

## Backcountry Weekly Summary

Intern/Forecaster:	Eric Murrow / Ben Pritchett
Week and Year	December 1st - 7th, 2017
Backcountry zone:	Crested Butte Area

### Notable Weather Events (snowfall, SWE, winds, temps, etc.)

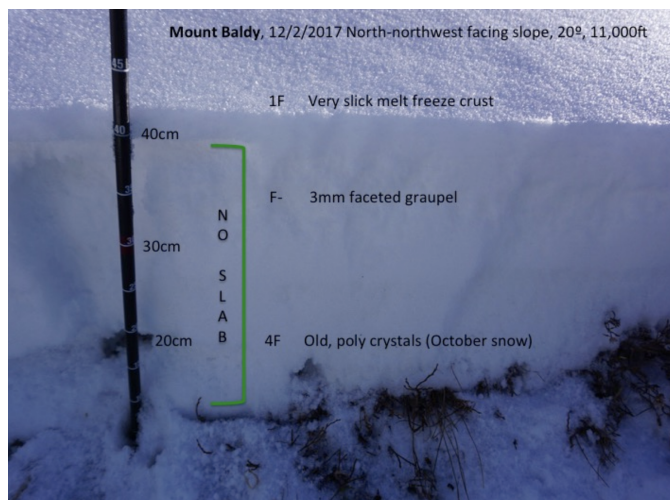
The temperatures this week started well above normal, becoming seasonably normal by the end of the week. We received no significant snowfall, and had one North wind event. Temperatures were mild on Friday 12/1, Saturday 12/2, and Sunday 12/3. Night time lows were generally below freezing and day time highs reached 30F - 40F.

On Sunday night 12/3, a storm system clipped the Northern half of Colorado, which only produced an inch or two across the Crested Butte area. As this system exited our area, it brought the first blast of arctic air into our area. From Monday 12/4 to Thursday 12/7 night time lows were near the 0F mark and daytime highs struggled to reach into double digits above zero. This cold air was significant because it further weakened our shallow snowpack. The arctic blast was the defining feature of this past week's weather.

### Snowpack (weak layer date(s) and status, structure, stability trends)

**November 17th Interface:** This interface is becoming stubborn to unreactive as the slabs continue to facet and weaken. Ski penetration is getting deeper in sheltered terrain, though sun, temperature, and wind crusts cap the November 17th storm snow in all but the most sheltered, shady alpine slopes. Cold temperatures this past week greatly contributed to the decomposition of this slab. This left many locations on the Northern half of the compass with a mostly faceted snowpack with no slab present. Remnants of small slabs remain plastered into isolated alpine features on Northwest to East aspects, though even these slabs are becoming weaker with time.

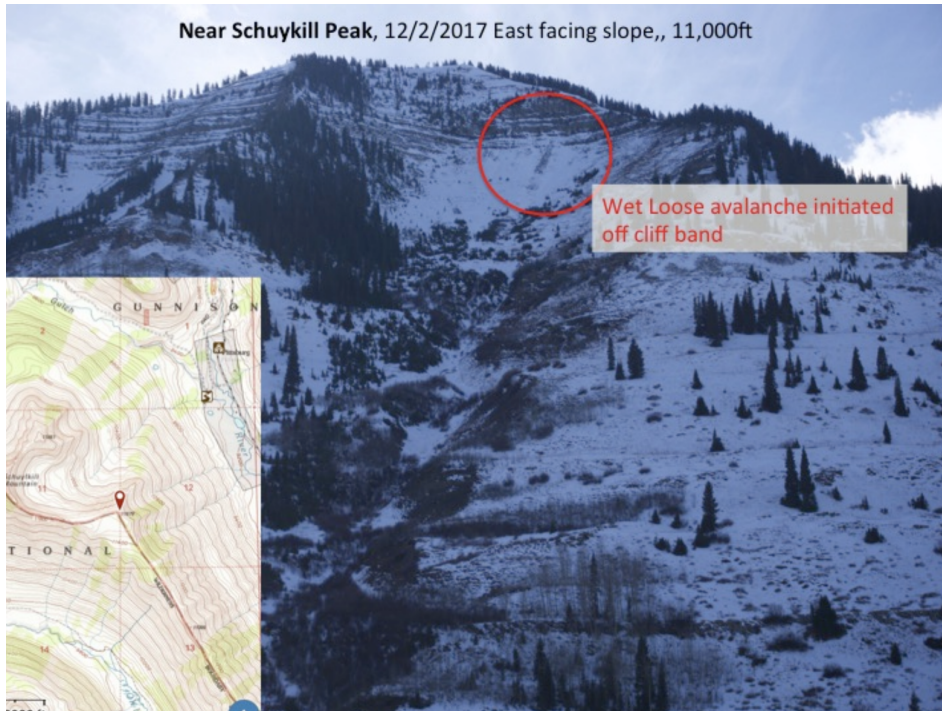
These observations ([1,2](#)) describe our current snowpack conditions. Also, here is a photo of a snow pit from Mt. Baldy area.



As the December dry spell continues, our snowpack will continue to lose strength. The weak layers forming now will pose significant problems in the future once our area receives substantial snowfall. Current snow surfaces are either facets or crusts which once buried will become our next dated interface.

## Avalanches

This past week was a quiet one for avalanche activity, with new avalanches observed, though there were a few past avalanches reported around our area. On 12/2 several wet avalanches were observed in the upper Slate River valley. Likely these avalanches ran in late November. Here's a photo of one of the slides, and the observation can be found [here](#).



This was a wet avalanche on Mt. Axtel, in the Pencil Chute area. It was reported on Sunday 12/3. It is unknown when this avalanche failed, but given the weather records, it is likely it failed a week prior around the same time as a similar sized wet slab avalanche off the east face of Gothic. Here's a photo showing the debris. This observation can be found [here](#).



## Incident, accidents, close calls

No reports of incidents, accidents, or close calls in our area.

## Comments (anything unusual/noteworthy, thoughts on the near future)

The cold temperatures this past week further weakened our already weak snowpack structure in most locations. Avalanche activity will be "rockin' and rollin" once our mountains see a significant loading event.