

# Checkpoints and Villages Along the Iditarod Trail

Chapter One: Anchorage to Rainy Pass

Information for Classroom Use



**Iditarod Educational Department**  
**ITC® 2007**

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Wasilla - Anchorage- Eagle River- Knik - Willow

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These activities and information are provided to you as resources for your educational projects. You are granted educational use of the digital pictures and images included in the work. After determining your educational goals and standards to address, use the information and these projects to assist you in your own lesson development.

The links in these lessons are provided to you as resources. Remember, the Internet is an ever changing source of information. The sites we are providing you with are subject to change. Doing a search on the Internet may lead you to other projects. \*\* When you follow links at this site, you will be leaving Iditarod's website. The links are provided to you as a learning tool and for your convenience. The inclusion of any link does not imply endorsement of the linked site. We are not responsible for maintaining the linked sites and not responsible for the contents of that site or any link contained in a linked site, or for any changes or updates to those linked sites. Supervision by teachers at school and parental supervision of students using the Internet at home is recommended and encouraged.

## Wasilla, Alaska

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

Mile 2.2 Knik Goose Bay Rd. Wasilla, AK

#### **Website Resources:**

Iditarod Official Website: <http://www.iditarod.com>

Iditarod Headquarters: <http://www.iditarod.com/aboutus/headquarters.html>

Wasilla Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.wasillachamber.org>

**Iditarod Headquarters is located at Wasilla, Alaska. The physical address is Mile 2.2 Knik Goose Bay Rd. Wasilla, AK.**

**Headquarters serves as the location for a museum and gift shop as well as the offices for the Iditarod staff members. All year long, tourists visit headquarters to learn about the race. Inside the building, there is a museum and a gift shop.**



Mile 2.2 Knik Goose Bay Rd. Wasilla, AK

**This is the same place, but a different time. What difference does the time of year make?**



**Pictures: Iditarod Headquarters, the Iditarod Trail sign, 2007 Wells Fargo Teacher on the Trail, and the statue that honors Joe Redington, Sr. The pictures were taken in February and in June.**



**Anchorage**  
**The Start of the Race**  
**Race Headquarters: Millennium Hotel**

**Website Resources:**

[www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com)



**Insider Video Segment:**

March 2, 2006 “Command Center”

March 4, 2006 “Behind the Ceremony”

Race Headquarters in Anchorage is the Millennium Hotel in Anchorage.

Once Iditarod begins, race volunteers are busy inside the Millennium Hotel assisting in a variety of tasks such as answering phones, working in the Iditarod gift shop, and working in the dog drop area. Technology plays an important role as volunteers work to upload race data from the trail, gather and post weather data, and assist Zuma with the email.



Race headquarters operates on a 24 hour a day schedule until all of the teams have reached Nome. Learn more about the kinds of volunteer jobs by going to [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com) and clicking on the words Volunteers to go to the section of the website dedicated to information about the Iditarod volunteers.

The race starts in Anchorage on the first Saturday in March each year. Race fans line the streets to watch as the mushers leave from beneath the start banner with their “Idita-Rider” in their sled for the ceremonial start of the race. A second sled is hooked to the musher’s sled adding additional weight and keeping the team’s speed slower.





Dogs that are returned from the checkpoints arrive at the Millennium Hotel by small planes that land on Lake Hood. The dogs are brought to the dog drop area, which has been set up as a comfortable place for dogs to enjoy meeting race fans while they are examined and cared for by veterinarians and the dog drop volunteers. The dogs wait for their

‘family--- the musher’s family and dog handlers’ to pick them up. Dogs needing a lengthier stay are taken to the Eagle River Correction Center where they are picked up by their ‘family’.

Curled up and waiting at the Millennium Dog Drop area, the dogs are very happy and well cared for by veterinarians and trained staff who are dedicated to ensure the best possible care for the dogs.



Learn more about dogs that are dropped from the race by reading the RACE RULES found on the website at the “Learn About” Iditarod tab at [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com).

Additional Resource:

Learn about the Idita-Rider event and auction by clicking the Iditarod Auctions tab at [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com) .



