



Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race®

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Iditarod Trail Receives a Facelift

A PRESS CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, AT 2:00 PM AT THE MILLENNIUM ALASKAN HOTEL TO FURTHER DISCUSS AND DETAIL THIS IMPORTANT PROJECT. IMAGES WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE MEDIA AT THAT TIME.

WASILLA, AK - December 2, 2014 - The Iditarod Trail received much needed improvements this past October. The Iditarod Trail Committee (ITC) reports that all trail users will now have a smoother path to travel through the Turquoise Lake fire area, essentially from Rohn to Farewell. An extensive logistical effort over this past fall involved heavy equipment being flown to the Farwell landing strip in a C-130, 20 miles of stumps being ground, deadfall removed as well as widening of the trail.

The trail maintenance effort was a multi-partner effort coordinated by the Iditarod Trail Committee. Funds were secured over the past few months through the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance (IHTA), as well as in-kind donations from Cruz Construction Alaska and race sponsor Donlin Gold. Senator Mike Dunleavy was instrumental in advocating the importance and timeliness of the project.

The Turquoise Lake fire started in 2009 and burned underground, rising to the surface in 2010 and eventually buried over 91,000 acres leaving a twisted mass of burnt deadfall and scorched tundra, impassable for any trail user. ITC, with the help of many, including residents from the village of Nikolai, worked in December 2010-January 2011 to reopen the trail.

Stan Hooley, CEO of the Iditarod Trail Committee said, "In 2012-13 there was sufficient snow to conduct the race but each year the trail was deteriorating. Last year with the low snow it was

determined by the Iditarod Trail Committee Board of Directors that major improvements needed to be completed to ensure the safety of dogs and mushers using the trail."

With funding in hand from both DNR and the IHTA, and approximately \$85,000 of in-kind services contributed by Dave Cruz, the project was able to proceed. Hooley said, "Dave's expertise in construction projects in remote Alaska and his passion for the Iditarod makes him a perfect partner."

Mark Nordman, Race Director said, "Annual trail work is constantly being done in problem areas all along the trail to Nome by the ITC along with local residents. Our efforts improve the trail for all user groups."

Nordman went on to say, "We want to make the trail as safe as wilderness travel allows but we are still crossing the Alaska Range where there are always real risks involved."

Iditarod XLIII will get underway at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 7, 2015, in downtown Anchorage at the corner of 4th Avenue and D Street. The race will follow the southern route as it does every odd year.

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