

[Home](#)

[Contact](#)

[Pictures 2009](#)

[Podcast](#)

[Race Info](#)

[Message Board](#)

[Leaderboard 2009](#)

Latest News

New! Bill uploaded a [youtube video](#) about this year's race capturing his time with the racers on Rainy Pass.

April 1, 2009 09:50

Marco arrived in Nome at 03:00 this morning in 2nd place. Marco has now finished the Northern and Southern Route of the Iditarod Trail. The locals had been concerned about him because the wind on the coast had picked up again and fresh snow covered the trails for the last 79 miles from White Mountain. What a way to finish an 1100 mile race!

Well done Marco. You are strong, determined and you arrived in Nome for the second time. Congratulations on a good finish in such a tough year. See you when the volcano lets you get back to Anchorage.

Redoubt Volcano has been erupting and spewing ash closing the airport again last night. Let's hope that Marco can fly home soon.

March 26, 2009 09:18

We Have A Winner

Tim Hewitt arrived in Nome last night at 23:29. (corrected for daylight savings time)

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

With his unprecedented 4th finish to Nome Tim established a Southern Route foot record of 25 days 9 hours and 29 minutes.

Tim left White Mountain around 20:00 on the 25th. He said, "At the summit of the second hill on Topcock it really started blowing and from there to Safety my sled was constantly flipping over in the wind, turning me around like a weather vane and at times I couldn't take another step into it." He finally held his harness in his down wind hand for a while and let the sled float along beside him. When he arrived at the Nome Kennel Club shelter cabin at 05:00 he said it was shaking and rattling. Knowing he faced several miles of the Salomon Blowhole Tim rested, ate, made water and drank because he knew it would be the last time until he broke out of the blowhole near Safety if the wind kept blowing. The mental fortitude and strength it takes to force yourself out of the shelter cabin and into a bitterly cold North wind, wind chill of the charts, at the end of an 1100 mile race is beyond anyone's comprehension that hasn't been in his shoes.

Phil Hofstetter (One of our race veterans who lives in Nome) rode out on his snow machine 16 miles to greet Tim and cheer him on. He went back to town and sat and flashed his car lights like a beacon to welcome him in. Such a welcome is priceless and Tim said Phil was a Trail Angel to a tired, trail weary racer.

In 2008 Tim had high winds for 6 days on the coast. This year the winds were even worse and began as soon as he hit the Yukon hardly letting up all the way to Nome. CONGRATULATIONS Tim for a great finish in a tough year!!!!!!!

"Oh, by the way Tim, You won a free entry for next year!!!!!!"

Tim under the Burled Arch in Nome

March 26, 2009 23:29



March 31, 2009 08:30

Marco called yesterday around noon and left a message saying he arrived in White Mountain at 09:00. He didn't call when he left but I expect that he just rested a short while and headed out on the home stretch to Nome. When you leave White

Mountain you climb slowly out of the valley into the treeless Topkok Hills. On a calm day it is a beautiful wind carved snowscape through the hills. You catch glimpses of the Bering Sea between the hiltops with sunshine sparkling on open water but quite often even seeing you feet is impossible in the blinding windstorms that frequent the area. After dropping out of the Topkok Hills Marco will head down the coast past Safety and on to Nome.

March 28, 2009 19:30

Marco arrived in Elim at 17:00 today. The winds have calmed down but now it's snowing making the trail soft and slow. He planned to leave Elim tonight around midnight. Marco said he hopes to call us from White Mountain sometime tomorrow night. He said part of him wants to stay and rest and eat but the other side of him just wants to get moving and finish. Hang in there Marco it won't be long now and there is pizza and beer in Nome.

March 25, 2009 15:00

Marco arrived in Shaktoolik at midnight last night. Linda the principal of the school fed him spaghetti and invited him to stay with her and her husband. The wind has been very strong all day. He planned to leave this afternoon about 16:00 after resting and eating a lot. By this point in the race food becomes an obsession. Three hamburgers and fries with 3 cokes for one meal is about right. Marco plans to go to the shelter cabin where he will have a meal and make water for the long sea ice crossing. If the wind is bad he will spend the night but if it calms down he will continue tonight. If you cross at night with good visibility you can see the lights of Koyuk nearly all the way. The lights just seem to sit in one place and never get any closer. But there are hamburgers to be had in Koyuk that inspire you to get there!



March 24, 2009 14:24

Tim just called from Elim. He arrived there at 13:30 this afternoon. He said the wind is still blowing on the coast. Despite that he sounded pretty upbeat. The wind creates what is called sastrugi on the trail which is like a hard choppy frozen sea on one side and a loose snowdrift of BBs on the other side, and your feet slide in it. It is extremely hard to move along on foot pulling a sled or pushing a bike though that like I did last year. It is very tiring!

Tim plans to leave Elim this afternoon after he gets his resupply package and hopes to arrive at the Walla Walla shelter cabin later this afternoon. He said he has to take the overland mail trail since the sea ice blew out. That section on the sea ice was one of my favorite sections last year. We stopped at the Walla Walla cabin which is maintained by the local fire department last year to wait out the big blow and to get enough rest, eat food and hydrate plenty before venturing out again into those winds.

The NOAA forecast site predicts this for today and tonight:

**SOUTHERN SEWARD PENINSULA COAST- INCLUDING...NOME...WHITE MOUNTAIN...GOLOVIN TUE
MAR 24 2009 ...STRONG WINDS FROM EARLY THIS MORNING THROUGH THIS AFTERNOON...
.TODAY...MOSTLY SUNNY. HIGHS 10 TO 15. NORTHEAST WINDS 20 TO 30 MPH. LOCAL GUSTS TO 50
MPH EAST OF NOME WITH BLOWING SNOW. .TONIGHT...PARTLY CLOUDY. LOWS ZERO TO 5 ABOVE
ZERO. NORTHEAST WINDS 15 TO 25 MPH. LOCAL GUSTS TO 35 MPH.**

That means that the wind is going to be blowing hard when Tim goes over the top of Little McKinley, which is a really big hill between Elim and Golovin.

Hang in there Tim, you have made it this far with all the wind and you made it though those nasty winds last year.

March 24, 2009 09:00

Tim arrived in Koyuk at 10:15 yesterday morning. I had been sitting by the phone so I wouldn't miss his call and had the misfortune to be on the phone when Tim called. He left a message on our voice mail. He said, "There were terrible winds all the way and it was the toughest thing I have ever done." This from a man who has literally thousands of miles on the Iditarod Trail over several years. He still managed to end the call on a "positive" note by saying when he left Koyuk at least it would be a tail wind. His next stretch to Elim is about 48 miles. About half way is another of the notorious "blowholes" at Kwik River. There is a shelter cabin on the edge of the blowhole maintained by the Elim volunteer fire department where he can take shelter if it gets too bad. Just before the cabin the trail makes a turn and the tail wind often turns into a nasty crosswind. This basic little cabin is as welcome as the finest hotel room in those conditions.

Marco arrived in Unalakleet at 12:15 yesterday and had just gobbled down a hamburger before he called. He said he planned to go eat a pizza as soon as he got off the phone. He was going to get some rest at the pizza parlor which also doubles as a B&B before heading out to Shaktoolik.

March 22, 2009 09:32

I received a call from Tim last night about 22:30 from Shaktoolik. He got hammered by the big winds for the last 13 miles into the village which sits at the end of a spit of land jutting out between Norton Sound and the Bering Sea. When you drop out of the hills onto this narrow peninsula you are completely exposed to the forces of nature with no place to hide. He said it was all he could do to lean into the driving North wind and move forward. In conditions like that you can't stop to eat, drink or even relieve yourself. Your well being depends on your ability to continue moving until you can get out of the wind. Even the most descriptive writer around can not explain these conditions in a way you could understand unless you have been there. Conditions like this are demoralizing and sap your physical strenght in a way that cold alone could never do.

Tim said he was going to get some rest in the school and see if the wind would drop a bit before he heads out to cross 18 miles of open river delta and 40 miles of sea ice across Norton Sound to Koyuk. This is the stretch of trail where a similiar wind storm turned back 4 time Iditarod champ Jeff King and sent him back to Shaktoolik with his dog team during this years Iditarod Sled Dog Race. The forecast doesn't look too good with 25mph winds with 40 mph gusts forecast. Let's hope the forecasters got it wrong and the wind calms for Tim's crossing.

March 21, 2009 10:46

Tim called his wife Loreen at 01:45 this morning from Unalakleet. He had good trails and weather crossing the Coastal Range. After he left Kaltag he stopped at Tripod Flats cabin for 3 or 4 hours then again to make lunch at Old Woman cabin. His time of just under 33 hours for the 90 mile run from Kaltag to Unalakleet is amazing especially after 700 + miles of winter trail and what he has been through on the Yukon. Here's hoping he has good weather and firm trails on his way to his 4th finish by foot to Nome. The trail up the coast across the Blueberry Hills to Shaktoolik is stunningly beautiful when Mother Nature smiles and gives us the chance to see beyond the trail under our feet.



Marco just called from Kaltag. He arrived there at 21:00 last night. He described the windstorm on the river as walking on a moving white carpet and said much of the time he couldn't even see his snowshoes. There is something to be said for enduring and surviving such tough conditions since Marco told me he feels stronger now than anytime during the race. He will leave for Unalakleet around 14:00.

Tom Jarding called me last night saying he had to return to Kaltag. His stomach bug flared back up and left him dehydrated and drained of energy. He planned to spend the night and re-evaluate things this morning. Another nights sleep didn't help and according to Marco he flew out of Kaltag this morning. Our thoughts are with you Tom and we hope you recover soon!

