



GNFAC Season Summary

April 15, 2014

Greetings:

What a year! Mother Nature was kind and gave us plenty of snow, about 140% of average. Snows came early and continued throughout. Skiing and snowmobiling were the best in years and the avalanche danger was the worst.

Our 24th season started when skiers triggered an avalanche on October 14th after late September snows made early turns possible. We issued periodic information bulletins as storms came and went through October and November and began our daily avalanche advisories December 6th. This season we issued 134 advisories and five separate avalanche warnings spanning 12 days, a record. Unfortunately, there were two snowmobile avalanche fatalities on two of those warning days. Eighty avalanche incidents were reported this season resulting in 23 folks caught with five partial burials, five full burials and four injuries.

The mission of the GNFAC is the same as the US Forest Service's first priority for the national Recreation program: public safety. We achieve this through avalanche advisories, field days, education and outreach. Avalanche education continues to grow in the community, both in the number of classes offered and number of attendees. Luckily we have a professional cadre of instructors working with the Friends of the Avalanche Center who taught 70% of the avalanche classes this winter.

The numbers tell a compelling story. The amount of people using our service continues to increase as does the demand for more data, information and education. Our website, www.mtavalanche.com, is refreshed every year and is a portal for avalanche products: advisories, accident reports, articles, videos, photos, snowpits, and weather stations to name just a few. The following index quantifies some of the work we've done this season.

THE GNFAC INDEX

- Number of people who get our daily avalanche advisory: 4,715

- Total number of avalanche classes and attendees: 91 and 4,268
 - Number of snowmobiler classes and attendees: 30 and 978
- Number of people who took an avalanche class in the last five years: 21,781
- Number of YouTube Videos and views this season: 62 and 96,417
 - Number of videos and views since we posted our first in 2006: 336 and 936,679
- Number of avalanche incidents: 80
 - Number of incidents last winter: 27
 - Area with the most incidents as expressed as a percent: Cooke City, 34%
- Minimum number of times Eric locked himself out of the office: 3
- Number of field days: 103
- Number of day's volunteers helped us and its work equivalent: 74 and one half-time position.
- State that leads the nation in snowmobile avalanche fatalities measured over 10 years: Montana
- Montana's national rank of all avalanche fatalities in last 10 years: 2nd
 - State that is first: Colorado
- Days when the danger was either HIGH or LOW in some part of our advisory area: 27 and 11
 - Last season: 10 and 55
- Number of Facebook "Likes" and Twitter followers: 3,243 and 1,415
- Name of forecaster responsible for ripping the lugs off the Yamaha Nytro track: Mark
- Daily average of pageviews to our website and advisory: 4,038 and 978
- Percent of people accessing our website via desktop, mobile and tablet: 56%, 35% and 9%
- Minimum number of times Doug wrote in the advisory it would snow and it did not: 3
 - Number of times he said it would not snow, but it did: who cares, it snowed.
- Number of weather stations the GNFAC and Friends of the Avalanche Center maintain: 4
- Articles that the GNFAC wrote for outside publications: 12
- Number of times the GNFAC was contacted by the media for an interview: 60

Mark, Eric and I would not be able to run the Avalanche Center without partnerships and collaborative relationships between the US Forest Service, Friends of the Avalanche Center, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and volunteer and local business support. This season about 45% of our funding came from sources outside the USFS. Key supporters include Cooke City Motorsports, Bridger Bowl, Montana Ale Works, Montana Import Group, Grizzly Outfitters, Mystery Ranch, Yellowstone Club Community Foundation and Gallatin County Search and Rescue. We are indebted to the local recreation community and businesses for supporting us through the Friends of the Avalanche Center.

Thank you for a great season. We will be back next October, but until then, have a safe and enjoyable spring and summer.

All the best,

Doug Chabot