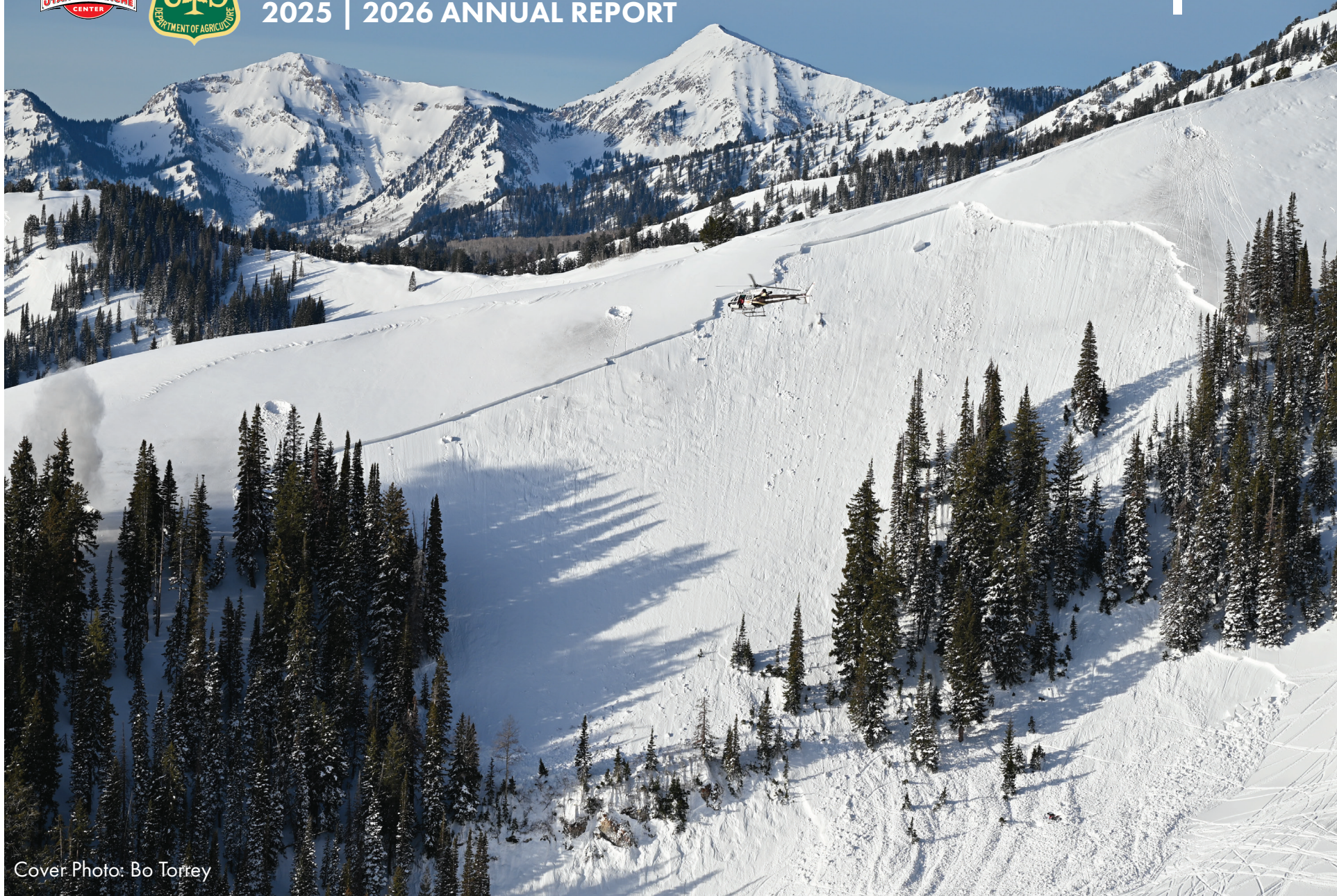




UTAH AVALANCHE CENTER

2025 | 2026 ANNUAL REPORT

25 | 26



Cover Photo: Bo Torrey

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Human-triggered avalanche off Sunset Peak in Big Cottonwood Canyon on April 3rd.



Backcountry 101 students on a day tour.

25 | 26 POINTS OF INTEREST

SEASON IN NUMBERS

610 AVALANCHES REPORTED

- There were **over 600 avalanches reported** from the backcountry in an 150 day forecast season.

FOUR AVALANCHE FATALITIES

- Tragically, **four people** were killed in avalanches in Utah this past season.

1434 OBSERVATIONS REPORTED

- **Thank you** to everyone who submitted an observation this season! Your observations assisted forecasters and the rest of the backcountry community.

439 FORECAST FIELD DAYS

- Our forecast team had **439 days in the field** across the state with **0 injuries**

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- From August to April, we hosted **138 KBYG'S - 38% year over year increase!** We had nearly **5,500 attendees** with over **60% of students in K-12.**

UTAH SNOW & AVALANCHE WORKSHOPS

- Our snow and avalanche workshops were well attended with **546 in-person attendees** and **177 live-stream participants** for PROSAW and **373 attendees** at USAW, our public workshop.

DEVELOPMENT & FUNDRAISING

- We had **2047** individual donors! Of our 1.8M budget, **nearly 60%** is raised from the public and our backcountry community. **Thank you** to all who contributed to our mission this year.

This is an overview of highlights and interesting data from this past season. More details pertaining to this section will be highlighted in the report.



UAC Board Member Michael Shea enjoying skiing in the La Sals. (M. Shea).

THE UAC MISSION

The Utah Avalanche Center's mission is to keep people on top of The Greatest Snow on Earth® by providing avalanche forecasting, awareness, and education throughout the State of Utah.

25 | 26 DIRECTORS' MESSAGE

A Note From Our Leadership:

As the 2025-26 winter season comes to a close, the Utah Avalanche Center (UAC) reflects on a year shaped by unusual weather & limited snow, but also the steady dedication of our staff, partners, and community.

After a brief glimpse of winter in October, conditions quickly shifted. Extended dry periods and consistently warm temperatures dominated much of the season, with several storms bringing rain to mid- and even upper-elevation areas. Snowpack development was inconsistent statewide, and most regions remained well below average in snow water equivalent. Access to terrain was often limited, and many backcountry users found themselves adjusting plans and expectations throughout the winter.

Where snow did accumulate, it was often shallow and variable. Early-season faceting created weak layers that lingered, while repeated rain events and melt-freeze cycles left behind crusts and mediocre riding conditions. Avalanche activity was generally limited by the lack of significant loading, but brief storms produced periods of elevated danger.

Tragically, four individuals lost their lives in avalanches in Utah this season. These accidents are a stark reminder that even in lean years, the risk remains. Each incident highlights the complexity of persistent weak layers and the importance of decision-making.

Our thoughts are with the families and communities affected, and we are grateful to the people who responded.

