GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sat Feb 4, 2023

Good morning. This is Ian Hoyer with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Saturday, February 4th at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Knoff Group Real Estate**, **Bridger Bowl** and **Cooke City Motorsports.** This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

There is no new snow this morning. Winds ramped up overnight to 20-35 mph with gusts of 35-60 mph out of the southwest and west. Temperatures are in the teens and 20s F. High temperatures today will be in the 20s and 30s F under partly to mostly cloudy skies. Strong winds will continue out of the southwest and west. Snowfall is expected to return tomorrow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range Lionhead Range Cooke City

Yesterday, skiers and riders triggered slides breaking 1-2 ft deep on wind loaded slopes near Big Sky and Cooke CIty (**Lone Mtn details**, **Mt Abundance details**, **Fisher Mtn details**). A skier was buried up to their waist in the slide on Fisher Mountain. Winds picked up overnight, building fresh new drifts that could break in similar avalanches today.

In general, as we get further out from last weekend's big storm, it is getting harder to trigger a slide. But a continuing stream of human triggered avalanches demonstrates that it is clearly still possible (**avalanche log**). Freshly wind drifted slopes are the most likely place to trigger an avalanche. Avalanches could break beneath the new and drifted snow or deeper on weak layers buried throughout the snowpack. As Alex reminded us in his video yesterday, these buried weak layers mean that the snowpack will stabilize slowly once loading stops (**video**). While on non-windloaded slopes these layers haven't been loaded for close to a week, windloaded slopes have continued to be stressed and haven't had much of a chance to stabilize yet. As the likelihood of triggering a slide slowly goes down, the potential size and destructive power is not decreasing.

With the recent avalanches on steep wind-drifted slopes, choosing to keep it simple and entirely avoiding those slopes today wouldn't be unreasonable. Look and feel for signs of wind effect in the surface snow. Cracks shooting out in front of your skis or sled are a clear red flag that you've found an unstable drift and should back off steep slopes. If you don't see any obvious signs of instability, take a few minutes to dig and test the snowpack as a final double check before riding steep slopes.

The avalanche danger is MODERATE today across the advisory area.

Please share avalanche, snowpack or weather observations via our **website**, email (**mtavalanche@gmail.com**), phone (406-587-6984), or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

Island Park

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KING AND QUEEN OF THE RIDGE, FEBRUARY 4TH

The King and Queen is today. We have filled all of our participant slots and can not take any more hikers, **but we can definitely take pledges** (until 1 pm today)! Help support the Friends of the Avalanche Center by making a donation. Come up to Bridger to cheer on everyone hiking!

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

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

February 9, FREE Avalanche Awareness at REI Bozeman. More details to come.

February 11, 10 a.m.-2p.m. Companion Rescue Clinic Field Day in the Bozeman area. Required Online Classroom Session at 6 p.m. on Feb 10. Information and course registration are HERE.

Every Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. ***Avalanche Rescue Training***, drop in for any amount of time. Round Lake Warming Hut, Cooke City. Free.

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