



### Race Information

- Pepsi Challenge Classic & Freestyle 50 KM
- Great River Energy Rush Classic & Freestyle 25 KM
- Giants Ridge 8 KM Race



**Saturday February 28, 2026**

**East Range Cross Country Challenges, Inc**

## Welcome SKIERS!!!!

The Board of Directors of East Range Cross Country Challenges, Inc., and the Race Committee take great pride in welcoming you to **the 40th Annual Pepsi Challenge, Great River Energy Rush & Giants Ridge 8K Ski Races**. We sincerely hope that you enjoy **"Taking the Challenge"** and that this race will become an important ski event on your winter calendar for each year to come.

The race would not be possible without the support of major sponsors and hundreds of volunteers who donate their time and resources to this event. Please take every opportunity – at aid stations and on the course to thank these supporters.

To help ensure a safe and successful race, please read the information we have provided in this ski booklet. Good luck in the race and we'll see you at the finish line!

### East Range Cross Country Challenges, Inc.

ERCCCI is a 501c(3) multi-community, Public Charity founded in 1987 to organize the Pepsi Challenge Ski Race at the request of Giants Ridge (IRRRB). **Our mission is:**

- **To promote healthy living through cross country skiing and other outdoor adventure activities on Minnesota's Iron Range, primarily at Giants Ridge.**
- **Provide educational resources.**
- **Aid in maintenance and development of adventure sport trails and venues.**
- **Create, assist and maintain opportunities for adventure sport enthusiasts of all ages to race, work out and socialize.**

### ERCCCI Board & Pepsi Challenge Ski Race Officials

Chairman	Tim Salo
Treasurer	Debbie Maki
Secretary	Deb Maki
Race Coordinator	Lisa Weidemann
Feed Stations	Lisa Weidemann, Michael Starken
Chief of Course	Todd Roswold
Chief of Timing	Debbie Maki
Registration	Deb Maki
Start & Finish	John Filander
Awards Ceremony	Deb Maki & Tim Salo
Ski Patrol	Debby Bocnuk
Timing Services	Superior Timing, LLC
Finance & IT	Tim Salo
Giants Ridge Consultant	Benji Neff
Chief of Competition	John Filander
Announcers	John Wagner & Jerry Newton
Snowmobile Shuttles/Feeds	Gregg Debevec

**Board Members:** John Filander, Gary Anderson, Deb Maki, Gregg Debevec, Michael Starken, Debbie Maki, Tim Salo, Todd Roswold, Debby Bocnuk, Benji Neff, Greg Walsh & Lisa Weidemann.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION – PLEASE READ!

## ERCCCI Office Location

Giants Ridge has generously given us office space in the Timing Building at Giants Ridge. The ERCCCI Board and its volunteers organize this race, so please do not expect Giants Ridge to have all the details of the race. If you have any questions or need information about the race, please contact Race Headquarters at 1-800-688-7669, ext. 8072 or 218-865-8072 [pepsichallenge@giantsridge.com](mailto:pepsichallenge@giantsridge.com).

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Friday February 27, 2026

**2:00pm – 9:00pm** **Bib pickup** registration lower level of The South Chalet at Giants Ridge, 6373 Wynne Creek Drive, Biwabik MN 55708.

### Saturday February 28, 2026

**7:00 – 9:00 am** **Bib pickup**. lower level of **The South Chalet at Giants Ridge**

**9:00 am** **25K & 50K Classic Races** – Mass Start

**9:30 am** **50K Freestyle Races Start** – Mass Start

**9:40 am** **25K Freestyle Races Start** – Mass Start

**9:50 am** **8K Race Start** Mass Start

**11:00am - 3:30 pm** **Competitor luncheon** at The South Chalet at Giants Ridge. Admission with the ticket included in your race registration packet is good for one boxed lunch (**Sandwiches with chips and Fruit**) to go or eat in with ski friends. Seating is available for those attending awards ceremony and door prizes. **Guests \$15 in advance only** up to 2/23/26. Alcoholic beverages **cannot** be brought into The South Chalet but are available for sale in Burnt Onion in the Main Chalet at Giants Ridge.

