GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Thu Jan 25, 2024

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Thursday, January 25th at 6:45 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Spark R&D** and **Mystery Ranch**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

AVALANCHE WARNING

We are continuing a Backcountry Avalanche Warning for the Centennial Mountains in Island Park. New snow and wind-loaded snow is overloading an exceptionally weak snowpack, creating very dangerous avalanche conditions. Human-triggered avalanches are very likely. Avoid avalanche terrain and avalanche runout zones. The avalanche danger is rated **HIGH** on all slopes. Contact the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center for more detailed information.

This warning will expire or be updated by 6:00 a.m. on Friday, January 26th.

Mountain Weather

In the last 24 hours 1-2" fell in Cooke City, West Yellowstone and Island Park. Southwest wind is blowing at 10 mph with gusts of 30 mph and mountain temperatures are 20 F. Today will become cloudy with wind blowing 10-20 mph out of the SW and switching NW tonight. By morning the southern mountains will have 1-2" of new snow and a trace to 1" south of Bozeman to Big Sky.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Island Park

Avalanche Warning

We issued an Avalanche Warning for the third day in a row in Island Park because it keeps snowing. An inch or two of new snow is keeping the snowpack very dangerous. Since Saturday, 1.5" of snow water equivalent fell, measuring a foot and a half of snow. Avalanches can be triggered from hundreds of feet away and getting caught could be deadly. Our advice is simple: don't get into or underneath any avalanche terrain. The avalanche danger is rated HIGH on all slopes.

Lionhead Range Cooke City

A large avalanche on Henderson Mountain in Cooke City was seen yesterday (**observation and photos**). It likely occurred the night before or yesterday morning and we are unsure of the trigger. No matter. This avalanche illustrates why we are worried: the snowpack is on edge, it is slow to adjust to even the smallest amount of snow, and remains very unstable for a long period of time. Read *The Last Word* at the end of the advisory for an explanation on these unusual conditions.

On Sunday, Alex and Dave triggered a slide at Lionhead (**video**) and a similar avalanche could occur today. Slopes that have added weight from previous wind-loading are extra susceptible to avalanching, just like the slide on Henderson Mountain. Last night, we were sent **4 photos** of recent slides in Cooke City, even more evidence of the snowpack's danger. I recommend staying off slopes steeper than 30 degrees and being extra careful traveling under slopes.

The avalanche danger is HIGH on previously wind-loaded slopes and CONSIDERABLE on all others.

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range

The snowpack in the Bridger, Madison and Gallatin Ranges remains weak and unstable. Even days after a storm the danger remains elevated. An unusually weak snowpack is creating unusual avalanche conditions. Slopes can be triggered from far away as Dave discovered on Buck Ridge on Sunday (**video**) and others on **Flanders Mountain** and **Hyalite Peak**. And let's not forget **Saddle Peak**, where a skier triggered a large avalanche far below the ridge. Dave and I turned around on the Throne in the northern Bridger Range because we were worried about triggering a slide far above us (**video**). The backcountry is dangerous and will remain so for a while. Karl Birkeland, avalanche scientist, wrote, "This snowpack is gonna take a LONG time to stabilize every time it gets loaded. Have patience. This snowpack is unlikely to get completely better until it's melted and heading down the rivers in the spring!" Not exactly what I wanted to hear, but likely true nonetheless. Read *The Last Word* at the end of the advisory for an explanation on these unusual conditions.

If you go into avalanche terrain it's likely you'll trigger a slide today. Consequently, the avalanche danger is rated CONSIDERABLE.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out: **Events and Education Calendar.**

Every weekend in Cooke City: Friday at The Antlers at 7 p.m., Free Avalanche Awareness and Current Conditions talk, and Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Round Lake Warming Hut, Free Rescue Practice.

We offer *Avalanche Fundamentals with Field Session* courses targeted towards non-motorized travelers in **January** and one geared towards **motorized users**. Sign up early before they fill up.

King & Queen 2024, 3 February 2024. Form a team or sign up individually to hike laps on the Bridger Bowl ridge to fundraise for the Friends of the Avalanche Center.

Loss in the Outdoors is a support group for those affected by loss and grief related to outdoor pursuits. Check out the link for more information.

KING AND QUEEN OF THE RIDGE, FEBRUARY 3rd

Do you like to hike? Do you like to ski? Then the King & Queen of the Ridge is for you. Hike, ski and raise money for the Friends of the Avalanche Center in their 2nd biggest fundraiser of the year. Join the effort to promote and support avalanche safety and awareness! Fundraising prizes for the top 5 individuals who raise over

$500. *No racing is necessary to compete for the fundraising prizes*. Info is **HERE**. Race participants for the February 4th event must register separately with Bridger Bowl **HERE**.