March 20, 2009 14:20

Tom called today around noon and said he was "mostly" recovered from his stomach bug. He planned to head out of Kaltag to begin the 90 mile trek over the coastal range about 13:00. There are 2 public use cabins on the Portage. Tripod Flats is about 30 miles from Kaltag and Old Woman cabin is about 60 miles. Both cabins have woodstoves and a supply of firewood stocked there by BLM staff. It can be a windy section of trail when you are out of the trees but usually it is a tailwind most of the way to the Bering Sea Coast. There is great Pizza in Unalakleet guys so hang in there.

March 19, 2009 18:40

Tim left Kaltag at 17:00 alone while Tom tries to recover from a stomach virus in Kaltag. Tom hopes to leave Kaltag in the morning if he can shake this bug.

March 19, 2009 15:00

Tom and Tim called in from Kaltag. They arrived at 13:15 after bivying about 10 miles out of town on the river. The Yukon river was a brutal stretch of trail for our racers and the Iditarod this year. After leaving Grayling the wind kept getting stronger and stronger until travel was not only difficult it became downright dangerous. They found a fish camp shelter with a roof and no walls on the downwind side of a point of land and called it home for

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

the next 23 hours. Tim said looking out over the river it looked like the whole thing was crawling down river. After the wind finally slacked a bit and seeing a musher go by they headed for Eagle Island passing 4 mushers dug in bivied in their sledbags in the storm before arriving in Eagle Island. They spent the night with the Iditarod vets and left for Kaltag the next morning. After getting some sleep just outside Kaltag they planned to just dry things out a bit and head across the Portage to Tripod Flats public use cabin for the night. They both sounded tired but determined. The Portage is a beautiful stretch of the trail. I hope the guys get a chance to enjoy it with out the wind or snowshoes.

March 19, 2009 11:00

I just received an e mail from Bob Ostrom with news of Tim, Tom and Marco. Bob is one of our racers who is working for Iditarod in White Mountain. He got an email from the checkers in Eagle Island saying Tim and Tom left Eagle Island yesterday morning and Marco came in this morning at 03:00. Sounds like Tim and Tom may have waited out the windstorm which reeked havoc with the mushers too. It is 70 miles from Eagle Island to Kaltag so I expect to hear from Tim and Tom sometime late tonight or tommorrow morning. Thanks for the update Bob!!! These guys are all very experienced Nome veterans but we are glad to hear from them after these long "black holes"

March 17, 2009 10:26

Marco called this morning from Greyling. He made good time on the river from Anvik and arrived at 01:15. Way to go Marco! 6 hours and 15 minutes for 18 miles in a bad headwind would be tough anytime but after nearly 600 miles that's impressive. He planned to head out as soon as he could get his drop from the post office. He sends, "A big Ciao, Ciao from Marco to Tim and Tom!"

Tim and Tom are just over 48 hours into the 130 miles from Greyling to Kaltag. This stretch of the Yukon River is BIG. Andy Heading descibed it, "This isn't a river it's a bleeping ocean"! At times at least for me it is easier to travel in the dark. It seems time passes quicker while you live in the small circle of light given off by you headlight than when you are looking at distant bends in the river that seem to move further and further back with each step you take. I know they will enjoy striding into the trees for a while when they leave Kaltag.

March 16, 2009 09:00

I found this quote in the ADN this morning: "It's epic," Warren Palfrey told the Iditarod Insider in Kaltag on Sunday. "This is the kind of stuff you can't practice in a non-racing situation. There's no trail. I'm thinking it's gusting 50-60 mph at times and (is a) total whiteout. Luckily there's enough markers out there.

When I read those words my memories of Kathi and I on the coast with Tim in 6 days of wind and cold last year were so real it sent a chill through me. Temps on the river were reported at -20F to -40. These kinds of conditions can't be explained only experienced. It leaves no room for error without a price. It can excite and drive you forward or demoralize you and push you back. Tim, Tom and Marco are all "Veterans of the Wind" and know when they reach Kaltag they will have it at their backs at least to Unalakleet. Here's hoping it just stops blowing!!

March 15, 2009 12:45

Tim and Tom arrived in Anvik yesterday evening about 19:00, but stayed only long enough for a up of coffee and pushed on through to Grayling where they arrived at 01:15 this morning. After a rest and resupply they headed out at 09:40 up the Yukon River to Eagle Island. The guys will be pushing against the infamous downriver wind on the Yukon. They probably call us next from Kaltag 130 miles away since Eagle Island is only an Iditarod checkpoint(wall tents) where they may or may not have the opportunity to call from a Sat Phone. They have been averaging about 45 miles per day, so it could take them 2 and a half days to get to Kaltag.

There was an article this morning in the Anchorage Daily News about the ghost town of Iditarod, once a bustling gold mining town with 5000 residents at the turn of the century:

[Iditarod offers glimpse into past](#)

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

It included an interview with Italian racer Marco Berni who walked the Northern Route in 2006.
He is back this year to complete the Southern Route.

March 15, 2009 21:00

Marco called from Shageluk this afternoon and said he ate 6 cheeseburgers, mashed potatoes, bread, jam and drank milk and 6 cokes. He said he was so hungry. If you have ever met Marco, he is a very thin man with very long legs. I have often wondered when he first did this race how he manages out there.

Now we know: He can eat a lot in one sitting! He said: "I am full, now I can continue up the trail."

He called me this evening and told me that he is leaving Shageluk this evening at 21:00 and will call us again from Grayling. I just looked up the weather info on NOAA for Anvik:

Temperature -4 F (-20 C) Windchill -23 F (-31 C)
Wind from the N (010 degrees) at 13 MPH (11 KT) gusting to 21 MPH (18 KT)
Visibility 10 mile(s) Sky conditions clear

Looks like the wind has picked up on the Yukon River.

Kathi

March 13, 2009 20:00

Tim and Tom called us at 19:00 this evening shortly after they had arrived in Shageluk. They plan to spend some time there drying out their gear and getting ready for the long push on the Yukon River. With cooler temperatures they finally were able to take off their snowshoes for the first time since Puntilla except for a short stretch on the Farewell Burn. Both are in high spirits and ready to push on to Nome. They will pass through the villages of Anvik and Grayling before they enter the long and empty stretch on the Yukon River. We hope to get a call from them from Grayling.

March 13, 2009 12:21

I got word this morning that Billy Koitzsch has scratched in Iditarod. He injured his knee trying to ride a downhill after days of pushing. According to his wife Erica he stuck his foot in a hole when the bike washed out and twisted his knee.

I got this from the message board and thought I would share

WHO FOUND WHO?

Excuse me Kathi but there's a bit of misinformation in your latest message board...:-)...we were busy packing the trail from Iditarod to Shageluk today when we came upon the "Lean Mean Pennsylvania Team", aka "Merchant's Marines", blocking the trail, roasting their socks and offering passers-by doughnuts and ostrich jerky. We quickly closed that part of the trail in the case that Lance Mackey's dogs came upon them and tried to lick them to death, otherwise preventing their untimely end. So they're probably under a tree right now, or walking all night through some of God's most spectacular section of the Iditarod, like they seem want to do (what do you expect for Steelers fans?) And if it wasn't for us good public servants, they might still be roasting their socks. kk

No news of Marco Berni but he should be near if not in Iditarod.

March 12, 2009 13:41

At 14:15 Tim called Loreen from "The third hill beyond Iditarod" where they were having lunch. They said the BLM guys on snowmachines offered their sat phone. Leave it to Tim and Tom to find phones in the middle of nowhere. They are still on snowshoes and looking forward to being passed by the dog teams. I was looking on the Iditarod site which shows the trail breakers moving at 3 mph between Iditarod and Shageluk. Not a good sign for a firmer trail.

March 12, 2009 9:38**The 350 Mile Race is Finished**

At 23:40 March 11th George Azarias our youngest competitor pushed his bike into McGrath to finish the 350.

Less than 3 hours later at 02:30 March 12th Roger Leavesley crossed the finish line in McGrath to win the red lantern award. He has officially set a new record as the oldest finisher to McGrath. When I spoke with Roger this morning he was in good spirits and said he would see us next year to ride a bike to McGrath. I commented that you never know it might be a sidewalk next year and Roger said if he believed that he wouldn't come back. Congratulations to you both for the determination and drive you demonstrated by hanging tough and finishing in less than ideal conditions. Final [race results](#) 350 mile race.

Thanks to each and every racer who started in Knik for joining us for this year's race. I hope to see all of you back 2010 for another experience on the Trail. In a year when Mother Nature and the Iditarod Trail tested us all we had 28 finishers to McGrath. That is the second most finishers we have had. Also I have never heard so many racers fresh off the trail say they would see us next year.

Let's not forget our four racers headed to Nome. We will be by the phone waiting to hear from each of them as they arrive in the villages along the way and keep all of you informed about their progress.

March 11, 2009 18:29

Sean Grady arrived in McGrath at 14:25. Sean had scratched at the Puntilla checkpoint then had second thoughts and headed out to finish what he started. Way to go Sean! We'll have a beer when you get back to the Valley.

March 11, 2009 12:10

I just recieved and e mail from Loreen Hewitt, Tim's wife and the female foot record holder for the McGrath race. Tim called this morning at 09:30 from Don's cabin on a borrowed Sat. phone. His pump for his stove has failed and he is hoping to get one sent to Shageluk. He and Tom were ready to head out. They have just been passed by the Iditarod trail breakers and are hoping to get off the snow shoes soon for the first time since Rainy Pass.

