GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sat Feb 1, 2020

Good Morning. This is Ian Hoyer with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Saturday, February 1st at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Ph.D. Skis** and **Spark R&D**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday, an inch of snow fell near Cooke City, with no accumulations in the rest of our advisory area. This morning temperatures are in the 20s and 30s F. Winds are 15-35 mph out of the southwest and west with gusts as high as 60 mph. Temperatures will be unseasonably warm today, rising into the 30s and even the high-40s F in spots. Winds will be southwesterly at 30-40 mph with strong gusts. A cold front tonight will bring snow and colder temperatures. A few inches are possible by tomorrow morning. Heavy snowfall will continue through the day tomorrow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

All Regions

There are three overlapping avalanche concerns today: avalanches breaking in wind drifts, avalanches breaking near the ground, and avalanches of wet snow.

Strong winds and new snow over the last week formed wind drifts on many slopes. These wind drifts have been avalanching. Alex triggered a 2-3 ft deep wind slab in Cooke City on Thursday and a number of natural wind slabs were reported as well (**video**). After the last few days of warm temperatures most of these drifts are now bonded to the snow beneath them. Watch for cracks shooting out in front of your skis or sled as a sign that you've found one that hasn't yet.

You could also trigger an avalanche much deeper in the snowpack on weak layers near the ground. These slides are becoming less likely, but recent big avalanches clearly show they are still possible. At Lionhead yesterday, I found the weak layers appeared to be gaining strength, but I still don't trust them (**video**). On Thursday, an avalanche broke 5 feet deep on a windloaded slope near Mt. Bole in Hyalite Canyon (**photo**) and a large avalanche on Fan Mountain near Big Sky broke 1000 ft wide and to the ground (**details**). You're unlikely to get warning signs before triggering one of these large slides. Dig and test the weak layers near the ground or simply stick to more conservative terrain.

Unusual weather makes for unusual avalanches. We aren't often dealing with wet snow avalanches at the beginning of February, but the combination of unseasonably warm temperatures and direct sun today make them a real possibility. Be on alert if you find the snow surface getting wet and sticky this afternoon. Roller balls and pin wheels (**photo**) are clear signs that the danger of triggering a wet loose avalanche is increasing.

With a range of avalanches possible, the avalanche danger is rated MODERATE today.

If you get out, please send us your observations no matter how brief. You can fill out an **observation form**, email us (**mtavalanche@gmail.com**), leave a VM at 406-587-6984, or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

King and Queen of the Ridge at Bridger Bowl

Today is the King and Queen of the Ridge at Bridger Bowl! Come up to cheer on participants as they help us raise money by hiking and skiing laps as many laps as they can on the ridge between 9:30 AM and 2:30 PM. It's always a good time and the weather today couldn't be much more pleasant! Come have fun in the sun! You can also pledge or donate HERE.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out and plan to attend one or two: Events and Education Calendar.

COOKE CITY

Every Friday and Saturday, **Snowpack Update and Rescue Training**. Friday, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at the Soda Butte Lodge. Saturday anytime between 10-2 @ Round Lake.

BOZEMAN

Every Friday and Saturday, **Snowpack Update and Rescue Training**. Friday, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at the Soda Butte Lodge. Saturday anytime between 10-2 @ Round Lake.

WEST YELLOWSTONE

TONIGHT! February 1, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness**, 7-8 p.m. at West Yellowstone Holiday Inn.