The IronLine sled dog race takes place Feb. 8 and 9, starting and ending at the Iron River RV Park

IRON RIVER—Recent snowfall and a lot of hard work have organizers optimistic with the start of the IronLine dog sled race just days away. __PUBLIC__

“With the snow we have been getting and temperatures forecast to be below freezing, the trails should be in excellent condition,” co-director Josh Brindle said.

About 20 teams have registered for the event with mushers coming from as far away as Alaska, including many from throughout the Upper Peninsula and one from Iron River.

The RV Park at the Iron County Chamber of Commerce will be converted into The Mushers’ Village prior to the start of Friday’s race with vendors and warming tents, Brindle said. “We’re going to create a village atmosphere,” Brindle added.

On Friday, The Musher’s Village will open to the public at 5 p.m. with dog sled teams leaving the starting gate at about 6:30 p.m. Brindle said that teams should begin arriving at the finish line around 8.

On Saturday, racing begins at 9:30 a.m. with mushers and their teams starting to return after 11.

“We have some very competitive teams,” Brindle said. “We expect an excellent race.”

“And right now we’re closing in on optimal trail conditions,” Brindle added. “With the snows that we’ve had, the groomers are out working on the trails.”

Spectators seeking to view the race from vantage points other than the start-finish line can visit the part of the trail crossing Chicaugon Lake near the George Young Recreation Complex. Road crossings are another excellent option for watching the race.

The IronLine organizers offer top prize of $2,000 for first place in the 10-dog pro class race. Second prize is $1,500, and third place nets the musher and team $1,200. A total of $6,500 in cash prizes will be awarded.

The event will be topped off with a banquet set for 6 p.m. at Zippidy Duda’s. Admission tickets for the banquet are available at www.theironline.com.