March 11, 2009 11:23

I had a good talk with Roger Leavesley and George Azarias last night when they arrived in Nikolai. As I mentioned in my last post they had just finished the long 13 miles from Salmon River. Roger was sure it was 30 miles. He made the mistake of asking a musher how far it was to Nikolai. The musher told him about 7 miles. 3 hours later he asked another musher and he said about 7 miles. As all of us who have had this happen at the end of a long hard stretch know it can be demoralizing. George said the puppy feet turned a good trail into a sand bed leaving him pushing along at 2 miles per hour. They both left Nikolai this morning around 08:30 for the final push into McGrath.

Howard Cook and Francesco Ghigliotti arrived in McGrath at 23:40 in good shape and high spirits. Savino Musicco arrived at 2400 limping badly but happy to be finished. The three of them left McGrath this morning to fly back to Anchorage.

I haven't heard from Sean Grady yet but expect him to arrive in McGrath soon. Hang in there Sean there is a celebratory beer waiting for you in McGrath.

I am guessing but I expect our leaders in the Nome race, Tim Hewitt and Tom Jarding are passed Don's cabin by now. Billy Koitzsch's spot shows him out of Ophir and I suspect Marco Bernie is beyond Ophir too. Unless the trail has firmed up, which I doubt with temperatures above freezing, snowshoes are faster than pushing a bike.

March 10, 2009 14:10

I just received an e mail from Frank McGuire's wife Lisa that he arrived into McGrath at 03:00 this morning. When he arrived at Peter's and Tracy's everyone was sleeping so he slipped out quietly to spend the night with his wife at the Takusko House. Now they are waiting to see the first few mushers come in before heading home. Way to alaskaultrasport.com/latest_news.html

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News
go Frank!!

I also got an update from George Azarias' spot. Best I can tell he is at the Salmon River bridge. The distance from there to Nikolai is only 13 miles but-----That is one of the longest 13 miles in the race after crossing the Burn. Watch out for them dogs George and best wishes to Nikolai!!!!!!!

March 10, 2009, 9:10 PM

This morning at 06:00 Howard Cook, Savino Musicco, and Francesco Ghigliotti left Nikolai hoping to push through to McGrath without another stop. Even after all this time on the trail Francesco took time this morning to wash dishes for Olene. What a fine thing to do for our wonderful hosts in Nikolai. Thanks Francesco!!!

Billy Koitzsch and Marco Bernie checked in from Takotna last night about 23:00. They planned to leave together around midnight and make the long trip up the big hill out of Takotna towards Ophir. We will probably not hear anything else from the guys until they reach Shageluk and the next phone.

We are still waiting to hear from Sean, Roger and George who are in route to Nikolai. They should have plenty of company since the leaders in the Iditarod Sled dog race will catch and pass them today. More when we hear from them.

March 9, 2009, 9:16 PM

Today about a dozen racers that have finished in McGrath and I flew back to Anchorage. It was hard to part ways with this wonderful group of people that I call my friends and whom I see once a year. I was finally reunited with my husband Bill and we could share our stories about the race. We could catch up on the complete the story about the endurance and drive those athletes showed this year. He showed me some video he took at Rainy Pass of some of the racers making their way through deep snow up towards the pass. They became tiny little dots in a distance advancing slowly up into the mountains disappearing into the blowing snow.

It shows the strength and mental toughness these racers have that are drawn to this race.

I am proud to call them my friends.

I enjoyed sitting on the floor in Peter and Tracy's house and listening to the trail stories until the early morning hours. Among them there was a sense of camaraderie that made the push over Rainy Pass in waist deep snow possible. When they left Rohn the competitive drive had kicked in again and they separated out over the trail again. This race was one to remember and to be talked about in years coming.

Each one of those racers goes back to their every day life and know that they " can do it".

Tim, Tom, Marco and Billy Koitzsch have left McGrath going another 750 miles on to Nome. We will continue to cover them on the website.

Bob Ostrom arrived in McGrath this evening, tired but happy, congratulations Bob!

A big Thank You to all the volunteers and checkpoints:

Rich Crain, Terry and Lisa Boyle, Jasper Bond, Rob Kehrer, Stepanie, Bonnie, Mike and Ingrid Jensen, Carl and Kirsten Dixon, the Perrins family and Sharon and Dick, Nick and Olene Petruska & Stephanie, Peter and Tracy Schneiderheinze, Michael Schoder, Dan Esai, Zoe, Emily, Tony Allen, Irene May

Kathi

March 8, 2009, 23:16

Rick Freeman and Robert Struble finish as well in 17th place.

Kathi

March 8, 2009 3:58 PM

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

Todd Kasteler arrived this afternoon as well. Well done!

Eric Johnson arrives in McGrath in 15th place! Congratulations!!

Lou Kobin and Eric Warkentin arrived in McGrath. You both did a super job this year.

Our first runners arrived last night Tim and Tom. Congratulations!

The Iditarod Sled Dog Race starts today and will go up the Iditarod Trail.

Rob our checker in Rohn said that we he would wait until this evening and then brake down the tent which will be picked up by the pilot. He said it is getting really busy with Iditarod people in Rohn.

Peter and Tracy's house was busy with 12 racers here in McGrath. Everyone stayed up late and was exchanging their experiences on the Iditrod Trail this year. Peter was whirling through the kitchen at 6:00 in the morning cooking up massive stacks of "mancakes" and omlettes. The racers are sleeping and eating and are happy to be here.

I talked to Olene in Nikolai this morning and there is still 7 racers on their way to Nikolai:

Francesco, Frank, George, Howard, Robert, Roger and Savino.

More later....

March 7, 2009 23:20

Ed Plumb finishes in 9th place arriving at 23:53. Great job Ed!

Alec Petro arrives at 23:20 finising in 8th place. Congratulations Alec!

Tracey and Jay Petervary arrived in McGrath this evening.

First woman into McGrath!

Second place for Tracy and Jay Petervary. John Ross arrived shortly after in fourth place, followed our first skier Peter Basinger, 5th place. Then Cory Smith in 6th place and Phil Hofstetter in 7th place.

Congratulations to all of them! They arrived between 19:28 and 21:48 this evening.

It is a big accomplishment to arrive in McGrath in a tough year like this.
And they were all in good spirits and smiling.

What a phantastic group of athletes that joined the race this year.

[pictures](#) of racers in McGrath today.

Kathi

March 7, 19:39

Chris Wrobel and James Leavesley have scratched and just arrived here in McGrath, we have just heard how they left Rohn checkpoint and decided to follow the river to Nikolai. The reason being was that at the start the surface was good and firm and it could be quicker than taking the conventional route. However 15 miles from Nikolai the surface became wet with overflow and conditions worsened. The two of them decided to turn back to Rohn in which they would scratch there, however they met a trapper along the way who kindly flew them to McGrath with their bikes strapped onto the outside of the plane! Its sad that they didn't complete the race but it does sound like they had a mini adventure of their own. They are both well and eating dinner, enjoying the warmth of Peter and Tracey's home.

Emily

March 7, 16:34

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

It is a beautiful day here, the sun is high, the sky is clear and it is a warm 10 degrees F. We have been told that there is another snow storm coming in over the next few days. Lets just hope that all the racers will be here by then and those continuing onto Nome are here or at another comfortable shelter to re energise for what could be another hard stint of pushing!

The news that we have recieved is that Yair is fine, he spoke to Kathi and told her how he had fallen into Skwentna River upto his chest. He is an amazingly well experienced mountaineer and so knew what to do, he undressed and got into his sleeping bag and took shelter. It was a very slow drying process as he put a layer on at a time and waited for his body heat to dry them. The snow machines reached him and took him back to Finger Lake where he has now transferred to Anchorage waiting to fly out to meet his wife in Hawaii.

We have had news that one more racer has scratched, Roberto Gazzoli did leave Puntilla but later returned and has now flown back to Anchorage.

Racers that have moved on from Nikolai are Aidan Harding, Alec Petro, Cory Smith, Edward Plumb, Eric Warkentin, Lou Kobin, Phil Hofsteter, Tim Hewitt and Tom Jarden, we are hoping that they arrive late tonight probably after midnight.

Tracey and Jay Petervary have been spotted 18 miles from McGrath, Peter Basinger was following closely, we are expecting them for dinner probably around 19:00 so we shall keep you posted!

Emily

March 7, 10:04

JEFF OATLEY WINS 2009!

Jeff has finished in an amazing time of 5 days, 19 hours and 34 mins!

Congratulations!

We have given Jeff a hot chocolate, sat him in front of the fire and he is telling his tales of what it was like out there. Not only has this been an amazing race for each individual but it is proving to be a great tale of team work. He has said how the snow over Rainy Pass was waist deep and there was no way 1 person could do it on their own, everyone grouped together and took turns in breaking the trail. This is one of many examples of how this event requires not only individual courage and strength but also strong supportive bonds. It is harsh out there and it is great to know that humans pull together when needed and achieve great things by doing this.



The next racers behind him left 12 hours behind Jeff. Way to go to regain your big lead again after losing it in waist deep snow on Rainy Pass!!

March 7, 2009 09:00

It has been an eventful morning, it started with a knock on the door, I expected it to be Jeff Oatley, it was in fact a local man called Jeff telling us that we needed to get out of the house as it was on fire! We called 911, got ourselves dressed and headed out of the house. The Emergency services were amazing, they responded quickly, thankfully the neighbours had already made calls to them. The fire was in the Chimney and was quickly put out, poor Peter and Tracy though they now have a chimney restoration project ahead of them and the room below needs to be dried out due to the hose pipes flushing water down the chimney.

After this we continued making contact with the state troopers (we called out a search last night for Yair), the helicopters went out for part of the night, this morning they went back up, locals have been out on snow machines as well as a local pilot Michael Schoder. It has been a very tense night, however the great news is that we have just received a call from Michael, he told us that he has found Yair and he seems ok. He is 15 miles off of the trail on a trappers route under a spruce tree. Michael is now organizing a couple of snow machines so that they can break a trail and reach him. He will then be taken back to Finger Lake, a fuel plane is later delivering and so there is a seat for him so that he can return to Anchorage this afternoon.

