GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Tue Jan 28, 2020

Good Morning. This is Dave Zinn with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Tuesday, January 28th at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by the **Community Food Co-op** and **Stronghold Fabrication.** This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday afternoon the mountains around Big Sky picked up a quick 2" of snow while the rest of the area remained dry. Winds were 5-15 mph from the south through west and mountain temperatures are in the low to mid-teens F. Snow will start falling near West Yellowstone this morning and spread across the advisory area this afternoon. The mountains near West Yellowstone will receive 5-8" of snow by morning with other areas getting 3-5". Today, temperatures will be in the 20s F and winds will be 10-25 mph from the south to southwest.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

All Regions

In the last two days, 3-8" of snow with 0.3-1.2" snow water equivalent (SWE) fell across the advisory area with more snow coming today. The weight of the new snow is stressing our weak snowpack and warrants extra caution, especially on slopes with fresh drifts (**photo**). The most likely avalanches today are on wind loaded slopes and won't fail deeper than the new snow. However, it is worth remembering that only four days ago the Big Sky Ski Patrol triggered a massive avalanche that broke deeply on weak layers in the snowpack and last week skiers and riders had close calls when they triggered large avalanches and collapsed slopes (**details, avalanche activity**). While less likely, triggering avalanches that fail deep in the snowpack is a dangerous possibility today.

On recent field days to **Mt. Ellis**, the **Taylor Fork**, and **north of Bridger Bowl,** members of the forecast team found weak snowpacks. Yesterday, we had stable results in our snowpits north of Bridger Bowl, but the structure was enough to keep us cautious (**pit 1, pit 2**). My partner and I ran thought experiments by asking each other, "What would you say if suggested skiing steep avalanche terrain today based on our findings." Our answers varied a bit as we pondered different slopes, but the clear theme was that we don't trust the snowpack this year, and we prefer maintaining a conservative mindset. That remains my answer even as many people *are* venturing into avalanche terrain and not triggering slides. Read more about the history of this season's avalanche activity and snowpack in the **mid-season snowpack summary** we published last week.

Consider the consequences of the terrain, assess the snowpack, and only expose one person to the hazard at a time if you are considering recreating on or underneath steep slopes today. Because human triggered avalanches are possible, the danger is rated MODERATE. As snow begins to fall later in the day, the avalanche danger will increase. Watch for cracking, collapsing of the snowpack, and avalanche activity as signs of rising instability.

If you get out, please send us your observations no matter how brief. You can fill out an **observation form**, email us (**mtavalanche@gmail.com**), leave a VM at 406-587-6984, or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

King and Queen of the Ridge at Bridger Bowl

Next Saturday, February 1, is the King and Queen of the Ridge at Bridger Bowl! Come up and help us raise money by hiking and skiing laps on the ridge. Prizes, camaraderie and a good time are guaranteed. Register with Bridger to hike in the event and create a pledge page to raise funds with your Ridge laps.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out and plan to attend one or two: Events and Education Calendar.

COOKE CITY

Every Friday and Saturday, **Snowpack Update and Rescue Training**. Friday, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at the Soda Butte Lodge. Saturday anytime between 10-2 @ Round Lake.

BOZEMAN

January 29, **GNFAC Forecaster Chat: Avalanche Myth Busters**, 6-8 p.m. at Uphill Pursuits.

January 31, Women's Only Companion Rescue Clinic, 6 - 8 pm at REI followed by a field day February 1. **More info and Register Here**.

February 1, **King and Queen of the Ridge** at Bridger Bowl (fundraiser). This is the Friends of the Avalanche Center's second biggest fundraiser of the year. Help us raise money by hiking and skiing laps on the ridge. Prizes, camaraderie and a good time is guaranteed. **Register with Bridger** to hike in the event, and **create a pledge page** to raise funds with your Ridge laps.

DILLON

January 29 and 30, **Introduction to Avalanche w/ Field Course**, evenings of January 29 & 30 plus a field day February 1. Snowmobile specific field day offered February 2. **More Info and Register Here**.

WEST YELLOWSTONE

February 1, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness**, 7-8 p.m. at West Yellowstone Holiday Inn.

HELENA

TONIGHT, January 28, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7 p.m. Carroll College.

LIVINGSTON

January 30, **Introduction to Avalanche w/ Field Course**, evening of January 30 plus a field day February 2. **More info and Register Here**.