GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Jan 30, 2019

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast issued on Wednesday, January 30th at 6:45 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Yellowstone Club Community Foundation** and **Bridger Bowl**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Under clear skies, mountain temperatures are in the mid-teens and winds are blowing west at 25 mph with gusts of 30-40 mph. Today will be mostly sunny and temperatures will rise into the low 30s. Winds will decrease from the west to 15-25 mph and tonight looks to be clear with another sunny day tomorrow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

All Regions

On Saturday I placed a fellow skier in a body bag after an avalanche pushed him through trees. The accident provided clarity to something that can seem vexing: on a steep slope, when are trees a sign of safety? The answer is that for skiers (or snow bikers), most of the time they are not. If trees are spaced far enough apart that a skier could link more than a couple turns, then the slope is open enough to avalanche. Instead of tree density, pay attention to slope angle. This accident, plus the avalanche south of Livingston on Saturday (**details**) and another on Mt. Ellis on Sunday (**details**), all involved avalanches in fairly dense timber. When the snowpack is unstable or tricky to assess, our only safe bet is to avoid avalanche terrain (measured as anything over 30 degrees steep). And the best way to do that is to rely on slope angle instead of seeking safety in trees.

Over the weekend there was a mob of avalanche activity. Some people were caught in slides (the **Throne**), some people triggered them (**Bradley Meadow**, **Cedar Mtn**) and others just saw the aftermath. Our forecast area is large, so take a few minutes to check out our **Avalanche Activity List** to see if there's been any action in the area you're headed to today. Recent avalanche activity, collapsing or cracking, indicate dangerous conditions and should override any positive feelings you might have about a slope's stability.

We have weak snow near the ground and we had a lot of snowfall late last week. With time, stability is improving and it is getting more difficult to trigger avalanches, but there are spots where it is possible. These areas will either be wind-loaded or shallow and unsupportable. Ian was in Taylor Fork on Sunday and was able to trigger a slide in one of these spots from 50' away (**video**, **photo**). Sinking to your waist in sugary snow is a serious concern because it means the underlying snowpack is weak and potentially unstable. Although triggering slides is getting harder, it's definitely possible, especially on slopes with recent wind-drifted snow. For today, the danger is rated MODERATE throughout our advisory area.

If you get out and have any avalanche or snowpack observations to share, contact us via our website, email (mtavalanche@gmail.com), phone (406-587-6984), or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

Avalanche Fatality, Tobacco Root Mountains

The accident report from the Bell Lake Avalanche is now posted **HERE**. You can also watch a video summary of the accident **HERE**. Watch your slope angles and do not be fooled by trees indicating safe zones.

King and Queen of the Ridge

This Saturday, February 2, at Bridger Bowl. This is the Friends of the Avalanche Center's second biggest fundraiser of the year. Come on out and help us raise some money by hiking and skiing some 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.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

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

BOZEMAN

February 2, **King and Queen of the Ridge** at Bridger Bowl (fundraiser). Register with Bridger to hike in the event, and create a pledge page to raise funds with your Ridge laps.

February 6, **1-hr Women's Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7p.m. at REI Bozeman.

February 8 and 9, **Companion Rescue Clinic**, 6-8 p.m. Friday at REI, 10-4 Saturday in the field. More Info and Register.

February 22 and 23, **Women's Companion Rescue Clinic**, 6-8 p.m. Friday at REI, 10-4 Saturday in the field. More Info and Register.

WEST YELLOWSTONE

February 9, 16 and 23, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness for Snowmobilers**, 7-8 p.m. Holiday Inn West Yellowstone.

LIVINGSTON

January 31, **Intro to Avalanches w/ Field Day**, Info and Register Here.

DILLON

January 31-February 2, **Intro to Avalanches w/ Field Day**, Info and Register Here.

HELENA

February 13, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness**, 6-7 p.m. at Carroll College.

COOKE CITY

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