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Kjell Inge Røkke Named First-Ever Iditarod Expedition Musher

New Program Celebrates Global Supporters, Boosts Race Sustainability and Awareness

Wasilla, Alaska — The Iditarod Trail Committee (ITC) proudly announces the launch of a groundbreaking new initiative: the Iditarod Expedition Musher Program. This special honorary category welcomes distinguished individuals from around the world to race the iconic Iditarod while promoting the race’s values of endurance, cultural heritage, and respect for the Arctic environment.

Norwegian businessman and philanthropist Kjell Inge Røkke will make history as the first-ever Expedition Musher during the 2026 Iditarod. Mr. Røkke has a deep admiration for the Iditarod’s unique spirit of human-animal partnership and Arctic exploration. In recognition of his passion, commitment, and philanthropic support, the ITC has formally endorsed his participation.

"On behalf of the Iditarod Board of Directors, we are honored to welcome Kjell Inge Røkke, a remarkable visionary and adventurer, whose passion for dog mushing, the adventure of the open trail, and our Alaskan communities is consistent with the Iditarod’s enduring spirit and mission." said Mike Mills, President of the Iditarod Board of Directors.

"The Expedition Musher Program opens a new chapter in Iditarod history—one that brings enhanced global visibility, financial sustainability, and cultural outreach," said Iditarod CEO Rob Urbach. "Mr. Røkke embodies the spirit of the trail, and we’re thrilled to welcome him on this extraordinary journey."

Mr. Røkke will participate in the race along with the entire field and while he will be allowed outside assistance he will be required to complete the entire race on the sled in order to officially finish under the burlled Arch in Nome and be one of few humans in the world that have earned the coveted Finishers Buckle. His participation will align with Iditarod safety and media protocols, and while exempt from certain race official race rules, he has committed to following "best mushing practices" to ensure exemplary dog care and that the integrity and flow of the race are maintained.

Iditarod Trail Committee
2100 South Knik-Goose Bay Road • Wasilla, Alaska 99654
907.376.5155 • www.iditarod.com



As part of his Ambassador role, Mr. Røkke has pledged substantial philanthropic support, including:

- \$2,000 for each official musher registered by November 28, 2025
- \$25,000 in direct financial support to the Iditarod Trail Committee
- \$100,000 to increase the 2026 race purse to \$650,000
- \$170,000 in community support for the 17 Alaska Native villages along the Northern and Southern Routes.

Mr. Røkke will bring his own dog team, veterinarian and support personnel, all operating under Iditarod's kennel and humane care standards.

The Expedition Musher Program is part of a broader effort by the ITC to raise awareness, attract global supporters, and strengthen the cultural and environmental legacy of the Last Great Race on Earth®. This unprecedented step blends tradition with innovation—helping to ensure the Iditarod continues to thrive for generations to come.

Media contact:

Shannon Noonan
Director of Marketing & Communications
Iditarod Trail Committee
shannon.noonan@iditarod.com

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About the Iditarod

The Iditarod Trail Committee is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve the rich tradition of the Alaska sled dog and the Iditarod Trail. The organization is charged with coordinating the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, an annual long-distance sled dog race stretching from Anchorage to Nome for nearly a 1,000-mile journey through Alaska over the roughest, most breathtaking terrain in the world. For more information, visit: www.iditarod.com.