We are all so glad that you are ok Yair and thank you so much everyone who has been helping us with the search.

So all of this before 9am! Its a huge relief and now we are looking forward to getting all the racers home safely!

Those that are making their way to McGrath are: Peter Basinger, Phil Hofstetter, Tracey and Jay Petervary, Cory Smith, Edward Plumb, John Smith, Alec Petro, we are looking forward to seeing you tonight!

Tim Hewitt and Tom Jarding have reached Nikolai and are getting some rest and we have got the kettle on for Jeff and Cory's arrival here in McGrath!

Well I hope that your day has been a little less eventful than ours, we will be in touch soon!

Kathi

p.s.

Just before publishing this we have just found out that Sean Grady has unscratched and he has just left Puntilla along with George Azarias and Roger Leavesley.

The other very exciting event is that Jeff Oatley has just walked in at 9:34!!!!!! He is still standing, covered in snow but smiling! Well done Jeff you are the 2009 Winner to McGrath, what an amazing accomplishment, this year has tested everyone to the extreme.

March 6, 2009, 22:44

Nore news from Nikolai! Skiers Ed Plumb and bikers Jay and Tracey Petervary arrived. First woman into Nikolai and still going strong. Fantastic effort everyone! I can't wait to see them all here in McGrath. I talked to Jay and he told me that they would eat, rest a bit and head out in two hours and that I would see them for breakfast.

Stay tuned. I expect we could see Jeff or Cory by 7:00 in the morning.

Anchorage Daily News by Craig Medred
[Wilderness race leaders power through pass](#)

[Wilderness racer gets through Rainy Pass](#)

Kathi

March 6, 21:44

News just in-Cory Smith is our first Skier into Nikolai, he sounds fresh but having a quick break before starting his homecoming! He is currently in second place!

March 6, 19:52

Good Evening!

The lead racer has been revealed! Jeff Oatley is back to his usual tricks of leading the pack, he checked into the final check point Nikolai before he finishes in McGrath. I was then phoned at 19:30 to let me know that he had

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

left 5 minutes before! Go Jeff, we hope to see you for lunch tomorrow. Apparently there are 2 skiers making their way to Nikolai tonight.

Bill Dent made the decision to scratch at Puntilla Check point, this year is exceptionally tough and to reach Puntilla is an achievement in its self well done to you all who retired there.

George Azarias has made it to Puntilla and his determination is carrying him on. He has stopped for a rest and has requested a wake up call in the early hours as he plans to continue the challenge at 3:00am, I am sure that there will be many people helping him in spirit to push his bike to the next check point.

I haven't heard anything else regarding our other racers, if I get any more information later I will let you know!

Kathi

March 6, 16:39

We had a call this afternoon around 4pm from Nikolai check point, a local on a snow machine has spotted 1 biker eight miles away from Nikolai, this is very exciting as we can expect them to reach the check point by 6pm! Who is it?! I will let you know when I know.

Regarding Yair Kellner, we are aware that he is still missing but we know that he is a very experienced rider and mountaineer. I am confident that he has taken shelter in a cabin with a local person. He is a very sociable man and so let's hope that he is having a good chat with the locals waiting for the weather to pass. If there is no sign by tomorrow morning, we will have search teams go out looking for him.

Today I popped out for a quick ski to clear the cobwebs away as I have been staying in keeping track of all the racers since I arrived on Monday. It is a fantastic day here, the sun shining, clear blue skies but the wind is up and it has a bite.

Peter took the snow machine out a couple of hours prior to the ski to clear a trail for us to use. It was a great ski, taking us past wonderful scenery, through woodland and over a marshland that would be totally inaccessible during the summer months. I took the advantage of taking a few photos to show examples of what our amazing strong competitors are dealing with this year:

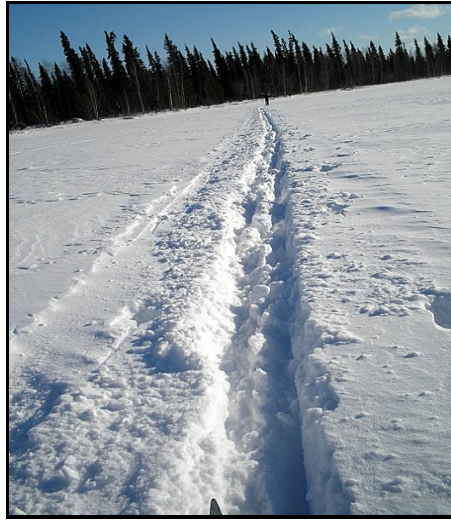
This is a good trail:

(The snow machine's trails are still clearly visible, the snow is packed enough for the bikes to ride, skiers to glide and the walkers to march over)



This is a moderate trail:

(You can see how the snow is a little uneven from the wind blowing the snow across the land and filling it up, this makes it softer and leads to the bikes being pushed)



This is a very bad trail:

(This trail has completely disappeared since Peter made it 2 hours ago! It is impossible to ride, un navigational-pushing is the key and sharing the load with others nearby by taking it in turns to break a path!)

This is the effect of the ground blizzards that I have been mentioning, unfortunately for this years racers, this trail is the one that they have seen the most of, hence it is the toughest year that I have seen!



I will update you later this evening, hopefully revealing who has made it to Nikolai.

Kathi

March 6, 12:44 PM

I did talk to Bill Merchant who was back in Puntilla and he had passed four walkers with his snowmobile on their way up to Rainy Pass. He said they had a big smile despite the ground blizzard and were traveling in streams. Francesco, Roberto and Savino and Howard. Way to go guys!

We are still looking for Yair Kellner, he has not showed up in Fingerlake or Puntilla. It is possible that he bypassed Fingerlake and is on his way to Puntilla and spent the night with Ingrid and Mike at Fin Bear Lake.

A pilot making two deliveries at Shell Lake will take a look from the air this afternoon. We are The Italians Roberto Gazzoli and Francesco Ghigliotti arrived there and said they had to take turns braking trail in all the fresh snow on that stretch of trail. Rob Kehrer called from Rohn this morning and several more racers have left Rohn and are on route to Bison Camp and Nikolai. Those are Alec Petro, Aidan Harding, Billy Koitzsch, Bob Struble, Rick Freeman, Eric Johnson, Todd Kasteler, Eric Warkentin, Lou Kobin, John Ross.

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

Marco Berni was the only racer resting at Rohn this morning.

21 Racers have made it to Rohn now with 20 on their way towards Bison Camp and on to Nikolai. I expect most of them to just take a short rest at the tent camp at Bison Camp, dry some gear, fill up with water and then continue on to Nikolai.

I expect to get a call from Nikolai (mile 300) today with the first racers arriving there this evening.

I have also talked to the Puntilla checkpoint this morning. There is strong winds in the forecast coming out of the Alaska Range today. The racers will face a stiff head wind. Once you leave Puntilla the trail goes above tree line and the winds create low wind chill temperatures and ground blizzards that can reduce visibility to nothing.

When it blows on the pass it is ugly up there.

Racers have turned around in these conditions on the pass in 2007 and in other years.

Several more racers scratched in Puntilla today bringing the total number of scratches to 14.

Catherine Shenk, Marco Costa and Alberto Villaverde took a snowmachine ride back to the lodge with the checkers and sons of the lodge owner today. They were going to retrieve their bikes by snowmachine today about 9 miles out of Puntilla. Catherine is really having a hard time with asthma. It is not unusual for racers to develop asthma in these cold temperatures. I happened to me in 2005, and I had never had asthma before. I am not sure why Alberto and Marco Costa scratched. I assume the deep snow and windblown trails. .

Sean Grady scratched as well.

Marco Costa was disqualified for snowmachine support on the trail.

I can't say it enough, it is extremely tough out there this year! It is a tremendous effort by all these athletes!

Kathi

March 5, 2009 11:04 PM

The stretch from Rohn to Nikolai is 80 miles long and the most desolate on the route where temperatures often drop to 40 below zero. There is a herd of free roaming buffalo in this area. Many years ago a large wildfire took out over a million acres, this is why this area is known as "the burn". This also the stretch where some racers have had hallucinations since this is where they are sleep deprived by now and the surroundings are kind of ghostly at night.

When you leave the Alaska Range behind you it is not quite getting flat yet. It is a series of steep hills through the woods and then hill after hill before Bison Camp. Bison Camp is a real refuge from the cold and loneliness out in this great big wilderness. Racers also cross an area known as the Farewell Lakes. Often the wind blows all the snow away and you are riding or walking across black ice. At night you use your head light to pick up the permanent Iditarod markers at the other end to find your trail or you look for scratch marks on the ice in the daytime left behind by the skis of a snowmobile to find your line.

I have seen huge wolf tracks in this area, but never saw a wolf.

The buffalo seem to be hiding when I came through every time too. They have sure messed up the trail one year when the snow was deep and they followed the packed trail and left huge craters in it, it was a bumpy ride for many miles that year. My eyes were rolling around in my head for a while after that section of trail with a stiff front fork on my bike.

Finally racers will arrive in the small native village of Nikolai where locals Nick and Olene Petruska have been wonderful hosts for the racers for several years.

I hope to get a call from Olene or Nick tomorrow that some of the racers have arrived there.

Once racers leave Nikolai they are on the home stretch to McGrath, another 50 miles along a series of lakes and swamps interspersed with wooded stretches to Big River. Then the trail follows down Big River for a few miles to the Kuskokwim River into McGrath, with several shortcuts across the bigger oxbow bends.

