GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Mon Feb 12, 2024

Good morning. This is Alex Marienthal with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Monday, February 12th at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Stronghold Fabrication**, **Bridger Bowl**, and **Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

A snow shower last night dropped 1-2" near Big Sky, Bozeman, and West Yellowstone with none near Island Park and Cooke City. Wind has been west-northwest at 5-20 mph with gusts of 25-35 mph. Temperatures are teens to 20s F this morning. Today, temperatures will reach mid-20s F, and wind will be westerly at 10-20 mph. Snow showers through tomorrow morning will favor the mountains near Bozeman with 5-8". Near Big Sky and Cooke City 3-5" are possible with 1-2" elsewhere.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Gallatin Range Madison Range Lionhead Range Cooke City Island Park

A person can trigger avalanches that break 1-4 feet deep and hundreds of feet wide, and avalanches can be triggered from flatter terrain below or connected to steep slopes. Last week the mountains near West Yellowstone and Island Park had an avalanche warning for seven days, and there were many natural and human-triggered large avalanches. Yesterday Doug skied near Hebgen Lake, and he had loud collapses in the skin track and saw large recent avalanches (**video**). Over the past week we have been overwhelmed with reports of natural avalanches, avalanches triggered from flat terrain, and large collapses of the snowpack. Before you go in the backcountry, our **Avalanche and Weather log** is required reading to see the evidence of current dangerous conditions.

Near Big Sky, Cooke City and south of Bozeman less snow fell over the last week compared to the other mountains, but a similarly weak snowpack exists and avalanches have been breaking naturally and triggered remotely from flat terrain. I was in Hyalite yesterday, and while we did not see obvious signs of instability we would not trust this season's very weak snowpack to hold any slabs of new or wind-drifted snow, and we avoided slopes steeper than 30 degrees (**video**). Near Big Sky, on Saturday riders on Buck Ridge triggered an avalanche from flat terrain (**photos**), and yesterday in Beehive Basin skiers remotely triggered two avalanches (**photos**). Yesterday near Cooke City skiers and riders reported many recent natural avalanches (**Mt. Abundance photos**, **Mt. Republic photos**, **Miller Mtn. photos**).

The evidence is clear that you could easily trigger a big avalanche. Plan to stay off of and out from under all slopes steeper than 30 degrees. Dangerous avalanche conditions exist and the avalanche danger is CONSIDERABLE.

Bridger Range

In the Bridger Range, moderate and strong winds over the weekend drifted recent snow into thicker slabs. These slabs avalanched naturally on Saddle Peak on Saturday afternoon (**photo**), and yesterday Bridger ski patrol found 12-14" hard slabs near ridgelines. Today, similar slabs can be triggered by a person, and more snow and wind will grow fresh slabs that are easy to trigger.

We have not seen avalanches break on old persistent weak layers in the Bridger Range since above freezing temperatures in late January, and there have been less signs of widespread instability. Although less likely, it is still possible to trigger an avalanche 1-2 feet deep on sugary, weak snow, especially with more new snow and wind on the way.

Avoid steep, wind-loaded slopes. On non-wind-loaded slopes carefully assess the snowpack for instability, and if you find a cohesive slab over sugary snow choose different terrain. Avalanche danger is CONSIDERABLE on wind-loaded slopes and MODERATE on non-wind-loaded slopes.

King and Queen of The Ridge Results

We closed out King and Queen (of the Apron) with $23,208 raised! A huge Thank You to all who participated and raised funds for The Friends of the GNFAC! The community came out big after a postponed event, participants were crushing bootpack laps and even getting some powder turns while fundraising for Friends of GNFAC. Top Fundraising teams were: Cooke City Exxon ($8,271), Science Saves Lives ($4,292), and Map Brewing Company ($1,905). Top individuals were: Mathew S., Dash R., Ron J., Katie B, and Tobin I.

Thank you to the Bridger Bowl Events team for all their work, Weston Boards, Bozeman Hot Springs and Blue Ice for donating prizes!

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out: **Events and Education Calendar.**

Every weekend in Cooke City: Friday at The Antlers at 7 p.m., Free Avalanche Awareness and Current Conditions talk, and Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Round Lake Warming Hut, Free Rescue Practice.

Loss in the Outdoors is a support group for those affected by loss and grief related to outdoor pursuits. Check out the link for more information.