

DOCUMENT PACKAGE COVER SHEET

February 17, 2026 Perry's Peak Avalanche

Document package contents:

- This cover sheet
- Supplemental Document of Key Findings and Clarifications from Independent Preliminary Report. The Supplemental Document was prepared by Blackbird Mountain Guides (BMG)
- Independent Preliminary Report on the February 17, 2026 Avalanche. The Independent Preliminary Report was prepared by avalanche professional Don Sharaf.

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BLACKBIRD MOUNTAIN GUIDES

**Supplemental Key Findings and Clarifications
from Independent Preliminary Report**

Regarding the February 17, 2026 Avalanche on Perry's Peak

To accompany the attached Independent Preliminary Report prepared by Don Sharaf

Introduction

This document package contains two separate documents: (1) this Supplemental Document of Key Findings from Independent Preliminary Report, prepared by Blackbird Mountain Guides (BMG), and (2) the Independent Preliminary Report on the February 17, 2026 avalanche, prepared by avalanche professional Don Sharaf, who was engaged by BMG to conduct an independent investigation of the avalanche accident and prepare a written report.

The information in this supplemental document is not part of the Independent Preliminary Report prepared by Don Sharaf and should be read as a companion to it, not a substitute for it. This document provides additional reference material, including key definitions, clarification of technical terms, summaries of key findings, and context not included in the Independent Preliminary Report.

The Independent Preliminary Report is the most thorough account produced to date of the events of February 17, 2026, drawing on a broad set of data, records, and firsthand statements that were not available for other investigative reports or news accounts published to date. Some questions may not have complete answers at this time, and some information may remain unknown.

Key Findings and Clarifications from the Independent Preliminary Report

The Group Attempted to Avoid Avalanche Runout Zone, but the Creek Crossing Was Blocked

Strava tracks show the group appeared to make two to three separate attempts to cross to the far side of the creek, consistent with an effort to reach terrain even farther from the avalanche runout zone.

“Examining Choo’s Strava track (Figure 12) from 2/17/2026 the group appeared to make 2 to 3 separate attempts to cross to the far side of the creek, but were most likely turned back by open water and vertical creek sidewalls.” (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 20)

The creek is normally bridged by consolidated snow and crossable in winter. Because of the unusual conditions of the season, it appears to have remained open and uncrossable below Red Dot Pass, preventing the group from reaching the northwest side of the creek. Based on the group’s tracks from the preceding days, they would not have known about this impassable barrier before their exit on Tuesday morning.

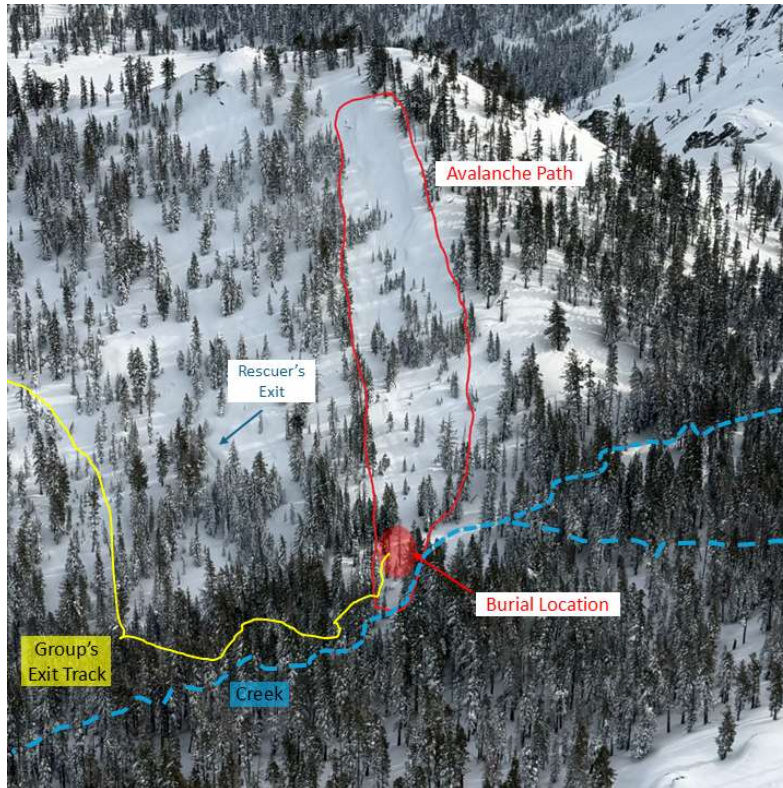
Crossing open water in winter storm conditions presents significant hazards, including cold-water immersion and wetting of insulation layers or climbing skins, increasing the risk of hypothermia, frostbite, and an inability to continue travel.

When the avalanche occurred, the group was traveling through low angle, treed terrain:

“When the group was caught by the avalanche, they were at an elevation of 7,850’ crossing a broad, flat-bottomed drainage in treed terrain that was 10°-11° in steepness. The start zone is believed to be ~390 vertical feet above their traverse.” (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 25)

The group was also traveling downslope from the routes most commonly used to exit Red Dot Pass:

“The burial site and assumed traverse track (based on Choo and KW’s Strava GPX tracks) are approximately 80’ downhill from the Red Dot Trail summer trail and well below the “common ingress/egress route” based on public Strava tracks (Figure 15) and BMG guide comments.”
(Independent Preliminary Report, p. 34)



p. 31 Figure 12

Guides Used Training and Experience in Selecting the Exit Route

Trained mountain guides commonly operate during periods of High avalanche danger and active storms by applying established risk-management practices, including terrain and route selection, continuous assessment of weather and snowpack conditions, and careful management of exposure. Avalanche danger ratings [see p.43 of Independent Preliminary Report] are regional forecasts intended to inform terrain selection and decision-making; they are not a prohibition on travel. AMGA- and American Avalanche Association-trained guides use these forecasts in conjunction with real-time field observations to adjust routes, objectives, and travel techniques as conditions evolve. Guiding under elevated avalanche hazard is a recognized and accepted professional practice when these methods are applied.