9:38 PM

Steve Perrins called me this evening from Puntilla/Rainy Pass Lodge. Some bikers have come back and decided to scratch. The fresh snow on top of windblown trails made it really hard to push a bike through it. They are flying

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

out and back to Anchorage tomorrow: Catherine Shenk, Marco Costa and Alberto Villaverde. Howard Cook, Francesco Ghigliotti and Savino Musicco arrived in Puntilla this afternoon.

March 5, 2009 9:04 PM

I just received that call from Rohn I was waiting for. Several racers have left Rohn, I don't have their times: Jeff Oatley, Chris Wrobel, James Leavesley, Jay and Tracey Petervary (Tracey you are so strong leading the woman's division, and this is your first race out there, you have all my respect!), Phil Hofstetter, Ed Plumb, Peter Basinger.

Tim and Tom are in Rohn and so are Alec Petro and John Ross. Lou and Eric and two others were still in the Dalzell Gorge when Rob called me at 9:00 PM.

I talked to Olene in Nilolai at the checkpoint and she said Daniel was out at Bison Camp tonight. So when the racers get there, 40 miles from Rohn he might have the wood stove going at this remote hunting camp. Daniel is heading back to Nikolai tomorrow, so the racers should have a trail to follow. The wind is blowing here in McGrath, so there is a chance the trails are blowing in once again.

I have been here in McGrath waiting to welcome racers into the 350 mile finish line. In a good year they would already be here. My guess is that we will see the first racer here Saturday night or Sunday early morning hours.

Kathi

March 5, 2009 6:26 PM

I did get a Sat Phone call from Rob Kehrer 5.6 miles below the top of Rainy Pass. He said they had a hard time making any progress in the deep snow.

They were not able to connect with Bill today. What a race this year! This one will be talked about for a very long time. There will be incredible individual stories that we will hear about after the race. There is so much snow out there and more to come. He didn't have the list of racers with him and saw many in passing while he was trying to break out a trail with Terry and Lisa.

He told me he would call me when he gets back to Rohn tonight.

He was in the process of mentioning some names, when the Sat Phone was braking up:

bikers: Jeff Oatley, Alec Petro, our two couples on the trail this year: Jay and Tracy Petervary & Eric Warkentin and Lou Kobin, Chris Wrobel, James Leavesley, Phil Hofstetter, John Ross, Aidan Harding, and

skiers: Ed Plumb, Peter Basinger, Cory Smith

and Tim Hewitt and Tom Jarding on foot

have made it into Rohn today.

You guys are absolutely amazing and so strong!

I hope to get a more detailed update from Rob after dark.

Kathi

March 5, 2009 4:41PM

Finally some news!! There were some issues with Sat Phones and communication. 6 bikers and one skiers reached Rohn this morning. I have no names, but I am working on trying to find out more right this minute. That is great news.

2:09 PM

I received an e-mail with Alec Petro's Spot location. He seems to be in the Dalzell Gorge, possibly with some other racers and they are making their way into Rohn. They have made it over Rainy Pass! He could be in Rohn

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

by this afternoon or early evening with some other racers. He is not far from where the trail gets on the Tatina River and then that should be a rideable trail into Rohn since the trail breakers have been up and down that trail several times now.

It is 37 degrees currently in McGrath, it is hard to stay dry in this kind of temperature in the wintertime, but it can set up the trails sometimes with a cooling following the warm temperatures, with snowmachine traffic packing the snow while it is warm. We will have to see what it will do to the trails.

Kathi

March 5, 1:06 PM

I had some brief issues with the uploading process to the web this morning and spent some time fixing that.

It seems to work again. The results page went blank for a bit.

I have talked to the Fingerlake and Puntilla checkpoint this morning. 28 racers at this point are in the Rainy Pass area with no news from Rohn of anyone arriving there. By now my hope is that Rob, Terry and Lisa have made it over the pass and have met up with Bill and that the racers are on their way to Rohn. Amazing effort by all those racers this year that are hanging in this year. Alaska's wilderness has the last word in this for sure. Nick and Olene, our hosts in Nikolai are waiting for the first racers as well. By this time a year ago 12 racers had already arrived in McGrath.

This may become one of the most memorable years and this one will be talked about many years later. 7 more racers are on route to Puntilla.

Bob May is scratching in Puntilla due to knee issues.

Yair Kellner is the only one that has not arrived in Fingerlake. He may have taken a wrong trail. There are some private cabins in the Shell Lake area. There is also a 15 mile trail that dead ends where some locals picked up a broken snowmobile and it may have looked like the trail to Yair. It has also happened in the past that some racers took the Iditarod Trail back to Skwentna. I spoke with Bill Dent in Fingerlake that told me this was the best race he had ever done and that he was having a lot of fun out there. He thought Yair was not far behind him on the windblown trail into Fingerlake. I will follow up on that later this afternoon with Zoe in Shell Lake and she may send out some locals to look for Yair if he doesn't show up. He could have bypassed Fingerlake too and followed the Iron Dog trail that bypassed Fingerlake.

Here is today's article in the Anchorage Daily News:

[Storm traps wilderness racers on Iditarod Trail](#)

March 4, 7:38pm

I did get some news from Puntilla about the situation on Rainy Pass! Bill Merchant our trail breaker has made it as far as Rainy Pass Lake with his snowmachine. He has had a very hard time with all the huge amounts of snow and no base or trail. He is at a cabin at Rainy Pass Lake there with some racers tonight. That is only about a mile from the top of the pass. He sent some of the racers that had arrived back to the half way lake cabin to hold up for the night, which is about 8 miles out of Puntilla, since the other cabin wasn't big enough for all of them. This information was passed on to me by Sharon from Puntilla and she received it from Rich Crain that returned from the pass area and said that they can't get through. He had talked to Bill. This means the racers are together and that only 4 bikers have pushed on over the pass on their own.

I do not have their names, that information was not available to me. Everyone is safe out there tonight and they are just staying put for now and have shelter. When Rob calls me from Rohn I might have more insight of what is going on on the other side of the pass. We hope that tomorrow they can break the trail out over the top and down to where Bill and the racers are. That's all I know for now. Jeff Oatley was also with Bill up there last night.

Today's article in the Anchorage Daily News [Iditarod trail missing under deep snow](#)

8:00 PM

I just got off the phone with Rob Kehrer, our checker in Rohn. They have been working all day in the Dalzell Gorge. He told me they made it about 8 miles out of Rohn toward the pass. The creek froze high, so it was a lot of work to build the ice bridges to get across the creek in several places. He sounded pretty tired after working all day. They hope to go over the top in the morning and meet up with Bill in the morning.

Kathi

March 4, 4:04 PM

I just visited with a local in McGrath. She told me that two people on snowmachines left McGrath yesterday with sleds and heavy fuel drums and equipment and went as far as Farewell Lake. That's where the trail leaves the mountains, crosses several lakes and heads into the burn. I am guessing it is between 25 to 30 miles beyond Rohn. They are heading back to McGrath today. So there should be somewhat of a trail left behind by those snowmachines.

Our racers need to follow the Kuskokwim River all the way to McGrath not on the road that goes out 10 miles from McGrath. There is a construction project going on here this winter to stabilize the river banks. Hopefully our veteran racers will not take the shortcut since they have taken that shorter route in the past. Snow is still coming down here in McGrath and down the trail. That's all I have for now.

Kathi

March 4, 2:12 PM

More cyclists have arrived at the Puntilla/Rainy Pass Lodge Checkpoint:

Bob Ostrom, Marco Costa, Sean Grady, Frank McGuire and Catherine Shenk. Well done! I talked with Bonnie at Skwentna and Sharon at Puntilla and it is snowing on the trail.

There is a winter storm watch in effect in the Susitna Valley that includes the trail all the way up to Puntilla. I just looked at the NOAA weather online.

AKZ145-050100- SUSITNA VALLEY- ...WINTER STORM WARNING FOR SNOW IN EFFECT FROM 3 PM THIS AFTERNOON UNTIL 4 PM AKST THURSDAY...

Looking out the window here in McGrath it is just snowing lightly this minute. My guess is, that by now something similar like last year is unfolding on the same stretch of trail. 9 bikers caught up with the trail brakers in 2008 and passed them up braking their own trail down the Dalzell Creek into Rohn. Under certain conditions even with a snowmachine and a motor it may not get you down the trail or at least not any faster or easier than by human power. Even a dog team would be stopped right now on the pass with the musher out front packing a trail on snowshoes.

This is what happened to the Serum Run this year:

[Deep snow calls a halt to modern-day Serum Run](#)

I am just as anxious as every fan, friend or family here in Alaska, all across the US and all over the world to hear something new.

This is not an easy year out there. The Iditarod Trail is never easy. It is the nature of Alaska's winter wilderness and the the nature of the Iditarod Trail and it is always tough. This year it may be a little tougher. Mother nature is presenting those racers many road blocks and challenges on their way to the finish line.

For those finishing in McGrath this year, it will be a huge accomplishment.

March 4, 11:23 AM

Many racers have made it into the Fingerlake Checkpoint. 29 racers so far.

Tim and Tom from Pennsylvania are leading the foot race and arrived in Puntilla this morning.

They are veterans of this race and have done this race several times. They both walked to Nome in 2001 on the southern route in just under 27 days. Tim walked to Nome in 2004 and 2008 on the northern route.

I heard through the trail gripevine that Marco Costa and Roberto Gazzoli had spent the night with Mike and Ingrid at Fin Bear Lake. They have been on the trail for several years now offering their hospitality to weary racers between Fingerlake and Puntilla. They are great folks! Steve Evans just called me that he was scratching at Shell Lake Lodge. He said that he has not been feeling good since he started the race. Most racers have been stopping at Shell Lake Lodge which is about half way between Skwentna and Fingerlake and Zoe has been feeding them hamburgers to get them up them trail. I have also talked to Sharon at Puntilla this morning.

