

## Backcountry Weekly Summary



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Week and Year	December 15-21, 2017
Backcountry zone:	Crested Butte Area

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

Wahoo, Crested Butte received its largest snow event in more than a month yesterday (Thursday, 12/21). But before getting into the details of this storm, we will recap the first part of last week.

From Friday, 12/15, through Tuesday, 12/19, air temperatures were seasonal with lows generally in teens to 20s F, and highs ranged from upper 20s to upper 30's. Not particularly frigid, nor particularly warm. Winds throughout this period were not a significant factor, although a light snowfall from the previous week (Wednesday, 12/13) did provide small amounts of snow for transport from the north winds.

Alright, now for some good news. Beginning on the night of Wednesday, 12/20, our area began to see snowflakes falling from the sky. Light snowfall continued to fall through early evening on Thursday, 12/21. Accumulations through our area were as follows: 7.5" at Schofield Pass, 6" at Kebler Pass, 4" in Gothic, and 2" at Upper Taylor SNOTEL. This snow fell with light to moderate southwest winds, followed by strong northwest gusts on Friday, 12/22.

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

The northern half of the compass at BTL and NTL locations are largely faceted out and very weak.

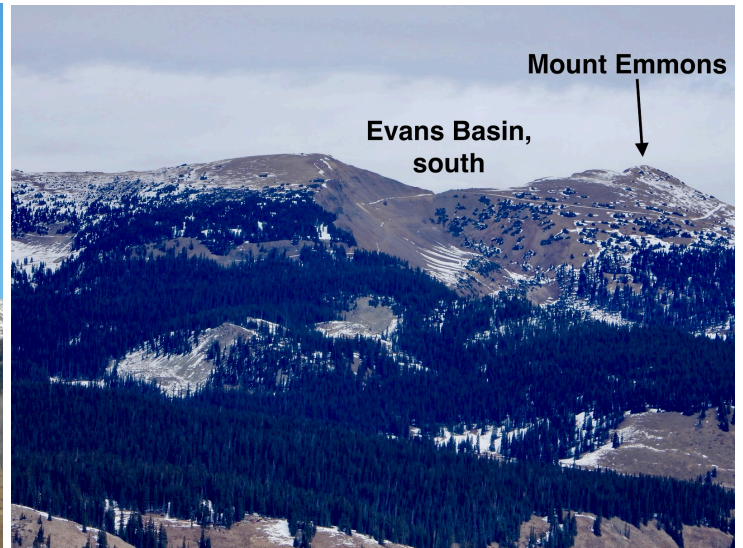
**11/17/2017 Interface:** This is our deepest layer of concern. This interface has not produced any avalanches in our area for some time. It is still recognizable on drifted slopes as the boundary between the large grained depth hoar and stiffer layer of faceting graupel above. On north to east aspects where this interface is beneath an old stiffened slab, this layer remains the layer of greatest concern in the future as the overburden of new snow accumulates.

**12/13/2017 Interface:** This is our weakest layer in sheltered terrain. Between December 14-15, several shallow wind slabs ran on this interface; no avalanches since. At lower elevations, this interface is identifiable by a thin temperature crust sandwiched between delicate facets. It lies above the 11/17 storm snow (often recognizable because of the graupel still present). Where this crust exists below about 11,000' it will be one to watch as slabs form over the top of it.

In areas with less than about 40cm of total snowpack depth, these specific interfaces don't make much difference since it's all a mess of weak facets that simply won't hold a big load. In drifted terrain and deeper sheltered slopes within the main snowbelt, these layers will require our attention as they become incrementally loaded by the late December storms. Here's a couple videos that highlight these two buried interfaces from [Reno Divide](#), and the [Anthracites](#).

Alpine terrain on the northern half of the compass has been abused by the wind. There are areas of shallow and very weak snow, areas of stout windboards, and isolated areas with Persistent Slab structure. [Here is an observation](#) that gives more information on above treeline locations.

The past month of dry weather has taken a toll the snowpack on the sunny aspects. Most are largely burned off or patchwork of melt/freeze crusts. Here are a few photos from around our area showing the lack of snow on sunny terrain.



## Avalanches

Last weekend, there were several small windslab avalanches reported on SE aspects above treeline from North winds transporting snow. This [observation can be found here](#).

## Incident, accidents, close calls

None in our area. The nearest incents were several skier triggered slides from Berthoud Pass area.

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

Weather forecasts for this weekend, strong winds (jet stream overhead) and more snowfall will create the potential for dangerous avalanche conditions in the coming days.