

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Jan 22, 2014

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, January 22 at 7:30 a.m. A **Montana FW&P Recreation Trails Grant** sponsors today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Today's weather will be a gentle reminder that, yes, it really is winter. This morning under cloudy skies, mountain temperatures are near 20F with ridgetop winds blowing light and westerly. Snow flurries will fall later this morning and last through the afternoon. Temperatures will not get much warmer today and winds will be moderate at 10-20 mph. I expect only 1-2 inches of new snow, but would love to be wrong and see more. Dry, sunny and above normal temperatures return tomorrow through the weekend. the ellipses: ... Another ellipses: ...

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

[Bridger Range](#) [Gallatin Range](#) [Madison Range](#)

Lionhead area near West Yellowstone

Yesterday Mark and his partner went into Frazier Basin in the northern Bridger Range. Winds hammered that area in the past week and they booted everywhere instead of skinning. Mark dug a few pits and found a similar snow structure to other areas: weak, four-finger hardness facets underlying a dense, one-finger hardness slab. The pits looked eerily similar to the ones that faked him and Eric out in Dogleg Chute in the Bridger Range on Friday: facets underlying a slab with tests showing false stability ([photo](#), [video](#)). Not one to be fooled twice, Mark descended a different line.

From the Bridger Range to Big Sky to West Yellowstone, the winter snowpack is being supported by weak facets. The thickness and overall hardness of this layer may vary from range to range, but the stability is similar. It's fair; it's been worse, but could be better. Triggering an avalanche is still possible and likely will remain this way for some time to come. This is shaping up to be a year of living conservatively in the backcountry. Facets, lingering instability and getting faked out one too many times, is reason enough to rate the avalanche danger **MODERATE** today. Eric explains the current snowpack in a [video](#) he made Saturday on Yellow Mountain. It's still relevant today.

Cooke City

The snowpack around Cooke City is deeper (averaging 6-7 feet) and stronger than any other area in our forecast region. It's possible to find weak facets near the ground, but these spots are few and far between. On Friday a group of riders found one of these "few" slopes and triggered a slide which fully buried one person. They performed a text book rescue and saved his life. The slide was triggered from a steep, thinner area of the slope. The fracture pulled out wind drifts at the ridgeline 12 feet deep. Deep slabs are scary business (see below). They are hard to trigger, but once they release, watch out! A [video](#) and [photos](#) of our avalanche investigation are on our website.

As the riders on Friday found out, avalanches are still possible. They are not easy to trigger, which is evident from all the tracks climbing steep hills. Folks are getting away with a lot. But we know there are thinner, weaker spots on some slopes that will rip out old tracks. For today the avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE**.

DEEP SLAB INSTABILITY: an analogy

To help us understand deep slab problems, picture a football field. Now picture a cafeteria tray tossed onto the field. The field represents an open avalanche slope and the tray represents a weak zone (typically thinner snowpack), the only spot on the football field where you can trigger it. You can ride and ski to your hearts content on that field as long as you don't hit the tray, which is hidden like a buried mine. If you do, you'll trigger the entire slope. A snowmobiler on Friday hit the tray and released a large avalanche. Many slopes in our area have snowmobile and ski tracks on them. The tracks look inviting, yet beware the cafeteria tray. A skier can hit it just as easily as a snowmobiler and the result is the same--a deep and potentially unsurvivable avalanche.

Mark will issue the next advisory tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m. If you have any snowpack or avalanche observations drop us a line at mtavalanche@gmail.com or call us at 587-6984.

10 SEATS LEFT!!

TONIGHT! MONTANA ALE WORKS FUNDRAISER DINNER

Tonight, Montana Ale Works is hosting the 6th Annual Fundraiser Dinner for the Friends of the Avalanche Center. Chef Roth is creating an elegant, multiple course menu. His culinary creation will be paired with wines from the Ale Works cellar. <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/9572>

GVSA POKER RIDE on BUCK RIDGE

This Saturday, the Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association is having their annual Poker Ride on Buck Ridge. Dale Gullett will be teaching transceiver skills, so stop on by. Registration will be from 9 AM - noon at the Buck Ridge parking lot just south of the Corral Bar and Steakhouse on Highway 191 (5 miles South of Big Sky). Each hand costs \$5.00. The last draw will be held at the Corral at 4:00 PM. Chili and cornbread will be provided. If you have any questions, contact Wes at (406) 600-6063.

ANDROID APP

If you have an android phone or tablet, you can download our new free app. It's a slick way to get the advisory. [Search Google Play for GNFAC](#). An iOS version is coming soon. Stay tuned.

EVENTS/EDUCATION

TONIGHT, BOZEMAN: Wednesday and Thursday 7-9:30 p.m.; all day Saturday or Sunday in field, **Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course**. Pre-registration is required: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/7113>

January 25, WEST YELLOWSTONE: Saturday, 7-8 p.m. at Holiday Inn, **1-hour Avalanche Awareness** lecture.

January 29, 30 & February 1, BOZEMAN : Wednesday and Thursday 7-9:30 p.m.; all day Saturday in field, **Advanced Avalanche Workshop with Field Course**. Pre-registration is required: <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/7114-asmsu-advanced-avlanche-workshop-w-field-course>

January 31, February 1, BOZEMAN: Friday 6-8 p.m., Saturday 10-2 p.m; **Companion Rescue Clinic**. Pre-registration is required: www.rei.com/stores/bozeman.html

February 6, BOZEMAN: Thursday, 6-8 p.m., Beall Park; **Women's Specific Avalanche Awareness Class and Transceiver Practice.**

February 8, BUCK RIDGE: Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., **Companion Rescue Clinic for Snowmobilers**, Pre-Registration is required. <https://www.ticketriver.com/event/9446>

February 8, WEST YELLOWSTONE: Saturday, 7-8 p.m., Holiday Inn, **1-hour Avalanche Awareness** lecture.

February 12, BOZEMAN: Wednesday, 6:30-7:30 p.m., MSU Procrastinator Theater, **Sidecountry IS Backcountry** lecture.

More information our complete calendar of events can be found [HERE](#).