GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Fri Mar 27, 2020

Good Morning. This is Ian Hoyer with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Friday, March 27th at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Stronghold Fabrication** and **Alpine Orthopedics**.

Bridger Bowl parking lots are private property. Please do not loiter or congregate in the parking lots. Please skin, ski, and leave. The ski area is closed and backcountry conditions exist (**video**).

A **Stay at Home order** has been issued for the State of Montana due to COVID-19, effective tomorrow morning.

Mountain Weather

There is no new snow this morning. Winds have been westerly at 15-20 mph with gusts to 30 mph. Temperatures are in the single digits to teens F. Scattered clouds this morning will build through the day, with snow showers possible this afternoon. Winds will be 10-15 mph out of the southwest and west. Mountain temperatures will rise to around 30 F. Light snowfall tonight won't bring more than dusting of new snow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

All Regions

Recent snow and strong winds have created dangerous avalanche conditions. 10 inches to 2 ft of new snow fell in the mountains earlier this week (measuring 0.8-1.3" snow water equivalent). Winds yesterday were stronger than expected, gusting into the 30s mph out of the west. These strong winds rapidly built cornices and heavily wind loaded many slopes (**photo**).

Yesterday we got reports of skier triggered and natural avalanches on wind loaded slopes in the Bridger Range, in Hyalite, across the Northern Madison Range, near Cooke City, and down by Quake Lake (see the Weather and Avalanche Log for details and photos). There were more than 10 slides reported yesterday. This is a clear indication that the wind drifted snow is unstable. These slides were all breaking 1-2 ft deep within the new snow from earlier this week. On many slopes they were sliding on ice crusts that formed last week (**video**). Avoid wind-loaded slopes where these slides will be easily triggered again today.

Clouds building through the day should keep wet snow from being too much of an issue, but if skies stay blue into the afternoon, be heads up on sunny slopes as the snow surface gets wet. Pinwheels, roller balls, and the feeling of sticky snow beneath your feet are all signs that the conditions for wet avalanches are developing. If the new snow does become wet, it will slide easily and far on the ice crusts beneath it.

Throughout our advisory area, the avalanche danger is CONSIDERABLE on wind-loaded slopes and MODERATE on all other slopes.

We plan to end daily avalanche forecasts on Sunday, April 5th and continue with general bulletins every Monday and Friday through April. Over the next week, we will take down weather stations and will no longer receive observations from guides and ski patrol. We need help gathering field data. 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).

COVID-19 Info and Updates

The stay at home order that goes into effect tomorrow morning allows for outdoor activities to continue (as long as you keep the mandated 6 feet of social distancing). However, it specifically discourages “outdoor recreation activities that pose enhanced risks of injury or could otherwise stress the ability of local first responders to address the COVID-19 emergency (e.g., backcountry skiing in a manner inconsistent with avalanche recommendations or in closed terrain).”

If you choose to go into the mountains during these unusual times, enjoy the fresh air, but dial back your objectives, slow down, and think carefully to minimize the risk of injury or need for rescue. Please respect the gravity of this situation and temper yourself according.

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

The avalanche education season is winding down, but you can still find a few courses offered by other providers on our website on the Events and Education Calendar.