

# Nenana Ice Classic tickets on sale

Tickets for the Nenana Ice Classic went on sale Saturday, February 1, 1986. This is the seventieth year of the Nenana Ice Classic which began in 1917 when engineers surveying for the construction of the Nenana Railroad bet on when the ice in the Tanana River would move out. The winnings then were \$800.00. Last year winners took home \$187,000.

Ticket outlets are available all across Alaska from Barrow to Ketchikan. Each \$2.00 ticket challenges the buyer to guess the day, hour and minute the ice in the Tanana, just upstream from its tributary, the Nenana River, will go out.

Nenana Ice Classic Manager and life-long resident Bob Coghill Jr. reports that this has been an exceptionally mild winter in the interior. "September was cold, until moose season was closed and the ducks were gone, but then it got unseasonably warm," said Coghill. "However there has not been much snow this year. Snow acts as an insulator protecting the ice from freezing as deep as it might. While the warm weather would mean less ice, the lack of snow means more ice." Coghill said.

In the 70 years that records have been kept the ice has gone out between late morning and late evening. This allows river watchers to get a good night's sleep.

The tripod structure is connected from the riverbank, via a rope, to a tower specifically constructed for the Ice Classic Event. In the tower is a Rube Goldberg system of ropes, pulleys and hatchets which combine to stop the clock as the tripod moves down the river.

The good people of Nenana and throngs from nearby Fairbanks line the banks of the Tanana River to watch the river ice. The river bank is also crowded with building materials, vehicles and various other goods destined for the villages along the Yukon River.

Nenana is the inland port for the Yukon. When the ice is gone barges and tugs will move constantly in and out of Nenana to take everything that the villages may need down the Tanana and into the Yukon.

The official sign of spring in interior Alaska is the ice going out in Nenana with the Nenana Ice Classic tripod. It is the hope of the Board of Directors of the Nenana Ice Classic that sensible legislation by the Alaska Legislature will allow this tradition to continue beyond its seventieth year.

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