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Preparations Going Well for Eagle Cap Extreme Sled Dog Race

**Record number of mushers to compete in the 11th running of the ECX,
January 21 - 24.**

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As race week approaches, Eagle Cap Extreme organizers are putting the finishing touches on all facets of the event. One of the final logistical hurdles: how to fit twenty-five teams and more than 200 dogs in the parking lot at Ferguson Ridge Ski Hill. “We’ve never had more than 22 teams participate in this event,” explains ECX president Randy Greenshields. “Right now we have twenty-five teams, and more may register before race day. It’s encouraging to see how popular our race has become.” For the first time, the lower parking lot at Fergi will be opened to stage dog teams prior to the race.

While officials and volunteers work to accommodate the high number of entries, they are enthusiastic about the level of competition anticipated in this year’s race, especially in the 200-mile main event. The lineup features 2011 Champion Steve Madsen, two past runners up in Brett Bruggeman (2014) and Mark Stamm (2012), and the 2014 100-mile Champion, Roy Etnire. Sprinkle in two-time ECX Best-Cared for Team Award winner Josi Thyr and eleven-time Iditarod veteran Karen Ramstead, and the 200-miler is a definite must-watch event.

The 100-mile event and the pot race also feature a host of familiar mushers, including 2013 pot race champion Steve Taylor, nine-time ECX veteran Rick Katucki, and three mushers from the Warren family of Council, Idaho. Susan Parraga is poised to run the pot race this year, the first Wallowa County resident to participate in the Eagle Cap Extreme. And the Junior Race, to be run at noon on Friday, features two young ladies from eastern Oregon: Moriah Hubbell of Summerville, and Morgan Anderson of Enterprise.

Some changes will be evident to race fans at the start this year. After receiving feedback from mushers about the sometimes treacherous descent of Fergi to finish the 200 and 100-mile races, ECX officials opted to run all of the races up the west side of the ski hill, where the pot race has run the past two years. Mushers still need to ascend and descend the 650 vertical feet to and from the Canal Road from Fergi, but they will do so in about

twice the distance as in years past. The start chute will run east-west along the base of Fergi Ski Hill.

Even as the army of nearly two hundred volunteers wraps up final details for the race, some things remain in Mother Nature's hands. "We get a lot of questions about snow conditions," says Troy Nave, one of the ECX Directors. "The good news is that the recent warmer temperatures helped consolidate the snow pack, making for a better running surface for the dogs. There is still plenty of snow along the course, and we expect more over the weekend. If we get a cold spell next week, conditions will be close to perfect."

The eleventh running of the Eagle Cap Extreme takes place this January 21st through the 24th. The ECX features a 200-mile, 12-dog race (the Iditarod and Yukon Quest qualifier), a 100-mile 8-dog race, a two-stage 62-mile "pot" race, and a 22-mile long Juniors Race. The race is free to spectators, a perfect winter event for families. For more information, including the full schedule of race week events, visit the ECX website www.eaglecapextreme.com, and follow the event on Facebook.

The ECX operates as a 501(c)(3) organization. It is put on with the help of more than 150 volunteers, and is supported by over 100 local businesses and individuals. It runs under special permit on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

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