Through it all, our entire team remained focused on delivering clear, timely information, adapting messaging to reflect the nuances of this atypical season.



UAC Forest Service Director Paige Pagnucco and Forecaster Trent Meisenheimer on a field day in the Western Uintas.

We are thankful for the continued and generous support of our partners, including the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation, the Utah Department of Transportation, the Utah Department of Public Safety, Salt Lake County, and SkiDoo, whose collaboration makes this work possible.

We are also grateful to the broader community for submitting observations, supporting our programs, and staying engaged throughout a challenging winter. While conditions were far from what we are used to, the shared commitment to backcountry safety never wavered.

This season was a reminder that no two winters look the same. Each brings its own set of challenges, and opportunities to learn, adapt, and improve how we understand and communicate avalanche hazards.

We look forward to El Niño finding its way back and possibly providing a bit more of the white stuff next season.



Nonprofit Director Caroline Miller and UAC Forest Service Director Paige Pagnucco enjoying a beautiful spring ski day.



Outgoing Non-Profit Director Caroline Miller skiing in Alaska.



Paige Pagnucco
PAIGE PAGNUCCO
UAC FOREST SERVICE
DIRECTOR



Caroline Miller
CAROLINE MILLER
OUTGOING EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR



UAC HISTORY

In the mid-1970s, avalanche information was recorded on a phone line in the Salt Lake District Office of the Wasatch National Forest. The UAC officially started 46 years ago, in 1980, when the Forest Service and the National Weather Service (NWS) signed an agreement to formally establish the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center at the NWS office in Salt Lake City. It had three basic charters: issue avalanche forecasts, provide avalanche education, and issue mountain weather forecasts. Thirty six years ago, in 1990, the nonprofit Friends of the Utah Avalanche Center was formed to bridge the gap between the available funding and the actual expenses of running the avalanche center, to ensure long-term sustainability. The collaborative partnership between the Forest Service and the nonprofit, collectively known as the Utah Avalanche Center, now employs a staff of 22 people working across Utah, delivering avalanche forecasts, awareness, and education.

AVALANCHE FORECAST

Our forecasts inform the public about what types of avalanches to expect, where they might occur, how big they may be, how sensitive they are, and how to avoid them. The forecasts are the most widely used UAC product. We forecast for 8 regions across Utah, from the Abajos to Logan. These free forecasts can be accessed online via our website and mobile app, or in a daily email delivered to your inbox. Additionally, the forecast is recorded on our telephone line each day at 7:30am with an early morning "Dawn Patrol" telephone message updated daily at 5am. Finally, tune into KPCW public radio every day at 8:06am for the daily forecast.

AVALANCHE AWARENESS

The goal of avalanche awareness is to inform people of the dangers of avalanches and explain what they can do to decrease their risk. We accomplish this by meeting riders where they are. We offer both in-person and virtual presentations, and we meet with backcountry users at trailheads where they access the mountains. Our primary awareness program is the Know Before You Go (kbyg.org) program. Second, we offer custom presentations on various topics ranging from the science of avalanches to terrain management to snowpack updates. Finally, we provide free transceiver training during the fall and winter months at parks and trailheads, which complements our trailhead avalanche awareness program. All of these awareness programs allow us to connect with backcountry users to discuss avalanche conditions across the state.

25 | 26 WHO WE ARE

The Utah Avalanche Center (UAC) exists to keep people on top of The Greatest Snow On Earth® by providing avalanche forecasting, awareness, and education throughout the state of Utah.



UAC Events Manager Claire Hurty, Forecasters Dave Garcia, Eric Trenbeath, Forest Service Director Paige Pagnucco, Forecaster Toby Weed, Intern Maddie Stagg and Max Lynch at Mountainfilm Fest in March, 2026 in Moab.

AVALANCHE EDUCATION

The UAC's on-snow avalanche education program offers a variety of avalanche courses for all experience levels, featuring a great student-to-instructor ratio and instruction from some of the most experienced avalanche educators in the state. Avalanche education is the best way to reduce your risk in the mountains, and our program is designed to equip students with the tools they need to make safe decisions in the backcountry. Our flagship course, Backcountry 101: Introduction to Avalanches, is available for all modes of transportation, including classes specific to skiers, snowmobilers, snowshoers, and for families. We also offer Introduction to Avalanche Rescue, Backcountry 201: Terrain Management, and Introduction to Avalanche Rescue & Wilderness Medicine courses.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE UAC.](#)

25 | 26 MEET THE TEAM



PAIGE PAGNUCCO
DIRECTOR
FOREST SERVICE UAC



BRETT KOBERNIK
FORECASTER
Skyline



DAVE GARCIA
FORECASTER & COMMUNITY
COORDINATOR
Moab



KATE WALLER
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
Salt Lake City



CAROLINE MILLER
OUTGOING EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR
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BROOKE MAUSHUND
FORECASTER
Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo



DREW HARDESTY
LEAD FORECASTER
Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo



LAUREL VINCENT
COMMUNICATIONS
COORDINATOR
Salt Lake City



TJ KOLANKO
INTERIM EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR
Salt Lake City



CHAD BRACKELSBERG
SPECIAL PROJECTS
DIRECTOR
Salt Lake City



ERIC TRENBEATH
FORECASTER
Moab



LIAM MCDONALD
AWARENESS MANAGER
Salt Lake City



ANDREW NASSETTA
FORECASTER
Uintas



CLAIRE HURTY
EVENTS MANAGER
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GREG GAGNE
FORECASTER
Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo



MCKINLEY TALTY
EDUCATION MANAGER
Salt Lake City



BO TORREY
FORECASTER
Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo



CRAIG GORDON
FORECASTER
Uintas



JEREMY COLLETT
STAFF INSTRUCTOR &
AWARENESS COORDINATOR
Salt Lake City



NIKKI CHAMPION
FORECASTER
Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo



TOBY WEED
FORECASTER
Logan



TRENT MEISENHEIMER
FORECASTER
Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo



TRAVIS MORRISON
RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY
PROGRAM MANAGER
Salt Lake City

INTERNS:

MADDIE STAGG
ARTIE COHEN

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Christian Schauf
Kirk Chester
Michael Shea

Nicole Sumner
Oliver Young
Randy Hartwig

Rich Mrazik
Sara Goeking



25 | 26 MEET THE TEAM

SEASONS CHANGE



Laurel Vincent with her dog Eddy on Mt. Nebo last fall.

WELCOME, LAUREL!

In January, we were thrilled to bring Laurel Vincent to the UAC team as our Communications Coordinator. Laurel brings a strong background in digital storytelling and outdoor education. Prior to joining UAC, Laurel served as Social Media Coordinator at NOLS, where she honed her ability to find creative solutions to unique challenges. Laurel has worked closely with educators, field instructors, and leadership teams to manage all aspects of a dynamic communication program. She is equally comfortable behind the scenes coordinating logistics as she is crafting impactful digital content or working with big-name brands. In just three months, we have seen the incredible impact of her work and can't wait for what's to come! Thank you Laurel for joining us. We are thrilled to work with you!

