

Hello Pocket Gopher Extreme Racers. I want to thank all of you for signing up to race in my extreme race. Rather than make this fancy with graphics and pictures I am going to get right to the point.

1. Upcoming important dates and events

17 June Release of race update 1 (this race update)

30 June Race schematics will be released.

4 July Any air travel arrangements need to be completed.

4 July Race Update 2 will be released.

11 July Race Update 3 will be released if needed.

17 July Arrive on site mandatory race meeting at 19:00hr local time zone.

18 July Races begins.

IMPORTANT ADMINISTRATION DETAILS:

1. Race Accommodations: I have arranged three different accommodations for you.

a. Camping on site: Primitive camping is available at the race start. Its free but there is no electricity or showers. We do have drinking water and campers and tents are welcome.

b. Camping at Outback Ranch: <https://www.outbackranch.net/> Outback is about 20 min from race HQ and they have everything from tent camping to cabins

c. Sawmill in Houston MN <https://www.the-sawmill-inn.com/> This hotel is about 15 min from the race start. More hotels are available in Lacrosse WI. Lacrosse is about 45 Min from the race start.

2. Waivers and Releases

a. Waivers will be available online for signature with race update 2. Please make sure all team members sign a waiver.

RACE and COURSE UPDATES:

1. Packing List Updates:

a. Pack rafts: Pack rafts are NOT provided as part of the race. If you are renting a pack raft or would like to ship your pack raft you can ship it to the following address

i. Sherri Allen ATN Pocket Gopher 12904 county 12, Caledonia, MN 55921

b. Paddle Bags: Paddle bags are required to go with your pack rafts and is where you will store all paddles, pumps, and PFDs. I do not put a requirement on paddle bags but make sure they can be secured, and your team number is attached.

c. Pack raft lights: Two **pack raft lights are required** front and back on each pack raft during the hours of darkness. Chem lights are acceptable and that is

what I would recommend. Most of you will be in the water both nights so plan accordingly.

- d. **Bike Boxes:** Bike Boxes are required for each bike on the team. Because my race is an expedition “lite” I will allow any bike boxes just make sure your entire bike fits in it. Bike shops are an excellent place to get free bike boxes. **Bike boxes may not exceed 20pds** when fully loaded. Bike boxes must be loaded and weighed Thursday Night before 22:00 local time.
- e. **Gear Bags:** Each racer will be allowed to have one gear bag not to exceed 20 pds that will be dropped at a TA in about the middle of the race. More will be revealed in the upcoming race schematics. Gear bags will be a trash bag with your number labeled on them. You are responsible for providing your own gear bag, one per racer, with race number attached. Gear bags must be loaded and weighed Thursday Night before 22:00 local time.
- f. **Rappel Gear:** All Rappel Gear is now optional. There will be rope assist on the course that will be optional for racers if they want to use it to enter a steep gulf. For those of you not familiar with a speed rappel or rope assist it is more of a rope aid than a true rappel. There are a number of ways to use a rope assist.
  - i. **Body Rappel:** Body Rappel is where you use your entire body to assist in slowing you down while traversing down the rope.
  - ii. **Friction Assist:** Technique using the upper half of your torso to assist you while traversing down the rope.
  - iii. **Traditional gear:** Harness and rappel device such as a figure 8

*(I will cover each of these in more detail in race update 2)*

2. **Course Hints:** For those of you racing a Pocket Gopher race for the first time you will quickly discover that my philosophy as a race director is to put the race in your hands and give you as many decisions as possible to make to control your own outcome. You will find that most of my course points are not in a particular order (1,2,3,4) so that each team can use their strengths to their greatest advantage. Often there will be 2-5 different options to reach a point. Because I design my courses with so many options it is impossible for me to tell you how far a particular stage will be, so my stage distances are estimates only based on the average milage of combinations. Your own individual team lengths may differ based on your team strength.
  - a. **Layout:** The course is a linear loop meaning once you leave the start line you will not see it again until the finish line
    - i. You will assemble and tear down your bike several times.

- ii. You will not have to carry you pack rafts more than a mile, but you may choose to portage depending on how you attack the course.
  - b. Foot Legs: On all hiking legs of the race, you will meet lot of different terrain with few trails. Some but not all trails are shown on map.
  - c. Bike Legs: You will be biking on single track, dual track, farm trails, horse trails, gravel roads, and rural routes and rural highways. Please use caution and follow all bike rules on rural routes and rural highways. Many of these roads have little or no shoulders so make sure you are clearly visible to vehicles on the roadways. There is not a lot of traffic on these roads but still be careful and make sure you can be always seen. Never stop your bike in the middle of the road or at an intersection to check where you are on the map.
  - d. Water Legs: You will be on slow moving rivers, flat water, and the Mississippi River. The Mississippi is an amazing river and fun to paddle but there are motor boats, fishing boats, speed boats, as well as barge traffic on the river. Never ever pass in front of a barge. Even if the barge looks like they are miles away they move faster than you think, and barges cannot stop quickly. Barge traffic is uncommon; however, certain routes may have such traffic, and it is important to always remain vigilant.
  - e. Maps: There will be no plotting of points this year on the course. You will see a variety of maps with 1:24 and 1:25 being the most common but you may also see 1:50 and 1:12 on some portions of the course.
  - f. Poisonous Plants: poison ivy is all throughout the course. Please be cautious around it.
  - g. Mosquitos: We have a crazy number of mosquitos in Minnesota, and they can become even heavier at night and in low lying areas. Please plan for them.
  - h. Ticks: There are ticks in MN some years that are thicker than others but there will be ticks
  - i. Poisonous Animals: While it is highly unusual there have been sightings of rattlesnakes in the past in this region of MN. They are rare but you may see one so use caution.
3. Race Schematics: I purposely put out my race schematics a little later than some race because my race schematics are full of added race information and clues about the race course itself. When you do get the race schematics, please go over them in detail. You are allowed to carry race schematics with you, but I will not be supplying them at the start of the race. Every year at least one team forgets their race schematics. Please do not let that be you!

I look forward to seeing you all at the dinner Thursday Night

John Harris