

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Jan 13, 2010

Good Morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, January 13, at 7:30 a.m. **ACE Powder Guides**, in cooperation with the **Friends of the Avalanche Center**, sponsor today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Last night 2-3 inches of snow fell in the southern Madison Range with an inch falling near Cooke City and the Yellowstone Club. Yesterday's strong southwest winds gusted into the 40s, but have lessened to 20-30 mph and will calm even further today. Mountain temperatures warmed to a few degrees above freezing, but cooled overnight into the high 20s. Under mostly cloudy skies temperatures will still hover near freezing. A weak southwest flow will create a few isolated showers bringing an inch of snow to the southern mountains.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Mark skied into Mount Blackmore yesterday while I rode into Lionhead to document the carnage from last week's avalanche cycle. Mark and his partner found 3-4 feet of snow on the ground with the lower half being facets. His stability tests showed some strengthening and he did not see any obvious signs of instability. The northern Gallatin Range received less snow than other areas last week. Although the scale was tipped and avalanches occurred, they were not as numerous or widespread as other regions.

My partner and I rode around Lionhead while Karl and a graduate student parked themselves on a hill and did 37 stability tests-a bit of an overkill to find out if the slope's stable; but they were in their white lab coats doing research. They found very consistent shears in their Extended Column Tests and even got a large collapse as they walked around. I rode far and wide, saw many big and small avalanches, and had surprisingly similar test results; clean shears breaking on facets about one-foot off the ground. This is the same layer that all the avalanches ran on. My sled would dive and porpoise through the facets which was fun, but disconcerting since it meant the snowpack structure-a slab being poorly supported by a weak, faceted snow-has not changed.

Last week the snowpack was like a rubber band getting stretched to its limit. On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday the rubber band broke and many slopes avalanched. On slopes that didn't avalanche, the stress is lessening as the snowpack adjusts to the new load. For riders and skiers this means that it's getting harder to trigger avalanches and the signs of instability will not be very obvious. The unstable snow structure and the fact that we're still finding shears propagating in our snowpits is not inspiring confidence. For today, on slopes steeper than 35-degrees the avalanche danger is rated **CONSIDERABLE**. On lower angled slopes the avalanche danger is **MODERATE**.

Mark will issue the next advisory tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m. If you get out in the backcountry give us a call or email with your observations. You can reach us at 587-6984 or email us at mtavalanche@gmail.com.

Ski Movies/Fundraiser

Hans Saari Memorial Fund presents the UP THERE Film Fest Thursday and Friday, January 14-15 at the Emerson Cultural Center - Two Films, including Mike Marolt's Skiing Everest and Swift, Silent, Deep, the Story of the Jackson Hole Air Force will be shown. For more info go to www.hansfund.org

Avalanche Education

Education Calendar

1. University of Montana/ Western, Room 311 Block Hall, Dillon, MT

One-hour Avalanche Awareness Class - Thursday, January 14th - 7pm to 8pm

2. University of Montana/ Western, Room 311 Block Hall, Dillon, MT

One-hour Avalanche Awareness Class - Friday, January 15th - 7pm to 8pm

3. Cooke City Fire Hall

One-hour Avalanche Awareness Class - Saturday, January 16th - 6pm to 7pm

4. Bozeman

MMA Teen Avalanche Class: Lecture Thursday, January 21st & Field Session Saturday, January 23rd. To sign up or get more information, call Erin Taylor Montana Mountaineering Associations at 522-0659

5. Bridger Bowl

AAI Level 1 Avalanche Course - Friday, January 22nd to Sunday, January 24th

www.americanavalancheinstitute.com

6. Four Corners Groomer Shack

RESCUE LECTURE: Tuesday, January 26th 7pm. The Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association is having it annual Chili Feed at 6:30pm in the Groomer Shack at 4 corners.

7. Billings

Avalanche Awareness and Rescue Class-Wednesday, January 27th, 6-9 pm at Beartooth Harley.

8. Bozeman

BASIC AVALANCHE WORKSHOP: The Friends of the Avalanche Center and ASMSU Outdoor Rec are offering a Basic Avalanche Awareness Class the evenings Wed, Thur, 27 & 28 January with a field day on Saturday, 30 January. \$25 donation. No sign up required. <http://www.mtavalanche.com/education/classes/basic>

9. Holiday Inn, West Yellowstone

One-hour Avalanche Awareness Class - Saturday, January 30th - 7pm to 8pm