GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Fri Feb 12, 2021

Good Morning. This is Ian Hoyer with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Friday, February 12th at 7:30 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Grizzly Outfitters** and **Blitz Motorsports and Yamaha**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

This morning there is an inch of new snow near West Yellowstone with none elsewhere. Temperatures range from -20 F in the Bridger Range to the positive teens F near West Yellowstone. Winds are generally westerly at 10-20 mph, with gusts of 30-40 mph last night, except for the Bridger Range where they are light and out of the east. Winds today will be 5-15 mph from the west and northwest. Temperatures will stay in the negatives in the Bridger Range, rising to around 0 F in Big Sky and the low teens F in West Yellowstone and Cooke City. A trace to 3” will fall across the advisory area today, with potential for a smidge more in Cooke City.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range Lionhead Range Island Park

We’re now four days out from the last significant snowfall. But that snowfall was a big one, with 2-4 ft of snow accumulating during the storm. Strong winds after the storm drifted the new snow around and continued loading the snowpack on many slopes through the first half of the week. During the storm there were widespread natural avalanches (**Bridger Range video**, **Buck Ridge video**, **large Skyline Ridge avalanche photo**). The snowpack is no longer hair-trigger, but triggering avalanches remains very much a possibility. Yesterday, snowmobilers in Portal Creek remotely triggered two large avalanches that broke on weak snow near the ground (**details and photos**). Thankfully no one was caught.

In Teepee Basin yesterday, I saw numerous natural avalanches that broke during the storm, but didn’t get the weak layers to break in my snowpack tests (**video**). I still kept off steep slopes because recent avalanche activity is clear evidence that the snowpack has been pushed past its breaking point and the weak layers in the bottom half of the snowpack will take a while to heal, despite mixed signals from snowpack test results. While the likelihood of triggering a slide is slowly decreasing, the consequences aren’t diminishing. Stay diligent and keep making conservative terrain choices.

The avalanche danger is MODERATE.

Cooke City

Cooke City saw 3-4 feet of snow during the last storm and strong winds at all elevations out of many directions. Numerous natural avalanches were reported following the storm, including a very large one on the south face of Mt. Abundance (**photo**), on Town Hill (**photo**), and slides that propagated widely, low on Woody Ridge (**photo**

). Triggering a large avalanche on buried weak layers remains possible today, particularly on wind-loaded slopes. Watch for drifts in unusual places on low elevation slopes as well as the usual areas around ridgelines. 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).

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.