GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sun Mar 29, 2020

Good Morning. This is Alex Marienthal with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Sunday, March 29th at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Assoc.** and **Montana State Parks**.

Bridger Bowl is closed and strongly advises against uphill travel which could place first responders at greater risk. Backcountry conditions exist. Ski Patrol is NOT performing daily avalanche or rescue work. Please do not loiter or congregate in the parking lots.

Park county is requesting anyone who is not a permanent resident or provider of essential service avoid all travel to Cooke City/Silvergate at this time. This includes both single day and overnight visitors.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday morning the mountains got an inch of snow. This morning temperatures are high teens to 20s F with west-southwest wind at 5-20 mph. Today, under partly sunny skies, temperatures will reach mid-30s F with southwest wind at 15-25 mph. Clouds will increase this afternoon with a trace to an inch of snow overnight. More snow is expected through Wednesday.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

All Regions

Three days ago several skier triggered and natural avalanches were reported (**photo**, **photo**, **weather and avalanche log**). Many of these broke below the recent snow, 1-2 feet deep on weak layers above a thick crust. Similar slides are possible to trigger today. The last couple days we received reports of unstable test scores on this layer throughout the advisory area. Doug and Dave found unstable test scores on this layer at Lionhead and Taylor Fork on Friday (**video**). Before you ride steep slopes, dig down a couple feet to assess snow stability. Regardless of test scores, today it is wise to avoid steep slopes with a slab of snow sitting on a crust.

Be especially cautious where moderate wind forms fresh drifts. These drifts alone can avalanche, or they can break a couple feet deeper on buried weak layers. Stay far back from cornices along ridgelines and avoid slopes directly below cornices (**photo**). Cornices can break further back than expected, and possibly trigger large avalanches.

Warmer temperatures and a little sunshine today will make wet avalanches possible. Wet loose avalanches can be triggered on steep slopes where the surface becomes wet. Wet avalanches could break deeper on the recently buried weak layers and crusts. Avoid steep slopes where the snow surface gets moist or wet, and be cautious of steep, rocky terrain above where natural wet avalanches might initiate as the day warms up.

Today heightened avalanche conditions exist, avalanches are possible and danger is rated MODERATE.

We plan to end daily avalanche forecasts on Sunday, April 5th and continue with general bulletins every Monday and Friday through April. We have taken down most 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).

Backcountry Skiing and Stay-at-home Order

Please consider mellower terrain and lowering your risk to reduce potential for a needed rescue. Also, the distraction of current events may cloud our judgment which compromises our ability to safely attempt more challenging objectives. A recent avalanche in Colorado left a rider with life-threatening injuries, required extensive resources and put rescuers at high risk. **Read this article from Outside Magazine** about the event, and adjust your travel habits to respect and conserve our community's resources.

A **Stay at Home order** is in effect for the State of Montana due to COVID-19. This order 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)". Get out and enjoy the fresh air, but please dial back your objectives, slow down, and work to minimize the risk of injury or need for rescue.