Why the Johnson Canyon Route Was Not Used

“Leaving Frog Lake Huts the route crosses SE facing avalanche terrain that varies between 28°-37°. This avalanche terrain could be bypassed to the west but that would involve crossing on to private property. The 7C property has aggressively pursued trespassers in past years and knowledgeable parties avoid crossing that property boundary (Figure 19). The Truckee Donner Land Trust also tells visitors not to trespass on this land on their website directions.

Approximately 3 miles from [sic] the huts the route to the Johnson Canyon roadhead follows the Summit Lake Road which crosses SW facing avalanche terrain. This avalanche terrain is unavoidable given the private property to the north. The Summit Lake Road is under 300 vertical feet of avalanche-capable terrain of 30°-40° for 900 linear feet of exposure.”
(Independent Preliminary Report, p. 39)

As noted on p. 39, signage on the property boundary reads “WARNING NO TRESPASSING FIREARMS IN USE KEEP OUT.”

Why the Tahoe Donner Nordic Center Route Was Not Used

“This access route is the longest way to access the Frog Lake Huts...”

“There is no viable route that entirely avoids these large slide paths that does not cross onto the 7C property.” (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 40)

In addition to the avalanche exposure on this route, its length combined with the extended flatness and uphill nature of the terrain would have been a significant consideration for the group’s endurance and safety in deep snow and low visibility.

The Route the Group Chose

“High danger UP shows an ascent route up the drainage that is beyond the expected reach of the avalanche paths off Perry’s Peak. This route was created with the intent of staying on the far side of the creek, but it was not intended to be followed precisely... The High danger UP route is generally located on the far side of the creek axis (which is very subtle) in the area that the group was caught.”

“Based on field observations of the burial site, the group was ~30-50 feet away from the toe of the avalanche and ~50 feet away from the marked route High Danger UP on the map. It is unlikely that the group was moved a significant distance from their traverse track to their location in the avalanche debris pile... This is also echoed by KW’s and Choo’s Strava track.”
(Independent Preliminary Report, pp. 27, 34)

“High Danger UP” is the name Senior Guide Smith gave, on his CalTopo map, to an ascent route for use when avalanche danger is High. As discussed above, Strava data and the independent report both indicate the group made repeated attempts to cross to the far side of the creek, consistent with an effort to follow this route, before ultimately being turned back by open water.

Weather Forecast and Guide Planning: Day One and Two, February 15 and 16

At the guide meeting on the morning of Sunday, February 15, the team discussed a break in the storm forecast for Tuesday morning, February 17:

“The weather forecast discussed in the Sunday Morning Guide Meeting included a break in the storm on Tuesday (2/17/2026) morning. This “weather window” looked favorable for the exit to the roadhead.” (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 16)

The National Weather Service forecast discussion available that morning was incorporated into BMG's AM Form for February 15: "with the highest snowfall rates overnight through Monday evening, then again Tuesday afternoon-evening," implying a comparative lull on Tuesday morning.

On Sunday, guides Alissandratos and Henry conducted snowpack tests:

"Alissandratos dug a pit on northerly aspects at Red Dot Pass and then Alissandratos and Henry dug on a NE aspect near Frog Notch around 8000'. Their goal was to assess the facets and crust from the snow drought. They found no reaction in their compression and extended column tests on the persistent weak layer, the crust nor any other layer (ECTX and CTN)."
(Independent Preliminary Report, pp. 16-17)

As referenced on p. 17 in the Independent Preliminary Report, BMG owner Blais and Alissandratos spoke by phone on Monday afternoon to discuss the plan for the following day. Alissandratos reported the results of the snowpack tests above, including no propagation in the extended column test (ECTN), and no other avalanches observed Sunday or Monday. Alissandratos said clients had asked about skiing an additional lap before heading out the following morning; Blais and Alissandratos discussed that the focus should instead be on exiting before the storm intensified further, if conditions allowed.

Guide Mindset on the Morning of the Avalanche: Day Three, February 17

The morning meeting on February 17 covered the following priorities:

"No morning extra ski lap before leaving. The weather forecast was such that they should leave as soon as possible following breakfast and packing. The predicted Tuesday morning weather window was going to shut quickly. They should maintain wide margins in avalanche terrain. This included carefully managing the descent from Red Dot Pass. There was discussion of landmarks for the safest route down to the meadows. Smith stated that they should descend to the far side of the meadow so that they could create the widest margin between the north paths of Perry's Peak and themselves, ideally crossing to the west side of the creek at the NW side of the meadow. Anticipating strong to extreme winds, high snowfall rates, and very poor visibility they discussed very careful client management when crossing Frog Pass, so that no one could wander off route for the short traverse of the alpine zone." (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 18)

As discussed above, Strava data indicates the group attempted, and was unable to complete, the creek crossing that was the specific objective identified in this meeting.

Group Spacing While Breaking Trail

Mountain guiding requires continuous assessment of dynamic conditions and competing hazards rather than rigid adherence to a single protocol. In non-avalanche terrain during a storm, the priority would typically be to prevent clients from becoming separated, and it is not standard practice to split a larger group during an exit if the objective is not to ski.

"The most likely explanation for the lack of spacing between skiers was that the guides did not recognize that they were in an avalanche path. The tight tree spacing, trees between the group and the start zone above, and the similarity to the terrain that they had just been

crossing does not make the path easily recognizable. Navigating by a digital map on a phone can be impossible in blizzard conditions.” (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 20, n.23)

Earlier that same morning, while travelling from Red Dot Pass, the guides spaced the group out:

“Tilley continued to the meadow, while Henry stayed at the slope breakover and staged clients 2 at a time from his position as they skied through. The guides all had radios and were able to keep people spaced apart on slope and in view of the guides on the way down.”
(Independent Preliminary Report, p. 20)

Avalanche Trigger: Natural or Human-Triggered

“It is not known, nor will ever be known, whether the avalanche was naturally triggered, or triggered by the weight of the group. None of the survivors report hearing or feeling a ‘whumpf’ or collapse prior to the avalanche.” (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 20)

The absence of a whumpf or collapse is consistent with a naturally triggered avalanche.

