GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sun Jan 23, 2022

Good morning. This is Alex Marienthal with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Sunday, January 23rd at 7:00 a.m. This information is sponsored by **Advanced Innovation**, **Madison-Gallatin Chapter of Wild Montana** and **BWAGs**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

This morning there is no new snow and temperatures are high teens to mid-20s F. Near Bozeman and Big Sky west-northwest wind is 20 mph with gusts to 40 mph. In the southern ranges and Cooke City north-northwest wind is 5-15 mph with gusts to 20 mph. Today will be partly sunny with temperatures in the high 20s to low 30s F. Winds will increase in the southern areas. By this afternoon, throughout the advisory area, northwest-west wind will be 15-25 mph with gusts to 35 mph. There is a chance for snow tomorrow afternoon.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range Cooke City

Moderate winds out of the northwest to west will form fresh drifts of snow that can avalanche under the weight of a person. Snowfall on Thursday night dropped up to 9” of snow near Bozeman (0.8-1.3” Snow Water Equivalent) and 5-8” in the Madison Range (0.5-0.6” SWE). Near Cooke City got 6-8” since Tuesday (0.6” SWE).

Winds have been calm to light leaving the recent snow to be transported by today’s wind, except in the Bridger Range where moderate winds yesterday formed drifts which were easy to trigger with skis and snowmobiles (**photo of snowmobile triggered wind slab**). Yesterday Ian and I went to Taylor Fork where wind was calm (**video**). We did not see signs of instability, but there was 8” of low-density snow that will be drifted into unstable slabs today. Be cautious of wind-loaded slopes, and avoid them if you see signs of unstable fresh drifts such as wind transporting snow across ridgelines, cracking across the snow surface or fresh avalanches.

Yesterday, a skier near Cooke City triggered a shallow, but wide avalanche in a steep couloir (**photo and details**). A separate group of skiers near Cooke City dug down and had unstable test results break under the recent snow and chose a different objective. Layers of surface hoar or near surface facets were buried by the recent snow in the southern half of our advisory area which could make fresh drifts easier to trigger. If other signs of instability are not present, before riding steep slopes dig and do a quick stability test to look for unstable weak layers buried below the recent snow (**photo of buried surface hoar**). In addition, although unlikely, a much larger avalanche breaking on weak snow near the bottom of the snowpack could be triggered by a smaller avalanche or cornice fall.

Avalanches are possible today and danger is MODERATE on wind-loaded slopes. On non-wind loaded slopes avalanche danger is LOW.

Lionhead Range Island Park

The recent storm dropped 3-4” (0.4” SWE) near West Yellowstone. This is minimal weight added to a generally stable snowpack, and large avalanches are unlikely (**video from Lionhead**). Drifts will form from moderate west-northwest winds today which will be generally small and isolated hazards. Watch out for fresh drifts along ridgelines and in very steep terrain, above cliffs, or slopes where getting knocked off your feet by a small avalanche would have high consequences. Overall, large avalanches are unlikely and the avalanche danger is LOW.

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).

Upcoming Education Opportunities

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 near Cooke City, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. FREE snowpack update and transceiver/rescue training. Stop by for 20 minutes or more at the Round Lake Warming Hut.