Shooting cracks, small wind slabs in Southern Madison

Date
Sat, 11/25/2023 - 03:40
Activity
Skiing

Went into the Lightning/Taylor Creek area of the Southern Madison's in search of some powder skiing with the new snow. On our ascent toward Woodward Mountain via the backside, we found fresh snow varying from 2 inches at the trailhead to foot deep lightly drifted areas in the upper elevations. In the protected low angle gully we ascended this new snow sat atop either rocks or a very stout wind crust. The latter of which made for great skiing. We descended Woodward top down and assessed the possibility of thin (3") wind slabs being reactive on the stout wind crust as the Woodward side seemed to have received a lot more loading from the storm's E winds. As we rolled over to slightly steeper terrain, I noticed the snow stiffening just below my skis and gave it a few hops where I intentionally popped the pictured slab. With this information, we decided to carefully traverse to more protected trees and descend via a less wind loaded and hazardous route. We ski cut from tree to tree triggering a few more of these very small slabs before finding wonderful powder skiing lower on the mountain where the wind had significantly less effect.

All of the slabs were 1 to 4 inches deep and propagated 5 to 15 feet wide. None of them possessed the mass or were on steep enough terrain to overcome and slide over the stauch wall. Overall was a great lesson in mitigating hazard and we were rewarded with some great turns.

Region
Southern Madison
Observer Name
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