

AVALANCHE ADVISORY

U.S. FOREST SERVICE

FORECASTER: Davis

IDAHO PANHANDLE AVALANCHE CENTER

EFFECTIVE DATE: 03/18/2011

DATE ISSUED: 03/18/2011 0730

OUTLOOK: 03/19-20/2011

This report does not apply to local ski areas within the forecast region and the hazard rating will remain valid through midnight March 18th, 2011. Special thanks to Idaho Parks and recreation for sponsoring this Avalanche advisory.

Mostly stable conditions with the steady accumulation of snow we received this past week but there are some layers near the top of the pack and a deeper weak layer that I have been getting reports of human triggered slides on.

WEATHER

TODAY: A 20% chance of snow above 3,500 feet, but I like to focus on the 80% chance of sun.

Temperatures above 5,000 feet in the low to high 30s and light E/SE winds.

TONIGHT: 60% chance of 1-2 inches to the north and 40% chance of an inch or less to the south.

Temperatures in the high 20s and E/SE winds.

OUTLOOK: Saturday the outlook calls for an 80% chance of 1-3 inches of snow across our forecast region. Mountain temperatures will be in the low 30s and winds will shift to the south. Saturday evening the snowfall may persist and winds may shift. Snowfall tapers off by Sunday with a ½ inch possible temperatures in the 30s and light westerly winds. **The avalanche danger will increase during the warming daytime hours today with the expected weather, particularly on south aspects. Overall avalanche danger will become more stable but you should be using spring travel techniques to avoid unstable conditions due to intense sun, periods of rain, and very warm temperatures.**

Selkirk and Cabinet mountains: Yesterday, we were getting snowed on all day up Wellington Creek in the Cabinets. On a north aspect we found over 12 feet of snow and the upper 1 foot was very light. The density increased with depth and we found our most reactive layer 6 inches deep, which sheared easily but not cleanly. Fractures propagated in this layer so test the upper 6 inches of snow on steep, 35 degrees +, and see if the stability is improving. It will get a little wet and slushy today in the sun so you could see some larger sloughs or possibly and small slab. We have heard 2 observations of deep releases in the Cabinets in the last couple of weeks and it is possible to trigger this deeper layer, but not likely. Steep northerly aspects with a lot of terrain features like dips and gullies should have you thinking about triggering this deeper layer. Avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE** on windloaded aspects and sun effected slopes steeper than 35 degrees above 5,000 feet. The avalanche danger is LOW on slopes less than 35 degrees.

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| 2 Moderate |  | Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify features of concern | Natural avalanches unlikely; human-triggered avalanches possible. | Small avalanches in specific areas; or large avalanches in isolated areas. |
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St. Regis Basin and Silver valley: Dan noted ventured up into St. Regis Basin yesterday and experienced the full gamut of weather from graupel, snow, and sun. The most sensitive layers they found were facets around crusts from last weeks rain event about 1 and 2 feet deep. These layers took moderate force and sheared with a rough bed surface. CTM#15 Q2. Other stability tests revealed the weak layer but showed it has moderate strength. Thanks to the Silver Mountain patrol for their pit data which showed a little more sensitive pack with easy shears under new light snow about 1 foot in depth. Another weak layer that sheared easily failed on a 3 foot deep graupel layer. Avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE** on windloaded aspects and sun effected slopes steeper than 35 degrees above 5,000 feet. The avalanche danger is LOW on slopes less than 35 degrees.

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The bottom line for today and this weekend will be checking the upper weak layer in the new snow. It has not completely stabilized and you could trigger it on steep northerly aspects, especially where it is firmer due to wind, and steep southerly slopes when it gets warmed up and turns slushy. You'll find the best powder out of the sunny slopes and in the trees on shaded aspects. The next advisory will be issued March 25th, 2011.

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