

Introduction

The Crested Butte Avalanche Center's purpose is to provide valuable and needed avalanche and weather information to the Gunnison Valley and the communities and towns in and around the valley. Professional forecasters observe, record and report daily weather, snowpack and avalanche activity while providing daily avalanche conditions bulletins accessible to everyone.

The overall educational purpose of the CBAC is to provide necessary daily information that prevents deaths and injuries due to the natural and triggered occurrence of avalanches in the backcountry. The CBAC has been in operation since 2001.

Executive Summary

Funding

The CBAC is funded by cash donations and by grants. During 2011-2012 season, our total budget was \$27,596.86

CBAC has a net income of \$2,674 for the season. Our goal is to put 10% of our profit back into our general fund, leaving us only \$100 short of our goal this season.

Organization

The Center is a 501(C) 3 non-profit organization registered with the Federal Government and the State of Colorado.

Operational Season

The CB Avalanche Center operated from November 11th through April 7th and produced 143 daily avalanche bulletins. The core staff for the 2011/2012 season consisted of 4 forecasters who also work locally as backcountry ski guides, ski patrollers and avalanche educators. A Board of Directors consisting of 6 volunteers oversaw fundraising and coordinated events in the local community. Major community events included our annual "Awareness Night" on December 7th, a viewing of "A Life Ascending" in January, as well as helping to produce yet another spectacular Al Johnson Memorial Uphill/Downhill Telemark Race.

Dissemination

We sent out over 19,000 emails of our forecast and our website had 63,934 views throughout the season. We also posted the forecast at the Crested Butte Mountain Guides office and at Izzys. Our report was read live, by the forecasters, each weekday on our local radio station (KBUT 90.3), which serves the Gunnison Valley and the Pitkin Valley.

Staff and Board

This season we adjusted our staffing to create one fulltime forecasting position, 3 part-time forecast positions, one bookkeeper and one intern/forecaster in training. The fulltime position allows for more logistical work and office duties to be kept up with. Our Board consists of 7 members from various educational and professional backgrounds within the valley.

Seasonal Snowpack Highlights

Snowfall in 2011/2012

Snowfall was limited this year in most of the Mountain West and much of the US, and Crested Butte was no exception. The town of CB reported 96.5" of total snowfall. CBMR reported 145" and Irwin reported 271".

Avalanche Danger

The CBAC forecasted had HIGH danger a total of 7 times on the danger rose and we met Avalanche Warning criteria 3 times. However, Considerable danger was present on the danger rose a grand total of 45 days this season. To give a better idea of the mid-winter snowpack, we issued some form of Considerable danger every day from 1/16-2/3 and everyday from 2/9-3/7 (with the exception of 2/25). We did not forecast any High or Considerable danger for the entire month of December or after March 7th.

Program overview

Service area:

Our area encompasses approximately 120 square miles centered on the Town of Crested Butte in the Elk Mountains. The boundary is the Ruby Range to the west, Gunnison to the south, the West Elk Wilderness and the Quartz Creek/Pitkin Valley to the east.

Who we reach:

We reach backcountry skiers and snowboarders, snowshoers and snowmobilers. The CBAC receives observations from all groups but the ski community is best represented. Many more people also use our services for the locally- generated weather forecast.

Daily operations:

The full time forecaster schedule was 3-4 days a week. Part time forecasters were scheduled 1-2 days a week. All forecasters were required to gather field observations before their first forecasting shift began. The intern sat in with different forecasters throughout the season. The bookkeeper was paid an hourly rate for the season and dealt with all the paychecks and taxes.

Staff:

Steve Banks - Executive Director/Forecaster

AIARE Level 3 Avalanche Certified, AMGA/IFMGA Certified Mountain Guide, Lead Guide for Crested Butte Mountain Guides, Lead Guide for Irwin, Crested Butte Professional Ski Patroller

John Mackinnon - Full Time Forecaster

AIARE Level 3 Avalanche Certified, AMGA Aspirant Ski Mountaineering Guide, AIARE Level 2 Course Leader, guide for Crested Butte Mountain Guides, B.A. Geosciences

Josh Hirshberg - Forecaster

AIARE Level 3 Avalanche Certified, guide for Crested Butte Mountain guides, AIARE Level 2 Course Leader, B.A. in Snow Studies and Social Ecology from Prescott College

Billy Rankin - Forecaster

AIARE Level 3 Avalanche Certified, Snow Safety Director for Irwin, Former Crested Butte Ski Patroller, Wilderness Medicine Instructor.