Storm Totals: Snowfall Through the Time of the Avalanche

Only the snowfall that had accumulated by 11:00 a.m. on February 17, the approximate time of the avalanche, is relevant to the avalanche itself. Subsequent snowfall affected recovery efforts, but not the hazard the group encountered that morning. The Independent Preliminary Report and the Sierra Avalanche Center (SAC) final report both reference the total snowfall of the storm through February 19, two full days after the avalanche, to explain snowfall variability, rescue conditions, and why the crown and other physical evidence of the avalanche were difficult to observe afterward.

Time	Snowfall Total
2/17, 11:00 a.m. (time of the avalanche)	28–39 inches
2/19, 4:00 p.m. (end of storm)	59–73 inches

There is some difference of opinion as to whether the Independence Lake SNOTEL station (28 inches) or the Central Sierra Snow Lab (39 inches) is more representative of the Frog Lake area; the true figure is most likely between the two, since the Central Sierra Snow Lab sits on the crest and typically records higher totals than stations farther from it.

Storm Data: Wind Speeds

There are differences between the Independent Preliminary Report and the SAC final report regarding the wind speeds recorded around the time of the avalanche. The Independent Preliminary Report explains this discrepancy as follows:

“The wind data from the various sources have a wide spread of values. The SAC Accident Report uses wind data from the Siberia Station at Olympic Valley. This station is AC powered and easily accessed from the chairlift. This makes that data reliable and consistent, but not necessarily the best analogue for the avalanche on Perry’s Peak. The Siberia Station is 500’ higher than the start zone at Perry’s Peak is located on the Sierra Crest and is 13.5 miles away.” (Independent Preliminary Report, pp. 8-9)

“The Tahoe Donner Station and the Donner Pass Road Station were more representative of the conditions that the group saw on Red Dot Pass and on their travel toward Frog Pass.”
(Independent Preliminary Report, p. 9)

The Tahoe Donner and Donner Pass Road stations, both roughly ten miles closer to the accident site than Siberia and more similar to it in terrain, elevation, and proximity to the Sierra Crest, present a more accurate picture of the conditions the group actually experienced:

Station (Elevation)	Sustained Wind	Gusts
Tahoe Donner (7,399')	14–32 mph	up to 62 mph
Donner Pass Road (7,636')	17–22 mph	up to 45 mph
Siberia (8,700')	64–80 mph	up to 125 mph

Rescue Timeline

“Blais (BMG owner) and Smith (BMG Senior Guide) left the Boreal roadhead and started breaking trail up to Frog Pass. Three members of Tahoe Nordic SAR and one member from Nevada County Sheriff SAR later caught up to Blais and Smith below Rest Stop Bowl following their broken trail toward the accident site.” (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 22)

BMG initiated its rescue response at approximately 11:36 a.m., after a call from the Nevada County Sheriff’s Office, which had been alerted by Tilley’s InReach message. After gathering supplies, driving to the trailhead through the storm, and coordinating with search and rescue teams, Blais and Smith left the trailhead for the accident site at 2:40 p.m.

At the scene, Tilley made the decision to continue searching for additional victims rather than pause to immediately fully extricate those survivors already located:

“Tilley made the call to keep searching.” (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 21)

This decision reflected Tilley’s assessment of the hazard and was consistent with accepted avalanche rescue protocol:

“Avalanche multi-victim rescue triage dictates that if the person has a patent airway then you continue searching for more victims under the snow. As resources arrive, or time passes by, then the rescuer should return to the live finds and extricate and perform secondary survey, render aid, and treat for hypothermia.” (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 21, n.24)

Key Definitions

Because mountain guiding involves technical terms that may not be familiar outside the industry, the terms below are defined for reference. Additional definitions appear in the Independent Preliminary Report's Glossary (p. 43) and footnotes.

Start Zone

A start zone is the section of an avalanche path where the avalanche releases, located at the top of the path and typically characterized by terrain steeper than about 30 degrees with little to no dense forest cover. It is not the area where the group started on the slope. The avalanche in this case started roughly 390 feet above the group as they traveled through lower angle terrain below (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 25).

AM Meeting

An AM meeting, or morning meeting, is a pre-operational briefing conducted by guides in the field that day to assess the day's risks. Topics include environmental conditions, hazard forecasts, risk management measures, communications, operational objectives, and client considerations, including client abilities and limitations. Clients do not attend AM meetings, so that guides can discuss risk candidly, challenge one another's assessments, and make operational decisions based solely on professional judgment, without actual or perceived pressure from clients who may have invested significant time, money, or emotion in a particular objective.

Extreme Wind

Strong and Extreme are designations commonly used by avalanche practitioners in the field. Light wind speeds are from 1-16 mph, moderate wind speeds are from 17-25mph, strong wind speeds are from 26-38 mph and extreme winds are > 38mph. p. 1 (American Avalanche Association, 2022)

"High Danger UP" and "High Danger Exit Ski"

These are route names chosen by Senior Guide Smith on his CalTopo map of the area. "High danger exit ski" identifies the descent route from Red Dot Pass to the bottom of the drainage as an option for use when avalanche hazard is High. "High danger UP" identifies the corresponding ascent route from the bottom of the drainage to the Frog Plateau, also as an option for use when avalanche hazard is High.

Roadhead / Trailhead

The Independent Preliminary Report uses the term "roadhead," which is synonymous with "trailhead."

Clarification of Images Unrelated to Feb 17 Terrain

Following the avalanche, video and images circulated publicly that do not depict the Frog Lake area or this incident, and appear to have contributed to inaccurate narratives about the terrain on February 17, 2026.

