



Ian Hoyer digging a snowpit outside Cooke City, January 30.

April 13, 2022

We just ended our 32nd year of operation. It was a low snow year with snowpack totals 70-80% of normal. The first snow fell on October 11 and our first recorded avalanche was on November 7 when a skier was caught in a loose snow slide in the Bridger Range. During the season we issued 12 early season bulletins before the start of our daily forecasts on December 12. We ended with our 122nd and last forecast on April 10.

The GNFAC team of 4 full-time avalanche specialists remained the same, with me, Alex, Dave, and Ian getting in the field, writing forecasts and teaching. This season Hannah Marshall was our intern and she was able to get out with us on many days.

We spent most of the year patiently waiting for the monster snowstorm that never came. Weeks without snow created faceted, weak snow at the surface that would get buried an inch or two at a time. As forecasters we were challenged to not sound like a broken record in our forecasts and videos, "Once it snows..." we would say over and over again. Even with low snow amounts, there were weak layers buried, dangerous, especially on the heels of a snowstorm. Tragically there were 3 avalanche accidents that killed 4 motorized users: 3 in Cooke City, 1 in Lionhead. Nationwide there have been 15 avalanche deaths (5 ski/snowboard, 6 motorized, 3 snowshoers).

The Friends of the Avalanche Center and the GNFAC worked together to teach avalanche classes. We ran field classes and lectured both in person and online. In total we offered 80 classes to 3,349 people, including 403 kids under 18 and 330 snowmobilers.

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- Total number of people getting our daily forecast: 6,736
- Number of field days: 117
 - Area with the most field days: Cooke City with 29
 - Number of snowpits we recorded in SnowPilot.org: 169
- Snowmobile damage: 2 shocks, 1 tie rod, 1 handlebar, 2 a-arms, and 1 actual arm (Dave's dislocated shoulder).

- Sled miles ridden in Cooke City and the rest of the forecast area: 600 and 1,200
- Best quote of the season: “I’m pretty sure it will work fine” said my partner as he showed me his cracked beacon that opened like a clamshell.
 - His plan: tape it back together and call it good.
 - Chances of doing his plan: 0%
- Reported avalanche incidents (aka. close-calls): 29
- Total caught, partially buried and injured: 9, 1 and 2
- The most avalanches recorded in a single day this season: 8 on February 6
- Number of videos and total views: 127 and 1,388,347 views
- Total number of minutes/days watched on YouTube: 589,926 minutes/410 days
- Total followers on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter: 19,700; 16,073; 7000; and 2,311.
 - Percentage increase from last year: 18%

The GNFAC relies on many individuals and community partnerships to operate. The Friends of the Avalanche Center along with a grant from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks help fund our education program and operations with 50% of our total budget. Later this spring we will send out a detailed annual report outlining all our programs, budget, and community support.

Enjoy the spring and summer. We will be back in October to get ready for a long overdue storm packed winter!

All the best,



Doug Chabot
Director

Forest Service
Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center