GNFAC Avalanche Forecast for Sat Mar 21, 2020

Good Morning. This is Ian Hoyer with the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Forecast on Saturday, March 21st at 7:00 a.m. Today's forecast is sponsored by **Grizzly Outfitters** and **Yellowstone Club Community Foundation**.

* Ski Areas are closed for the season. Backcountry conditions exist. There is no avalanche control or ski patrol services. Please stay clear of workers, work areas, snowcats, snowmobiles, chair lifts and other equipment. Watch **Dave's video** explaining what to expect if you tour in the ski area.

Mountain Weather

It's going to be another pleasant spring day. There is no new snow this morning. Temperatures are in the teens and 20s F and will rise into the 30s F. Winds out of the west at 5-15 mph will continue through the day. It will start out sunny with increasing clouds this afternoon and the possibility of light snow tonight. Only expect a trace to 2" by tomorrow morning.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

All Regions

There are two primary avalanche concerns today: one that you're likely to encounter but is fairly manageable and one that is unlikely but very dangerous.

The snow surface will become wet and unstable this afternoon on sunny slopes. Wet slides will generally be confined to the surface snow, but at low elevations could involve the whole, shallow snowpack. Luckily, the conditions for wet avalanches are easily to identify and avoid. If you're sinking deeper than your ankles in wet slush, it's time to get off steep slopes. Plan ahead to avoid steep slopes at low elevation that'll be sopping wet as you head back to the trailhead in the afternoon.

The other main concern is avalanches breaking at the ground. These slides are unlikely – until yesterday, it had been several weeks since our last report of a deep slide. However, yesterday, two different groups of skiers in the Absaroka Range (outside of our advisory area) triggered large avalanches breaking near the ground (**photos and details**, **photos and details**). One slide was triggered by a large cornice fall and the other by the third skier on the slope. Skiers north of Beehive Peak also sent in pictures of a deep slide that appears to have been triggered by a natural cornice fall earlier this week (**photos and details**). Yesterday, Dave backed off a slope in the Taylor Fork after getting an unstable snowpack test result on weak snow near the ground (**video**). It was a high elevation, shady slope where the weak layers that formed months ago still haven't gained much strength and the snowpack is shallow enough you could still impact them. It'll take finding the wrong spot on a thin slope or a cornice fall to trigger one, but these slides are a good reminder to not forget the possibility of a deeper avalanche.

Surface hoar buried earlier this week is a less widespread concern, but worth looking out for (**photo**). Skiers near Cooke City yesterday found it buried about a foot deep on Abiathar Peak.

The avalanche danger is LOW this morning. The danger will rise to MODERATE on sunny slopes as the day heats up.

We will end daily avalanche forecasts on Sunday, April 5th and continue with general avalanche bulletins every Monday and Friday through the month. In the coming weeks will begin taking down weather stations during our

field visits. With more people in the backcountry and ski areas closed, we need help gathering field data.

If you get out, 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).

Upcoming Avalanche Education and Events

The GNFAC and Friends avalanche education programs have been cancelled due to the coronavirus. Thank you to all our amazing instructors for a great year of education!

Our education calendar lists awareness lectures and field courses offered by other providers: Events and Education Calendar.