

Still Wary of Persistent Weak Layers

Date

Sat, 03/01/2025 - 13:20

Activity

Snowmobiling

Another day of warm temps and clear skies allowed us to cover a lot of ground in the Southern Madisons. We rode into the Taylor Fork, up to the weather station, to the top of Carrot Basin, through Sage Basin, up and over into Cabin Creek, and all the way up to the head of Red Canyon.

We spotted a few old avalanches. [One in Cabin Creek](#) that was triggered two days ago by snowmobilers on a N facing [aspect](#). At the top of Carrot Basin, we saw a small avalanche (R1-D1) on a N [aspect](#) that likely broke yesterday on buried weak layers. We also spotted one [cornice](#)-fall triggered (R2-D2) avalanche that broke earlier this week in Sage Basin and then an older [wind slab](#) in Sunlight Basin.

We dug a [snowpit](#) in Sunlight Basin right next to where Alex and I dug last week. At that site on 2/21, we triggered whumpfung, shooting cracks and got [propagation](#) in our [snowpit](#). Today we did not experience any of those signs of instability. Our [snowpit](#) showed poor structure with buried [surface hoar](#) and facets but yielded ECTN's on that [weak layer](#).

There were a handful of small wet-loose avalanches on solar aspects that we noted throughout the day. While northerly aspects stayed cold, solar aspects became wet a couple inches down.

Despite no remarkable new avalanche activity and the stubborn reactivity in our [snowpit](#), we remain wary of mid-elevation slopes steeper than 30 degrees. Over the last 12 days, we have received reports nearly every day of avalanches breaking on persistent weak layers buried 2-3' deep. Recent nearby avalanche activity in [Teepee Basin](#) and [Lionhead](#) is evidence that these weak layers should not be trusted quite yet.

The travel advice remains tricky, but you have a few options:

1. Before committing to steep slopes, dig down 2-3' and assess for layers of buried [surface hoar](#) and facets. Make observations as you step off your snowmobile or skis or board - are you staying on the surface or sinking all the way to the ground?
2. If you are choosing to ride steeper slopes, pick ones with less consequential terrain features like trees, cliffs or gullies.
3. The ol' reliable option: stick to riding slopes less than 30 degrees.

Region

Southern Madison

Location (from list)

Taylor Fork

Observer Name

H Darby