**12:00 PM to 3:00 AWARDS CEREMONY** – The South Chalet at Giants Ridge. Major awards and class prizes will be distributed at this time. Winners will be verified before receiving awards or prizes. Early awards may be handed out beginning at 12:00 pm as **certified** results are available. **Additional seating is available in the Main Chalet**

## Poles

ERCCCI will provide poles as needed. Extra poles will be available after the start and at all feeds. If you borrow a pole, your bib number will be recorded. **IF POLE IS NOT RETURNED TO THE TIMING BLDG, YOU WILL BE BILLED.**

## Waxing

Waxing information will be posted at Registration and at the start. **NO WAXING AT REGISTRATION.** Wax rooms are available at the Golf Maintenance and Ironing Board Wax buildings at Giants Ridge. Waxing is **not** permitted at The South Chalet at Giants Ridge.

## Birkie Qualifier

The Pepsi Challenge is a qualifier for the American Birkebeiner. The Pepsi Challenge 50K race will qualify a skier for the Birkie. You must ski at least a 23K race to qualify for the Kortelopet. In case of a shortened Pepsi Challenge race, your result will not be recognized by the Birkie.

## 25K & 50K Classic Races

The Classic 25K and 50K Races will be starting at 9:00 am allowing only classic skiers a chance to experience this great course. As always, our course will be groomed to provide excellent conditions for classical skiers. This is a mass start with 25K & 50K skiers all starting together.

## American Ski Marathon Series

The Pepsi Challenge is a member of the ASM Series. The series is North America's longest-running and largest citizen's racing and touring series, featuring 16 premier ski marathons and winter festivals stretching from Vermont to Alaska.

## Clothing Bags

Deposit your bag (marked with your bib number) by the sign marked "Bag Drop" in the secure bag drop tent near the Start area at Giants Ridge. Bags and tags are available at the tent. Do not put sharp or heavy objects in the bag. We are not responsible for broken bags that result in lost or stolen items. After the race you may claim your bag from the secured bag drop.

## Restrooms

**Restrooms** are available at registration with numerous portable toilets around the start/stadium area. Restrooms are also located in the chalet and South Chalet at Giants Ridge Lower Level.

## Refund Policy

**Your registration fee is non-refundable.** Medical "comps" will be granted only with verification from a doctor. Bibs are non-transferable!

## Lost & Found

Lost and found is located in the Timing Bldg. If you have found or lost something, see Debbie Maki on the main floor of the Timing Bldg. Remember to tie your clothing bag securely! Before you leave Giants Ridge please check to make sure you have all your ski equipment and personal belongings.

## Cut-Off Times for 50K Race

**50/25k race 25K point - 12:30 pm (Stadium Feed 4)**

**50/25k race 32K point - 1:30 pm (Feed Station 1)**

**50/25k race 43K point - 2:45 pm (Feed Station 2)**

**8K Race 4K point - 11:30 am (Stadium Feed 4)**

For safety reasons, skiers who arrive at control points after a cut off time will not be allowed to continue. No exceptions. **Any skiing after cut-off times is at your own risk per Giants Ridge ski pass provisions.**

Along the course, please thank the volunteers for their efforts to ensure your safety on the trails!

## Parking and Access

Parking is available at the Lodge lots (North), Main Chalet, Burnt Onion Building (South) & Overflow along highway 138 adjacent to main entrance. The Bronze ski trail runs North/South along the entire Overflow parking lot for easy ski access to the Stadium area on the North end of the complex.

## Food & Aid

Three feed stations are located along the 25K course approximately seven KM apart; six on the 50K course, plus a feed station in the Stadium. All stations have water, Gatorade and/or doughnut holes, Fig Bars and Honey Stinger Gel.

## On Course

All skiers use the same course and finish in the Stadium area at Giants Ridge. Signs and staff will indicate division points for the 8K and 25K races and continuation of the 50K. **PLEASE STUDY COURSE MAPS, OBSERVE & READ THE SIGNS IN THE STADIUM AND FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS CAREFULLY.**

## Rules & Regulations

Classic/diagonal skiers should stay in the parallel tracks on the outside edges of the course. Freestyle skiers must not skate over parallel tracks.

Please yield to faster skiers, remaining as far right as possible. If someone is skiing on your ski tails or poles, they most likely need to be allowed to pass.

Passing skiers have right-of-way. FIS rule 337.5 prevails. You must yield at first demand, even if the course has two tracks. Common commands are "Hut!" and "Track!". Make sure you say these commands loud enough so the skier ahead can hear you. If a skier yells "track" – please move and allow that skier to pass safely. If you leave the race you must: 1. Check out at a feed station or in the Stadium and 2. **Report your bib number to an official in Timing Bldg.**

When you are done with your race – please do not cool down by skiing the race course. The Bronze/Oslo trails are not being used this year in the race course. You may ski south out of the Stadium, cross the base of the ski hill, past the Burnt Onion Bldg. and pick up the Bronze Trail. Please stay off the race course. Thank you.

