GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Thu Jan 31, 2019

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast issued on Thursday, January 31st at 6:45 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Montana State Parks** and **Gallatin County Search and Rescue**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Skies are partly cloudy, mountain temperatures are near 20F and west winds are averaging 15-25 mph with gusts of 40-45 mph in the Bridger Range and in Hyalite. Today will be partly sunny and west winds will decrease to 15-25 mph with daytime temperatures in the low 30s. Our next chance of snow is Sunday.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

All Regions

This is our third day in a row without snow. No snow means no loading and the snowpack is less sensitive to triggering. With a decreasing avalanche danger the odds of making a mistake in the backcountry, unfortunately, do not decrease along with it. On Saturday, many slopes were ripe to avalanche and did (**full list**). Today their numbers are much less, but knowing which slopes are still dangerous is critical.

On many slopes there is weak snow in the lower third to half of the snowpack. In almost all our videos over the last 2 months we show this sugary, unsupportable snow. It was responsible for the fatality in the Tobacco Root Mountains (**video**, **report**), and Ian triggered an avalanche on this weak layer in Taylor Fork (**video**, **photo**). You don't need a Level 1 certification or snow science degree to find it, just step off your skis or sled. If you sink to the ground, you found it. Signs of instability such as cracking and collapsing, which were prevalent over the weekend are less so today, and evaluating slope stability requires work.

Karl Birkeland skied to Mt. Ellis yesterday and his experience is instructive. He was there on Saturday and retreated lower on the mountain when he got collapses and poor stability test scores (**video**). Yesterday there were no collapses and cracking, but he dug 3 snowpits (yes, he's super into it) and found instability in each one (**video**). From the summit he skied his skin track back to the car avoiding avalanche terrain. Although the avalanche danger is going down throughout our area, he found conditions that were bad. What Karl did is what we all need to do: in the absence of collapsing and cracking, dig and test the snow. It's the only way to know what's under our feet.

For today, the avalanche danger is rated MODERATE since human-triggered avalanches are still possible.

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).

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.**

LIVINGSTON

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

DILLON

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

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.

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.