

# SIERRA AVALANCHE CENTER ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020



# Thank You

The Sierra Avalanche Center (SAC) continues to function as a partnership between the Tahoe National Forest and a volunteer Board of Directors with 501(c)(3) not for profit organization status. This relationship continues to strengthen both operationally and financially while continuing to gain support in the community.

Some of the accomplishments from this past season include:

- SAC's nonprofit branch contributed over **\$70,312** to the Forest Service avalanche forecasting efforts, and additionally funded **119 professional observations** to supplement forecaster data.
- The Tahoe National Forest (TNF) provided **\$11,800** in infrastructure support. The USDA Forest Service provided **\$45,266** for forecaster salaries in the form of \$17,000 from Region 5, \$8,500 from Region 4, and \$19,766 from the Truckee Ranger District.
- During the 2019-20 forecasting season, SAC's advisory website was accessed nearly **930,000 times** by approximately **141,000 unique visitors**.
- SAC issued **156 daily avalanche advisories** and 3 early season snow condition reports.
- The TNF forecasters continued to strengthen their working relationship with the National Weather Service in Reno, local ski patrols, and other professional organizations.
- SAC hosted the sixth annual California Avalanche Workshop, providing a full day of continuing education for **300 members of the public**.



- The nonprofit operated **6 three-day motorized level 1 avalanche courses** thanks to the G17 grant from CA OHMVR Division and presented **7 motorized-specific avalanche awareness presentations**.
- SAC presented an avalanche awareness presentation to approximately **50 students** in Lake Tahoe Unified School district. This was part of the EpicPromise Winter Adventure Program in partnership with South Tahoe Environmental Education Coalition.
- Additionally, SAC presented over **38** avalanche awareness presentations at various venues ranging from local high schools and ski teams to regional outdoor shops and college campuses, reaching approximately **2,248** attendees.
- SAC issued **\$12,500** in avalanche education scholarships to the public.
- The Professional Avalanche Workshop (PAWS), in memory of Bill Foster had to be cancelled due to COVID-19.

We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who has put forth time and effort to support the Sierra Avalanche Center.

# Season Recap

While the 2019-2020 winter ended between 60-75 percent of average snowfall, depending on the method of measurement, the season featured some wild variation. After an above average December, February was the driest on record. Winter kicked back in with a wet and cold March, and continued with an above-average early April. The winter featured very little rain.

Of note, more users visited the Sierra Avalanche Center website this April than in any previous April. This March was the second busiest March on record. The busiest March was in 2018. These increases did not correspond to record snowfall but rather the closure of ski areas due to Covid-19.

SAC also documented more close calls/incidents than average in the spring, despite avalanche activity similar to the previous spring. Last year (18-19), for instance, we had 149 reported avalanches in March and April and 11 people caught (~7% of reported avalanches caught a person). This year we had 119 reported avalanches and 15 people caught (~13% of reported avalanches caught a person). This nearly doubling of the percentage of people caught or buried in slide was a notable increase.

From November 27th through May 3rd, the Sierra Avalanche Center issued 156 daily avalanche advisories. The number of advisories issued for each danger level was: 35 Low, 95 Moderate, 21 Considerable, 5 High, and 0 Extreme. Additionally, 3 early season snow condition reports were posted during November. Average viewership of the advisory throughout the year averaged 5,787 views per day.

## The Forecast Team

The Tahoe National Forest employs avalanche forecasters who work in the Sierra Avalanche Center Program. Brandon Schwartz is lead forecaster and directs the avalanche forecasting program. Andy Anderson works as a senior forecaster under Brandon. Steve Reynaud works as the third forecaster in the program.

All three forecasters work 5 days per week collecting daily avalanche, snowpack, and weather observations. This data is combined with additional data received from the SAC Professional Observers, local professional backcountry guide services, local professional ski patrols, and the general public.

The Tahoe National Forest forecasters are solely responsible for the creation of the daily avalanche advisories issued through the SAC website as well as any issued avalanche watches and warnings.

Travis Feist and David Reichel returned as professional field observers for the southern portion of the forecast area.

Andy was not able to ski during the early part of the winter so Daryl Teittinen stepped in as an additional professional observer while Andy was injured. He contributed 20 observations. The SAC website continued to allow public and professional users to include video, photos, and maps in their observations. Professional guide services Alpenglow guides, Alpine Skills International, Donner Summit Avalanche Seminars, Mountain Adventures Seminars, and Tahoe Mountain School shared their field observations with the avalanche center. Kirkwood, Mt. Rose, Squaw Valley, and Sugar Bowl also submitted observations to the avalanche center.

# Advisory Area

The advisory area of the Sierra Avalanche Center covers approximately 1,500 square miles of the Central Sierra Nevada Mountains of California and Nevada. The advisory area is bound by Highway 49 Yuba Pass on the north and Highway 4 Ebbetts Pass on the south. The advisory covers the avalanche terrain along the Sierra Crest and extends to the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada.

Two inroads to the west side of the Sierra Crest exist within in the advisory area at Carson Pass and at Ebbetts Pass, in order to include the backcountry terrain surrounding the established boundaries of the Kirkwood and Bear Valley ski areas.

# Finances

<b>INCOME (TOTAL)</b>	<b>\$433,342</b>	<b>EXPENSES (TOTAL)</b>	<b>\$287,455</b>
Individual Donations	\$131,211	Forecasters / Observers	\$89,213
CA State Parks OHV Grant	\$122,221	Education	\$69,300
Foundation Donations	\$55,800	Executive Director	\$54,846
SAC Ski Day Lift Ticket Sales	\$52,013	Equipment	\$20,263
Other Corporate Donations	\$50,932	Office/General Admin	\$16,186
Events	\$16,375	Social Media/Marketing	\$15,179
Other Income	\$4,790	Web/IT/Professional	\$11,126
		Payroll taxes	\$9,655
		Banking/other	\$1,687

# Sponsors

The Sierra Avalanche Center operates thanks to the generous support of our sponsors.

## Summit Sponsors

Sponsors who donated more than \$10,000 to SAC



# Extreme Sponsors

Sponsors who donated between \$5,000 and \$9,999 to SAC



# High Sponsors

Sponsors who donated between \$2,500 and \$4,999 to SAC



# Considerable Sponsors

Sponsors who donated between \$1,000 and \$2,499 to SAC



# Moderate Sponsors

Sponsors who donated between \$500 and \$999 to SAC

