

Population: 8 – This checkpoint is at the home of the Dan and Jean Gabryzack family.

***Skwentna (SKWENT-nuh) - (SKW) Lat 61.55 Long 151.11***

Population: 37 – Located near the confluence of the Skwentna and Yentna Rivers. The checkpoint is located at Joe and Norma Delia's log house, also known as the Post Office. There is a store and limited lodging nearby.

***Finger Lake -- (FL) Lat 61.59 Long 152.40***

Population: 2 – In the heart of the snow country, here it is not uncommon to have 10 feet of snow on the ground. The checkpoint is at Winter Lake Lodge.

***Rainy Pass -- (RP) Lat 62.10 Long 152.43***

Population: 2 – This area represents the highest point on the Iditarod Trail as it passes over the majestic Alaska Range. Located on Puntilla Lake is Vern Humble's guiding operation. Known as Rainy Pass Lodge, it is closed down at this time of year. Iditarod uses one of their cabins for a checkpoint and another for mushers to rest in.

***Rohn (RONE) -- (ROH) Lat 62.35 Long 153.21***

Population: 0 – This area is tied with Rainy Pass as having the most spectacular scenery. The gateway to the interior, Rohn Roadhouse marks the transition point where the mushers start to venture into the flatlands of the interior, along with dropping temperatures. Situated near the confluence of the South Fork of the Kuskokwim and Tatina Rivers, the checkpoint is a cabin built in the 1930s. Note: most press mistakenly

refer to this as Rohn River checkpoint, but there is no Rohn River. It's Rohn Roadhouse. Many mushers take their mandatory 24-hour layover here before heading across the treacherous Farewell Bend area. No facilities or lodging are available at Rohn.

***Nikolai (NIK-o-lye) -- (NIK) Lat 63.02 Long 154.22***

Population: 94 – This is the first of many Alaska Native villages along the Iditarod Trail. There is a village store at the far end of town across the airstrip and limited lodging is available through advance booking. The checkpoint is located in the Community Hall.

***McGrath (muh-GRATH) -- (McG) Lat 62.57 Long 155.36***

Population: 304 – Located near the confluence of the Kuskokwim and Takotna Rivers, this thriving community has two stores, a bar and a restaurant. It's the last chance to buy aviation gas, except for Galena, until you reach the coast at Unalakleet. Lodging is also available with advance booking.

***Ophir (OH-fur) -- (OPH) Lat 63.08 Long 156.31***

Population: 0 – Now a ghost town, it took its name in 1908 from a nearby placer creek, one of a dozen streams in Alaska to be named by Bible-reading prospectors, for the lost country of Ophir, the source of King Solomon's gold. Many items and artifacts still remain untouched. The checkpoint is at Dick and Audra Forsgren's cabin.

***Iditarod (I-DIT-a-rod) - Lat 62.38 Long 155.05***

Population: 0 – Now a ghost town, it was once a bustling community of over 10,000. GCI Dorothy G. Page Halfway Award is presented to the first musher to the checkpoint in addition to a trophy and \$3,000 in gold nuggets.

***Flat (flat) – Lat 62.45 Long 158.01***

Population: 0 – The historic mining town of Flat will be the turnaround of the Gold Trail Loop. From here, mushers will travel back through the checkpoints on the Southern Route.



## GOLD TRAIL LOOP DESCRIPTION BETWEEN CHECKPOINTS

### **Anchorage to Campbell Airstrip..... 11 miles**

Ceremonial start of the Iditarod Trail that begins on Fourth Avenue and runs through the snow-covered streets and trails of Anchorage. Each musher participates and carries an Idita-Rider, a passenger who has successfully bid (\$500-\$7,500) to ride in the basket of a particular musher to the end of this 11-mile ceremonial start.

### **Deshka to Yentna Station ..... 42 miles**

The trail begins at Deshka Landing in 2021. The race will start at what's considered the airstrip heading to Coral Hill and then to the Susitna River. Once the teams drop onto the Big Susitna River they travel to the Yentna Station Checkpoint, which is located on the Yentna River.

### **Yentna Station to Skwentna ..... 30 miles**

The mushers run the Yentna all the way to the confluence with the Skwentna River and the town of Skwentna, three miles from the mouth. These slow moving glacial rivers normally provide very good trails. They are all from one fourth to more than a mile wide and freeze thick enough to provide a good trail until late into the winter. Hazards are sometimes plentiful with rough ice to manhandle a sled over and around. Overflow, water running on top of the ice, can be a very real problem in some conditions.