Footage that circulated on social media of a helicopter-and-"Bambi Bucket" avalanche mitigation technique, showing large avalanches being released on extreme terrain, was not filmed at or near Perry's Peak or any terrain close to Frog Lake. That footage was taken years earlier, during a large storm cycle in

March 2023, on an entirely different mountain, and the terrain shown bears no resemblance to the terrain the guides were managing on February 17. The same water-bucket technique was used by Pacific Gas & Electric during avalanche mitigation efforts at the actual accident site on February 20, 2026 (Independent Preliminary Report, p. 25), but the widely circulated video is not footage of that event and should not be used to characterize the terrain or hazard the group encountered.

Because earlier media reports have cited images of terrain unrelated to the February 17 avalanche, it is important to note that the Independent Preliminary Report's generic schematic diagrams of avalanche components (Figures A-1 and A-2, p. 44) are illustrative only and are not images of the Frog Lake avalanche or terrain.

Guide Qualifications and Training Standards

Unlike many international mountain guiding jurisdictions, the United States does not require mountain guides or guide services to hold a specific professional certification or complete standardized technical training. As a result, guide qualifications vary significantly across the industry. As an IFMGA-certified guide-owned company, BMG voluntarily applies the standards and training progression established by the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA), so that its guides exceed minimum regulatory requirements and demonstrate a commitment to nationally recognized best practices in risk management, technical competence, and client care.

Under the AMGA scope of practice, Certified Ski/Splitboard Guides can work unsupervised in all ski terrain. This includes glaciated and non-glaciated terrain with ascents and descents that may involve short-roping on moderate rock and mixed terrain. They also act as supervisors to Apprentice Ski Guides. Assistant Ski/Splitboard Guides can work independently on non-glaciated terrain. Apprentice Ski Guides can work under the supervision of a Certified Ski/Splitboard Guide on non-glaciated terrain that does not involve rope work; "supervision" means working in the same basin as the supervising guide, so an Apprentice Ski Guide can lead clients independently as long as the supervising guide is operating in the same basin (source: amga.com/resources/scope-of-practice).

On the February 2026 trip, BMG staffed four guides for eleven clients, roughly twice the guide-to-client ratio BMG considers to be typical in the industry for non-glaciated ski touring terrain.

Guide Biography Summaries

Summary of Guide Biographies Included in Independent Preliminary Report

Andrew Alissandratos. Andrew was an AMGA Certified Ski/Splitboard Guide, an Apprentice Alpine Guide, an Apprentice Rock Guide, and an AIARE Avalanche Course Leader with Avalanche Professional Level 2 training. He was a Senior Guide with Blackbird Mountain Guides. As a fully certified Splitboard Guide, Andrew could operate independently and without supervision in all ski terrain, and could supervise apprentice ski guides in non-glaciated terrain within the same basin. He had over 80 days of professional coursework and guide training, not including prerequisites between courses, and had led 10 previous Frog Lake trips for BMG.

Niki Choo. Niki was an Apprentice Ski Guide with Professional Level 1 avalanche training and an AIARE Avalanche Course Instructor. She was also a PSIA Level 3 Ski Instructor with 15 years of backcountry skiing experience prior to guiding and had over 40 days of professional coursework and guide training, not including prerequisites between courses. Niki had shadow-guided an AMGA Certified Ski Guide on a Frog Lake trip during Considerable avalanche hazard in January 2026.

Mike Henry. Mike was an Apprentice Ski Guide with Professional Level 1 avalanche training and an AIARE Avalanche Course Instructor, with over 40 days of professional coursework and guide training, not including prerequisites between courses. He knew the Frog Lake terrain well, from personal trips, portering trips, and two previous guided trips to Frog Lake Huts.

Ryan Tilley. Ryan is an AMGA Certified Alpine Guide, Certified Rock Guide, and Assistant Ski Guide, an Aspirant IFMGA Mountain Guide one exam away from becoming one of fewer than 300 fully certified IFMGA Mountain Guides in the United States. He can operate without supervision in all non-glaciated ski terrain and in complex alpine terrain. He has Professional Level 2 avalanche training, is an AIARE Avalanche Course Instructor, and has over 100 days of professional coursework and guide training, not including prerequisites between courses.

Biographies Not Included in Independent Preliminary Report

Zeb Blais. Zeb is Blackbird Mountain Guide's owner and founder and is an IFMGA / American Mountain Guide, certified by the AMGA in all three mountain guiding disciplines (Ski, Rock and Alpine). The IFMGA certification is globally recognized across 28 member countries and represents the highest international training standard for mountain guides. Zeb is an AIARE Avalanche Course Leader with AIARE Level 3 Avalanche Training. He has over 100 days of professional coursework and guide training. Zeb has 19 years of professional experience in avalanche mitigation and mountain guiding, having worked for 20+ mountain guiding services and ski patrols. Zeb has guided five Frog Lake Trips plus multiple personal trips.

Jason Smith. Jason is an AMGA Certified Ski Guide, an Apprentice Alpine Guide, and an AIARE Avalanche Course Leader with Avalanche Professional Level 2 training. He is a Senior Guide with Blackbird Mountain Guides. As a fully certified Ski Guide, Jason can operate independently and without supervision in all ski terrain, and can supervise apprentice ski guides in non-glaciated terrain within the same basin. He has over 80 days of professional coursework and guide training, not including prerequisites between courses, and has guided 12 Frog Lake trips for BMG, as well many personal ski days at Frog Lake Huts.

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PRELIMINARY REPORT on the FEBRUARY 17, 2026 AVALANCHE

Accident report regarding the February 17, 2026 avalanche on Perry's Peak, Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, California. This report reflects the information available as of July 15, 2026 and may be updated as further information becomes available. Definitions not supplied within the body of the report can be found in Appendix A (Glossary). Valuable explanatory information is often found in the footnotes of each page. All BMG clients are identified by their initials, while some of the living BMG guides and employees are identified by their initials followed by "-G".