THANK YOU FROM CAROLINE

As this report gets wrapped up, I too will be wrapping up my final days as the Executive Director of the nonprofit Utah Avalanche Center. My family and I are making the move to Alaska, where my husband and I were both presented with exciting new opportunities. I never anticipated moving on after a few incredible years and I cannot thank the entire backcountry community enough for all I have learned during my time. The people of Utah's backcountry community are one of a kind. Thank you for welcoming me and showing me what makes this place so unique. There are so many folks I met at events, in parking lots, and on the skin track... each of you reminds me why we do this important work. It's difficult to distill the impact a role can have on you, so I'll just say thank you, deeply. Wishing you all safety and adventure in all the winters ahead.



Craig Gordon enjoying a bluebird ski day in the Uintas.

A LEGEND RETIRES - THANK YOU CRAIG!

After 26 years with the Utah Avalanche Center, Craig Gordon retired from his post as a USFS avalanche forecaster this spring. Over his career, Craig had an incredible impact on all areas of the UAC. Craig started his journey in Utah as a patroller at Brighton, making his debut there in 1985. After working as a heli guide, he started his tenure with the UAC on the Manti-Skyline plateau in 1999. In 2003, he built the forecasting program in the western Uintas, impacting many users throughout the state with his legendary enthusiasm and clear communication about how to have fun AND stay safe in the backcountry.

Craig's impact has also extended to the UAC's flagship programs. In response to the tragic avalanche at Aspen Grove on December 26, 2003, that claimed the lives of three teenagers, Craig quarterbacked the Know Before You Go program. The program aims to give free avalanche awareness through engaging, informative presentations for anyone interested in recreating in Utah's mountains and has impacted thousands of people all over the world. Additionally, his energy made programs like PROSAW what they are.

Craig's clear communication and energy have impacted so many throughout the state, inside and out of the UAC. Thank you for all you've done and we wish you the best of luck as you move into your next chapter.

25 | 26 SEASON IN REVIEW

FORECAST

DASHBOARD



**AVALANCHES
REPORTED**

554

**TOTAL FORECASTER
FIELD DAYS**

439

**HUMAN-TRIGGERED
AVALANCHES**

214

**CAUGHT &
CARRIED**

43

**PARTIALLY OR
FULLY BURIED**

9

**AVALANCHE
FATALITIES**

4



Natural wet slab avalanche that occurred at Alta Ski Area in March 2026. (B. Torrey).



Skier triggered avalanche in Toledo Chute, March 2026. (B. Torrey).



View of the Mary Main Bowl Accident in the Brighton periphery.

DANGER LEVELS

ACROSS THE STATE



25 | 26 LOGAN

SEASON IN REVIEW

The Logan area mountains in northern Utah include the Bear River and Wellsville Ranges. The highest peak in the zone is Naomi Peak, topping out at 9983'.



A snowmobiler was lucky to escape this avalanche on Three Terraces. They were able to self-arrest while their sled tumbled down the slope.

SEASON SUMMARY

Compared to a normal year in the Logan zone, the 2025-2026 winter riding season was abbreviated, shortened significantly on either end by record warmth, several rain-on-snow events, and prolonged periods without snow. There were two notable dry spells: a high-pressure system that remained parked over the Intermountain West for much of January, and a few weeks of sweltering summerlike heat in March that burned off low-elevation snow and melted out trailheads and access routes across the region. Limited access, low user numbers, and some degree of conservative decision-making likely contributed to no reported avalanche-related injuries or accidents, but there were several close calls, with riders unintentionally triggering sizable avalanches, and two reported airbag deployments.

Snowfall arrived late in November and was limited to

upper elevations in the Bear River Range. The shallow early-season snow quickly became weak and faceted. In early December, a warm, wet storm added about a foot of heavy snow (~3" SWE), overloading the weak layer and producing widespread natural avalanches. Snowpack structure remained poor through mid-December until rain and warm temperatures near Christmas saturated the pack. A subsequent refreeze stabilized conditions, and post-holiday snowfall brought improved riding and generally LOW avalanche danger.

Early January storms delivered significant snow, including 15 inches at Tony Grove. Some natural wind slab avalanches were observed, along with a cornice fall near Emigration Summit, but overall stability remained good. By January 8, conditions featured deep powder and good coverage, with earlier weak layers capped and largely dormant, leading to excellent riding conditions.

Cold powder conditions were short-lived, ending with a prolonged January high-pressure system that weakened the snowpack and created widespread, persistent weak layers across the zone. Riding conditions deteriorated, access remained limited, and many slopes, especially in Providence Canyon/Logan Peak areas, went untracked, allowing poor snow structure to persist. Small February storms added minimal snow.

Beginning February 17, a well-forecast storm brought widespread loading across the region, prompting the Utah Avalanche Center to issue an Avalanche Watch followed quickly by an Avalanche Warning as conditions rapidly deteriorated. Natural and human-triggered avalanches were reported across the Bear River Range, including multiple large remote-triggered slabs failing on the January persistent weak layer.

Activity was widespread and consequential, with avalanches observed in the Wellsville Mountains, Beaver Canyon, Providence Canyon, and Franklin Basin, includ



Thank you to Ski-Doo for the sleds that get our forecasters where they need to go.

ing several large slides 2–3 feet deep and hundreds of feet wide. After the Warning expired, we issued a Special Avalanche Bulletin, as CONSIDERABLE avalanche danger persisted and additional large avalanches were triggered, including a close call in Three Terraces, where a rider narrowly escaped a hard slab avalanche that released well above them.

Late February storms added heavy snow and wind loading, keeping instability in place. A significant near-miss near Naomi Peak underscored the ongoing hazard. Early March brought a brief return to good riding, but rapid warming and blistering record heat quickly degraded the snowpack, leading to wet avalanche activity and a very early melt-out. April saw a return to winter with the Tony Grove Snotel reporting 20" of new snow with 3" of SWE on April 23! Adventurous riders got a few bonus powder days. Overall, the season was defined by persistent weak layers, short-lived periods of good riding, above-normal temperatures, and heightened risk during storm cycles.

The Central Wasatch Mountains, including the Provo and Ogden areas, are part of the Wasatch Range and are known for their rugged terrain and prominent peaks such as Mount Timpanogos near Provo and Mount Ogden above the Ogden Valley.

SEASON SUMMARY

Winter 2025/2026 was a season of extremes across Utah's mountains. An exceptionally wet October raised early expectations, but the winter that followed never delivered a deep, consistent snowpack. Instead, it unfolded as a warm, drought-leaning season, with much of the precipitation falling as rain at mid and lower elevations. As forecaster Evelyn Lees once described similar conditions, the Wasatch resembled "a cake decorated by a child, where they put frosting on top but forgot the sides." While Alta briefly reached 100 inches at the snow stake in mid-February (peaking at 117 inches in March), record-breaking warmth in March rapidly erased snow at lower elevations, leaving aspects that looked more like early summer than late winter.