Neither of us has heard from the trail brakers or if a racer has made it to Rohn yet.

After Puntilla is where racers get into real remote country and there are no phones all the way to Nikolai other than the checkers and trail brakers Sat Phones in Rohn. Before Sat Phones in the old days of this race there was no communication between Puntilla and Nikolai. It doesn't look like the fastest bikers would arrive under 4 days at this point, unless the trail is hard packed and fast once they get over the pass and beyond Rohn, where often there can be bare ground for several miles. This year there is a fair amount of snow on the ground in Rohn.

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

Here in McGrath, Peter Schneiderheinze, our host at the finish line of the 350 mile race, has been trying to pack a trail with a snowmobile to run his sled dogs, but he told me there was so much snow, that if you don't stay on top of it and pack your trail every time you get new snow it was impossible to get through. He said he ventured off the trail and the snowmachine sunk in deep into bottomless snow. Then he had to dig the snowmachine out.

It sounds like that might be an issue all the way up and down the trail. Stay tuned. I hope to get word from Rohn by this evening.

Kathi

March 4, 9:18 AM

All the racers have made it through Skwentna this morning. Sharon called me from Rainy Pass Lodge in Puntilla.

Several more racers have arrived and already left there:

Aidan Harding, Billy Koitzsch, Cory Smith, Eric Warkentin and Lou Kobin, John Ross and Bob May are on their way to Rainy Pass. No news from Rohn yet. Bill Merchant has not made it over the pass as of this morning. Rich Crain was in Puntilla this morning heading up to the pass to give Bill a hand with the trail braking. It appears that this is a tough year out there. Rob, Lisa, Terry and Stephanie are going up from the Rohn side again this morning building ice bridges in the Dalzell Gorge. I hope to have word from Rohn later today.

Kathi

March 4, 12:25 AM

I have been anxious all evening to hear from our Fingerlake and Puntilla checkpoints. I saw on the message board that Yair Kellner has made it past Shell Lake Lodge and should be in Fingerlake by now and that Frank McGuire and Bob Ostrom have passed him up and are possibly in Fingerlake by now as well. After the first three days the checkers are almost as tired as the racers since they don't get a lot of sleep either. Puntilla has a radio phone and our checkpoint is in a small cabin away from the main lodge so I have decided not to disturb them this late. There are 9 racers on their way to Rainy Pass tonight and when I got a call from our checker in Rohn Rob Kehrer in the early evening Jeff Oatley had not arrived in Rohn yet and they have not been able to meet up with Bill Merchant on the pass. I have not received a trail report from Bill Merchant today with the actual conditions that they are encountering right now. But as I mentioned earlier it is not unheard of that it has taken racers 24 hours to Rohn in a year with bad trail conditions.

There are also racers moving through the night that left Fingerlake this afternoon that should arrive in Puntilla in the early morning hours. I will try to call Fingerlake and Puntilla in the early morning to update the leaderbaord.

Kathi

March 3, 4:01 PM

Updates from Fingerlake. 8 more racers have arrived there and some have already left and are on their way to Puntilla. Our 3 skiers Peter Basinger, Ed Plumb and Cory Smith. Well done!! As well as Billy Koitzsch, John Ross, Catherine Shenk, Bob May and Marco Costa made it to Fingerlake mile 130. This afternoon has been quiet, I hope to hear more this evening.

Kathi

March 3, 11:30 AM

Several calls have come in from our checkpoints this morning. Jeff Oatley left Puntilla at 3:00 AM this morning and is on his way to Rainy Pass! Way to go Jeff! He is making great time considering the conditions this year. He is now over 170 miles into the race, past the half way point to the finish in McGrath!

This stretch can be the most beautiful of the entire race or absolutely horrible. I have seen it both ways crossing over Rainy Pass myself. The trail goes above tree line and to the highest point of the Iditarod Trail at 3100 feet (1000 meters). It is a very exposed and open area. More often than not the wind is blowing up there shortly after you leave Rainy Pass Lodge at Puntilla. And then sometimes it really blows up there.

In 2006 the the temperature was well below zero and the high winds were creating a windchill in excess of -50 F.

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

Bill and I held up at the half way cabin for many hours before continuing on over the pass.

Another year several racers turned around and scratched in Puntilla because of the extreme cold and drifted in trails. I have even heard of dogs stalling in those conditions and turning around in those conditions.

Once they leave Puntilla racers are committed to make it over the pass and down Pass Creek where they get back into the trees where it is possible to find some shelter. Spending the night and bivving on the pass is not a good option. The best way is to leave Puntilla at 3:00 to 4:00 AM and get into Rohn by dark. It is possible to push a bike from Puntilla to Rohn in 14 hours like Bill and I did last year, but it has taken racers as long as 24 hours from Puntilla to Rohn if conditions are bad.

The trail can be windblown, drifted in, granular unconsolidated snow and deep snow to non existent. Racers find their way with their feet and look for a base under the snow.

Rohn is just a spot on the map with a BLM cabin and the Iditarod has exclusive rights to it. Our checkpoint is a wall tent we fly in and out and our checker works hand in hand with the Iditarod Trail crew. Currently Rob, Terry and Lisa are working their way up through the Dalzell Gorge to meet up with Bill, who is coming in from the Puntilla side. In the Dalzell Gorge they build many ice bridges across the Dalzell Creek with sticks, snow and water, it is an amazing ride through there on a bicycle in the dark or at daylight. Jeff Oatley is up there somewhere right now on his way to Rohn.

We have a Sat Phone there, I may hear something or I may not. I will post when I get news.

There is a group of bikers 14 hours behind him: James Leavesley, Chris Robel, Alec Petro and Tracy and Jay Petervary left Fingerlake at 5:45 AM.

Eric Warkentin and Lou left shortly after them. Phil Hofstetter left Fingerlake at 9:00 AM this morning.

All racers have made it in and out of the Yentna Checkpoint and our checker Rich Crain is now heading up the trail by snowmachine. Yair Kellner and Bill Dent were getting ready to leave Skwentna when I talked to Bonnie there. Frank McGuire and Bob Ostrom and Anne Ver Hoef are still resting in Skwentna. The majority of the racers are now moving up the trail between Yentna Station and up towards Puntilla with Jeff Oatley the only one on his way to Rainy Pass. I have heard that a weather system is supposed to move into Alaska by Thursday bringing more snow and warm temperatures. I was just looking at the forecast for McGrath for Wednesday and Thursday and it doesn't look good at all. Thursday shows a high of 36 F and chance of rain and a low of 20 F at night. Nighttime would definitely be the time to ride in order to have firm trails.

Usually by the time racers get over the Alaska Range they get into much colder temperatures into a different climate zone, the cold and dry Interior. But as in years past it is possible even in the Interior of Alaska to get rain in mid winter. Last year we had wet snow and rain for several days between McGrath and Ruby and temperatures up to 35 F, yet another year a racer had seen -55 F on that same stretch of trail.

Eleazaro Rossi and Joerg Painsipp scratched from the race because of problems with their sleds.
6 racers have scratched so far.

I hope to have more news later this afternoon.

Kathi

March 3, 00:05 PM

Late night call from the Fingerlake Checkpoint:

Chris Wrobel and James Leavesley came in 6 hours and 50 Minutes behind Jeff Oatley. Jay and Tracey Petervary, Eric Warkentin, Lou Kobin and Alec Petro made it into Fingerlake tonight. I compared their progress to last year and that lead group is now about 12 hours later into our third checkpoint than last year. Despite the soft trails, these guys are making amazing time! Lou and Tracey you girls are amazing!

March 2, 11:27 PM

Other than the in and out times of checkpoints I didn't get any other trail reports this evening so I decided to post this quote by

Craig Medred from a recent article in the Anchorage Daily News as racers move on up the trail into the dark of the night:

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

"The hardest race to run is the one waged in your mind, and it is for this reason the Iditarod Trail Invitational is the hardest race in the world. Forget the distance of hundreds of miles, the brutal Alaska winds, the subzero cold, the bad trail, and the danger of avalanche and overflow. Those are the smallest of the challenges to be met. The bigger hurdle is the sheer desolation one finds from near Shell Lake in the foothills of the Alaska Range on through Rainy Pass to McGrath, and beyond across the vast tracks of nothingness and ever more nothingness to the Bering Sea coast and, eventually, for some, to Nome."

March 2, 2009 9:00 PM

Wow, what a first day, so much going on in different places on the race course. Ever since I arrived in McGrath I spent all day on the phone and on the computer. I wait all year for this event to finally take place whether I am racing or writing the updates. It is always an exiting time of the year. The race is now into the second night. Jeff Oatley who leads the race is now covering what I consider one of the toughest sections of trail from Fingerlake to Puntilla. You start climbing into the foothills of the Alaska Range with endless steep hills to go up and down and over. Last year the trail was the best I had ever seen on that stretch and Bill and I covered it in 8 hours. I got into Puntilla for the first time in the daylight and could see how beautiful the ride was and fun with some great Alaskan singletrack on snow.

The racers leaving Skwentna will go through the "infamous" willow tunnel where many racers encountered a mad moose cow last year and then climb the Shell Hills before they go across many frozen swamps to Winter Lake Lodge on Fingerlake. Our trail brakers are out there tonight as well working on putting in a trail over Rainy Pass. Several racers are spending the night at Yentna Station and will resume the trail with lifted spirits in the daylight.

Once you come out of the dark and look around you at this magnificent winter scenery of the Alaskan wilderness, the energy often returns and we move on up the trail. Those rivers at night can seem endless especially with soft trail conditions as they are this year. I wish all the racers that have scratched all the best and a quick recovery.