Investigation Sources

This report is based on statements and data from many sources. The initial and final reports from the Sierra Avalanche Center helped paint the picture of the avalanche and the subsequent rescue efforts. Several media sources were used to establish the accident, rescue, and recovery timeline. Telemetry data from remote weather stations in the Perry's Peak vicinity were analyzed. Oral interviews (AC-G, Tilley, Blais, and Smith) and written statements filled many gaps in the account and pointed out inconsistencies in the public narrative. Maps, photos, and data from a Senior Guide at Blackbird Mountain Guide (BMG) helped tremendously with terrain and route analysis, the rescue efforts, and winter operations at BMG. Pre-trip questionnaires from the clients, the acknowledgement of risk form, and information from the BMG website illustrate the information available to clients regarding potential risks and hazards and their nature. BMG Morning Guide Meeting forms showed the preliminary information that the guides had each day and what their thought process was going into the day.

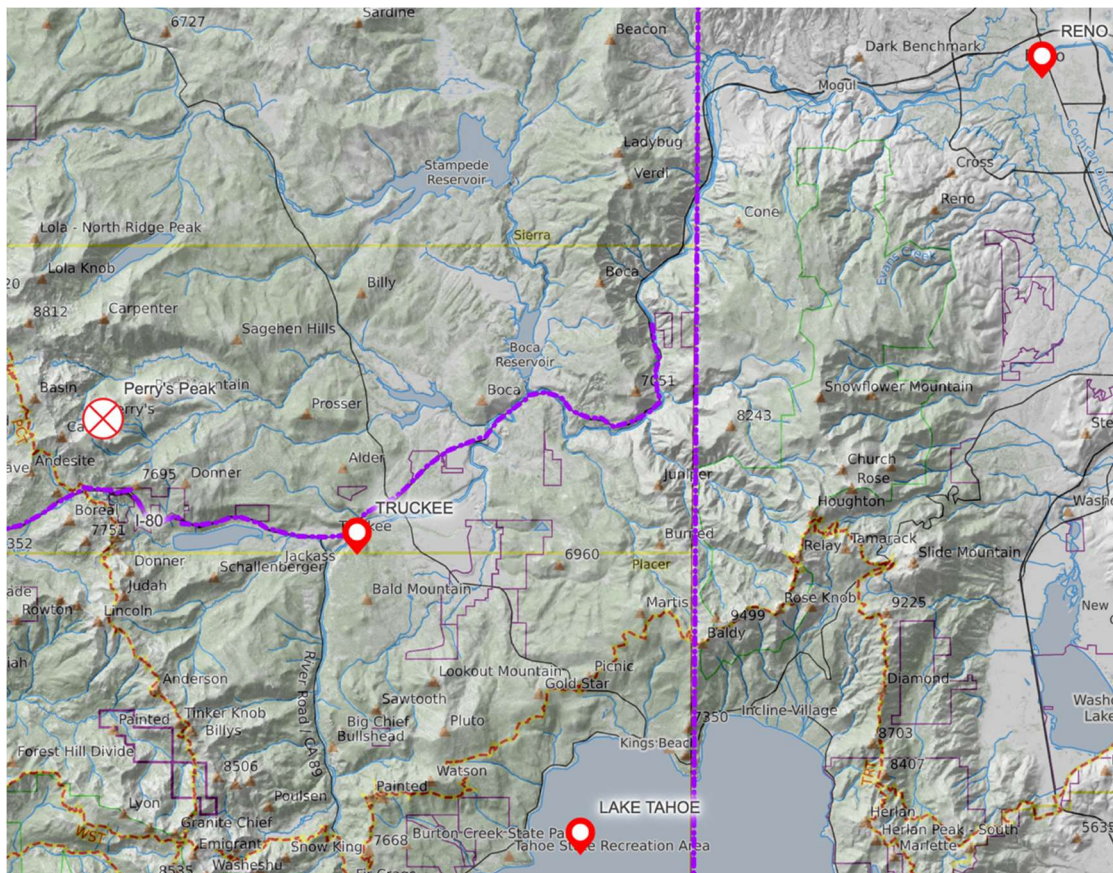
Background

On the morning of February 17, 2026 two groups of Blackbird Mountain Guides (BMG) and their clients were returning to the Castle Peak Trailhead after staying two nights at the Frog Lake Huts. Early in the morning of day 2 on the 3-day guided backcountry ski trip, a major winter storm brought heavy snowfall and strong (25-38mph) to extreme (exceeding 38 mph)¹ south to southwesterly winds to all elevations around the Central Sierra. By day 3

¹ Strong and Extreme are designations commonly used by avalanche practitioners in the field. Light wind speeds are from 1-16 mph, moderate wind speeds are from 17-25mph, strong wind speeds are from 26-38 mph and extreme winds are >38mph. These delineations have rough corollaries in the amount of snow that can be transported. (American Avalanche Association, 2022). A full table of wind speeds can be found in the glossary in Appendix A Table A-3).

new snow and wind-transported snow had created high avalanche hazard². As the group of 11 clients and 4 guides were breaking trail toward Frog Pass, they were caught in an avalanche. Thirteen people were captured by the moving avalanche debris and 12 were completely buried. Rescue efforts initiated by the remaining guide and a client led to the live rescue of four additional clients, but nine people, including clients and guides, died in the avalanche debris before they could be recovered. The BMG owner, a Senior BMG Guide, and members of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue (TNSAR) and Nevada County Sheriff Search and Rescue (NCSSAR) skied in to the survivors in the early evening and assisted them back to the huts, where they subsequently were transported by snowcats. Rescuers found eight of the nine avalanche victims on that first night but had to leave them onsite until more resources became available and greater scene safety could be ensured. Following slope testing and mitigation efforts on the morning of 2/20/26 five of the victims were recovered before strong winds and darkness shut down recovery operations. The following morning the four remaining victims were recovered.

Accident Site Locator Map. The dashed purple North-South line is the border between Nevada and California.



² Hazard and Danger are often used interchangeably. The North American Avalanche Danger Scale can be found in the glossary in Appendix A (Table A-1).