Early winter was dominated by rain events that created widespread crust layers, including a notable Christmas Eve rain crust and another New Year's event. These crusts contributed to difficult travel conditions but were not the primary avalanche concern. By mid-January, high pressure took over, and a prolonged dry spell set in.

From January 9 through mid-February, the central Wasatch saw only light, intermittent snowfall totaling roughly a foot. This extended dry period produced a widespread layer of weak, sugary facets that became known as the "Dry January Layer." Avalanche danger dropped to LOW in mid-January, and while riding conditions were variable, backcountry travel was generally stable aside from isolated dry loose activity and a rare slab of wind-drifted snow.

That calm period ended abruptly when a major storm cycle, starting on February 17, brought up to 50 inches of heavy snow and more than 5 inches of water. The Utah Avalanche Center issued an Avalanche Watch, followed by an Avalanche Warning and HIGH danger as conditions rapidly deteriorated. The storm buried the Dry January Layer and created widespread instability across the range.



Ascending towards Baker Pass during the a very dry January to hunt for cold north facing snow.

From February 18–22, nearly 50 avalanches were reported failing on this buried weak layer, along with numerous close calls. Tragically, the cycle resulted in four avalanche fatalities in five days, making it the defining and most consequential period of the season. Three of these accidents occurred in the Salt Lake region, with one in the northern Provo region.

The next important event occurred in the second half of March as Utah was dominated by a record-breaking heat dome. Daily highs and overnight lows were repeatedly shattered, and by late month, low and mid-elevation terrain, especially solar aspects, looked more like early June than late March. At 8,800 feet, the Alta Guard station remained above freezing nearly continuously from March 17 through April 1, with only a brief dip below freezing on the night of March 26.

Just as most people had mentally shifted to spring, two powerful storms arrived on April 1–2, delivering 20–30 inches of dense snow and up to 3.35 inches of snow water equivalent in the upper Cottonwoods. The April 1 snowfall bonded reasonably well to the previously wet, warm surface. Still, subsequent loading on April 2, combined with strong west-northwest winds and weaker bonding at mid-storm interfaces, set the stage for widespread instability.



This very large natural glide avalanche on Ivory Flakes occurred on March 21st during the record-breaking heat wave.

On April 3, a clear, bluebird powder day followed the storm, and the Salt Lake Zone saw its most active avalanche day of the season, with 18 reported skier-triggered avalanches, at least 10 involving people, and one helicopter evacuation due to traumatic injury.

Conditions remained unsettled through April, with a few surprise "powder" days (a handful of field observations from April 28 relayed great delight from such good, very late-season riding conditions). Still, by then, most backcountry users had hung up their skis in favor of bikes and golf clubs. All in all, we leave the 25/26 winter looking back at the driest winter on record. Sundance ski area reported 58.5" of snow for the season.... Snowbasin 132"...and Alta Ski area - as of press time - recorded just over 319" for the season.

25 | 26 UINTAS SEASON IN REVIEW



The Uintas are big country - having machines like this makes our forecasters' job that much easier and more efficient, and possibly, a little bit more fun as well.

SEASON SUMMARY

The 2025–26 winter in the western Uinta Mountains was defined by an inconsistent storm track, long dry spells, and a snowpack that never fully settled into a predictable pattern. October brought a promising start, with valley rain and early-season snow accumulating at upper elevations. However, a prolonged dry period through November weakened this shallow snowpack, allowing faceted, sugary grains to develop near the ground.

This fragile foundation was tested in early December when a heavy, wet, wind-driven storm swept across the range. From Daniels Summit to the Bear River area, widespread natural avalanches occurred on steep slopes, failing on the weak basal facets. Storms through mid-December remained sporadic and largely insufficient for building a durable base. A major shift came around Christmas, when a warm, moisture-rich system delivered rain to the highest elevations.

While initially concerning, this event formed a thick, impenetrable crust that capped the weak early-season snow, ultimately creating a more stable structure.

The weather pattern briefly improved in early January, as a multi-day storm cycle delivered 3–5 feet of snow and substantial water content, marking one of the most productive periods of the season. However, this momentum quickly faded into a six-week dry spell. Limited snowfall and clear conditions allowed surface snow to weaken again, setting the stage for renewed instability.

In mid-February, a powerful storm deposited several feet of dense snow atop the weak surface snow. Initial calm winds preserved weak layers, but subsequent strong winds formed dense slabs. Avalanche warnings, direct outreach, and strong messaging helped mitigate risk during this dangerous period. Despite heavy recreation use and several human-triggered avalanches, no serious

The Uinta Mountains are located on the Wyoming/Utah border. They are home to a continental snowpack and the highest peak in Utah, King's Peak.



This natural soft slab avalanche occurred on February 18, during what came to be the defining storm of the season. The persistent weak layer avalanche failed on facets that formed during the prolonged mid-winter dry spell.

incidents or close calls were reported in the Uinta zone.

March brought a mix of exceptional riding conditions and unusual warmth. An early-month storm produced low-density powder, but this was followed by record-breaking temperatures and rapid stabilization, limiting expected avalanche activity. Increased rider traffic, particularly in the western Uintas, contributed to a rise in human-triggered avalanches during this time.

By April, warming temperatures accelerated snowmelt, especially at lower elevations, reducing trailhead access and overall interest in winter recreation. A few late-season storms provided brief returns to winter conditions, but could not offset the rapid melt. Overall, the season was marked by extremes, periods of excellent riding interspersed with long dry spells, resulting in a snowpack that forecasters aptly described as “a winter that never fully wintered.”

SEASON IN REVIEW 25 | 26 SKYLINE

The Manti-Skyline Mountains in central Utah are part of the Wasatch Plateau and are known for their high-elevation ridgelines and prominent peaks such as South Tent Mountain, the highest in the range.



Snowcat-triggered avalanche off of State Road 31 on the Skyline Summit.



UAC Forecaster Brett Kobernik performing field work on his SkiDoo turbo.

SEASON SUMMARY

The 2025-26 winter season on the Skyline can only be described as warm and lean. Warm weather persisted late into the fall and through December. Meager amounts of snow accumulated in late November and early December, which then turned to faceted snow during a prolonged dry spell through mid-December. In late December, two warm storms in a southwest flow moved through, delivering some wet snow and rain up to at least 10,000'. Around the new year, temperatures cooled off, and there were some decent snowstorms. At this point, it seemed that winter had finally arrived. However, the storm flow came to an abrupt halt. A month would pass without any significant snow.



UAC Forecaster Brett Kobernik remotely triggered this sizeable PWL avalanche on February 23, demonstrating the fragility of the facet-plagued snowpack.

