GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Fri Dec 13, 2019

Good Morning. This is Ian Hoyer with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Friday, December 13th at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Bridger Bowl** and **Montana State Parks**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

This morning, there are 1-3" of new snow around Bozeman and Big Sky, 4-6" around West Yellowstone, and 5" near Cooke City. Winds are west at 15-25 mph, gusting up to 45 mph. Temperatures are in the high teens to low twenties. Showery snowfall will continue today and through tonight. Expect 1-2" across most of the advisory area by tomorrow morning, with 4-6" near Cooke City. Winds today will be westerly at 15-30 mph with strong gusts. High temperatures will be mid-20s to low-30s F under cloudy skies.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Madison Range Southern Gallatin Lionhead Range Island Park

The mountains near Big Sky and West Yellowstone have the dangerous combination of a weak snowpack loaded by new snow and strong winds.

Yesterday, riding on Buck Ridge we could tell the snowpack was weak before we even started digging. We sunk hip deep into the weak snow when we stepped off our sleds and got several collapses – clear signs of instability. A layer of surface hoar buried a foot down was breaking easily in stability tests (**video**). Below the surface hoar were several crusts and multiple layers of weak, faceted snow. The snowpack further south is even weaker (**video**) and those areas received more new snow. Triggering an avalanche is likely. Avoid riding on or beneath slopes steeper than 35°. The avalanche danger remains CONSIDERABLE today.

Cooke City

Another 5" of new snow in the Cooke City area makes triggering avalanches likely today. Yesterday, ski guides got multiple large collapses on the weak layer that Doug and I found on Monday (**video, photo**) and decided to stick to low angle terrain (**details**). Follow their example and do the same today.

Avalanches will be the easiest to trigger and largest on wind drifted slopes, but as the new snow piles up you could also trigger slides on non-windloaded slopes, so don't let your guard down. The avalanche danger is CONSIDERABLE.

Bridger Range

The snowpack in the Bridger Range is not as weak as areas near Big Sky and West Yellowstone, and it hasn't been loaded by as much new snow as around Cooke City. Unfortunately, that only means that the avalanche conditions aren't quite as bad, not that it's stable. There is a layer of weak, faceted snow, that is buried around a foot deep (deeper on windloaded slopes). On Monday, Alex found this weak layer capped by a hard windslab on Saddle Peak (**video**). Today, you can trigger a small avalanche in a fresh wind drift or potentially a larger slide breaking on this weak layer. The avalanche danger is rated MODERATE.

Northern Gallatin

Yesterday, Doug went to Hyalite to check on conditions before the Bozeman Ice Fest. His avalanche concerns were limited to the new snow on windloaded slopes (**video**). Skiers on Blackmore reported heavy windloading, but stable conditions otherwise. Pay attention to the snow beneath your feet. Cracks shooting out from your boots or skis are a sure sign to stay off steep slopes. The avalanche danger is MODERATE on wind-loaded slopes and LOW elsewhere.

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).

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.

BOZEMAN

December 18, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7 p.m. at Uphill Pursuits.

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.

BILLINGS

December 17, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7 p.m. Elevated Powersports.

CHOTEAU

December 19, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness**, 7-8 p.m. at Choteau High School.