GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Wed Feb 19, 2020

Good Morning. This is Dave Zinn with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Wednesday, February 19th at 6:45 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by the **Yellowstone Club Community Foundation** and **Gallatin County Search and Rescue**. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

The mountains around Bozeman and Cooke City received 1-2" of new snow in the last 24 hours with none for the rest of the advisory area. Mountain temperatures are in the single digits above and below zero F and winds are 5 mph from the west to north. Skies will clear today with temperatures in the low to mid-teens F with light winds at 5-10 mph from the west to north.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range Cooke City

New snow and strong winds last week increased the avalanche hazard. This weekend numerous natural and human triggered slides occurred across the Bridger, Madison, and Gallatin Ranges and in the mountains around Cooke City. Reports are still coming in. Yesterday, a human triggered avalanche north of Cooke City broke 3-4' deep and 100' across a small slope (**photo and details**). Several natural avalanches on heavily wind loaded slopes on Wilson Peak likely failed Monday night. On Monday at Buck Ridge, a snowmobiler triggered a large avalanche more than four feet deep that failed on weak snow near the ground (**details**). These recent events are clear evidence that human triggered avalanches are still possible. Go to our **avalanche activity page** to learn more about this avalanche cycle.

As high pressure settles into the advisory area, it will be harder to trigger avalanches on deeply buried weak layers. Persistent weak layers, such as the widely distributed weak, sugary snow near the ground, are tricky. Signs of instability like natural avalanches and collapsing will not be forthcoming today and you may get stable test results but keep the big picture in mind. This weekend the mountains reached a tipping point and large, destructive avalanches occurred on this layer and within the new snow. Doug wouldn't trust the snowpack at Mount Ellis on Monday (**video**) and, in Cooke City, this deeply buried weak layer kept us making relatively conservative decisions even though the mountains and stability tests presented us with no signs of volatility (**video**).

Today, make conservative terrain choices to avoid the hazard or carefully assess stability and manage your exposure if you are going into avalanche terrain. The avalanche danger is rated MODERATE.

Lionhead Range Island Park

In the mountains around West Yellowstone, stability has improved. There has been no avalanche activity reported in the area in the last ten days. Riders are out and climbing hills and not triggering slides. We rode up Denny Creek and Lionhead Ridge two times in the last week and a half and were pleasantly surprised both times

by the lack of avalanche activity, the absence of signs of instability following a significant loading event and that weak snow near the ground is gaining strength (**Ski Hill video, Denny Creek video**). The avalanche danger is LOW and human triggered avalanches are unlikely. Continue to follow standard avalanche safety protocols by carrying all avalanche rescue gear, assessing steep slopes for isolated instabilities, and exposing only one person at a time to potential hazards.

If you get out, please send us your observations no matter how brief. You can fill out an **observation form**, email us (**mtavalanche@gmail.com**), leave a VM at 406-587-6984, or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out and plan to attend one or two: Events and Education Calendar.

COOKE CITY

Every Friday and Saturday, **Snowpack Update and Rescue Training**. Friday, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at the Soda Butte Lodge. Saturday anytime between 10-2 @ Round Lake.

BOZEMAN

March 4, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness.** 6-7 p.m. at REI.

WEST YELLOWSTONE

February 22, **1-hr Avalanche Awareness.** 7-8 p.m. at West Yellowstone Holiday Inn.