### **Skwentna to Finger Lake..... 40 miles**

From the Skwentna checkpoint, the trail continues up the river for one mile and turns off on the left bank. It continues inland across Eight-Mile Swamp through spruce timber and cottonwoods to the Old Skwentna Roadhouse. The crossing is at a 45-degree angle to the river. The trail climbs up a creek drainage turning first right and then left into an open swamp, long and narrow, and through spruce forest for 2-2.5 miles to Shell Creek. Overflow and/or open water is often a problem. From Shell Creek the trail continues, crossing One Stone Lake. From there to Finger Lake are open swamps and thin stands of spruce and alder. The trail crosses to the north shore and the Finger Lake cabin. All grades are moderate or gentle with no hard climbs and no dense woods.

### **Finger Lake to Puntilla Lake (Rainy Pass Lodge) ..... 30 miles**

At Finger Lake the trail drops sharply onto Red Lake leaving the lake at the northwest corner. It climbs steeply leaving the lake at the northwest corner. It climbs steeply up a small creek bed to the benches above Finger Lake. From here it is through swamps, spruce and alder forest to Happy River. At the river there are three benches to descend with the first being the longest drop, known as the "Steps". A small drainage leads down to the level bench and the trail drops straight down this "V". From this bench the trail descends off the right end to the bench along the river. The last drop is onto the river itself. This section is one of the most hazardous on the trail and extreme caution must be exercised here. The trail will be well marked and the descents will have a straight lead-in.

Once on the river itself, the trail turns left to the mount (200') and then right, going up the Skwentna River. Approximately 1/4 mile up the Skwentna is a draw coming down from the right and the trail goes up this draw. A ramp may have to be constructed because the bank has washed away leaving a cut bank four to eight feet high. Once into the draw, stay to the right side as the left side leads to a vertical wall 6' high and is impassable. The draw is only 125 - 150 yards long and once on top the trail continues northwest to Shirley Lake passing through spruce and cottonwood and rolling hills. No grades are steep or long. The steepest grade is up the draw from the Skwentna River. The trail exits Shirley Lake on the northwest side and continues through spruce and cottonwood to Round Mountain. There are some moderate but short grades and a couple of steep but short grades both up and down. At Round Mountain a side hill is encountered and brush is encroaching on the trail. From here to Puntilla Lake is a distance of three to four miles and is gentle terrain with open swamps and sparse timber.

**Puntilla Lake to Rohn..... 35 miles**

Puntilla Lake (Rainy Pass Lodge) is 1835 feet above sea level and from here the trail climbs through Rainy Pass reaching 3160 feet above sea level. From the lodge the trail climbs a small hill and enters the valley. It runs on the north side of the ridge that separates the Indian Creek drainage from Happy River drainage. The trail gradually crosses to the right side of the valley and where Happy River forks three ways, follows Pass Creek (the right fork) into Rainy Pass itself. The climb is gentle but the terrain is barren with a few willow thickets and the snow is wind packed to ice and very rough. Once across Rainy Pass Lake (Puntilla Lake), the trail climbs to the summit and descends along Dalzell Creek. Dalzell Creek runs to the Tatina River and here the trail turns sharply left and continues five to six miles to the Rohn checkpoint.

**Rohn to Nikolai..... 75 miles**

The trail leaves Rohn and crosses the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River and turns sharply left (inland) about 3/4 mile below the Rohn checkpoint. From here to Farewell Lake the trail crosses sharp hills with moderate and steep grades, both up and down. Some of the grades are up to 1/2 - 1 3/4 miles long. The trail is very narrow in places and in some of the denser stands of spruce is a tunnel. The worst area is the Tin Creek with a steep side hill drop to the canyon floor and a climb up the other side. This climb is to the right of the gorge (100-150 yards) and should be well marked. The trail from Tin Creek to Farewell Lake continues through spruce and alder. In the open areas the trail is but a rut when the snow is light. It crosses several "wallows" which are very rough. Approaching Farewell Lake the terrain levels out somewhat and crosses a small lake a couple of miles prior to dropping onto Farewell. This is bison (buffalo) country!