Some racers are still resting at the Skwentna Roadhouse.
I may get some more updates from there later tonight.

Kathi

March 2, 2009 8:02 PM

All racers have made it to Yentna Station. Several are spending the night there.

Jeff Oatley arrives in Fingerlake at 2:54 PM. He is leading the race!

It has been an eventful day here for me since I have been in McGrath. There have been some scratches in Yentna. Riccardo Ghirardi had problems with his knees and decided to stop here. Geoff Roes also had knee issues. Jill Homer stepped into some overflow last night and has some frostbite on her toes. As far as I know it is minor, but not continuing on is a good decision to prevent further damage to the toes. Three of them flew out to Willow and Geoff and Jill are staying with friends in Palmer. Riccardo is taking the bus to Anchorage from Wasilla. Isabel Vicente Lopez is also scratching with some issues with her eyes, possibly from the wind last night. She is flying out this afternoon as well and Geoff is taking care of her as well to make sure she will get back to Anchorage. Thank you very much Geoff!

I have heard from our trail brakers that went through Ptarmigan Pass yesterday. That route is not a good option this year. One of their snowmachines went through the ice into open water. Everyone was ok. Last night they camped 4-5 miles outside of Rohn and then cut out a new trail by daylight with machetes off the river and through the woods. Their plan is to work their way back towards Rainy Pass through the Dalzell gorge. Our other trail braker Bill Merchant left Puntilla today and was on his way to Rainy Pass when the snowmachine sunk into the snow up to the handlebars. It took him 2 hours to dig out the snowmachine. He was calling me from his Sat Phone and said that the wind had piled up a lot of snow in places. He was on his way through Ptarmigan Pass (also known as Hells Gate route, which is 30 miles longer and used by the annual Iron Dog snowmobile race to Nome that took place two weeks ago). I warned him about the open water on the Kuskokwim River and he is on his way back to Puntilla to get another snowmachiner to go with him to put in the trail over Rainy Pass. Rob Kehrer, our checker in Rohn told me that three of them are going to work their way up the Dalzell Gorge building ice bridges and punching out a trail towards Rainy Pass from the Rohn side.

March 2, 2009 12:47 PM

I have a report from Yentna Station! 28 racers have checked into the first checkpoint. Their position and in and out times are on the leaderboard. The majority of the racers is on their way to Skwentna and some have probably already left there and are on their way to Shell Lake. I will post more information this afternoon and evening after checking with the Skwentna checkpoint.

1:20 PM

Only 8 bikers have made it to the Skwentna Roadhouse at mile 90 (Checkpoint 2) so far. Jeff Oatley seems to have a pretty good lead so far. He is 6 hours ahead of the next bikers. He is being chased by Chris Wrobel and James Leavesley who left Skwentna at 1:10pm. The other bikers I was told all had a good breakfast and are resting.

March 2, 2009 10:22 AM

I received a call from Bonnie at Skwentna Roadhouse as I headed to the airport this morning that Jeff Oatley had been through there early this morning at 4:29 AM, ate and slept for two hours and left Skwentna at 7:10 AM. I have no information on other racers yet. I will post as soon as I hear from our checkpoints.

I have had no luck contacting Yentna Station this morning. It was -9 F at the Anchorage airport this morning and -25 F here in McGrath as I arrived with skies overcast in this area.

Kathi

March 2, 2009 12:15 AM

The first biker made it into Yentna Station. It's Jeff Oatley. He told our checker Rich Crain there that he had been walking and pushing the bike some and was hoping to reach Skwentna in about 4 to 5 hours. No other racers haven't arrived yet. I talked to Bill Merchant, our trail braker on the snowmachine this year and he said the trail is drifted in in the open areas from the wind and all the new fluffy snow. By this time last year there were about a dozen racers into Skwentna. It looks like this year may not be as fast on the trail like it was last year, at least for now. It may change, you never know on the Iditarod Trail. I will fly into McGrath in the morning and hopefully have more updates when I get there.

Kathi

March 1, 2009 6:40 PM

The race started today under sunny skies and temperature at 15 F. 45 racers left Knik Lake smiling and in good spirits heading across Knik Lake. Many of them a good meal at the Knik Bar getting in a few more calories before the first long stretch of trail to the first checkpoint. Shortly after the start I went to where they cross Burma Road (mile 10) and watched them come through. This is the last road that racers see before they arrive in McGrath. The first racer after 10 miles into the race was Jeff Oatley with a big smile. The bikers were already pretty scattered out at this point which seemed unusual because this early in the race the bikers are always bunched up and ride in clusters. There was a stiff north wind in the air which will be more noticeable to the racers tonight when they travel up the Yentna River and temperatures are going to drop. I hope to hear from Yentna Station later tonight the first checkpoint at mile 57 as the first racers arrive there. I will try to post some pictures above under "pictures" link with some of the pictures I took at the start and Burma Road. Also click [here](#) to view images from the start today.

Kathi

February 28, 2009

Finally all the racers are in town and we got to meet everyone and put faces to their names on the race roster. Everyone attended the pre race meeting this afternoon at the Golden Lion Best Western while it was alaskaultrasport.com/latest_news.html

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

snowing heavily outside.

Tomorrow at 2:00 PM 47 racers from 6 different countries, including the United States, Italy, Austria, Australia, Spain and England will leave the starting line at Knik. 28 bikers, 3 skiers and 17 runners. 15 competitors are from Alaska. 38 racers hope to get to the finish line in McGrath at the 350 mile point and 9 racers will continue another 750 miles on to Nome. We have a great competitive field with many veterans returning and about half the field this year are rookies.

The McGrath(350 mile field):

For the bike record holder Peter Basinger this is his 9th race on the Iditarod Trail and he will for the first time be skiing instead of biking this year. The year he set the record he followed the 30 mile longer route through Ptarmigan Pass instead of Rainy Pass.

We have a highly qualified and very competitive women's field this year. There are six women this year, 5 are on bikes and only one runner Anne Ver Hoef from Anchorage.

The Nome(1100 mile)field:

This is only the 4th time that the human powered race is following the southern route (2001,2005,2007,2009).

Tim Hewitt is back for another try to Nome. He became the first person last year to finish on foot to Nome three different years. This year is an odd numbered year, so the race follows the southern route, Tim did the southern route before with his friend and trail companion Tom Jarding in 2001, and he is back this year as well.

I hope to have the first updates on the website in the evening tomorrow. 17 bikers were in and out of the first checkpoint at Yentna Station before 10:40 PM last year.

Looking forward again this year to report all the trail news as soon as I hear from our checkpoints.

Kathi

February 23, 2009

Today's article about the race in the [ADN](#) by Craig Medred.

After the start on Sunday I will fly to McGrath and post "latest news" twice daily on the race website. The website coverage has been a huge success in the past two years with many people from all over the world watching the race on the Internet. Last year we had 173,000 page views during the first week of the event.

I am excited to be out on the race trail since I won't be racing myself this year. I am looking forward seeing the racers arrive in McGrath at the finish line. I will also be able to post pictures of the racers at the finish line of the 350 mile race.

We will have a "leaderboard" and again our "message board" for family, friends and fans of the race. Joe Polk with MTB Cast is happy to host podcasts during the race again.

The pre race meeting is Saturday 2:00 PM until 4:00 PM in the Kenya room at the Golden Lion Best Western Hotel at:
1000 East 36th Ave, corner of the New Seward Highway and 36th Avenue.

It is mandatory for all racers.

Kathi

February 22, 2009

Hello to All,

My compliments to all the racers, well most anyway, for packing the drops very efficiently. Barry Stanley owner of Denali Flying Service has been our pilot for several years and was the caretaker and guide for Rainy Pass Lodge for several years. More often than not the weather makes getting to Rohn in a small ski plane a challenge but it

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

was not bad at all yesterday. It was a beautiful day to fly in our drops. We flew over the trail from Finger Lake to Rohn. The new snow they just got from Skwentna to Rohn should make the brush less of a problem. It was a beautiful day through Rainy Pass with just enough snow to cover most of the rocks up top. Rohn had about 4 inches of new snow on top of 12 inches left over from the big thaw. That's what I know for now.

Don't forget the party for all racers at Speedway Cycles on Friday around 7:00 PM.

See you then.

Bill & Kathi

February 19, 2009

Hello All,

Kathi and I just returned from 5 days on the trail. We enjoyed riding and camping with Yair Kellner from Australia who is racing this year and Kevin Hill from Canada during our winter bike camp. We had several inches of fresh snow and one of the long range forecasts (if you believe in such things) is for more snow right through race time with a couple of sunny days mixed in. We had a lot of practice during the camp at staying warm when staying dry is not an option.

There has been a question about the rules I would like to clear up. Racers in the 350 to McGrath are allowed 2 drop bags and all other gear, clothing or spare parts must be carried from the start. Racers are not allowed to send drops to themselves between Knik and McGrath.

A change of clothes to McGrath is allowed. Some racers can send drops to themselves in McGrath and beyond. I will pick up drop bags at noon on Saturday, February 21st at Alaska European B&B at 3107 Cottonwood Drive.

Greg at Speedway Cycles is having a pre race party for all racers at his shop again this year. The party will be Friday afternoon February 27th Thanks Greg!

The pre-race meeting will be from 2:00 until 4:00 February 28th at the Golden Lion Best Western.

We will load bikes for transport to the race start at 10:30 am Sunday at the Golden Lion The bus to the start will pick us up at 11:00 am on Sunday March 1st at the Golden Lion. The clock is ticking now and in just a few more days we will head out for another adventure on the Iditarod Trail. I very much look forward to being back on the trail with all of you veterans and meeting our first time racers. With a little luck I will have good weather on Sunday and will have a first hand report on the Pass after we fly to Rohn.

