

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sat Feb 9, 2013

Good morning. This is Eric Knoff with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Saturday, February 9 at 7:30 a.m. **Montana Import Group** in partnership with the Friends of the Avalanche Center sponsors today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Since yesterday morning a trace to one inch of snow fell in the mountains around Big Sky and West Yellowstone; all other areas remained dry. Currently, temperatures are ranging from the single digits to low teens and winds are blowing 5-15 mph out of the ENE. Today, temperatures will warm into the 20s F under partly to mostly cloudy skies and winds will blow 5-15 from the NNE. A Canadian cold front with a limited amount of moisture will impact our area tonight into tomorrow. The mountains around Bozeman, Big Sky and Cooke City will likely see 2-4 inches of snow by tomorrow afternoon. The mountains around West Yellowstone will pick up 1-3 inches.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range

Lionhead area near West Yellowstone

Long dry spells interrupted by heavy snowfall is not ideal. Preferably, snow should accumulate a few inches at a time, 3-4 days a week. This allows the snowpack to build gradually without persistent weak layers. Unfortunately, this type of scenario does not define our current situation in southwest Montana. Instead, our snowpack has been formed by a weather pattern resembling something created by Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

This manic madness has produced a snowpack chock-full of spatial variability. On some slopes the snowpack is deep and stable; but on others, faceted snow buried 1-3 feet deep remains a concern.

In the mountains around West Yellowstone, a layer of facets buried 1-2 feet deep can be found on most aspects and elevations. This layer is most pronounced on slopes facing the southern half of the compass but also exists on shadier aspects. Though this layer is gaining strength, it continues to command respect. Digging snowpits and doing stability tests is highly recommended when riding in these areas.

In the mountains around Bozeman and Big Sky buried facets are not as widespread, but can be found in isolated areas. Mid to low elevation terrain like Mt Ellis in the northern Gallatin Range and Yellow Mountain near Big Sky will be likely places to find an unstable snowpack. In upper elevation terrain, slopes that had a thinner snowpack prior to last week's storms will be the most likely to hold buried facets 2-3 feet deep ([photo](#)).

Although avalanches are becoming harder to trigger, buried weak layers continue to make human triggered avalanches possible and the avalanche danger is rated [MODERATE](#).

Cooke City

Consistent snowfall in the mountains around Cooke City has kept the development of persistent weak layers to a minimum. Mark rode this area the past few days and found a generally strong and stable snowpack ([video](#)). While most slopes offer green light conditions, there are a few areas to look out for. Mid to low elevation slopes

where the snowpack is thinner hold the weakest snowpack structure (**photo**). Be cautious when riding in these areas, specifically around creek beds or steep gullies. In upper elevation terrain, there is the possibility a stubborn old wind slab could pop loose under the weight of skier or rider, but this scenario is becoming less likely the longer we go without snow and wind.

Today, generally safe avalanche conditions exist and 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.

February 16: 11th Annual King and Queen of the Ridge

The **Avalanche Center**, **Montana Ale Works** and **Beartooth Powder Guides** have already entered as teams. Organize your own team or come out as an individual hiker. Better yet, let others do the hiking for you and **donate** instead! If you would like to donate to the Avalanche Center team of Mark and Eric (30 lap goal!) drop us a line at mtavalanche@gmail.com. Pledges can be made per lap or just a flat donation. Kids and families are encouraged to hike too! Prizes will be awarded to the most hikes (1st, 2nd, and 3rd); most money raised; most laps for a team; most money raised for a team. **[More Information](#) / [Registration Form](#)**

Ice Creek Lodge in Valhallas (Canada) available at a deep discount!

Funds benefit the Friends of the Avalanche Center. Dates are March 22-29, 2013. This backcountry touring lodge is a Helicopter ride in and holds up to 10 people. The lodge is private, has full kitchen, sauna, etc., and will be a world class March trip into the Valhalla's!

http://www.icecreeklodge.com/back_country_lodge_accommodation.html

Interested? Contact Eric Ladd at 406-570-0639 or eric@theoutlawpartners.com

EDUCATION

A Dozen More Turns, a documentary on the 2005 avalanche in the Centennial Range by Amber Seyler is now uploaded on YouTube! Check it out **[HERE](#)**.