

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Feb 8, 2012

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, February 8 at 7:30 a.m. **Montana Ale Works**, in cooperation with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**, sponsor today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday was a splitter day with lots of sun, temperatures in the teens and light winds. Ridgetop winds picked up slightly last night and are currently blowing 15-25 mph out of the west to southwest. Winds will continue today as temperatures rise into the mid 20s. Valley fog will give way to sunny skies this morning before more clouds roll in tonight and drop an angstrom or two of snow (one ten-millionth of a millimeter, aka flurries). By the way, has anyone seen La Nina? She's missing and frankly I'm upset with her.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The southern Madison and southern Gallatin Ranges, the Lionhead area near West Yellowstone and the mountains around Cooke City:

Yesterday, Karl was in Bacon Rind, I was in Carrot Basin and Cabin Creek and skiers were nearby in Taylor Fork. We were all in the southern Madison Range, yet our findings were dissimilar. Karl skied to the same slope we visited a week ago, but instead of collapsing, cracking and columns popping out in his stability tests, he got nothing. I was seven miles away and although I found no obvious signs of instability my three [snowpits](#) showed unstable results about half the time. Further to the northwest of me skiers got two large collapses with cracks shooting hundreds of feet; indisputable signs of dangerous conditions.

As the snowpack strengthens and becomes less hair-trigger determining stability becomes more slope specific. A few slopes are good, some are fair, and a few are still very poor. The skiers did not dig any pits because they did not have to; Mother Nature gave them the equivalent of a flashing neon warning and they stuck to low angled terrain. In general, my confidence with this snowpack is low. I don't completely trust it. For today, the avalanche danger remains **CONSIDERABLE** on slopes steeper than 35 degrees and **MODERATE** on less steep.

The northern Madison and Bridger Ranges:

The mountains around Bozeman have not gotten snow since Thursday. Winds have also been light, which minimizes loading. The snowpack in the Bridger Range is only 2-3 feet deep and is comprised mostly of weak, faceted snow. But at this time, weak is not unstable and the faceted base is easily supporting winter's meager load. It's the 90 lb weakling of snowpacks; just don't ask it to do any heavy lifting. The northern Madison Range has a poor structure of weak faceted grains underlying thicker slabs of snow. This architecture will not change anytime soon, but without new snow or wind-loading the snowpack is trending toward stability. Two days ago Karl and his partners were out investigating wind slabs perched on facets. He could not get anything to break in his tests, but still stuck to lower angled slopes since he felt it would be possible to trigger something steep. Slopes steeper than 35 degrees or any slope with a hard wind slab has a **MODERATE** avalanche danger. Less steep slopes without a wind slab have a **LOW** avalanche danger.

The northern Gallatin Range:

In the northern Gallatin Range, Mark found stronger and deeper snows on Elephant Mountain in Hyalite. There's been no snow or significant wind in days and he had no immediate stability concerns, which he describes in this [video](#). For today, since natural and human triggered avalanches are unlikely, the avalanche danger is rated **LOW**.

I will issue the next advisory tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m. If you have any snowpack or avalanche observations, drop us a line at mtavalanche@gmail.com or call us at 587-6984.

FUNDRAISING

10th Annual King and Queen of the Ridge

The 10th Annual King and Queen of the Ridge ski/hike-a-thon will be held at Bridger Bowl this Saturday, February 11. 100% of the proceeds go to the Friends of Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center to promote avalanche education in southwest Montana. Kids and families are encouraged to hike too! You can help raise money two ways:

- 1). Get pledges and hike the ridge. You don't have to do 20 laps – you can get flat pledges and hike just once!
- 2). Sponsor someone. If you don't have someone to sponsor, consider sponsoring the GNFAC since we'll be hiking for dollars. **Email us at mtavalanche@gmail.com with a pledge!**

Go to http://bridgerbowl.com/events/view_event/81/ for more information and registration forms.

PRIZES INCLUDE: 4 front skis, two pair of Schnee's Hunter boots, three Mystery Ranch backpacks and three pair of Oboz shoes.

EDUCATION

Bozeman

FREE 1-hour Avalanche Awareness at REI on Thursday, February 16 at 6:30 p.m. For more information call REI at 406-587-1938.