

GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Thu Jan 23, 2025

This is Mark Staples with the avalanche forecast for Thursday, January 23rd, at 7:00 a.m. sponsored by the [Yellowstone Club Community Foundation](#) and [Montana State Parks](#). This forecast does not apply to operating ski areas.

Mountain Weather

Yesterday's cloudy skies dropped another inch or two of snow mostly in mountains near Bozeman, Big Sky, and Cooke City. Near the top of Bridger Bowl, the storm total from late Tuesday evening through Wednesday was 16 inches (0.25 inches of SWE) of the lightest snow possible, almost 99% air.

Clear skies this morning allowed temperatures to drop to almost 0 degrees F in most areas. Winds are blowing 10 mph from the NW with some higher wind speeds on Lone Mountain near Big Sky. In the Bridger Range, temps range from 5-10 degrees F, and winds are gusting 20-30 mph at all elevations.

Clouds will increase today as a trough of low pressure (aka a "storm") drops into Montana from Canada. Temperatures should rise into the teens F, and winds should increase and blow from the W 15 mph with gusts 30-40 mph. The strongest winds of 60-70 mph will be further north along the Rocky Mountain Front. Snow should start falling tomorrow morning and there should be 3-5 inches of new snow by Saturday

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion



Southern Madison Southern Gallatin Lionhead Range Cooke City

Wind slab avalanches are the primary problem mostly from strong winds on Tuesday and late last week that blew generally from the W and some NW. On Tuesday, ski guides near Cooke City spotted a [200 ft wide wind slab](#) that released naturally.

Larger persistent slab avalanches that could break on old faceted layers 1-2 feet above the ground have become much less frequent. The peak instability was almost two weeks ago after a long period of sustained snowfall following Christmas. With only light snowfall trickling in since then, the likelihood of triggering one of these has dropped significantly but the possibility remains.

Faceted layers of snow that cause persistent slab avalanches are like relationships - they can break in an instant, but take time to repair and build trust. With several large avalanches last week near Cooke City ([here](#) and [here](#)), one in the [southern Madison Range](#), and one [major sign of instability last Sunday near Cabin Creek](#), I need a little more time to build the trust to enter big terrain.

For these reasons today the avalanche danger is [MODERATE](#).



Bridger Range Northern Gallatin Northern Madison Island Park

Wind slab avalanches are the main problem in the mountains near Bozeman, Big Sky, and Island Park. To be honest, they are always a concern to varying degrees, and I've been fooled many times thinking wind slabs had stabilized only to find one that hadn't. Increased winds today may form new, shallow wind slabs and keep older wind slabs unstable.

Today seek out slopes sheltered from the wind. Dave and his partner [followed this exact strategy yesterday](#) in the northern Bridgers even though it was not easy to find a wind sheltered slope. Persistent slab avalanches are unlikely, and old weak layers have gained strength on most slopes where the snowpack is over about 5 feet deep.

The avalanche danger is [MODERATE](#) on wind loaded slopes and [LOW](#) on non wind loaded slopes.

KING AND QUEEN OF THE RIDGE

Do you like to hike? Do you like to ski/ride? Then the King & Queen of the Ridge on 2/1 is for you. Hike, ride and raise money for the Friends of the Avalanche Center at Bridger Bowl this year! Join this fun event to promote and support avalanche safety and awareness! Fundraising prizes for the top 5 individuals who raise over \$500. *No racing is necessary to compete for the fundraising prizes.* Info to fundraise is [HERE](#) or [donate here](#).

Race participants for the King and Queen of the Ridge must register separately with Bridger Bowl [here](#)

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

Our education calendar is full of awareness lectures and field courses. Check it out: [Events and Education Calendar](#)

TONIGHT January 23, 6-8 p.m. & January 25, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Women's Companion Rescue w/ Sisters of Snow. Required pre-registration and more information [HERE](#).

THIS WEEKEND January 25 or 26, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Avalanche Fundamentals Field Course. Required pre-registration and more information [HERE](#).

Every weekend in Cooke City: Friday at The Antlers at 7 p.m., Free Avalanche Awareness and Current Conditions talk, and Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Round Lake Warming Hut, Free Rescue Practice.