## START

All races begin with a mass start. Please line up according to your ability.

Start time for 25K & 50K Classic is 9:00 am – Giants Ridge Stadium. Ski on your honor for classic style races only – no V1, V2 or Herringbone with glide phase skate techniques allowed.

Start time for 50K Freestyle 9:30 am & 25K Freestyle is 9:40 am.

Start time for the 8K race is 9:50 am.

**Please take it easy at the start. We would prefer no broken poles, scratched up skis or a pile up. Show consideration and courtesy to other racers.**

## FINISH

Electronic RFID chip timing is being used this year. The chip label is attached to the back and front panel of your bib. **DO NOT BALL UP OR CRINKLE YOUR BIB BEFORE THE RACE** - doing this will break the circuits in your chip. Your time will be recorded as you cross over the finish line by a sensor wire - make sure your bib number is visually available – no jackets over bibs.

Results will be available at the Awards Banquet (Ticket printer) on race day. Results will be sent to [Skinnyski.com](http://www.skinnyski.com) and the Birkie office. Results will be posted on <http://www.superiortiming.com> and [skinnyski.com](http://www.skinnyski.com). No results will be mailed.

**Protests must be made at the Timing Building to Superior Timing or John Filander, Chief of Competition within ½ hour of posting of unofficial results. It's too late to protest at the 2:00 pm Awards program.**

## Leaving the Course or Race

You must notify a race official if you leave the race for any reason. Failure to do so may result in an unnecessary, time-consuming search for missing skiers and/or inaccurate results.

For example, if you are in the 50K race and stop at the 25K mark in the Stadium, you must go inside the building second floor to inform the timer you dropped out of the race.

## Safety Note/First Aid Facilities

Ski Patrol first aid areas are at the start, midway and finish (South Chalet Ski Patrol Office). Notify officials of an injured skier and help anyone in need. Your safety is our prime concern. This is a technically difficult course. You should familiarize yourself with the course before the race. Know the course, ski it if possible and know the locations of the feeding and first aid stations. Ski in control and never hesitate to help another skier in need. Please report any problems or injuries to feed station personnel. They are equipped with radios to request immediate assistance if necessary.

Medical and rescue staff wear Red Cross or Ski Patrol jackets. They are authorized to pull skiers from the race for medical reasons. Their decision is final.

## Injuries

Injuries are most likely to occur at the steep downhill runs. Do not over ski your abilities. You are much more likely to win this race on the up hills than on the down hills. Please report injuries to the next feed station so that they can call for assistance.

## Frostbite

To prevent frostbite, keep hands, ears and (if necessary) face protected in cold weather and/or presence of severe wind chill. Heat loss from exposed areas can be very rapid, especially on fast down hills.

Frostbite is initially painless. Ask others to check for you. First aid and feed station personnel will watch for frostbite. Warm frostbitten areas immediately. Continue to ski only if color returns, but check area frequently. If the area remains white or is extensive, you should seek medical attention and shelter immediately!

## Hypothermia & Dehydration

In cold weather, dry layered clothing, hand and headgear can help prevent hypothermia. Impending hypothermia is signaled by uncontrolled shivering. Prevention is your responsibility. Aid and report others with suspected hypothermia. Warm shelter is available at the start stadium. Evacuation is available at feed stations.

Don't pass up feed stations! Replenish yourself with liquids and high calorie foods. Cold, slow conditions as well as extremely warm sticky conditions adversely affect body moisture and heat. Eat and drink early and often!

## Awards

**Top Finishers:** Awards will be given to the first three (3) finishers in the 50K & 25K - Men and Women.

Class prizes(50 & 25K- **FITS** Socks) (8K Giants Ridge Souvenir) will be awarded to the top 3 – Male and Female – in the following **age groups**:

**8K only:** 9 - 11 and 12 – 15 (all skiers under the age of 9 must have an adult ski with them)

**25K only** 13-15 age group.

**50K, 25K & 8K:** 16 – 18, 19 – 24, 25 – 34, 35 – 44, 45 – 54, 55 – 64, 65 – 74, 75 and over.

Prize drawings are done before the race at registration. Only pre-registered skiers will be entered into the prize drawings. Your skier bib packet will be ticketed if you are a winner. Collect your prize at the ERCCCI Board's Table at Registration at the South Chalet at Giants Ridge.

