

TUSTUMENA 200 Dog Sled Race BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Tustumena 200 Sled Dog Race is a Kenai Peninsula event covering 200 miles. Beginning in 1984 with only a handful of mushers, first place prize was valued at only \$5.00. The race now offers \$7500 to the winner. The total amount of money awarded to mushers in the race is over \$25,000 each year.

The race runs the last weekend in January and has grown in reputation to draw the attention of competitive distance mushers from Alaska, the lower 48, and international locations.

Before mushers can compete in the 1,150 mile Iditarod, they must first finish 500 qualifying race miles in events such as the Tustumena 200. The T-200 is sanctioned by the Iditarod Trail Committee and the only official qualifying event on the Kenai Peninsula. It is important to have a qualifying race on the Kenai Peninsula so that local racers have a better chance of entering the Iditarod.

The official start of the race is in Kasilof. Mushers leave the starting line with between 12-14 dogs. They travel 100 miles through the Caribou Hills to the official halfway point in Clam Gulch. There, they are required to take a mandatory 6 hour layover to rest their teams and allow the vets to check over all the dogs. Then they head back over the same trail to return to the starting point in Kasilof. They must take an additional four hours of timed rest along the trail at established checkpoints. There are 5 checkpoints on the trail.

All mushers must adhere to the rules of the race. Each musher must carry mandatory gear, including: a cooker, cooking gear, sleeping bag, hand axe, snowshoes, enough booties for each dog, dog food, and people food. They cannot start the race with less than 12 dogs, and cannot finish with less than 5. There are places along the trail where mushers can leave tired and injured dogs with volunteers, to be transported by truck back to the finish line. There are many rules ensuring safe and fair conduct by the mushers, and complete rules may be viewed on the T-200 website at www.tustumena200.com.

Some of the activities of race weekend include a vet check, to make sure all dogs are fit to run a 200 mile race; a musher's meeting, to inform mushers of rules and hazards on the trail; and a pre-race banquet, where mushers pick their bib numbers and meet members of the public. The culmination of the weekend is the Awards Banquet on Monday night.

In addition to the T-200 website, you may want to view the Iditarod site at www.iditarod.com and be sure to read articles in the Peninsula Clarion leading up to the race.