



April 13, 2020

Winter is not going down without a fight, but we have concluded our 30<sup>th</sup> season of daily avalanche forecasts. A 10" early snowstorm prompted our first bulletin of the year on September 26. Snow continued, folks flocked to the mountains and we issued 17 bulletins before our daily advisories started on November 30. By April 5<sup>th</sup> we had issued 128 daily advisories including 2 days of avalanche warnings, and will continue posting weather and snowpack updates twice a week through April. This was a good winter on many fronts: no avalanche fatalities and plenty of snowfall. Our snowpack depth (SWE) is currently measured to be 113-119% of average.

This winter Dave Zinn joined our team as a part-time forecaster and will return next year in full-time capacity. Additionally, 32 volunteers and our intern Spencer Jonas partnered with us in the field when we were not out with each other.

The United States has 21 avalanche fatalities so far this season. Given the wintry weather and unprecedented increase in backcountry use caused by the COVID-19 "self-quarantine", there may be more. On the Custer Gallatin National Forest there were 59 avalanche incidents (aka. close calls) that we are aware of: 27 skiers or snowboarders, 30 motorized and 2 ice climbers. Our records show 12 people were caught with 2 snowmobilers and one snowcat partially buried. This is the first winter since 2012-13 without an avalanche fatality.

We worked with the Friends of the Avalanche Center and their 42 instructors to teach 125 classes reaching 4,240 people. Many of these were snowmobilers (678) and kids under 18 years old (995), two of our target audiences. Most classes were 1-hour *Avalanche Awareness*, *Companion Rescue* and *Introduction to Avalanches with a Field Session*. With funding from Montana Parks we continued our weekly Cooke City education program of Friday night awareness and Saturday rescue practice. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the program and 4<sup>th</sup> year without a fatality in Cooke City.

#### *GNFAC INDEX*

- Total email subscribers to the avalanche forecast: 5,245

- Number of daily views to our Forecast page: 1,526
  - Increase from last year: 20%
- Percentage of people accessing mtavalanche.com on a smartphone, desktop, or tablet: 61%, 35%, 4%
  - Percentage of iOS vs Android: 67% and 33%
- Number of field days: 122
- Number of times Doug forgot his shovel handle at home: 1
- Total number of snowpits we recorded on snowpilot.org: 137
- Reported avalanches and incidents: 318 and 59
- The most avalanches recorded in a single day this season: 21 on February 9
- Deepest measured crown depth: 15' in Cooke City
- Number of videos and total views: 116 and 583,000
  - Really, over half a million views? Yup.
- Maximum number of takes to make a 1-minute video: 6, a new record by Dave\*
  - \*Alex once had 8 takes. None were good enough to publish, so the record is debatable.
- Total followers on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter: 12,097; 12,260; 4,120; and 2,092
  - Percentage increase from last year: 18%

Alex, Ian, Dave and I rely on many individuals, community partnerships and volunteer efforts in order to run the avalanche center. Almost 50% of our funding comes from outside the Forest Service. The Friends of the Avalanche Center along with a grant from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks fill in the shortfall. Businesses that financially support our work through the Friends include: Grizzly Outfitters, Your Montana Chevy Dealers, Spark R&D, Yellowstone Artic Yamaha, Yellowstone Club Community Foundation, Cooke City Motorsports, Gallatin County Search and Rescue, Highline Partners, Mystery Ranch, World Boards, Uphill Pursuits, Cooke City Super 8, Bridger Bowl, Community Food Coop, Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association, Stronghold Fabrication, Knoff Group Real Estate, Alpine Orthopedics, Werner Wealth Management, Ph.D. Skis, Swiss Fit, MAP Brewing, Swiss Fit, Ph.D Skis, and Klim. Enjoy the spring and summer. We will be back in October in anticipation of an epic winter!

All the best,



**Doug Chabot**  
**Director**

**Forest Service**  
**Gallatin National Forest Avalanche**  
**Center**