

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Tue Feb 1, 2011

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Tuesday, February 1, at 7:30 a.m. Cliff Gullett Memorial Fund, in cooperation with the Friends of the Avalanche Center, sponsors today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Brrrr. After getting used to the warm weather last week, this morning's mountain temperatures are downright nasty. Minus 16 to minus 20 is the average with clear skies and light northerly winds at 5-15 mph. Today will be sunny, but cold. Temperatures will rise into the low single digits before plummeting again tonight to minus 15 or minus 20; is there really a difference? High pressure, clear skies and temperatures in the teens are forecasted for tomorrow with a warming trend all week.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The Bridger, Madison and Gallatin Ranges, the Lionhead area near West Yellowstone, and the mountains around Cooke City and the Washburn Range:

Stable snow prevails over most of our advisory area. Layers in the snowpack are bonding well which are confirmed in our snowpits, tests and field investigations. As folks expand their territory searching for untracked powder, they are finding avalanches that broke over a week ago in thinner snow and also near ridgelines on wind-loaded slopes. Eric and his partner checked out an older slide up Dudley Creek which was the result of a cornice break on heavily drifted snow ([photo](#)).

Thinner snowpacks are weaker and can be found with a quick stab of a ski pole or by stepping off a sled. If you hit dirt, go somewhere else. Not only will the riding and sliding be better, but it'll be safer too. Snowpack assessment doesn't get much easier than this. Although the snowpack structure is weak in spots, without a new snow load most slopes are staying put.

Yesterday, folks reported small wind slabs breaking in the Bridger Range and also outside Cooke City. Winds have calmed, but it's still possible to trigger a small slide on a wind-loaded slope. For today, the avalanche danger is rated MODERATE on wind-loaded slopes steeper than 35 degrees. All other slopes have a LOW danger.

Surface hoar was found over the weekend on some slopes ([photos](#)). It appears to be a random distribution, but these feathery crystals are now capped with an inch or two of snow from Sunday night. Cold temperatures, clear nights and sunny days could further weaken the top six to eight inches of the snowpack. If you're interested in learning more about this process, you can read my article, [No Snow, Big Problem](#).

I 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.

9th ANNUAL KING AND QUEEN OF THE RIDGE

The 9th Annual King and Queen of the Ridge will be held at Bridger Bowl on Saturday, February 12. ALL proceeds go to the Friends of the Avalanche Center who use the money to promote avalanche education in southwest Montana. Last winter we taught 64 classes reaching over 4,900 people. You can help raise money to

continue this education in 2 ways:

- 1). Get pledges and hike the ridge. You don't have to do 20 laps – you can get flat pledges and hike just once! Or you can test your mettle and try and break John Yarrington's record of 29 laps in 5 hours.
- 2). Sponsor someone. If you don't have someone to sponsor, consider sponsoring the GNFAC since we'll be hiking for dollars.

Go to http://bridgerbowl.com/events/view_event/81/ for more information and registration forms.

Avalanche Education

February 2, 3, and 5 in Bozeman

Advanced Avalanche Awareness –Wednesday & Thursday 7:00p.m. – 9:30 p.m. at MSU SUB Room 235 with a field day on Saturday at Bridger Bowl. ADVANCED REGISTRATION REQUIRED ([more information](#)) ([Register](#))

February 12 and 13 in Cooke City

Avalanche Workshop for Snowmobilers and Skiers – Lectures on Saturday 12 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. field session on Sunday 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. ADVANCED REGISTRATION REQUIRED ([more information and registration](#))

For additional information and a listing of other avalanche classes, go to:

<http://www.mtavalanche.com/workshops/calendar>