During this time, the entire snowpack turned to weak faceted snow. In mid-February, a series of storms added two to three feet of snow. This new snow on top of the old, weak snow made for a very unstable situation. There were a few natural avalanches, but more notably, there were numerous human-triggered avalanches, many of them triggered remotely. The unstable period lasted about a week, and thankfully, no one was caught or injured.

Once again, the storm systems shut off, warm weather moved in, and this weather pattern basically continued to dominate the rest of the winter season. The meager snowpack, which only reached an average of about three feet deep, quickly started melting off in March, and by the third weekend in March, there was so little snow that daily forecasts were discontinued for the season.



Dark Canyon slide in the La Sals. (E. Trenbeath).



Blue sky and bottomless powder in the Mt Tukuhnikivatz cirque. (M. Shea)

SEASON SUMMARY

Like all regions in the West, the La Sal and Abajo Mountains of SE Utah experienced record low snow and warm temperatures, and we finished out the season with less than 100" of total snowfall. That said, the snowpack was still interesting and had a degree of instability for most of the season.

On January 9, with only 36" total snow for the season, a snowmobiler triggered a large, 700' wide avalanche in Dark Canyon. He was caught, carried, and buried up to his neck. A week prior, the first snow in over a month had fallen on top of the Christmas Rain Crust (CRC). Totalling 10" at a whopping 2.3" of SWE. Surprisingly, the event produced no natural activity and very few outward signs of instability.

On January 8, 4" of low-density snow fell. On January 9, heavy, localized wind loading affected the slope the riders were on. The Dark Canyon avalanche initiated as an 18" deep wind slab before stepping down to facets below the CRC, and propagating widely across the slope.

The rest of January remained dry, and the entire snowpack faceted through. Winter finally made an appearance the third week of February, bringing 20" of low-density powder to the range, producing hair trigger conditions, a large remote-triggered avalanche in Horse Creek, and a natural cycle on upper elevation, northerly aspects.

Unfortunately, that was winter's only real appearance, and it was soon followed by record heat in March. The heat wave produced a large, natural wet slab release in upper Gold Basin.

In spite of the low snow year, community support remained strong at both our fall and spring fundraising events, and we had good attendance at our annual KBYG talk. We were also able to hold a successful BC 101 course during the snowy week in February. We ceased regular operations on Sunday, March 29.

OVERVIEW OF ACCIDENTS

The 2025–26 winter in Utah will stand out for its shallow, fragile snowpack. Extended dry periods created persistent weak layers in the snowpack. When storms finally arrived, they rapidly overloaded this fragile structure, resulting in dangerous avalanche conditions. Four tragic avalanche fatalities in the course of five days in February are a stark reminder of how hazardous these conditions were—and how they affected a wide range of backcountry users.

FEBRUARY 18, 2026 | MIDWAY | ANT KNOLLS

A snowmobiler was caught and killed in an avalanche near the Ant Knolls in the Snake Creek drainage while riding with his son. They were in relatively low-angle terrain when the slope above them failed on a buried persistent weak layer. The victim was fully buried, and although his son eventually located him and began a rescue, he did not survive.

This accident underscores how unpredictable and far-reaching persistent slab avalanches can be—triggering from low-angle terrain and propagating well beyond where you might expect.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REPORT.](#)

FEBRUARY 19, 2026 | SLC | BRIGHTON

A young skier was killed in an avalanche just outside the boundary of Brighton Resort.

She was skiing with family in terrain adjacent to the ski area when she was caught and buried. People on scene, along with ski patrol, responded immediately, but she did not survive.

This heartbreaking accident shows how easy it is for people to lose track of where inbounds terrain ends and the backcountry begins. Just outside the boundary, there is no avalanche control, and on this day, conditions were every bit as dangerous as the rest of the backcountry. Knowing exactly where you are—and what that means—matters.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REPORT.](#)



The Ant Knolls avalanche was triggered in lower-angle terrain below the steep slope above, pulling down an enormous amount of snow on top of the victim. (P. Flank).



An 11-year-old girl was buried in an avalanche that failed on a persistent weak layer outside the Brighton Resort boundary. Despite heroic rescue efforts, she did not survive.

SEASON IN REVIEW 25 | 26 AVALANCHE FATALITIES

FEBRUARY 21, 2026 | SLC | BUTLER BASIN

Two skiers were caught and buried in Butler Basin while ascending. The avalanche released on a relatively short slope, failing on a buried persistent weak layer and generating enough moving snow to fully bury both skiers. Other backcountry skiers in the area witnessed the slide and responded quickly, recovering both individuals, but, sadly, one later died from his injuries.

This is a scenario we see too often - experienced backcountry travelers stepping into steep terrain while a persistent weak layer problem lingers. These avalanches are connected, wide, and unforgiving, and when multiple people are caught in one, the situation becomes even more difficult.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REPORT.](#)

FEBRUARY 22, 2026 | MIDWAY | SNAKE CREEK

A snow biker was killed in an avalanche in Caribou Basin in Snake Creek. He had been riding with a group but became separated from them late in the day. While traveling alone, he was caught in a large avalanche and fully buried. When he didn't return to his group, a search was initiated, but his partners couldn't detect a beacon signal. The victim had forgotten to turn his transceiver on, and unfortunately, he was found buried in the snow the following day.

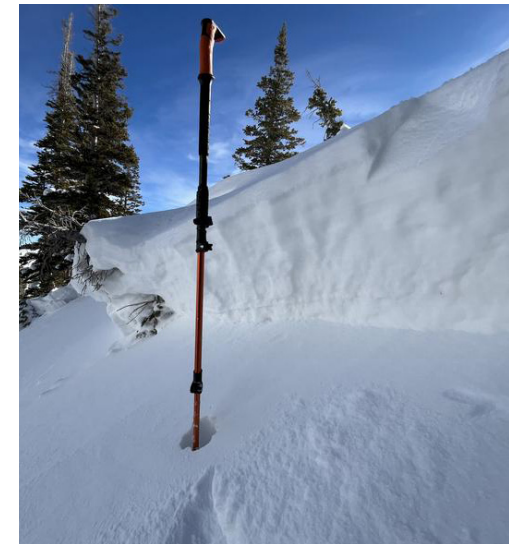
This accident speaks to a few things we think about a lot as forecasters: how sensitive these persistent weak layers remain, even days after storms, how much the margin for error shrinks when you're essentially alone in avalanche terrain, and how something as simple as a trailhead beacon check can greatly improve the likelihood of finding a buried person.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REPORT.](#)

Our deepest condolences go out to the families, friends, and communities affected by these losses. We take these accidents seriously, and we'll continue to learn from them and share what we can - so others have the information they need to make good decisions and come home safely.



Two skiers were ascending this treed slope in Butler Basin when an avalanche occurred, which caught, carried, and buried both of them.



Persistent weak layers can be deceptive - sometimes all it takes is touching the right spot to trigger an avalanche.



UAC Forecaster Trent Meisenheimer at the crown of the Caribou Basin avalanche.