The trail leaves Farewell Lake at the northwest end of the lake and for the next 8-10 miles passes through dense spruce forest and across lakes. It then enters the old "Farewell Burn." In the summer of 1984, the B.L.M. cleared the trail through the Burn. It is 25 feet wide and was cleared to bare ground so there are no windfalls. The terrain is rolling with short moderate grades. This trail segment is approximately 20 miles long and it then enters very large open swamps to the Salmon River. Trail markings are the only visual references for direction. At the Salmon River the trail turns to the right, crosses the Salmon River at the cabins and continues

to Nikolai through spruce and alder stands and open swamps. It crosses the Kuskokwim River into Nikolai. The one danger area through the Burn is at Bear Creek, which has a history of being open. Bridges will be built, if needed, and the area will be well marked. Nikolai will be a restricted tent camp checkpoint only with no access to any community buildings.

**Nikolai to McGrath..... 48 miles**

From Nikolai, the trail runs west to McGrath. The terrain is mostly flat. The trail passes through open swamps, small stands of spruce and alder and runs on the river itself. There are no grades to consider. This section is well-traveled and should present no problems unless deep fresh snow is encountered, at which time the trail is very soft. McGrath is a major staging area and many trails run out of town. The Iditarod will be well marked to prevent confusion.

**Ophir to Iditarod ..... 80 miles**

Out of the Ophir checkpoint the trail follows a cat trail along the Innoko River into the old town site, about a mile. It runs right down the airport runway and crosses the Innoko about a mile further along. You cross the river again at six miles out of the checkpoint. Large spruce, birch and cottonwood here provide a good camping spot. Immediately after crossing the Innoko, the cat trail forks -left to Iditarod. It will be marked. A long up grade through black spruce to the Beaver Mountain Pass across a barren rocky, desolate area. Two small creeks cross this stretch offering the only meager cover available. The trail is heading in a West - Southwest direction. Six to eight miles after re-entering spruce cover; you pass Don's Cabin on the right side of the trail. You are 36 miles from Ophir. The trail crosses a small spruce-covered ridge and crosses Windy Creek. The trail runs south on the east side of the Iditarod trail through open timber, swamps, and lakes into Iditarod. The checkpoint is on the west side of the large slough with old town on the left.

**Iditarod to Flat ..... 10 miles**

The trail out of Iditarod follows a historic freighting trail southeast. Musher's will traverse approximately eight miles of low rolling hill before they reach the historic mining town of flat.

1973-2020 CHAMPIONS & RED LANTERN WINNERS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Musher</u>	<u>D:H:M:S</u>	<u>Musher</u>	<u>D:H:M:S</u>
1973	Dick Wilmarth	20:00:49:41	John Schultz	32:05:09:01
1974	Carl Huntington	20:15:02:07	Red Olson	29:06:36:10
1975	Emmitt Peters	14:14:43:45	Steve Fee	29:08:37:13
1976	Gerald Riley	18:22:58:17	Dennis Corrington	26:08:42:51
1977	Rick Swenson	16:16:27:13	Vasily Zamitkyn	22:09:06:06
1978	Dick Mackey	14:18:52:24	Andrew Foxie	22:03:29:44
1979	Rick Swenson	15:10:37:47	Gene Leonard	24:09:02:22
1980	Joe May	14:07:11:51	Barbara Moore	24:09:25:45
1981	Rick Swenson	12:08:45:02	Jim Strong	18:06:30:30
1982	Rick Swenson	16:04:40:10	Ralph Bradley	26:13:59:59
1983	Rick Mackey	12:14:10:44	Scott Cameron	21:04:36:41
1984	Dean Osmar	12:15:07:33	Bill Mackey	19:09:43:33
1985	Libby Riddles	18:00:20:17	Monique Bene	22:03:45:45
1986	Susan Butcher	11:15:06:00	Mike Peterson	20:13:42:21
1987	Susan Butcher	11:02:05:13	Rhodi Karella	19:09:01:01
1988	Susan Butcher	11:11:41:40	Lesley Monk	19:13:22:55
1989	Joe Runyan	11:05:24:34	Bob Hoyt	17:11:19:19
1990	Susan Butcher	11:01:53:23	Steve Haver	21:10:26:26
1991	Rick Swenson	12:16:34:39	Brian O'Donoghue	22:05:55:55
1992	Martin Buser	10:19:17:15	Vern Cherneski	18:13:05:02
1993	Jeff King	10:15:38:15	Lloyd Gilbertson	18:04:19:19
1994	Martin Buser	10:13:02:39	Mark Chapoton	16:16:17:35
1995	Doug Swingley	09:02:42:19	Ben Jacobson	17:06:02:05
1996	Jeff King	09:05:43:13	Andy Sterns	15:23:48:22
1997	Martin Buser	09:08:30:15	Ken Chase	15:09:07:44
1998	Jeff King	09:05:52:26	Brad Pozarnsky	14:05:42:04
1999	Doug Swingley	09:14:31:07	Jeremy Gebauer	15:03:18:44
2000	Doug Swingley	09:00:58:06	Fedor Konyjkhov	15:05:44:44
2001	Doug Swingley	09:19:55:50	Karen Ramstead	14:23:53:16
2002	Martin Buser	08:22:46:02	David Straub	14:05:38:12
2003	Robert Sørлие	09:15:47:36	Russell Bybee	15:05:30:53
2004	Mitch Seavey	09:12:20:22	Perry Solmonson	15:02:50:36
2005	Robert Sørлие	09:18:39:31	Phil Morgan	15:06:02:57
2006	Jeff King	09:14:11:36	Glenn Lockwood	15:18:08:56
2007	Lance Mackey	09:05:08:41	Ellen Halverson	16:11:56:20
2008	Lance Mackey	09:11:46:48	Deborah Bicknell	15:05:36:12
2009	Lance Mackey	09:21:38:46	Tim Hunt	15:14:06:22

