

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Wed Feb 2, 2011

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Groundhog Day, Wednesday, February 2, at 7:30 a.m. Javaman, in cooperation with the Friends of the Avalanche Center, sponsors today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

With temperatures of zero this morning I'm betting the groundhog is a no-show. Today will be a beautiful winter day with sunny skies, mountain temperatures rising into the teens and north to northwest winds blowing 10-20 mph. High pressure continues to dominate our weather pattern. Tonight, clear skies will help the temperatures plummet to below zero and warm up even more tomorrow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The Bridger, Madison and Gallatin Ranges, the Lionhead area near West Yellowstone:

If the air is minus 15, but my boots are in 32 degree standing water, my feet should be warm, right? Pushing the sled out of a slushy creek proved this just isn't so. Mark and I rode up Little Bear to Wheeler Peak in the northern Gallatin Range yesterday. The snowpack was thin and ranged from three to four feet deep with its lower half consisting of weak, faceted snow. But weak does not always mean unstable. In the absence of cracking, collapsing, recent avalanche activity, and poor test scores, we've got [Very Good](#) snow stability ([video](#)).

From the Bridger Range to Big Sky to West Yellowstone the avalanche danger is rated [LOW](#). But even during times of widespread stability, there are always a few individual slopes that are not team players and could possibly be triggered. In one pit yesterday we found a pocket of preserved surface hoar from December 5th—an example of these crystals resilience. That's why we wear beacons, ski and snowmobile one at a time and do stability tests; because sometimes we get surprised. A low danger does not mean no danger.

The mountains around Cooke City and the Washburn Range:

The snowpack in the Cooke City region is deep and stable. The only exception is steep wind-loaded slopes. There's no shortage of snow to blow around in Cooke and folks reported small avalanches involving new, wind-blown snow in the last 48 hours. A [YouTube clip](#) shows a skier triggering a small slide on Monday, and yesterday a skier noted one natural ([photo](#)) and another human triggered slide in Sheep Creek. For today, the avalanche danger is rated [MODERATE](#) on wind-loaded slopes steeper than 35 degrees. All other slopes have a [LOW](#) danger.

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

TONIGHT: February 2, 3, and 5 in Bozeman

Advanced Avalanche Awareness –TONIGHT & 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>