## Restarting the Race

### Insider Video Segment:

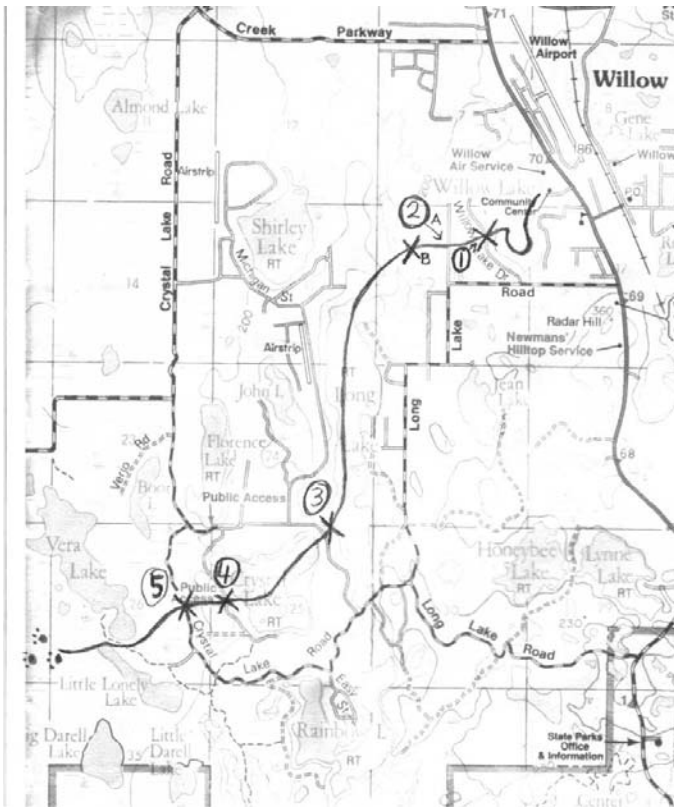
March 5, 2006 Restart in Willow

**The official location for the restart of Iditarod is Wasilla, Alaska.**

The restart of the race is held on the Sunday following the start of Iditarod. When the musher's team leaves the starting banner, the clock begins. The in and out times during the ceremonial start the day before, don't count as part of the mushers total time. The race officially begins at the restart of the race. Thousands of fans turn out to the staging area to stand beyond the security fence to watch as the teams leave for the checkpoints Knik, Yentna, Skwentna, and the rest of the Iditarod Trail. Iditarod begins!



Volunteers who have the job of dog handling report to the coordinator and get their assignments. Some mushers have dog handlers and friends or family to help them but other mushers rely on the volunteers to assist in getting the teams to the start banner.



From Volunteer Tim: “For the past several Restarts I have been the ham operator at check point # 5 which is the last crossing on the road system. I try to set my station up 2 hours early to insure a good vantage point at the crossing. If I’m lucky, I park my pickup about 50 feet from the crossing and won’t allow anyone else to park closer, thus giving the teams a clear path without distraction. From the truck information is relayed back to head quarters as each team crosses. This is accomplished via a 2m ham radio and packet system { Ham Email on Ham Frequency }. The information consists of team number, time across, and dog count. I am in contact with all the other road system check points

and can pass along any important data that needs be. There is normally a large crowd at this check point and I can pass info to the spectators also. I normally bring along a jug of coffee and am fairly comfortable for the time frame involved.”



## Yentna Station and Skwentna



### Resources on all checkpoints:

[www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com) Click on the Learn About tab. Click on the menu item: The Iditarod Trail. Beneath the map are the names of the checkpoints and important data. When you click on the name of the checkpoints you can read additional information about each location along the trail.

<http://www.yentnastation.com/winter.htm> Yentna Station Roadhouse

### Insider Video Segments:

March 6, 2006: Skwentna

March 6, 2006: Skwentna Sweeties

Yentna Station (<http://www.iditarod.com/learn/iditarodtrail.html>) is a lodge that is run by Dan Gabryczak, his wife, and their family.



Skwentna Checkpoint is located on the Yentna River. Joe and Norma Delia reside in their home near the two story checkpoint cabin. Joe was a checker during the race for the first 25 years. Joe has been the postmaster for Skwentna for many years. He and Norma remain very involved at the checkpoint during the race.

(<http://www.iditarod.com/learn/iditarodtrail.html>)

# Finger Lake and Rainy Pass

## Website Resources:

<http://www.iditarod.com/learn/iditarodtrail.html>

<http://www.withinthewild.com/page/17>

<http://www.rainypasslodge.com>

## INSIDER Video Segment:

March 7, 2006 Trouble on the Trail

The checkpoints of Finger Lake and Rainy Pass are remote locations but they can be very busy checkpoints. These are locations that tourists often fly to and visit during the race. The tourists arrive on small bush planes and spend hours photographing the mushers and observing what goes on in checkpoints. In this photograph tents have been set up for the volunteers to reside in during their stay at Finger Lake.