2010	Lance Mackey	08:23:59:09	Celeste Davis	13:05:06:40
2011	John Baker	08:18:46:39	Ellen Halverson	13:19:45:49
2012	Dallas Seavey	09:04:29:26	Jan Steves	14:11:57:03
2013	Mitch Seavey	09:07:39: 56	Christine Roalofs	13:22:36:08
2014	Dallas Seavey	08:13:04:19	Marcelle Fressineau	13:04:42:08
2015	Dallas Seavey	08:18:13:06	Cindy Abbott	13:11:19:51
2016	Dallas Seavey	08:11:20:16	Mary Helwig	13:08:51:30
2017	Mitch Seavey	08:03:40:13**	Cindy Abbott	12:02:57:31*
2018	Joar Leifseth Ulsom	09:12:00:00	Magnus Kaltenborn	12:20:13:14
2019	Peter Kaiser	09:12:39:06	Victoria Hardwick	14:22:51:49
2020	Thomas Waerner	09:10:37:47	Kaci Murringer	13:22:29:45

\*\* Fastest winning time

\* Fastest Red Lantern time

## ALPHABETICAL MUSHER LIST

PHOTO	NAME	CITY	STATE	COUNTRY	STATUS
	Travis Beals	Willow	AK	USA	Veteran
	Anna Berington	Knik	AK	USA	Veteran
	Kristy Berington	Knik	AK	USA	Veteran
	Aaron Burmeister	Nome/Nenana	AK	USA	Veteran
	Martin Buser	Big Lake	AK	USA	Veteran
	Rick Casillo	Talkeetna	AK	USA	Veteran
	Larry Daugherty	Eagle River	AK	USA	Veteran
	Jeff Deeter	Fairbanks	AK	USA	Veteran



Richie Diehl	Aniak	AK	USA	Veteran
Paige Drobny	Fairbanks	AK	USA	Veteran
Gabe Dunham	Willow	AK	USA	Rookie
Riley Dyché	Fairbanks	AK	USA	Veteran
Alan Eischens	Wasilla	AK	USA	Veteran
Matthew Failor	Willow	AK	USA	Veteran
Linwood Fielder	Willow	AK	USA	Veteran
Marcelle Fressineau	Whitehorse	YT	CANADA	Veteran
Cindy Gallea	Wykoff	MN	USA	Veteran



Matt Hall	Two Rivers	AK	USA	Veteran
Hal Hanson	Kenai	AK	USA	Rookie
Victoria Hardwick	Bethel	AK	USA	Veteran
Karin Hendrickson	Wasilla	AK	USA	Veteran
Jessie Holmes	Nenana	AK	USA	Veteran
Joanna Jagow	Fairbanks	AK	USA	Rookie
Gunnar Johnson	Duluth	MN	USA	Veteran
Dan Kaduce	Chatanika	AK	USA	Veteran
Peter Kaiser	Bethel	AK	USA	Veteran