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Trip Overview

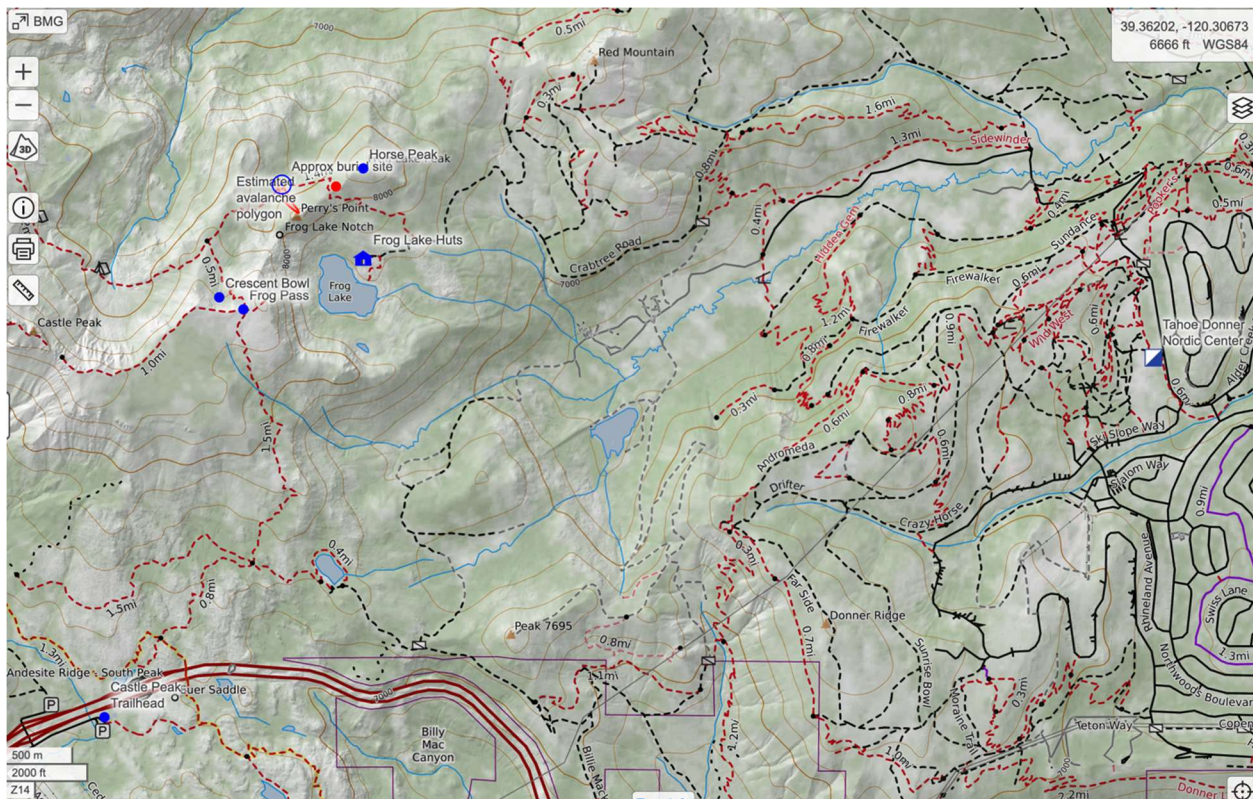


Figure 1: Overview map of Frog Lake and Castle Peak Zone. The map includes Tahoe Donner Nordic Center to include the trailhead where rescue transport transitioned to road-based vehicles.

Blackbird Mountain Guides (BMG) offers guided trips in California, Oregon, and Washington, as well as international trips. These trips include mountaineering and rock-climbing trips in the summer, but a large portion of their offerings are guided winter ski trips and avalanche courses, particularly in the Tahoe Region of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The Frog Lake Huts opened in December 2021 and that winter BMG ran a trip out of the huts to investigate the feasibility of running guided multi-day trips in the surrounding terrain. From that winter onwards, BMG has run an average of 5 trips per season with experience managing their groups in considerable or high avalanche hazard during the trip. Since 2021 they have run 29 multi-day trips to the Frog Lake Huts.

The Frog Lake Huts multi-day backcountry ski and snowboard trip was advertised on the BMG website for the dates of February 15-17, 2026 and was a hybrid of self-support hut experience and one that was fully catered. The trip was open enrollment, but eight of the eleven spots were taken by a group of women who knew one another. These women all had backcountry experience to varying degrees ranging from level 1 avalanche courses to several years of ski patrol experience. A high intensity storm was forecasted to begin on their first night at the huts and was expected to bring “multiple feet of snow” in several different pulses by the end of the storm. On day 1 the group’s ingress to the huts and the

subsequent ski lap around Perry's Peak was uneventful and provided good snow quality. Day 2 was stormy and was an excellent day of skiing for both ski groups. On day 3 of the trip the storm intensity ramped up and trail-breaking and route-finding was made very difficult by high precipitation intensity and strong to extreme wind speeds. Between 1100 and 1130, ten clients and three guides were caught by an avalanche while ascending the drainage on the NW side of Perry's Peak. Eight clients and three guides were completely buried, one client was partially buried-critical, and one client was partially buried-not critical³. Rescue efforts by the fourth guide Tilley immediately following the avalanche resulted in the survival of four clients. Subsequent rescue response was hindered by blizzard conditions with outside rescuers reaching the accident scene at 1730 and the survivors made it to the road system at ~2100 that night. Of the 9 people who remained buried, eight were located in the early evening of 2/17 (at the time they thought they were only looking for 8 people). The final person was located and recovered with five of the nine victims on 2/20/26 when conditions were safe enough for the SAR teams to return to the scene. The following morning the remaining 4 were recovered.