## ERCCCI Supported Events

East Range Cross Country Challenges supports three additional High School events with coordination, in-kind donations, volunteer support. All events serve 1,500 –2,000 participants.

1/10/2026 Mesabi East Invitational

2/4/2026 Section VII Region Final Meet

2/11-12/2026 Minnesota State HS Championships

**Please Join us for the 41st Annual Pepsi Challenge/ Great River Energy Rush 25k/ Giants Ridge 8K races on:**

# March 6, 2027



Bib#	First Name	Last Name	City	
1	31 TIM	SALO	AURORA	MN
2	34 STEVE	EKMAN	GILBERT	MN
3	36 KURT	SCHIERENBECK	GRAND MARAIS	MN
4	38 STEVE	CHIODO	BLOOMINGTON	MN
5	41 ROBERT	OGREN	BLOOMINGTON	MN
6	55 LARRY	DAGEN	GILBERT	MN

## Thank You, 2025 Race Friends

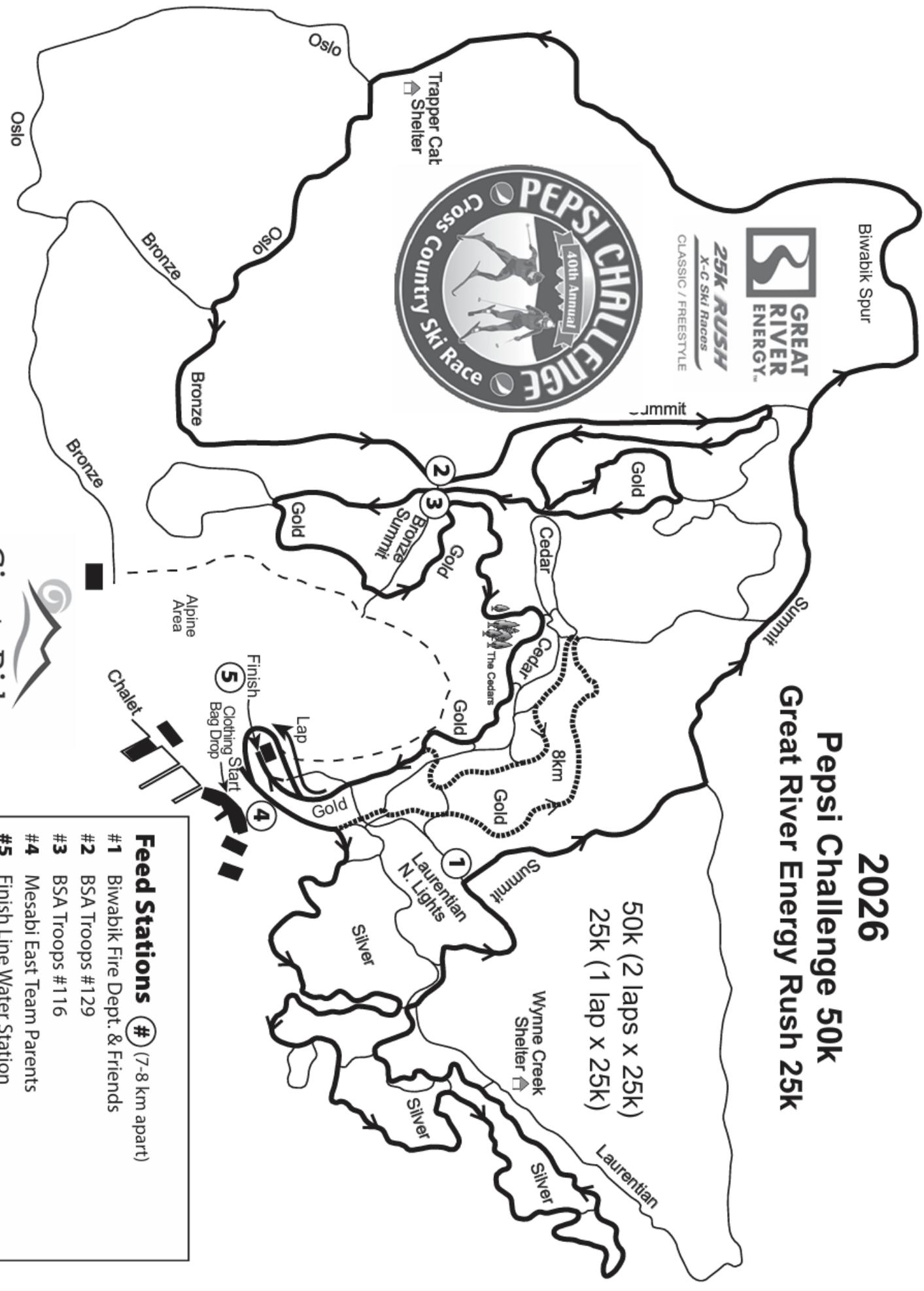
Pepsi Bottling Group-Gr Rapids, Great River Energy, Giants Ridge, Rossignol, Lakehead Constructors, Inc., FITS Socks, WDIO - Duluth, Minnesota Power, Honey Stinger, Giants Ridge Food & Beverage Crew, REX Wax, SKINNYSKI.COM, Todd Roswold & Giants Ridge Grooming & Maintenance Staff, Clothing Tent Crew, Quad City Rotary Club, Lisa & Jay-Feed Stations, Biwabik Area Civic Assoc., Ranger Snowmobile Club, Ashlee Larson & Biwabik Ambulance & Fire Depts, Lakeland Fire.