Dennis Kananowicz	Tolsona	AK	USA	Veteran
Joar Leifseth Ulsom	Mo I Rana		NORWAY	Veteran
Brenda Mackey	Two Rivers	AK	USA	Rookie
Wade Marrs	Willow	AK	USA	Veteran
Joshua McNeal	Fairbanks	AK	USA	Rookie
Quince Mountain	Mountain	WI	USA	Rookie
Ryne Olson	Two Rivers	AK	USA	Veteran
Christopher Parker	Fairbanks	AK	USA	Rookie



Aaron Peck	Grande Prairie	AB	CANADA	Veteran
Nicolas Petit	Girdwood	AK	USA	Veteran
Michelle Phillips	Tagish	YT	CANADA	Veteran
Mille Porsild			DENMARK	Veteran
Ryan Redington	Wasilla	AK	USA	Veteran
Jessie Royer	Fairbanks	AK	USA	Veteran
Brent Sass	Eureka	AK	USA	Veteran
Dakota Schlosser	Willow	AK	USA	Rookie
Dallas Seavey	Talkeetna	AK	USA	Veteran



Lev Shvarts	Willow	AK	USA	Veteran
Ramey Smyth	Willow	AK	USA	Veteran
Chad Stoddard	Anchorage	AK	USA	Rookie
Cody Strathe	Fairbanks	AK	USA	Veteran
Shaynee Traska	Gladwin	MI	USA	Veteran
Will Troshynski	Fairbanks	AK	USA	Rookie
Susannah Tuminelli	Willow	AK	USA	Rookie
Sean Underwood	Talkeetna	AK	USA	Rookie
Sean Williams	Chugiak	AK	USA	Rookie



Aliy Zirkle	Two Rivers	AK	USA	Veteran
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## DICTIONARY OF MUSHING TERMINOLOGY

- **Gee** - Command for right turn
- **Haw** - Command for left turn
- **Come Gee! Come Haw!** - Commands for 180-degree turns in either direction
- **Line Out!** - Command to lead canine to pull the team out straight from the sled. Used mostly while hooking canines into team or unhooking them
- **Mush! Hike! All Right! Let's Go!** - Commands to start the team
- **Whoa!** - Command used to half the team, accompanied by heavy pressure on the brake

**NOTE:** Teams are directed through spoken orders. The leader of the team must understand all that is said and guide the others according. An intelligent leader is an absolute necessity. At times it appears that there is E.S.P. between musher and the leader.

### Mushing Vocabulary:

- **Alaskan Husky** - "Breed" generally used as sled dog. Not recognized by the American Kennel Club.
- **Booties** - Type of sock made to protect canines' feet from small cuts and sores. They are usually made out of a light weight pack cloth.
- **Dog in Basket** - Tired or injured canine carried in sled.
- **Double Lead** - Two canines that lead the team side by side.
- **Indian Dog** - An Alaskan Husky from an Indian village.
- **Lead Dog or Leader** - Dog(s) who run in front of others and are generally must be both intelligent and fast.
- **Swing Dog/Dogs** - Canines that run directly behind the leader and help "swing" the team in the turns or curves.
- **Malamute** - A registered breed, larger than most sled dogs Term often used by old timers for any sled dog Breed not often used in mushing teams.
- **Neck Line** - A line that connects a dog's collar to the tow line and between the two collars of a double lead
- **Pedaling** - Pushing the sled with one foot while the other remains on the runner
- **Rigging** - Collection of lines to which canines are attached and includes towline, tug lines and necklines.
- **Runners** - Two bottom pieces of the sled that come in contact with the snow and extend back to the basket for the driver to stand on. Runners are usually wood, covered with plastic or Teflon, which is usually replaced at least once during the Race.
- **Slats** - Thin strips of wood that make up the bottom of a wooden sled basket.
- **Snow Hook or Ice Hook** - A heavy piece of metal attached to sled by line and embedded in the snow in order to hold the team for short periods of time.
- **Snub Line** - Rope attached to the sled used to tie the sled to a tree or other object.
- **Stove Up** - Injured generally temporary and applies to both mushers and canines.
- **Tether Line** - A long chain with shorter pieces of chain extending from it and used to stake out a team when stakes aren't available.