



Annual Newsletter



Friends of the Flathead Avalanche Center | PO Box 4276, Whitefish, MT 59937 | friends@flatheadavalanche.org

Progress

In the past 10 years, an average of 27 people die each in avalanches in the U.S. Winter backcountry visits have increased substantially, yet the number of avalanche fatalities has not mimicked this trend. If the fatality rate had increased proportionally, there would be over 200 fatalities each year. This is *huge progress*, and we attribute much of it to improvements in avalanche education, awareness, and forecasting. The FAC and FOFAC are working together to save lives. Our classes are brimming at capacity, our outreach numbers are staggering, and our forecast center is developing into a reputable resource. Let's keep the momentum going!

Inside This Issue

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Your support makes a difference: How your donations spell progress for the FAC

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Meet your forecasters: The FAC has put together a talented team of avalanche specialists. Their bios and credentials are on our website, but here's a closer look.

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How you can help: The Great Fish Challenge is our biggest fundraiser.

Your support makes a difference

- FOFAC funded a 4th avalanche forecaster position this winter. That equates to more resources, more fieldwork, and improved avalanche forecasts.
- We are installing two new weather stations this year! Through fundraising and partnerships, FOFAC is funding a much needed wind sensor on Mt. Aeneas and a full weather station in the Middle Fork. These stations are filling huge data gaps that will improve forecast accuracy.
- A mobile app is forthcoming! We are partnering with the Sierra Avalanche Center to design an app so you can easily fetch the forecast on the go. Stay tuned for that release; hopefully this winter.
- Classes, classes, and more classes. We are responding to your demands for women's specific, motorized specific, rescue clinics, forecaster talks, NRSAW, awareness and intro classes, and more!



Over 66,000 website visits last winter and social media users have more than doubled in the past 2 years.



We offered 46 classes to 1,757 students this winter – our most productive season yet!



FAC published 209 staff observations from the field this winter. Our field presence has doubled since 2017!



We published 80 videos from the field this winter. That's 4x the content compared to two years ago. People love the videos, for good reason.

“We are really growing and becoming respected more widely than we could have ever expected 5 short years ago.”

Dow Powell, FOFAC President



Meet your forecasters



ZACH GUY

What's the best part about waking up at 3 a.m. to go to work? What's the worst part?

It's the only few hours of my day when the world is truly quiet. No texts or calls or emails: just focusing on snow. The worst part is falling asleep at dinner parties or other socially frowned upon moments.

What have you learned from near misses?

Trust your gut! In all of my close calls, my brain was trying to justify my terrain choices but my gut was telling me no.

MARK DUNDAS

What's the most rewarding part of your job?

When I'm teaching classes in the field, and people finally get it - a topic that they've read about but it suddenly makes sense. They love it! I also enjoy when people approach me and thank me for the product that we put out. There are some 'old school' folks in the community, and I assumed they don't read the advisory. It makes me especially happy when they approach me and I find out they are following along too.



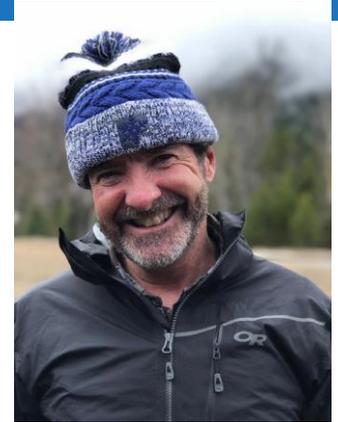
BLASE REARDON

What's your favorite area to go out for fieldwork?

Anywhere there's fresh snow, no skin track, and no other tracks.

What's the best part about waking up at 3 a.m. to go to work? What's the worst part?

Favorite part: Second breakfast! And Third breakfast! Worst part: Late afternoon, when I feel really tired but don't want to drink more coffee.



CLANCY NELSON

What's the best part about waking up at 3 a.m. to go to work? What's the worst part?

The best part is that it justifies my caffeine addiction, and I get to see the sunrise all winter. The worst part is that it's 3 a.m.



“The FAC is clearly a top-notch operation that is doing great things for avalanche safety in the Flathead. Thanks for all you are doing to run this highly successful program!”

Karl Birkeland

Director of the National Avalanche Center



THE GREAT FISH CHALLENGE

The Great Fish Challenge is FOAC's biggest fundraiser. Last year we raised \$38,462. Your donation is stretched through a match from the community foundation. If you value avalanche education and daily avalanche forecasts in the Flathead Valley, this summer is the best time to support our cause. The FAC relies on public donations to fund regular operations and projects.

The Great Fish Challenge accepts donations from July 15 until September 13. You can find FOAC's donation page at <https://www.whitefishcommunityfoundation.org/great-fish/> or contact us at friends@flatheadavalanche.org for more information.

Thank you for your generous support. Your contributions help make our backcountry a safer place.

