

GNFAC Avalanche Advisory for Wed Feb 13, 2013

Good morning. This is Doug Chabot with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Wednesday, February 13 at 7:30 a.m. **Bridger Bowl**, host of this Saturday's **King and Queen of the Ridge** sponsors today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday morning 3-4 inches of snow fell around Big Sky with other areas receiving just a trace to one inch. Winds are still cranking from the west in the Bridger Range and [Hyalite](#) area at 30-50 mph; all other weather stations are measuring 15-30 mph. Under cloudy skies temperatures are in the mid-teens. A moist northwest flow will drop 1-2 inches of snow today with mountain temperatures reaching the mid-20s and wind speeds remaining the same.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Northern Gallatin Range

The northern Gallatin Range is windy and had a foot of new snow to blow around from Sunday's storm. Yesterday, Mark toured into [Alex Lowe Peak](#) with the skier who was caught in Saturday's avalanche. Winds were blowing, gusting and building drifts. In most spots these were glued down and stable, but where they formed over weak layers they will be unstable. Mark dug in the avalanche crown and found a layer of small facets that broke under a hard slab. The avalanche was triggered from a thin spot (only two feet deep) which is indicative of a widespread problem throughout southwest Montana. Skiers in Flanders drainage yesterday skied lower angled slopes when they too found thin, weak snow in the upper elevations. Today the avalanche danger is rated **CONSIDERABLE** on all wind-loaded terrain. All other slopes have a **MODERATE** danger.

Mark posted [three photos](#), a great [video](#) and [snowpit](#) from his investigation.

Bridger Range Madison Range Southern Gallatin Range

Lionhead area near West Yellowstone

The Bridger Range and mountains around Big Sky to West Yellowstone have two avalanche problems to be aware of:

1. Thin snowpacks are weaker;
2. Some slopes have a buried weak layer 1-2 feet under the surface.

On Monday, touring into [Beehive Basin](#), I found thick layers of faceted grains in areas less than three feet deep. Thin snowpacks are weak and unstable and should be avoided. Yesterday, I went into [Bacon Rind](#) and easily found the layer of surface hoar buried under a foot of snow. It shows up as a high visibility stripe in the snowpit ([photo](#), [video](#)). This layer is gaining strength, but I don't trust it and do not recommend getting on steep slopes where it exists. Over the weekend there were reports of cracking and collapsing in the northern Madison Range as well as a skier triggering an avalanche on Lionhead Ridge ([photo](#)).

For today, the avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE** on all slopes since human triggered avalanches are still possible.

Cooke City

Cooke City has a deep, mostly stable snowpack. Winds have been light which is a welcome change from normal. Although generally safe avalanche conditions exist, there are still isolated slopes at lower elevations that are thin and weak and could produce small slides. For today, the avalanche danger remains **LOW**.

Mark 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](#)**

AVALANCHE EDUCATION

Cooke City: This Friday, a free 1-hour *Avalanche Awareness* lecture at the Community Center, 6 p.m.

West Yellowstone: This Friday, a free 1-hour *Avalanche Awareness* lecture at the Holiday Inn, 7 p.m.