

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sun Nov 25, 2012

This is Doug Chabot with early season snowpack information issued on Sunday, November 25th at 7:30 a.m. Today's information is sponsored by **Mystery Ranch** in partnership with the Friends of the Avalanche Center. Please remember that uphill traffic is not allowed at Big Sky or Moonlight Basin ski areas. It is permitted at Bridger Bowl, but backcountry conditions exist within the ski area boundaries. This information will be updated as conditions change.

Mountain Weather

A moist weather system streaming off the Pacific is producing snow, mainly in our southern mountains. At 6 a.m. the mountains around Cooke City, West Yellowstone and the southern Madison Ranges have gotten 4-5 inches. Two to three inches has fallen around Big Sky, one inch in the northern Gallatins and a dusting in the Bridger Range. Winds are light at 10-15 mph out of the W to SW with temperatures in the low 20s. Another 1-2 inches will fall today, but skies will clear tonight with no further storms predicted through Wednesday.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Since snow fell Wednesday night we have not gotten any reports of avalanches. Skiers and climbers are finding mostly stable conditions. Above 8,000 feet the northern mountains have a layered snowpack about 1.5 feet deep with 2-2.5 feet in the southern areas. We are not finding or hearing about widespread instabilities; two days of avalanche control at Big Sky did not produce slides either. However, there are pockets of weaker facets on high elevation north-facing slopes. Skiers found this in the Bridger Range ([snowpit](#)) and the Big Sky patrol noted slopes that were thin (and likely faceted) and capped with a hard slab felt "hollow and drummy", a sign of poor snow structure.

Last night's snow fell with light winds and temperatures in the 20s. The [snow water equivalent \(SWE\)](#) measured about .4 inches which translates into 10% density. The layers in the snowpack are bonding together and overall we have a strong snowpack ([video](#)). The only layers that are fracturing in stability tests are on high elevation, north-facing slopes.

It's early season and we've only gotten limited field data. Evidence is pointing towards stable conditions, but this is not permission to be reckless. Unless you spent your summer skiing in the southern hemisphere, I bet your skiing is pretty rusty along with your decision making. I know mine is.

Pre-season Prep of Avalanche Gear

We do not want our gear slowing us down in an emergency. A few minutes of gear maintenance can shave off lifesaving minutes during a rescue. Put fresh batteries in your beacon, snap together probes and ready your shovel for quick deployment. We made a video with this simple message [HERE](#).

Once we get more snow we will begin issuing daily advisories and avalanche danger ratings. If you have any snowpack or avalanche observations to share, drop us a line at mtavalanche@gmail.com or call us at 587-6984.

EDUCATION

Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course at MSU in the evenings of November 28 and 29 with an all-day field session on December 1. Sign up for this class [HERE](#).

Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course in Billings at Hi-Tech Motor Sports on December 12 and 13, 6-9 p.m. and the field course on January 20 in Cooke City. Sign up for this class [HERE](#)

Snowmobiler Introduction to Avalanches with Field Course in West Yellowstone on December 20 and 21. Sign up for this class [HERE](#).

FREE 1 hour lectures:

December 3, Northern Lights Trading Company, Bozeman, 7 p.m.

December 8, Greenup Performance in Black Eagle near Great Falls, MT, 7 p.m.

December 12, REI in Bozeman, 6:30 p.m.