Photograph by Diane Johnson, 2000

## **A word from Victor, a race volunteer at Rainy Pass: (Dec. 2006)**

### **Photographs submitted by Victor Hett**



“I am a Ham Radio Operator and my main function at check points is passing traffic (information on where the mushers are) to the Anchorage HQ using Ham Radio. I have done this for the past two years and am looking forward to another fun filled experience.

There are two of us that do the comms (race communications) at each checkpoint. We set up a crossband repeater near the checkpoint which enables us to pass the traffic immediately to the Anchorage HQ through our crossband repeater to another repeater many miles away. I have worked the very beautiful Rainy Pass Check Point where the Perin family has a lodge. They are the most wonderful people you ever want to meet. Also at Rainy Pass there is a hunting/fishing guide that has lived there for over 40 years. His name is Bucky. His cabin is like a first class museum. The weather has been beautiful at times and at other times I have seen it so cold that we do not let anyone go outside by themselves. It is sometimes hard to stand up in the wind.

We arrive at our checkpoint a few days before the first musher arrives. This gives us time to cut a hole in the ice with a chain saw so the musher's can get water for their teams. We sort out the dog food that has been brought in by small airplanes on skis to make it easy for the musher's to find their food bag when they arrive.

Being responsible for communications, we are the first to arrive in the checkpoint and the last out. There is no communication with the outside world from Rainy Pass except via radio or the expensive satellite phone which we only use for private confidential traffic which is rare.

When we have cleaned up the checkpoint, we return to Anchorage for a day or so before we are flown out to our next checkpoint.”



Photographs by Victor Hett

There is no road system for tourists to drive to these two checkpoints. One must travel by dog sled, snowmachine, (snowmobile), or bush plane. Individuals have traveled by bike, snowshoe, skies, or by foot. An “Iditasport Winter Challenge” - is held during February. The route follows a section of the Iditarod Trail and ends at Finger Lake near the Winter Lake Lodge. Participants in this event bike, snowshoe, or ski during this competition.



There are other events that take place in this area, too, such as the Iron Dog Race. You can learn more about these events by doing a search on the Internet.



## Scrapbook: From the Checkpoints:



**Knik Museum**



**View from a bush plane!**



**Post Office in Skwentna**



**Checkpoint Building: Skwentna**



**Dog Yard in Skwentna**



**A Vet Examines a Dog Team: Skwentna**

## Finger Lake and Rainy Pass: Iditarod 2000



**A snow and ice sculpture at Finger Lake during the 2000 Iditarod can inspire classroom art projects.**

Photographs by Diane Johnson,  
Iditarod 2000

**Permission for educational and classroom use granted.**



# Lesson Connections

## Alaska Standards:

**English/Language Arts: Resource:** <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/standards/pdf/standards.pdf>



**A student should be able to speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences.**

A student who meets the content standard should:

- 1) apply elements of effective writing and speaking; these elements include ideas, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure, and personal style;
- 2) in writing, demonstrate skills in sentence and paragraph structure, including grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation;
- 3) in speaking, demonstrate skills in volume, intonation, and clarity;
- 4) write and speak well to inform, to describe, to entertain, to persuade, and to clarify thinking in a variety of formats, including technical communication;
- 5) revise, edit, and publish the student's own writing as appropriate;
- 6) when appropriate, use visual techniques to communicate ideas; these techniques may include role playing, body language, mime, sign language, graphics, Braille, art, and dance;
- 7) communicate ideas using varied tools of electronic technology; and
- 8) evaluate the student's own speaking and writing and that of others using high standards.

**National Standards:** <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/SubjectTopics.asp?SubjectID=7>

### **Writing**

1. [Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process](#)
2. [Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing](#)
3. [Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions](#)
4. [Gathers and uses information for research purposes](#)

### **Creative Writing:**

1. Pick one of the digital pictures in this chapter. Use the picture as an inspiration for a poem, short story, or an essay.
2. Think and compare: What would it be like to be an Iditarod volunteer during the race and at a checkpoint like Finger Lake or Rainy Pass in comparison to a checkpoint located in Anchorage or in one of the villages? What challenges might volunteers face in each location? What specific supplies might be necessary in one checkpoint versus another? Compare two places and write your thoughts. Create an essay, poem, or a poster comparing the two checkpoints and sharing the information you have surmised through research.
3. Think and Respond: What kinds of animals might be seen at a checkpoint such as Finger Lake or Rainy Pass? Research and gather information. Create a project to demonstrate what you have learned.
4. Think and Respond: What role does the presence of wild animals that could be in or near the checkpoint play on the set up and maintenance of a checkpoint?



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