

Mt. Blackmore

Date

Wed, 12/22/2021 - 10:45

Activity

Skiing

I skied Mt. Blackmore this morning. The trail was in much better condition than last week. Good, not great, ski-in/ski-out coverage.

South-southwest winds were moderate-strong and scouring more than loading it seemed like, but isolated slabs and whales of snow could be found. I did not get any drifts to crack or collapse. Fresh wind slabs were 2-4" thick, 1f-P hard, and not very continuous...

I dug a pit high on the NE face/shoulder. As I moved from the ridge to a loaded slope of the face snow depth went from 12" to 36" over about 6 feet. I dug where it was 111cm and my first ECT was ECTN10 below the wind slab then ECTN22 on facets at 70cm. A second test gave ECTN17 on that facet layer, then ECTP20 on depth hoar at 35cm, so I did a third ECT which gave ECTP17 on the facets at 70cm, then a fourth ECT repeated that ECTP17... pit attached. I was moving into shallower snow as I got more unstable results, down to about 90cm HS. Anyway, I didn't think I would trigger an avalanche on that layer, but it did give me pause to be any further out or higher on that face where it was steep. I didn't intend to go higher or further out anyway, mainly due to not wanting to deal with the winds any higher up on the ridge/summit. Even though I feel danger for that PWL is low, the ECTPs were enough to ensure I stayed conservative.

For the long term I think the snowpack is not great, especially the higher you go. We will need to stay conservative with these facets mid-pack (30-70cm) (throughout the area). Since they are not hair-trigger or showing obvious signs of instability with these small recent storms I fear we (or someone) will get surprised with a cumulative loading or big wind event, or who knows... As usual, it comes down to: the snowpack has layers, it could avalanche [at some point, somewhere], be careful out there.

*I will add my pit and photo(s) to the website, I just wanted to test the obs submission form.

Region

Northern Gallatin

Location (from list)

Mt Blackmore

Observer Name

Alex Marienthal