The avalanche in Caribou Basin was presumably triggered low on the slope by the victim, as he was traveling alone at the time of the incident.

25 | 26 **AVALANCHE EDUCATION PROGRAM**

During the 2025-2026 season, the UAC hosted **35 avalanche classes**, reaching **345 students** across Utah. Despite a slow start to the season and only a few major storms impacting our mountain ranges, our instructor team remained adaptable and creative, delivering high-quality learning experiences to eager students. The team navigated the season with zero student injuries and even buried themselves in the snow to create realistic avalanche rescue scenarios.



UAC instructor Becky Fuys sets up a realistic avalanche rescue scenario during an Introduction to Avalanche Rescue and Wilderness Medicine course. (R. Emery)

This season, we debuted our Continuing Education Series, designed for experienced backcountry users looking to explore unique topics and common themes in avalanche accident reports. Touring parties worked through interactive tabletop exercises based on real-world scenarios to navigate out of nuanced terrain, assess their avalanche rescue planning skills, and more.

After **two sold-out events**, we look forward to expanding this series next season. Additionally, we continued to grow our motorized avalanche program, hosting public classes for the Davis County and Salt Lake Valley snowmobile clubs.



UAC instructor Trevor Katz shows students a recent avalanche during a snowmobile Backcountry 101 course.

We were also thrilled to host the second season of our Introduction to Avalanche Rescue & Wilderness Medicine course, designed to equip students with the skills to rescue an avalanche victim and provide essential patient care. This season, we implemented several curriculum improvements and offered four public classes. We'd like to thank Becky at Backcountry Ready for providing excellent wilderness medicine instruction and the Brighton United Fire Authority Station for offering an outstanding learning environment.

Despite the exponential increase in backcountry use over the past decade, avalanche fatalities in the United States have remained steady at around 23 per year. While many factors contribute to this encouraging trend, avalanche education has undoubtedly played a key role in improving mountain safety. At the Utah Avalanche Center, we offer a variety of on-snow courses designed to help students reduce their risk in the backcountry.



All-Women instructor team for our Women's Backcountry 101 Course. (M. Stagg)

Finally, we continued to build on our flagship Backcountry 101: Introduction to Avalanches (BC101) course to ensure learning opportunities remain accessible to all. In addition to our motorized and ski/splitboard BC101 courses, we offered a Family-Style BC101 for parents and their children, a Snowshoe BC101 for winter hikers, and a Women's BC101 course taught entirely by our female instructors.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR AVALANCHE EDUCATION PROGRAM HERE.



**UAC CURRICULUM IS PROUDLY ACCREDITED BY
THE AMERICAN AVALANCHE ASSOCIATION**

25 | 26 AVALANCHE AWARENESS PROGRAM

Avalanche awareness is about helping people feel informed, confident, and connected before they head into the mountains. This season, the Utah Avalanche Center's Awareness Program focused on doing exactly that. Whether we were chatting with riders at trailheads, teaching beacon skills in the park, or tabling at films and gear swaps, our goal remained the same: to make avalanche safety approachable and part of the culture.

AVALANCHE AWARENESS WEEK:

Did you know that Utah is the only state in the USA that officially recognizes Avalanche Awareness Week? Starting in 2019, the first full week of December is recognized as "Avalanche Awareness Week." The Utah Avalanche Center, in collaboration with state agencies like the Department of Outdoor Recreation, hosts awareness events across Utah for the entire week. This year we had **14 events** from Moab to Logan, connecting with **over 1,000 people** about avalanche safety and awareness. Our kickoff party at Sugarhouse Park in Salt Lake City included multiple stations to practice rescue and medical skills and information from other public organizations such as Intermountain Health Flight Services, Wasatch Backcountry Rescue, and SLC Search and Rescue. The week ended with our annual Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop.



Avalanche Awareness Week Kickoff Party at Sugarhouse Park.

PUBLIC BEACON TRAINING PARKS:

The UAC manages four public beacon training parks in Logan, Park City, Moab, and Highway 35 in the Uinta region. These beacon parks are **free to use** for anyone interested in practicing their rescue skills. The dry season presented a challenge for getting our public beacon training parks up and running but we were able to pivot to higher elevations.



Jeremy Collett & Maddie Stagg at a TAAP at the Grizzly Gulch Trailhead.

TRAILHEAD AWARENESS:

Backcountry trailheads have been a critical touch point for meeting backcountry users of all kinds face to face. This season we had **17 trailhead awareness events** at **12 different trailheads** across the state, interacting with **nearly 1,000 users**. At these events, UAC staff and forecasters will set up at a trailhead to share resources, current conditions, and stoke for users heading out or returning from a tour. We also continued to spread the word on standardized community radio channels in the central Wasatch thanks to support from Rocky Talkie! We've found that these events are especially impactful at trailheads with not only backcountry skiers and splitboarders, but hikers, cross country skiers, and families as well. Along with our trailhead awareness events, the UAC also manages over 30 "Are You Beeping?" trailhead signs. This year we upgraded signs in the Skyline region and added a trailhead sign to Swan Flat in the Logan Region thanks to the support from Utah Snowmobile Association.



Beacon Training Park in Wolf Creek Pass in the Uintas.

25 | 26 KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



Know Before You Go is the first step in your journey through avalanche education. The program introduces you to avalanche safety with some simple steps you can take to stay safe and have fun in snow-covered mountains.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Know Before You Go program was launched in response to the tragic avalanche at Aspen Grove on December 26, 2003, that claimed the lives of three teenagers. The program aims to give free avalanche awareness through engaging, informative presentations for anyone interested in recreating in Utah's mountains. The most common Know Before You Go presentation is a 45 minute lecture about how to read a forecast, essential gear, further training, and some basic travel guidelines.

Since its inception, the program has expanded beyond Utah's schools and youth organizations to reach universities, outdoor clubs, retail shops, community organizations, and industry partners worldwide. Our KBYG online learning platform alone has reached users in nearly 40 countries. What began as a local initiative has grown into a global movement!



Jeremy Collett presenting our Know Before You Go presentation for the Silverfork Skimo Team at Solitude.

From local ski shops to K-12 schools, this program has a broad reach into the Utah public as well. This season the KBYG program reached over **5,500 students** and hosted **140 in-person presentations** across the state. Half of these presentations were delivered to students under the age of 18, helping spread avalanche awareness to younger generations.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR KBYG PROGRAM HERE.](#)



Big avalanche around Snowbird.

DID YOU KNOW?

We are proud to offer the KBYG program **free of charge** to our incredible community. If you're interested in hosting a presentation for your business, school, club, ski or snowboard team, or any group involved in mountain recreation, please contact us ahead of next season. We're always seeking new partnerships and opportunities to promote avalanche safety. For more information, visit kbyg.org.