Registration and Pre-Trip Information

Blackbird Mountain Guides' website for the Frog Lake Huts Trip provides several tabs of information including Overview, Itinerary, Prerequisites, Inclusions and a Gear List. The prerequisites lead with this statement: *The terrain at the Frog Lake Huts ranges from intermediate to expert level riding...* They then follow up with:

Here are the skills that you'll need for the trip.

- *Advanced Resort Riding Skills – Including off-piste terrain in challenging snow conditions.*
- *Intermediate Backcountry Experience – Including efficient gear management and skinning, transition technique, with 20+ days spent in the backcountry.*
- *Moderate fitness – Able to spend an active day outside, moving uphill at 1,000' per hour for durations of roughly 1 hour between breaks. Participants should be able to hike 4-6 miles and climb 1,500-2,500 vertical feet throughout the course of a day.*

The BMG registration form⁴ for the trip is online and asks prospective clients to rate their ability based on 5 stars with space for written explanations. Questions related to contact information, medical concerns, and dietary considerations followed standard formats. Questions specific to the ski program include the following:

³ A person is *partially buried-not critical* if their head is above the snow surface when the avalanche stops. A person is *partially buried-critical* if their head is below the snow surface when the avalanche stops but equipment, clothing and/or portions of their body are visible. A person is *completely buried* if they are completely below the snow surface when the avalanche stops. Clothing and attached equipment is not visible on the surface. (American Avalanche Association, 2022).

⁴ The complete registration form is in Appendix C (not including the Alpine Climbing and Rock Climbing pages which are not relevant to this trip).

1. *How would you rate your fitness and uphill movement while touring in the backcountry.*
2. *How would you rate your skiing or riding ability in backcountry terrain?*
3. *How would you rate your mountain sense in backcountry environments?*
4. *How familiar are you with backcountry ski and avalanche gear (beacon, shovel, probe, skins, touring bindings)?*

Two questions in the personal questionnaire stood out as providing insight to the clients.

1. *What is the hardest physical challenge you've completed?*
2. *What is the hardest physical challenge that you've been unsuccessful with?*

The clients generally chose not to expand on their “star” ratings in the ski questionnaire but gave thoughtful answers to the ‘hardest physical challenge’ questions. Of the 11 clients on this trip, five indicated they were returning clients of BMG (AA, CS, CA, AS, and KM). Two clients expressed that they had little winter backcountry experience (JH and KW).

The assumption of risk form executed by each guest highlights the many dangers associated with the winter mountain environment. The section addressing winter hazards reads as follows:

...Conditions that can make skiing, snowboarding, hiking, biking, or climbing difficult and dangerous and that may result in significant injury or death as a result of a fall or an impact with another object; these include, ski lifts and other ski area infrastructure and signage, steep slopes, ice, snow cornices, poor snow conditions, poor visibility, bad weather, low temperatures, extreme heat, sun exposure, trees, tree-wells, rocks, creeks, boulders, holes, depressions and other obstacles that may be below the snow surface, deep snow and other backcountry users, including those that may be untrained and making poor decisions. ...
Risks related to outdoor elements, including but not limited to avalanches, rockfall, inclement weather, thunder and lightning, severe and or varied wind, temperature or weather conditions.

Weather Data

There are many weather stations in the Central Sierra Zone particularly around Donner Summit. Within four miles of the avalanche accident site there are six weather stations. Three of those sites record temperature and snow data, while the three others are set up for temperature and wind data. Elevations vary from 6,900’ at the Central Sierra Snow Lab (CSSL) to as high as 8,340’ at the Independence Lake SNOTEL.

