GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Mar 22, 2023

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Wednesday, March 22nd at 6:45 a.m. This information is sponsored by **Avalanche Alliance** and **Yellowstone Club Community Foundation**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

In the last 24 hours the mountains received an inch of snow. Current temperatures are 10 F and wind is light at 5-10 mph out of the northeast. Today will be partly sunny with temperatures rising into the mid 20s F. Wind will remain light and switch to the southwest tonight. Around West Yellowstone and Cooke City clouds will increase this afternoon and 2-3" are expected by morning.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range Lionhead Range Cooke City

Today's primary avalanche concern involves new snow that fell Monday through Tuesday morning along with wind drifts. Ian rode in Buck Ridge towards Cedar Mountain yesterday and found these 2 instabilities should be sought out and tested (**video**, **observation**). Dave skied into Frazier Basin in the Bridger Range on Monday and noted loose snow avalanches that were running surprisingly far on an ice crust (**video** and **observation**). These instabilities are easy to investigate since they are shallowly buried which is *not* the case with deep slab avalanches, a white-knuckled avalanche problem.

Large, deep avalanches are breaking on a layer of faceted, weak snow that formed in early January. All ranges have this potential, but our southern ranges especially so. Alex and Dave saw large slides in Taylor Fork (**video**, **observation and photos**), I noted a big avalanche cycle in Lionhead (**video**), and yesterday I investigated a large slide outside Cooke City that was triggered by a snowmobiler on Saturday (**video**). Triggering these large slides requires hitting the slope in just the wrong location. The avalanche in Cooke was triggered by the 4th rider who hit a thin spot that was undetectable at the surface. Furthermore, we occasionally get a deep slide with only a light load of new snow. Deep slab avalanches are few and far between and their instability can't always be detected with a snowpit. There is no outward evidence these slopes are ripe to avalanche which makes them unpredictable and scary. They are the IEDs of the snowpack.

For today, I recommend digging and testing the upper couple feet of the snowpack. Recent snow may slide far and a wind slab could break. If you decide to get on steep slopes be fully aware that lurking deep there *may* be a dangerous layer teetering on instability that you could trigger.

Today the avalanche danger is rated MODERATE.

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

Island Park

Today's primary avalanche concern involves the new snow that fell Monday through Tuesday morning along with wind drifts. A secondary issue is that large, deep avalanches are breaking on a layer of faceted, weak snow that formed in early January. All ranges have this potential, but our southern ranges especially so. If you decide to get on steep slopes be fully aware that lurking deep there may be a dangerous layer teetering on instability that you could trigger. We made a **video** last week on the deep avalanches that occurred in Island Park and a snow biker sent in this **photo**. Also, we got a thorough observation of avalanche activity in Hellroaring Creek **HERE**.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

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

Sunday, March 26, **Avalanche Alliance Sweepstakes**! Win a custom 2022 Ford 350 Super-Duty truck or many other items. Proceeds help support avalanche centers. Use code LASTCHANCE to receive 40% more tickets. Winners will be chosen at the Jackson Hole Hill Climb.

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