Until then safe travels and see you soon.

Bill & Kathi

February 5, 2009

Hello to All,

With less than a month until race start it is time for the annual appearance of aches and pains both real and imagined that are our bodys' way of trying to discourage us from putting them through 350 or 1100 miles of Alaskan winter trails. Mine are even worse this year thinking of 350 miles of trailbreaking on a smelly, bouncing snowmobile than it would be if I was going to be on my bike. I have even had a dream or two about chopping my way through the "wall of willows" blocking the entrance to Rainy Pass.

Rob, Terry and Lisa will be heading out 3 days before the race to try to get the trail in over Rainy Pass. They will probably go to Rohn through Hell's Gate and work their way back over the pass without the extra burden of pulling loaded sleds while putting in new trail. As veterans of 2007 remember there is more than one way to Rohn from Puntilla if worse comes to worse. Longer but no hills and just as scenic.

Just a reminder that drops need to be packed in strong bags not boxes and clearly labeled with your name and the checkpoint. You can ship the bags inside boxes and we will unpack them for delivery to the checkpoints.

Drops are to be expendables (food, batteries, handwarmers etc) only. The 10 lb (4.5kilo) weight limit will be enforced. All clothing and survival gear must be carried from the start.

I will pick up the drops sent to Alaska European B&B at noon on Feb. 21st.

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

I just received an email from a racer informing me Northwest Airlines has new size restrictions on baggage:

"I have been on the phone with Northwest Airlines several times begging them to consider the sled like a snowboard, and stressing that it weighs only 4 pounds. I got nowhere. I suspect that a lot of the other people coming up there haven't checked with the airline to see if they will have problems. I know that the "dimension limit" on Northwest was dropped on November 8, 2008 from 160 inches (L + W + H) to 80 inches, and if it is between 62 and 80 inches they charge an extra \$175 (for a \$32 sled). I am not sure if other airlines have done the same but you might want to check with the one you will be flying with."

Zoe at Shell lake asked me to remind racers to remove shoes with screws or spikes before you go inside checkpoints. Both her and Skwentna had damage to their floors last year. We are looking forward to seeing all of you soon!!!!

Bill

January 20,2009



Hello All,

After a great cold spell that had the Chickaloon River frozen and fun to ride it warmed up. Now the trails are punchy and a lot of overflow. I have been contacted by a school teacher in Elim who is also a runner interested in racing next year. He has offered to help Nome racers with contacts in villages from Unalakleet to White Mountain. Here is his e mail to me:

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

"I am a school teacher for Bering Strait School District and an avid runner who lives in Elim. I have recently heard about the race and am willing to give my name and number and address for packages. I would also be able to find contacts for people going to Nome. If needed or wanted in Unalakleet, Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Elim, Golovin, and White Mt. This is roughly the last 250 miles. If you would like contact names and number please let me know or feel free to pass out my email. If nothing else, I can hook people up with a hot shower, hot food, and a place to sleep. Thanks, I am looking forward to watching the results live every week like it's shark week!"

Nick Schollmeier

Thank you Nick for offering hospitality to our racers.

Also Michael Schoder emailed me a trail report. Michael is who we have to thank for the hard fast trail last year from Skwentna to Finger Lake that he groomed all winter.

"I heard through Zoe that Irondoggers Brad Helwig and Eric Qualm snowshoed the steps and made it down onto the Happy River today. They said the trail is "real rough, and real brushy". These two guys have been the ones who have been punching ahead, but it has been a long slow process this year. Lakes have huge overflow ponds on them from the rain the last few days. They had gotten about 20" of snow on Wednesday-Thursday before it rained all day yesterday. Shell Lake apparently looks like blue water on top of the ice. But it will freeze. Brush will remain to be a factor. As the race gets closer I will keep everyone posted about trail conditions as I get them."

See You Soon

Bill and Kathi

December 23, 2008

I have spoken with all the checkpoints and they have all agreed to let us come back even though we don't always smell so nice. Actually everyone is excited to see all the old friends from past years and to meet the rookies. Well known to all the veterans the folks on the trail who open their homes and lodges to us are very important to the race. We are visitors in their homes and should always be respectful and polite. Always ask permission before using anything at the checkpoint. Like last year at Bison Camp we will only have a tent, woodstove and possibly wood. The Runkles (who maintain the camp) have not booked any hunters for the second year in a row and will not be able to be at the camp during our race.

For the rookies you will discover that just a shelter from the desolation, -40 and or wind on the Fairwell burn can turn this tent heated or not into a 5 star hotel. We had our annual meeting with the Bureau of Land Management the government agency who issues our permit. Everything is set for the 2009 race. They have offered to give all racers a Centennial packet celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Iditarod Trail. Their enforcement ranger (the guy with the badge and gun) will speak to us at the pre race meeting.

Kathi, Mark Gronewald and I rode from Knik Lake to Burma road and to the Point Mackenzie Store yesterday. There has been a trail closure on the trail after seven mile lake and the climb up nine mile hill. Just before you hit Burma road there is a barricade but local mushers and trail users have put in a new trail to the right that will take you to the next left and across Burma Road a bit further down and back onto the Iditarod Trail. The Knik 200 has markers on the trail right now. After lunch at the store we rode the trail back. If the race had started yesterday you could have ridden a cross bike but it's snowing again now. For those of you interested a New York Times reporter has written a story with video about the race. [Click here](#) to read the story.

The next two months will fly by and we will be eating a Knik Bar hamburger getting ready to start another race on the Iditarod Trail. Good Trails and Training to all of you.

Happy Holidays to everyone and we hope the New Year is good to you.

Bill and Kathi

December 8, 2008

Hello All,

Kathi and I have just returned from a week on the trails out of Knik. The winter biking school went well. The trails were good for the training course. At times they were hard and fast, part of the time they were soft,

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

covered with fresh snow and good training for pushing bikes. The rivers are well frozen with just enough overflow to show the importance of having water proof shoes. The last I heard the trail is open as far as Shell Lake. Word from McGrath is cold, 18 inches (50cm) of snow and the river ice is good. Looking back to last year's race one thing I would like to change is the amount of trash Kathi and I and others picked up on the trail. When we arrived in Rohn we both had a large bag of trash racers had thrown away on the trail. Anyone can occasionally drop a piece of trash without knowing it but not the amount we picked up. Please help us keep the trail clean and take your trash to the next checkpoint. I will remind everyone again as we get closer to race time but

drops will be due at Alaskan European B&B by noon on February 21st.

Anyone planning to stay at the B&B should contact Irene at irenemay60@hotmail.com I hope all of you are having a great winter and your training is going well.

See you soon.
Bill

November 20, 2008

The [roster for the 2009 Iditarod Trail Invitational](#) is full. We have started a first come first served waiting list. No promises but we did have a few cancellations last year. It is exciting to see how popular the race is becoming but a bit sad to tell our friends we don't have spots for them at the starting line. Not only are we limited to 50 racers by our BLM permit we are limited by race philosophy and logistics on the trail. Those racers who remember the 2001 race understand what happens when too many racers are on the trail. It completely overwhelms the checkpoints, changes the trail dynamics and lessens everyones experience. If you don't get to race this year we hope to see you again in 2010.

We will be holding a five day winter biking school on the Trail beginning November 29th. When we get back I will give everyone an update on trail conditions.

Bill and Kathi

October 14, 2008

Date changed for race start. The race will now start on **Sunday March 1, 2009.**

Some of you are probably still living and training in late summer heat but in South Central Alaska the leaves have fallen, morning low temperatures are below freezing and it is snowing outside now. I was told they had 2 ½ feet of snow at Puntilla the other night. Many of us here hope to be biking, running and skiing on snow covered trails soon. This type of weather always puts the Iditarod Trail back in my mind day and night. My head is busy with memories of past races and racers, details to get ready for the next race and of course excitement about seeing all our friends from the lower 48 and around the world in February. We already have a lot of old friends on the roster and several rookies we look forward to meeting this year. Kathi will be race director during the race and I will be on the trail as one of the trail breakers. Rob Kehrer called me and we are glad he will be back for his 5th year as trailbreaker and checker at Rohn. Be sure and tell Rob, Lisa, Terry and Jasper thanks when you go through Rohn. Putting a trail in over Rainy Pass, building trail in the Dalzell and being the checker in Rohn is about as tough a job as you can find. Without the hard work of a lot of people we would never have the Iditarod Trail every winter. As conditions on the trail change though the winter I will keep you updated even though all the veterans know the only time you will know what to expect is moment by moment while you are on the trail. We have had two years in a row of good trail conditions but what it will be this year we just have to wait and see. However bad the conditions might be I think its always better than a good day in the city. I hope all of you have a great winter training season where ever you are.

Bill

June 30, 2008

Hello from rainy Alaska, I guess it is summer for most of you but here in our part of Alaska it has been cool and raining. Many of our trails are still snow covered or too muddy to ride. I am already looking forward to winter when we have thousands of miles of good biking/hiking and skiing trails to explore. With the roster nearly half

alaskaultrasport.com/latest_news.html

4/2/2009

Iditarod Trail Invitational Latest News

full at the end of June and more inquiries coming everyday I think we will have another great field at the starting line next year. We have been happy to hear from some veterans we haven't seen for a while and several new qualified rookies. Kathi and I have a fun but very busy wilderness guiding season coming up. After July 3rd we will not be near a computer very often to check or answer emails. We will get back to you as soon as we can. We hope all of you are having a great summer and that we see you in February.

Bill and Kathi

This web site *is the property of AlaskaUltraSport.*

