

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

STATE OF ALASKA

PO BOX 112000,
Juneau, Alaska, 99811-2000
PHONE: (907) 465-4652
FAX: (907) 465-3390



PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Richard F Schmitz, Communications Special Assistant
Office: (907) 465 4640
Mobile: (907) 321 0040

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DROPPED IDITAROD DOGS UNDER INMATES' CARE AT HILAND MTN. CC

(JUNEAU) – Staff and inmates at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center in Eagle River are continuing a long tradition as they again volunteer to care for sled dogs dropped from teams competing in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, Superintendent Dean Marshall said.

This year, close to 30 inmates have volunteered for the program. Dog food and straw is provided by the Iditarod Trail Committee. At present, eight dogs are being cared for, however the facility can board as many as 100 dogs. The number changes frequently as mushers return from the trail and collect their dogs.

Hiland Mountain remains an important link in maintaining the highest standards of dog care demanded by the Iditarod Trail Committee. Mushers competing in the race frequently remove dogs from their teams at checkpoints. Dogs dropped before the midway point of the race are returned to Anchorage by air, and then transported to Hiland Mountain where they are cared for until their owners can retrieve them.

The volunteer dog handlers consist of minimum custody inmates working in teams. The crew logs in and tags each dog brought in, makes sure each dog has water, food and clean straw bedding, and takes note of medications and any veterinary treatment that might be required.

The dog care project began in 1974 under the direction of then-deputy superintendent Dan Reynolds, who was also a dog musher. In 2006, the facility cared for a little over 300 dogs.

“These dogs deserve the best possible care, and I’m proud to say this is what the inmates and staff at Hiland Mountain provide year after year.” said Commissioner Joe Schmidt.