KBYG DASHBOARD

TOTAL
PRESENTATIONS

138

ATTENDEES
K-12

50%

TOTAL
ATTENDEES

5,500

COUNTRIES
REACHED

38

25 | 26 INTERNSHIP & OBSERVER PROGRAMS

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Every winter, the Utah Avalanche Center offers an Internship Program designed to give participants a comprehensive look at a small non-profit within the avalanche community. For those interested in pursuing a career in outdoor recreation, fundraising, or avalanche awareness, the program provides an opportunity to work alongside seasoned professionals while contributing to our mission.

This season, we were thrilled to have Maddie Stagg and Artie Cohen as our UAC Interns. Maddie and Artie were essential to our winter programming as they presented the Know Before You Go program to students and adults, taught on-snow avalanche classes across Utah, tabled at community events to help spread avalanche awareness, assisted in fundraising efforts, and much more. We are incredibly grateful for their contributions this season and look forward to watching their careers grow.

“Throughout my internship, I was able to receive mentorship from various UAC staff, deepen my knowledge on avalanche terrain and management, and grow my professional skills” - Maddie Stagg



UAC Interns enjoying a ski day at Snowbird.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many of our non-profit staff members were once interns themselves. In fact, many of our interns go on to continue working in the avalanche industry. If you or someone you know is interested in an internship that blends avalanche education, non-profit work, and professional growth, keep an eye out for our 2026-2027 internship posting early this summer.



View of the La Sals from the Laurel Highway.

OBSERVER PROGRAM

Observations are an integral component of a tour plan. The UAC observer program began in 1987 to crowdsource avalanche information, and nearly forty years later, we still receive an impressive number of observations from recreational and professional backcountry users across the state. Observations include information about recent avalanches, weather, snow characteristics, red flags, snow profiles, and more. After analyzing these observations, we publish them on our website, helping create a more informed and engaged backcountry community. This year, observers submitted **over 1400 observations** across the state!

CHECK OUT OUR NEW OBSERVATION DATA EXPLORER TOOL HERE.



Avalanche in the Uintas near Chalk Creek, taken by Pro-Observer Noah Sievers.

25 | 26 COMMUNITY EVENTS



Our Backcountry Benefit, hosted by Black Diamond.

SEASON IN REVIEW

The Utah Avalanche Center is committed to serving as a community hub for Utah, and this year we made meaningful strides in expanding the programs and experiences we offer. To support this growth, we welcomed Claire Hurty as our Events Manager, bringing dedicated leadership to a program that continues to grow in both scale and impact.

This season, we produced **25 original events** and participated in **47 community tabling events**, reaching **over 12,000 contacts** across all 72 engagements. These touchpoints reflect our ongoing commitment to connecting backcountry users with the education, resources, and community they need to make informed decisions in the field.

Among the season's highlights were the 32nd Annual Backcountry Benefit, a series of sold-out speaker events, and the launch of a new continuing education series. The Backcountry Benefit, our annual event that kicks off the season for our community, drew **900 attendees** and **56 sponsor booths**, our largest to date. The event remains one of our most powerful opportunities to connect people with the resources that keep them safe in the backcountry.

COMMUNITY DASHBOARD

TOTAL EVENTS

72

TOTAL RAISED

\$280,000

CONTACTS

>12,000



Our second Continuing Education event hosted at Fisher Brewing.

Our speaker series brought eight events to the community this season, featuring experts from across the avalanche and outdoor industry sharing research, experience, and insight. This includes our new Continuing Education Series, designed for a more experienced user. In these talks, students are presented with a case study and get to discuss with a small group. We look forward to expanding these offerings to engage new fields of study and a broader range of backcountry users.

Collectively, this year's events program generated **over \$2,000** in revenue, representing 20% of our annual operating budget.

We are proud of the foundation our team has built and remain focused on refining our existing programs while developing new opportunities to educate, connect, and serve our community in the seasons ahead.

FIND AN UPCOMING EVENT HERE.

"Both [Continuing Education] scenarios were useful challenges to think through, and I really appreciated hearing the range of perspectives from different attendees. I've already signed up for the next one and am planning to encourage my touring partners to attend as well. It feels like a really valuable way to get everyone on the same page." (N. Lomanto).

At the UAC, our top priority is communicating lifesaving information like avalanche forecasts, weather updates, and educational materials.

25 | 26 U-CAAST PROJECT



Special Projects Director Chad Bracklesberg and Research and Technology Program Manager Travis Morrison mountain biked up to our weather station in the Uintas Duchesne Ridge Wind site in the summer of 2025.

U-CAAST: LEVERAGING SNOWPACK MODELING FOR SMARTER FORECASTING

The 2025–2026 season marked a pivotal transition for the **Utah Computer-Assisted Avalanche Support Tool (U-CAAST)**. This year, we transitioned from a promising prototype to an increasingly operational part of the UAC forecasting workflow.

The team had a busy off season, building on last year’s dashboard launch and weather station upgrades. The team spent the off-season improving usability, improving the SNOWPACK model, and expanding geographic coverage statewide. The goals driving that work remain the same as when the project launched: improve forecast accuracy, increase staff efficiency, surface patterns that might otherwise go undetected, and present data and information in ways forecasters can act on quickly. This season, we made meaningful progress on all four fronts.

For the first time, UAC forecasters began incorporating the U-CAAST dashboard interface. This dashboard provided information on snowpack stratigraphy, instability indicators, and 48-hour projections. Alongside traditional field observations, the dashboard assisted forecasters in their daily forecasting decisions.



One of our research towers deployed at Atwater study plot in Alta. The atwater study plot gives us a testbed for testing new sensors, their configurations, in a representative test bed before deploying out to our other sites.

Feedback from forecasting staff helped the team identify and resolve issues in near real time. Now model outputs are systematically tracked against UAC-published danger ratings and field-observed instability indicators across all regions. Early validation results are encouraging, and this season’s data positions us well for a rigorous end-of-season assessment.

This work sets the stage for our next major milestone. By November 2026, U-CAAST will be prepared to run automatically across **more than 20 forecast locations** throughout Utah for both public and professional users. The summer of 2026 is a critical build phase. Efforts will center on strengthening the data pipeline, expanding the station network, and developing the validation infrastructure needed to move forward with confidence. Reaching this milestone will produce the skill-score data required for publication and future grant reporting, helping to advance the science while also supporting the long-term sustainability of the program.

We are grateful to the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation for their continued support of the weather station infrastructure that makes this work possible, and to the UAC forecasting staff whose daily engagement with the tool drives its improvement.

25 | 26 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Donor generosity is the force behind our life-saving work.



Team members Mack Talty, Chad Brackelsberg, and UAC board members teaching a Ride and Refresh for a local snowmobile club. (H. Slack)



Ski day at Deer Valley with Wayne Wong, followed by lunch at the Sticky Wicket. (B. Lewis).