Dept., Jennifer Larson, Jen & Gary Crotteau, and their BSA Troop 116 & Troop 129, Giants Ridge Ski Patrol, Laskiainen, Hoyt Lakes, Aurora, & Biwabik Queens & Their Courts, Vivid Design, E R Shopper, Aurora Fire Dept., Palo Fire Dept., Town of White, Friday & Saturday work crews, Start & Finish crews, Ashlee & Tina Berts & Registration Crew, Gregg Debevec, Timing Ladies, Jerry Newton & Announcers, Giants Ridge Golf Maintenance Crew, John Filander, Tim Salo, Mt Hosts & Nordic Volunteers, Our Local Friends & Relatives, Parents & skiers on the ME/VA/E-G/MI-B Nordic Ski Team, and our banquet crew Voyageurs Retreat Community – Jan, Scott & Maren, Mary, Sherry, Kathy, Lori & Deb.



# 2026

## Pepsi Challenge 50k Great River Energy Rush 25k



### Feed Stations # (7-8 km apart)

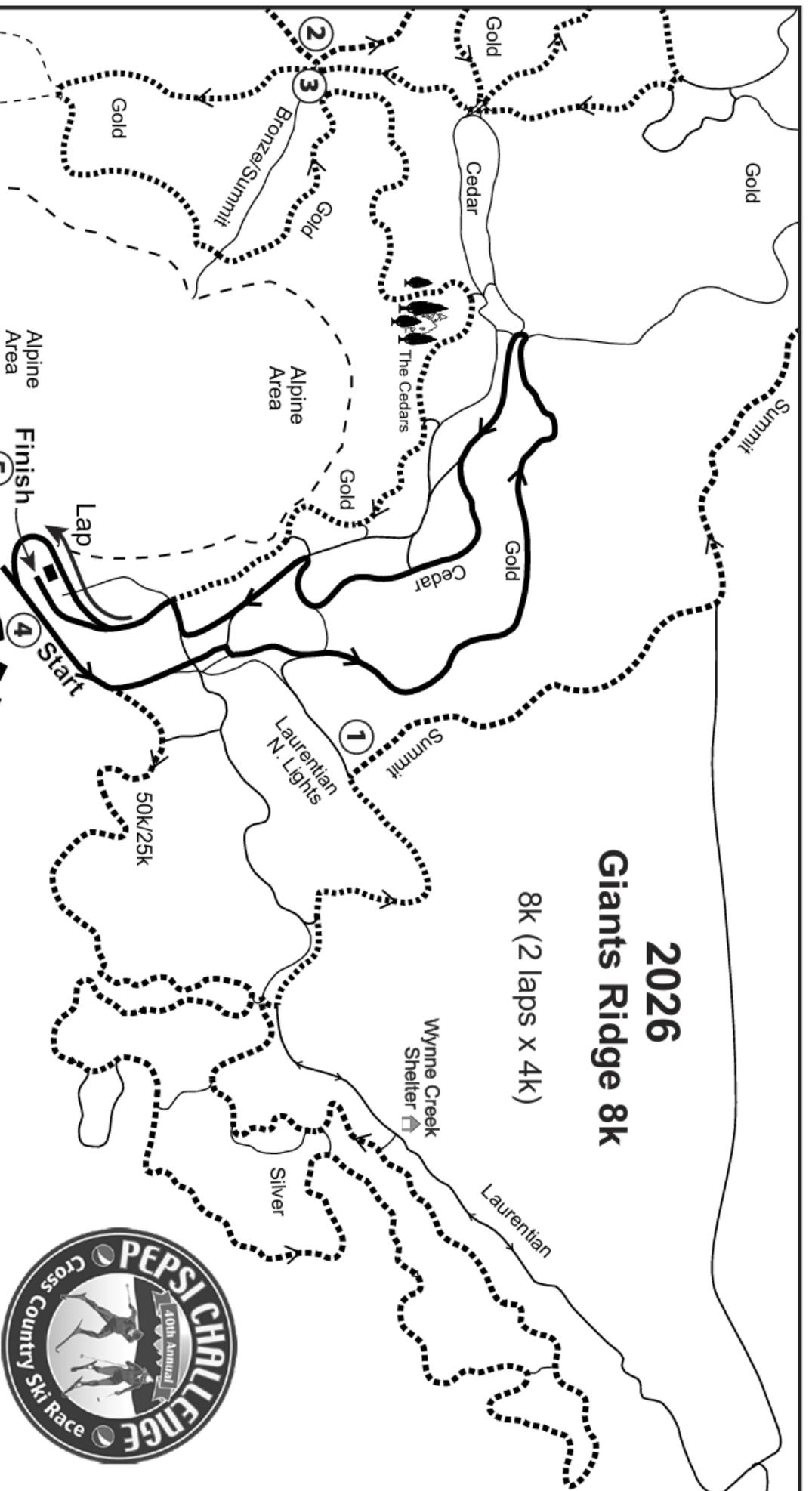
- #1 Biwabik Fire Dept. & Friends
- #2 BSA Troops #129
- #3 BSA Troops #116
- #4 Mesabi East Team Parents
- #5 Finish Line Water Station

Giants Ridge.  
giantsridge.com

Feed stations will serve: Water, Gatorade and Stinger gels (limited amount).

# 2026 Giants Ridge 8k

8k (2 laps x 4k)



## Feed Stations

(7-8 km apart)

