

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Mon Feb 28, 2011

Good morning. This is Eric Knoff with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Advisory issued on Monday, February 28, at 7:30 a.m. The Pinhead Classic Telemark Festival in cooperation with the Friends of the Avalanche Center, sponsors today's advisory. This advisory does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Over the past 24 hours 1-2 inches of new snow fell in most areas. Mountain temperatures are on the cool side ranging from the single digits to low teens F. Winds have started to pick up - blowing out of the W-SW at 15-30 mph with gusts in Hyalite and Big Sky reaching into the 40's. Winds will continue to increase throughout the day with gusts reaching upwards of 60 mph by this afternoon. Temperatures will climb into the 20's under mostly cloudy skies. A cold front will arrive this evening bringing with it cooler temps and light precipitation. 1-3 inches will accumulate in the mountains by tomorrow morning.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

The Bridger, Madison and Gallatin Ranges, the Lionhead area near West Yellowstone, the mountains around Cooke City and the Washburn Range:

Hold on to your hats skiers and riders, today could get a little wild. After a superb day yesterday, the weather is turning once again. Winds in the range of 50-60 mph are expected in the upper elevations today and light snow will likely be part of the equation. The good news is - the mild weather yesterday helped stabilize recently formed wind slabs and assisted in reducing snow available for transport. The bad news is - our snowpack could once again be heading down the slippery slope that new snow and strong winds can create.

Despite a brief setback from yesterdays calming effects, I don't expect this latest storm to cause any long term problems. The snowpack throughout our advisory area is relatively strong and is fortunate to have very little in the way of buried weak layers. Yesterday, Mark did a long tour in the northern Madison Range and did not observe any recent avalanche activity, nor did he experience any signs of instability such as cracking or collapsing. Mark did mention most slopes had been affected by the wind, but he felt comfortable skiing in steep terrain. One potential problem he did notice was a layer of facets forming on the surface of south aspects. This layer will only be a problem if it receives a heavy load.

Doug also found stable conditions in Cooke City. He did observe a few small slides - one likely triggered by a skier and the other by a cornice drop ([photo 1](#), [photo 2](#), [photo 3](#)); but he felt these events were isolated and did not represent the overall snowpack. I was in Hyalite yesterday and also felt comfortable in steep terrain. I observed climbers on nearly all the major ice climbs and talked with a few skiers who ventured up high. One skier did mention he saw a small slab avalanche near Hyalite Peak, but that was the extent of natural activity.

Today, the primary avalanche concern will be wind loaded slopes - specifically near ridgelines or in steep, rocky terrain. If the winds crank like they are forecasted to, conditions may change rapidly. As always, pay attention to your surroundings and consistently ask yourself "Is the weather contributing to instability?" If conditions do start to change never be afraid to alter your plans.

For today, the avalanche danger is rated MODERATE on all wind loaded slopes and MODERATE on all slopes steeper than 35 degrees. On less steep slopes unaffected by the wind, the avalanche danger is rated LOW.

Doug 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.

Upcoming Events

3rd Annual Montana Ale Works Fundraiser

Tuesday, March 1 at 6:00 p.m. in the Railcar at Ale Works in Bozeman

Cost: \$25 to benefit the Friends of the Avalanche Center

Details: Chef Roth at Montana Ale Works is creating tapas style servings that will be paired with select beer from Lone Peak Brewery. More information [HERE](#).

Pinhead Classic

The 30th Annual Pinhead Classic on is Saturday, March 5th. “Gangsters and Flappers” is this year’s costume theme, so come dressed up to race, socialize and win great prizes. Registration is \$30 but get you all sorts of cool stuff. All proceeds benefit the Friends of the Avalanche Center. Check out the website <http://pinheadclassic.com> for details.

OTHER NEWS

New Snowpits Page

In response to our survey we added a new page to the website with images of our snowpit profiles. This page is under the Resources/Other Info tab at www.mtavalanche.com/snowpits

Backcountry Skier Survey – Researchers at Alaska Pacific University are studying decision making in backcountry skiers and would like to get information from you. If interested in this 10-15 minute survey, go to this website: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SE_AK_Backcountry_Skiing_Research