GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Thu Feb 11, 2021

Good Morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Thursday, February 11th at 7:30 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Montana Chevy Dealers** and **Montana Backcountry Alliance**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

At 5 a.m. there's a dusting of snow around Bozeman. An arctic cold front is nudging into our forecast area. Alpine at Bridger Bowl is reading -22F, while Big Sky is near 0F and other areas are near 10F. Around Big Sky and Taylor Fork wind is blowing westerly at 20-30 mph with gusts of 40-60 mph and 10-25 mph everywhere else. Temperatures will rise to zero in the north and high teens in the south before plummeting tonight to below zero in all places except balmy West Yellowstone. Snowfall later this afternoon and tonight will drop 4" around Cooke City and 2" elsewhere.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range Lionhead Range Island Park

Snowfall stopped Monday afternoon after dropping 3-4' of snow. As a result there were many avalanches throughout our entire forecast area, many on wind-loaded slopes. Weak, sugary snow at the ground avalanched, a few slopes for the second or third time. Some broke at the interface of the new and old snow. It is our third day after the storm and the snowpack is no longer hair-trigger. However, large avalanches are still possible as the snowpack adjusts to this heavy burden. Our field days to the Bridger Range, Buck Ridge, northern Madison Range and Lionhead all point to slowly strengthening snowpack. Yesterday, in the Bridger Range, Dave noted the new snow *more than doubled* the total depth. He saw many avalanches and remains concerned about slopes that have not yet slid (**video**). Ian was in Lionhead (**video**) where it only snowed half as much as the northern areas and described the stability as "not bad", one of the better endorsements all season. Be cautious if you venture into avalanche terrain. Dig and test the snowpack to make sure you are not choosing an unstable slope. Many of the **16 recent avalanche fatalities** involved *multiple victims* per incident, so only expose one person at a time to avalanche terrain. "Ski one at a time" is to be taken literally, not one person skiing every 30 seconds. This way, if an avalanche happens only one may die.

Since triggering avalanches is possible, for today the avalanche danger is rated MODERATE on all slopes.

In the last 5 days we have many new **videos**, **pictures**, **avalanche details** and **snowpits** that are worth scrolling through.

Cooke City

By Tuesday morning Cooke City had 3-4 feet of snow and strong wind at all elevations and many directions. This combination triggered avalanches. Yesterday, a large slide was seen on the south face of Abundance (**photo**) breaking about as wide as it could. Also, on Town Hill, a natural avalanche was seen early yesterday morning

which broke on the ground (**photo**). Wind-loading of the new snow was a common denominator in these slides as well as the **bison triggered slide** in Lamar Valley (outside our area, but fun to see nonetheless). Our **photos page** (filter for Cooke City) shows many slides from the last couple days. Wind-loaded slopes should be approached with caution which are found on most slopes, not only at the ridgelines. For today it is possible to trigger a slide on steep slopes and the danger is rated MODERATE.

If you get out, please send us your observations no matter how brief. You can submit them via our **website**, email (**mtavalanche@gmail.com**), phone (406-587-6984), or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

A USFS message: Parking Etiquette

Snowplows are out there working hard to keep roads and trailheads open for YOU. Give them--and your car--some space!

- Park only in existing trailheads and pullouts.
- Do NOT park on the highway or in the driving lane.
- Do NOT block private driveways or park directly across from them.
- Many roads are plowed by private homeowners. Thank them!
- No overnight camping at trailheads in Hyalite Canyon.
- Don’t expect plowed roads. Come prepared for winter conditions.
- If you can’t park safely, go to another location.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

See our **education calendar** for an up-to-date list of all local classes. Here are a few select upcoming events and opportunities to check out:

Every Saturday in Cooke City, FREE snowpack update and rescue practice at the Round Lake Warming Hut between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. **Poster with More Info**.

February 19 and 20, Companion Rescue Clinic. Registration HERE.

February 26 and 27, Women's Companion Rescue Clinic with SheJumps. Registration HERE.