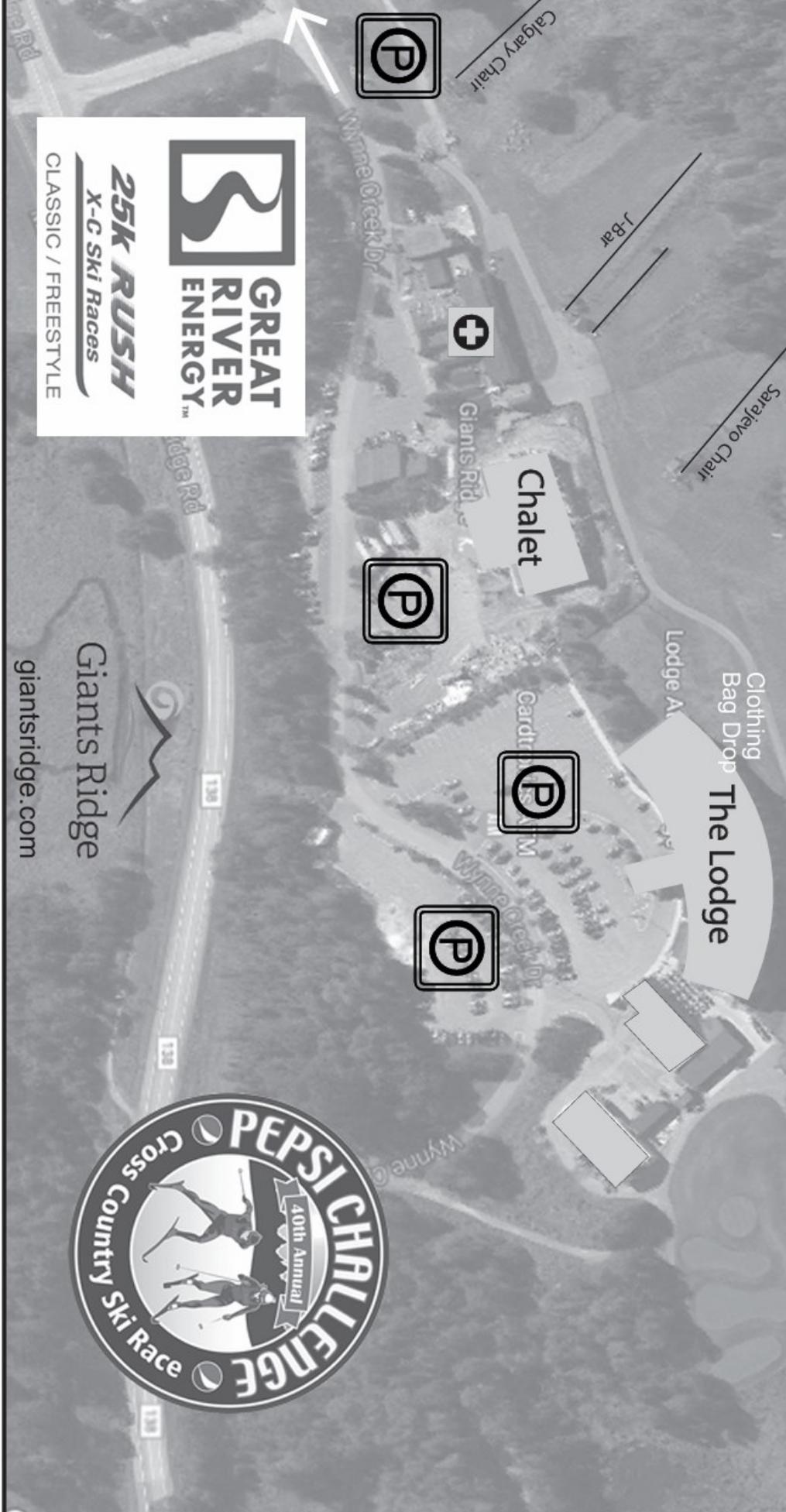
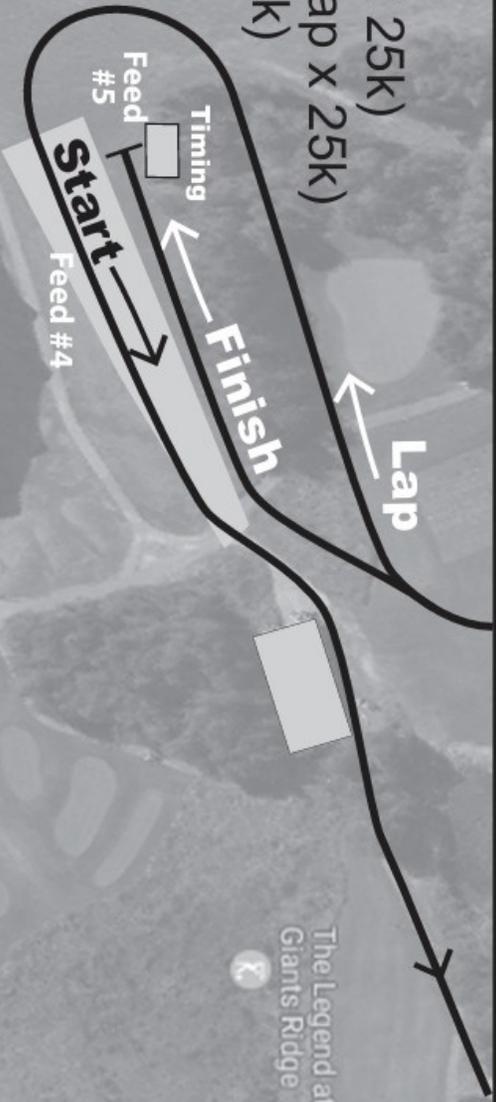
- #1 Biwabik Fire Dept. & Friends
- #2 BSA Troops #129
- #3 BSA Troops #116
- #4 Mesabi East Team Parents
- #5 Finish Line Water Station

  
Giants Ridge.  
giantsridge.com

Feed stations will serve: Water, Gatorade and Stinger gels (limited amount).

# 2026 Stadium Map

Pepsi Challenge 50k (2 laps x 25k)  
Great River Energy Rush 25k (1 lap x 25k)  
Giants Ridge 8k (2 laps x 4k)



**GREAT RIVER ENERGY™**

**25K RUSH**  
X-C Ski Races  
CLASSIC / FREESTYLE

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