

Weekly Summary December 16-23

Authors:	Dan Hohl and Zach Guy
Dates:	Dec 16-22, 2022
Zones:	Crested Butte, Northwest & Southeast Mountains

Friday 12/16

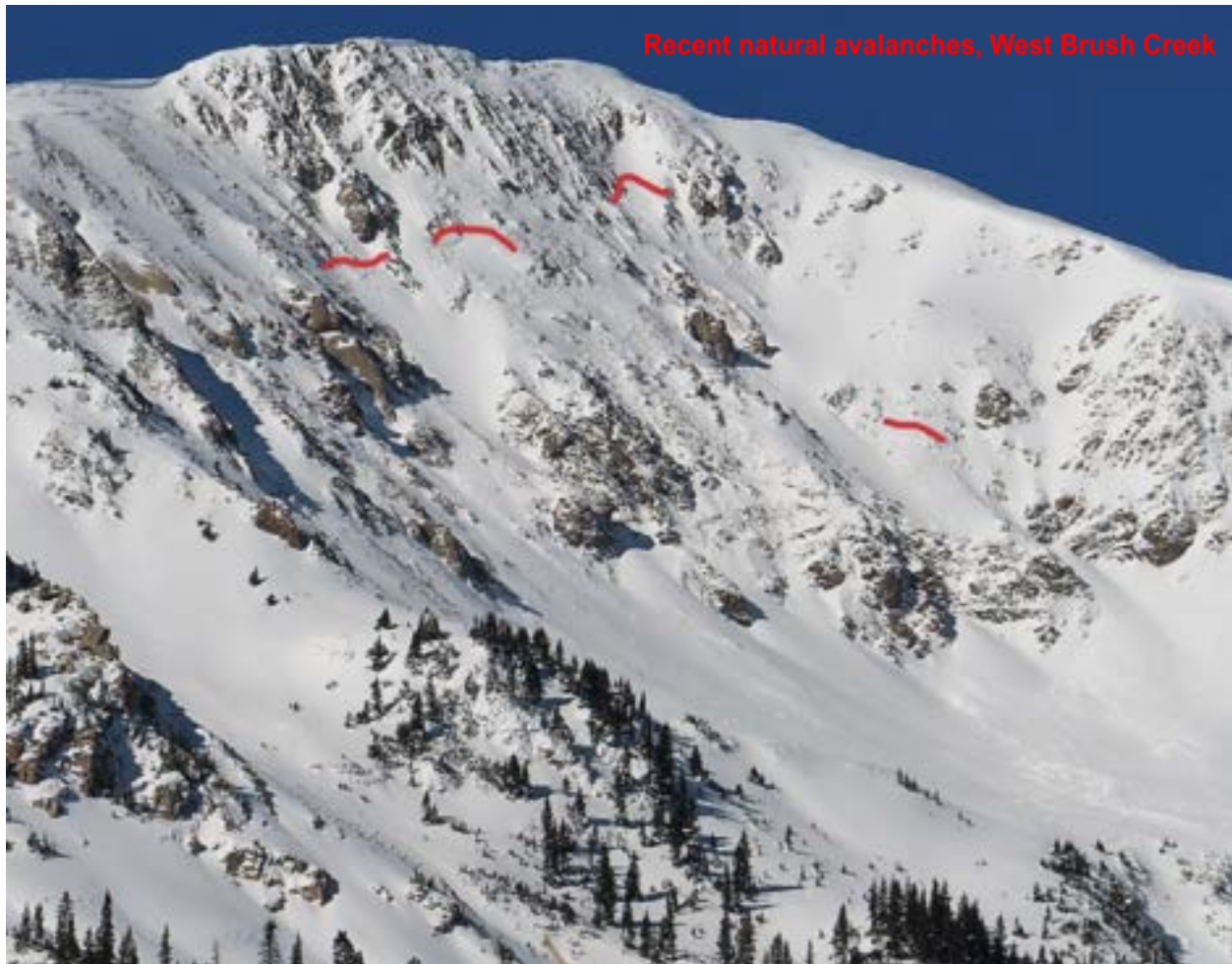
Friday dawned cold with an overnight low of -7F. Fortunately the skies were clear and the winds were light from the Northwest. We had our first good visibility since the snow and wind events of the previous week. Two notable D3's were reported on Purple Ridge that reached valley floor. These likely ran in the previous few days and made it all the way to the Slate River. Several other natural avalanches were reported ranging from D2 to D3 that ran earlier in the week. All of these ran on West to North to East aspects Near or Above Tree Line, fitting into the pattern we have been seeing with these Persistent Slab avalanches.



Pair of natural D3's on Purple Ridge

Saturday 12/17

Saturday morning brought the coldest temps of the winter so far with a low of -20F in Crested Butte under clear skies. A merciful shift in the winds to the Southwest warmed things up slightly by the afternoon and brought temps up to 20F. Another notable natural D3 avalanche likely ran on Saturday above Yule Creek on a Northerly aspect.



Sunday 12/18

The dry spell continues, as does the slow shift towards warmer temperatures and the gradual downtrend in avalanche danger. The clouds held off for most of the day and the wind remained light out of the West. Sheltered terrain held soft snow, and some slopes had even benefited from a windblown powder refresh. However, the majority of exposed terrain, especially in the alpine, has been ravaged by the winds. While this combination of no new snow and consistent wind effect has rendered many persistent slabs more stubborn to triggers, the size of these avalanches should they release remains large to very large. What's more, isolated natural releases are still possible as shown by today's natural D2 near Augusta.



Monday 12/19

Monday was a pleasant day to get into the hills with clear skies, light to moderate Westerly winds, and temps in the 20's. No new avalanches were reported today and the danger lowered to Moderate across the entire zone. Snow surfaces remain stiff and wind affected up high and soft and faceting at lower elevations.

Tuesday 12/20

Tuesday brought cloudy skies, generally light winds, and very occasional flakes. The widespread faceting of our snowpack is continues and signs of instability are becoming increasingly rare. The potential for a destructive avalanche still lurks out on slopes that hold old November snow at their base.



Midpack faceting in Thanksgiving Bowl

Wednesday 12/21

The arrival of the Arctic blast! A trace to a few inches fell Tuesday night, favoring the Irwin area. The winds held at moderate out of the West during the day, and ramped up around sunset, transporting much of the new snow. Just after sunset, an arctic cold front brought extreme west to northwest winds at all elevations, and plummeted temps to well below zero. Scarp Ridge, CBMR, and Elkton all recorded gusts over 80 mph on Wednesday night, but even downtown Crested Butte saw gusts reaching 50 mph.



Thursday 12/22

In the wake of arctic front, strong northwest winds and blowing snow continued. Although there is some uncertainty about how extensive wind loading vs wind erosion is, early observations suggest that both wind slabs and persistent slabs released during the wind event, including a large avalanche in Red Lady Bowl.