Alan Bernholtz - Forecaster

Founder of CBAC, AIARE Level 3 Certified, AIARE Level 2 Course Leader, Operations Director for Irwin, Former Crested Butte Professional Ski Patroller

Jayson Simons-Jones - Forecaster

AIARE Level 3 Avalanche Certified, AMGA Certified Ski Mountaineering Guide, former Crested Butte Ski Patrol, Owner of Crested Butte Mountain Guides, Wilderness Medicine Instructor

Michaela Precourt-Intern

AIARE Level 2, WFR, B.A. in Snow Science and Adventure Education from Prescott College

Board Members:

President: Reid Templeton, Vice President: Than Acuff, Secretary: Kirk Haskell, Treasurer: John Mortimer, Officers: Chris Myall, Billy Rankin, Alan Bernholtz

Observers

Public

The CBAC struggled to receive information from the general public this season. While this is not unusual in low snow years, it was a marked difference from the previous year.

Town site of Gothic

Billy Barr from Gothic emailed us with any significant avalanche observations. He also reported on any snowfall or significant weather events.

Irwin Cat Skiing

Irwin provided daily observations as well as access to their 2 remote weather stations.

Fundraising

Supporters

The Crested Butte Avalanche Center cannot operate without the help from the local community. The support comes from all demographics of Crested Butte including concerned residents to businesses. The support comes from a wide range of businesses exemplifying the uniqueness of the town of Crested Butte and the people who live there. Here is a list of those people and businesses that contributed to our success.

Businesses:

Crested Butte Medical Center, Artesanos Rugs, The Last Steep, Onsite Roofing, Ice Mountain Jewlery, Mountain Spirits Liquor, Brick Oven Pizza, CB Printing, CB Auto, Alpengardner, Clear View Window Washers, Elk Mountain Lodge, Mountain Colors Paint and Design, Dragon Sheet Metal, Eagle Sales of Crested Butte, The Eldo, Donitas Cantina, CB Builders, Smokey Bay Fisheries, Scheafer Roofing, .

Awareness Night

This season we had approximately 200 attendants. We had an awareness presentation, videos, pizza and beer and a raffle. We raised \$6565 through pizza and beer sales, a silent auction and sales of our ever popular t-shirts and hoodies.

Grants

The **Jean Thomas Lambert Foundation** generously donated \$5000 for the operations and daily bullitens. The **Town of Crested Butte** donated \$500 towards our awareness night.

Other Logistics

Office

This was our 4th season in the “Old Town Marshalls Office” which is ideal for the CBAC as it allows us to have an in-town location for the public to stop by. This year the CBAC held weekly stability meetings on Monday mornings for all guides, patrollers, general public or anyone who wanted to talk snow.

Scheduling

Scheduling went as follows: John MacKinnon forecasted Monday-Wednesday and every other Sunday, holding office hours open to the public on Monday mornings. Josh Hirshberg Forecasted Wednesday and every other Sunday with Steve Banks picking up Friday and Saturday. In such a transitional year, we saw many scheduling changes and help from Alan Bernholtz, Billy Rankin and Jayson Simons-Jones to fill in on occasion.

Communication with CAIC

We continue a good working relationship with the CAIC. The CBAC has begun entering all our weather, snowpack and avalanche observations into the CAIC database. We will continue this as a regular procedure next season. During a meeting with the CAIC both avalanche centers agreed to *SKYPE* with each other between 6:00 and 6:20 am to touch base and talk about the danger rating.

Forecasting Timeline

The CBAC forecast is uploaded to the Web by 7:00 am. The majority of our users visit the website between 7:00 and 8:00 am. Emails are sent out no later than 7:30 am via iContact.