GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sun Feb 5, 2023

Good morning. This is Alex Marienthal with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Sunday, February 5th at 7:00 a.m. This information is sponsored by **Bridger Bowl** and everyone who hiked and fundraised for the King and Queen of The Ridge. This year's top 3 fundraisers were **Dash Rodman (1)** and **Matthew Sebren (2)** of team Cooke City Exxon and **Janis Putelis (3)** of team Highline Partners/ New Age Artisans. This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

This morning there is no new snow. Winds are southwest at 10-25 mph with gusts of 35-50 mph. Temperatures are teens to 20s F. Today temperatures will reach 20s to low 30s F with southwest-west wind at 20-35 mph. Snow will start to fall this afternoon and tonight with 3-5" expected by tomorrow morning.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Bridger Range Gallatin Range Madison Range Lionhead Range Cooke City

Today a person can trigger avalanches that break 1-2 feet deep below recently wind-drifted snow or deeper on buried persistent weak layers. Recent human-triggered avalanches show what is possible, and are evidence that the snowpack needs more time to adjust to last weekend's heavy snowfall. On Thursday and Friday near Big Sky, skiers triggered slides 1-2 ft deep on wind loaded slopes (**details 1**, **details 2**). On Friday near Cooke City, a skier was buried up to their waist in a slide on Fisher Mountain (**details**), and a rider triggered a small slide near Mt. Abundance (**details**).

Over the past two days I found buried surface hoar in the northern Gallatin Range (**video**) and near Big Sky (**video**). Finding this buried weak layer is enough evidence to back off steep slopes until the snowpack has more time to adjust or "heal" after being loaded by heavy snow last weekend. As time passes without snow or wind-loading, more slopes become stable and there are fewer obvious signs of instability like collapsing or unstable snowpack test scores. However, the consequences and size of potential avalanches are large, and you do not want to risk finding a slope that is unstable.

Be extra cautious of wind-loaded slopes and carefully assess the snowpack for the presence of buried weak layers before riding or crossing steep slopes. If you plan to ride slopes steeper than 30 degrees, dig down 3-4 feet to be sure there are no concerning buried weak layers. If snow accumulates this afternoon, watch for fresh drifts that may be unstable and add weight to buried weak layers. Today the avalanche danger is MODERATE.

Please share avalanche, snowpack or weather observations via our **website**, email (**mtavalanche@gmail.com**), phone (406-587-6984), or Instagram (#gnfacobs).

Island Park

In Island park a person can trigger avalanches that break 1-2 feet deep below wind-drifted snow or deeper on buried persistent weak layers. Snow is expected during the day, and danger will rise this afternoon if snowfall is heavy. Watch for fresh drifts that may be unstable and add weight to buried weak layers. Avoid freshly wind-loaded slopes and carefully assess the snowpack for the presence of buried weak layers before riding or crossing steep slopes.

King and Queen of the Ridge Results

Thank you and great work to everyone who participated in this year's King and Queen of the Ridge event. This year we set a fund-raising record of $31,626! We greatly appreciate the support from everyone who hiked, donated, and raised money for The Friends of GNFAC. The King of the Ridge for the second year in a row is **Casey Bloomer,** with a record 34 hikes, and Queen is **Rachel Topf,** with 23 hikes! **Full Results Here**.

This year's top 3 fundraisers were **Dash Rodman** (1) and **Matt Sebren** (2) of team Cooke City Exxon and **Janis Putelis** (3) of team Highline Partners/ New Age Artisans. The top three fundraising teams were Cooke City Exxon, Highline Partners/ New Age Artisans and team Science Saves Lives.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out: **Events and Education Calendar.**

February 9, FREE Avalanche Awareness at REI Bozeman. More details to come.

February 11, 10 a.m.-2p.m. Companion Rescue Clinic Field Day in the Bozeman area. Required Online Classroom Session at 6 p.m. on Feb 10. Information and course registration are HERE.

February 16, FREE Avalanche Awareness night for women at REI Bozeman. Time TBD.

March 3-5, Bozeman Splitfest. More info and register here.

Every Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. ***Avalanche Rescue Training***, drop in for any amount of time. Round Lake Warming Hut, Cooke City. Free.

Loss in the Outdoors, is a support group for those who have been affected by grief and loss related to outdoor pursuits. Check out the link for more information.