SEASON IN REVIEW

This year, the Development Team has made tremendous strides in securing critical support for our mission. We are especially grateful for the continued backing from the Division of Outdoor Recreation through programs such as RTP Motorized, RTP Non-Motorized, OHVR, and UCORE, which have been instrumental in funding both our continued capital development for weather stations, forecasting, the website and updated mobile app, and innovative outreach programs like Know Before You Go (KBYG).

Furthermore, the individuals in the backcountry community provided tremendous support. Our Year-End Campaign was record-breaking, raising **nearly \$350,000**, which represents almost 20% of our annual revenue. This incredible support from our donors ensures that we can continue providing avalanche safety resources, information, and education to winter recreationists across Utah.

DEVELOPMENT DASHBOARD

TOTAL NUMBER OF DONORS	TOTAL RAISED FROM INDIVIDUALS	AVERAGE DONATION	TOTAL MEMBERS
2047	\$514,600	\$251	383

Event revenue remains a cornerstone of our fundraising efforts. From large-scale gatherings like the Backcountry Benefit to smaller community-driven events during the Spring Campaign, and curated experiences such as Ski with Wayne Wong and the Bear River Snowmobile Safety Class, our events provide both engagement and impact. Even when weather challenges required adjustments, as with the Bear River class that we had to cancel, our community's support never wavered.

We also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to our corporate partners whose generosity and collaboration make our work possible. This year, we are especially grateful to KUHL, Mammut, Black Diamond, BCA, Backcountry, Polaris, OnX, and Toyota. Your support enables us to expand educational programs, improve forecasting tools, and continue saving lives in Utah's backcountry.

Looking ahead, we are energized by the opportunity to build on this momentum, deepen our community engagement, and continue delivering programs that protect and empower winter recreationists across the state.

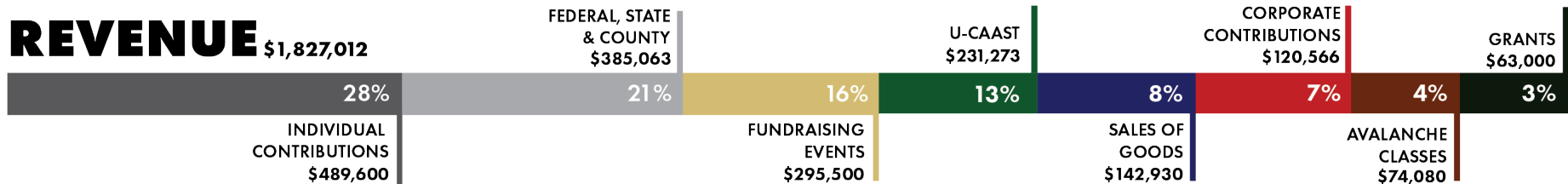
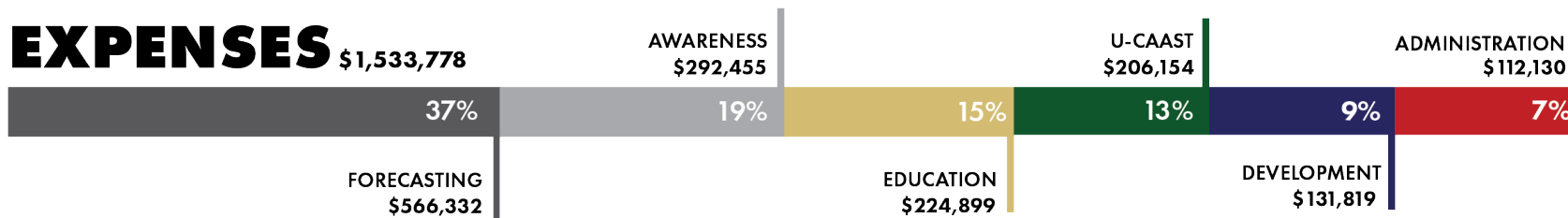
SUPPORT THE UAC AND DONATE HERE.

25 | 26 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

SEASON IN REVIEW

Since 2000, backcountry use in Utah has surged **nearly 20-fold**. This has driven a **25-fold increase in the costs** required to support avalanche forecasting, education, and awareness. While inflation has climbed about 75% over the same period, our reach has far outpaced it; each dollar we invest today reaches **four times as many** people as it did in 2000, a testament to the efficiency and innovation behind our work.

Our funding structure is resilient and community-driven: about 75% of our program costs are covered by the nonprofit UAC through contributions from individuals, businesses, and local partners. The remaining ~20% is funded by federal, state, and county agencies. This enduring partnership with the backcountry community and industry leaders is what powers our mission. **Thank you** for your integral role in powering our work.



GRANTS AWARDED:

- American Avalanche Association
- Canyonlands Natural History Association
- George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation
- PacifiCorp Foundation
- Park City Community Foundation
- Park City Special Services
- Snowbird Play Forever Wednesdays
- Stephanson Pope Babcock Foundation
- Summit County
- Vail EpicPromise
- Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation (DOR)
- W.L Eccles Foundation

FINANCIAL DASHBOARD

OPERATING BUDGET

\$1.30M

TOTAL DONORS

2047

REVENUE

\$1,802,012

EXPENSES

\$1,533,778

25 | 26 SUPPORT & SPONSORSHIP



UAC Board Member Kirk Chester on a powdery sunset ride.

THANK YOU, RESORTS!

Utah Ski Resorts help us keep our lights on! This season, many resorts generously donated lift tickets to the UAC, which we then sell to fund lifesaving programs.

We continue to enjoy a great relationship with Utah ski resorts and Ski Utah, communicating regularly on snow conditions and cooperating on avalanche education for professionals and the public.

Thank you to Ski Utah, Alta, Beaver Mountain, Brighton, Deer Valley, Park City Resort, Powder Mountain, Snowbasin, Snowbird, Solitude, and Sundance for supporting this program.

THANK YOU, MOTORIZED SPONSORS!

We would like to give a big **thank you** to Ski-doo, and Karl Malone Powersports who generously provided our forecasters with six snowmobiles for the season. Snowmobiles are essential for our forecasters, enabling them to venture into the field to gather crucial snow and weather data for our forecasts, as well as engage with users in the backcountry. This allows us to better access terrain throughout Utah to get you the most up-to-date avalanche information possible.

Our motorized sponsors Big Pine Sports, Snow Big Deal, Ultimate Outdoors, DNR, Weller Recreation, Utah Snowmobile Association, International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association, and many others allow us to spread avalanche information across the state. **Thank you** to these businesses and clubs for their dedication to avalanche safety and support of the UAC.

25 | 26 SPONSORS

\$20K+



\$10K - 20K



\$5K - 10K



\$1K - 5K



\$500 - 1K



25 | 26

**UNTIL NEXT TIME,
LET'S STAY CONNECTED!**



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THE UAC MISSION

The Utah Avalanche Center's mission is to keep people on top of The Greatest Snow on Earth® by providing avalanche forecasting, awareness, and education throughout the State of Utah.

