



April 15, 2019

Thanks for a wonderful winter. We concluded our 29<sup>th</sup> season after 129 daily avalanche forecasts between November 30<sup>th</sup> and April 7<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, we issued 14 preseason information bulletins and have 7 post season bulletins scheduled. An October 5<sup>th</sup> snowstorm on started winter, and by the beginning of November skiing, riding and avalanches were in full swing. The 2018-19 season had it all: droughts, cold weather, intense snowfall, many avalanches and a varied snowpack that had months long persistent weakness. Our snowpack depth (SWE) is currently measured to be 100-114% of average.

Ian Hoyer joined our team as a part-time forecaster this season which allowed us better field coverage and eased our early morning forecast schedule. Alex, Eric, Ian and I relied on our intern, Andrew Schauer and 28 volunteers as partners on days we were not out with each other.

This winter there were 25 avalanche fatalities in the US including two in southwest Montana: a skier in the Tobacco Root Mountains and a skier in the Bridger Range. In our area we had 63 avalanche incidents (aka close calls) reported to us that were split between skiers/snowboarders (27), motorized users (31) and ice climbers (5). These incidents resulted in 7 people being caught, 4 partially buried, 1 fully buried and 2 killed.

We worked with the Friends of the Avalanche Center to teach 129 classes reaching over 3,200 people. Many of these were snowmobilers (761) and kids under 18 years old (689), 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 third year of the program and third year without a fatality in the Cooke City area.

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- Total email subscribers to the avalanche forecast: 5,090
- Number of daily views to our Forecast page: 1,281
  - Rank of the Forecast page on our website: 1
  - Ranks of *weather/bridger-lift* and *weather/lobo* pages: 2 and 3

- Number of Avalanche Warnings issued: 7
  - Additional Avalanche Warnings for the Centennial Range in Idaho: 4
- Number of videos posted to YouTube and total views: 118 and 111,529
- Total followers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter: 10,707 and 9,689 and 2,021
- Number of Instagram videos posted and views: 75 and 200,932
  - Average number of views/video: 2,679
- Number of field days: 132
- Total number of snowpits we recorded on snowpilot.org: 100
  - Estimated total, in pounds, of snow shoveled digging pits: 200,000
  - % of digging by our intern: 50%
- Days we worked as “excepted” employees during the government shut-down: 34
  - The best part of the government shutdown: parking
- Best “ghost ride” for having his sled hole-in-one into a tree well: Eric
- Number of blown belts this year: 2
- Reported avalanches and incidents: 263 and 63.
- The most active weekend for avalanches: January 26 & 27 January with 23 avalanches
- Coldest recorded temperature on our vehicle thermometer: -34F
- Number of times we had to beat the frozen trailer lock with a wrench to open it: at least 6
  - Number of times we also poured hot coffee on it: 5
- Number of times we did not go in the field because it was too cold: 0
  - Number of times we wish we didn’t: at least 6

In order to run the avalanche center, Alex, Eric, Ian and I rely on many individuals, community partnerships and volunteer efforts. 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, Yellowstone Artic Yamaha, Montana State Parks, Yellowstone Club Community Foundation, Gallatin County Search and Rescue, Highline Partners, Mystery Ranch, World Boards, Spark R&D, Cooke City Super 8, Bridger Bowl, Community Food Coop, Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association, Stronghold Fabrication, Knoff Group Real Estate, Alpine Orthopedics, Lawson Dental, Werner Wealth Management, MAP Brewing, Morison-Maierle, Swiss Fit, Ph.D Skis and Cooke City Motorsports.

Enjoy the spring and summer. We will be back in October in anticipation of another fantastic season.

All the best,



**Doug Chabot**  
**Director**

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