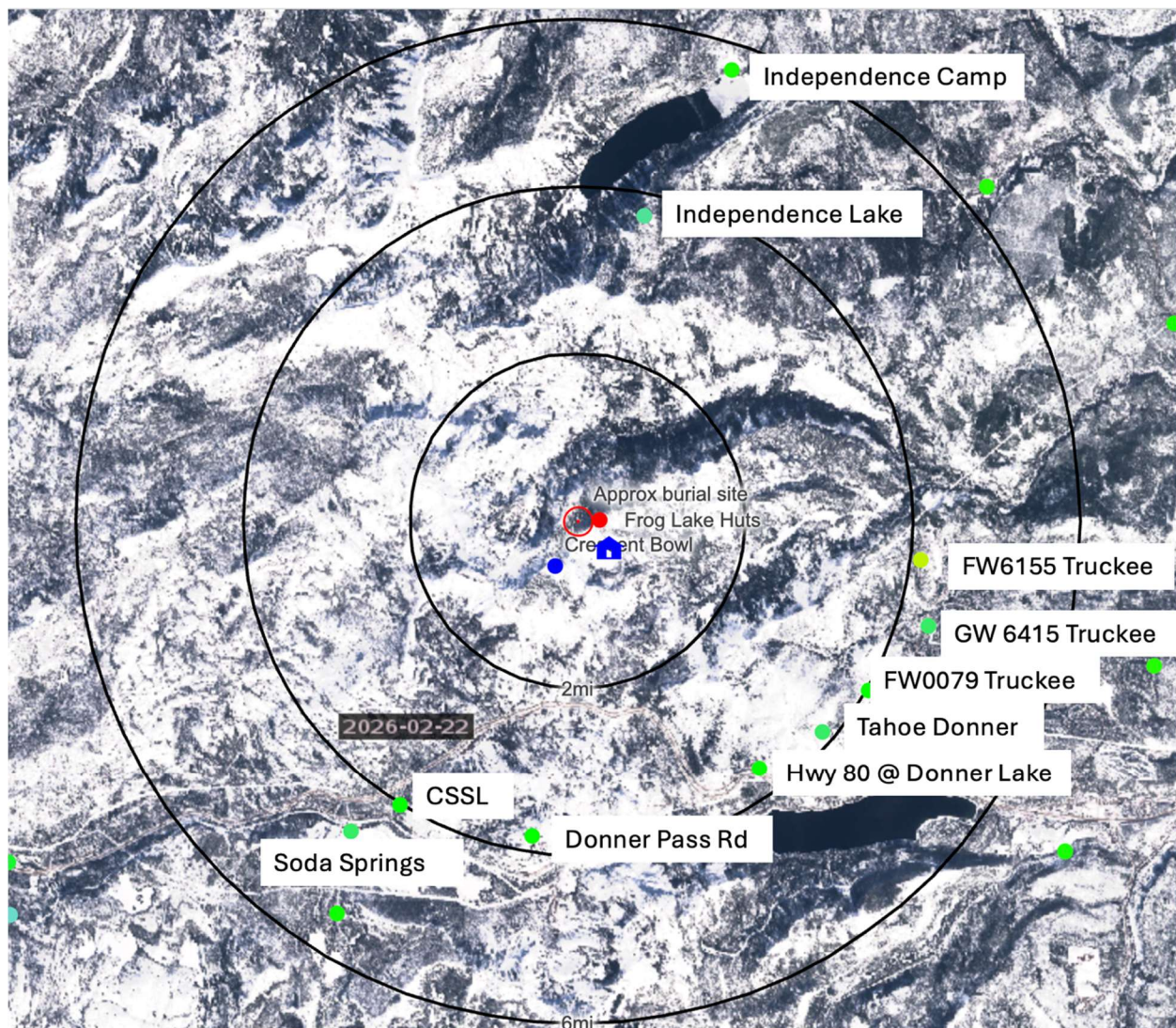


Figure 2: Sentinel satellite imagery forms the base layer of this image. Snow coverage as of 2/22/26. Range rings are located at 2, 4, and 6 miles from the avalanche accident site. Most of these weather sites had snow depth and precipitation data, while a few others have wind data. All stations have temperature data.

Examining the data from these stations confirms that the storm between 0200 on 2/16/26 and 1600 on 2/19/26 was indeed a big storm. The spread in snowfall and Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) amounts does vary significantly. Using HS (settled snow height) for interval and storm (HST) totals is a good way to capture the overall depth of the snowpack and potential trail-breaking challenges. Adding up hourly snowfall amounts can create a misleading picture of how much snow was accumulating. From a snowpack perspective the best way to analyze added stress to the snowpack is by the amount of weight being added, which is calculated from changes in the Snow Water Equivalent (SWE). In Table 1, changes in HS and SWE are calculated for notable times in the accident timeline. These times are at irregular intervals. These selected times, or time ranges, include:

Date	Time (Range)	Notable Event
2/16/26	0100-0400	Depending upon the station, this is when the site began recording snow/precipitation for the storm event.
2/16/26	1600	This was the time that both groups returned to the huts after skiing on day 2 of their trip.
2/17/26	0700	This was the time that the BMG Guides met for their morning guide meeting. It actually started five minutes before 0700.
2/17/26	0900	This was the time that the BMG group left Frog Lake Huts for their exit to the trailhead.
2/17/26	1000	This was the time that the group was all together on top of Red Dot Pass.
2/17/26	1100	This was the approximate time that the avalanche occurred.
2/17/26	1800	This was the approximate time that the SAR teams left the accident site to return to the Frog Lake Huts and subsequently the Tahoe Donner Nordic Center.
2/19/26	1400-1600	This was the time that snow/precipitation ended in the storm. This has little bearing on the accident but illustrates the variation between weather stations for the same storm.

It is unknown to the report author, which of these sites is the most representative of the snowfall at the time of the avalanche. Local knowledge from the BMG guides points to the Central Sierra Snow Lab (CSSL) as being the best analogue for the Frog Lake Area. Observed storm snow depth when the guides returned to the huts on Day 2 was approximately 2 feet, which corresponds best with CSSL at 6,890'. Independence Lake SNOTEL at 8,300' is the most similar in elevation to the start zone of the path that avalanched. Regardless, within four miles of the accident site, there are significant differences in the amount of snowfall and that variation should be considered when trying to characterize the conditions that the BMG group encountered on day 2 and 3 of the trip. No matter which data set applies the best for the day of the accident, there was snow available for wind transport and the south to southwest winds were an ideal direction and speed for top-loading and cross-loading the start zones on the north side of Perry's Peak.

Temperatures, and temperature trend data were not especially notable during this storm. The temperatures remained below freezing for the duration of the entire storm and there were few temperature or wind spikes in the dataset that would have created obvious mid-storm shear planes prior to the time of the accident. These mid-storm shears likely existed, but their formation time did not jump out of the data.

The wind data from the various sources have a wide spread of values. The SAC Accident Report uses wind data from the Siberia Station at Olympic Valley. This station is AC

powered⁵ and easily accessed from the chairlift. This makes that data reliable and consistent, but not necessarily the best analogue for the avalanche on Perry's Peak. The Siberia Station is 500' higher than the start zone at Perry's Peak is located on the Sierra Crest⁶ and is 13.5 miles away. Wind speeds at Siberia Station at the approximate time of the avalanche (1100) averaged 80 mph with gusts to 125 mph (wind speeds of this nature would have been very difficult to make forward progress in). It seems more likely that the Tahoe Donner Station and the Donner Pass Road Station were more representative of the conditions that the group saw on Red Dot Pass and on their travel toward Frog Pass, which were all in comparatively wind-sheltered terrain. The Donner Pass Road weather station shows little variation in wind speeds between the time the group left Frog Lake Huts, when they met atop Red Dot Pass, and when the avalanche occurred (winds were from the SW with average winds of 22 mph and gusts to 45 mph). Winds at Tahoe Donner at the time the team was on Red Dot Pass time averaged 24 mph and gusted to 41 mph from the south. One hour later they had risen to an average of 32 mph with gusts to 62 mph from the south. It is difficult to say which weather station most accurately mirrors the wind speed on the Perry's Peak start zones on the day of the avalanche, but it seems that the Siberia weather station was not the best analogue for Perry's Peak. Perry's Peak lies several hundred feet below the Sierra Crest and in the lee of the "Frog Plateau" for south to southwest winds.

⁵ AC power allows anemometers to be heated. This keeps them from building up rime ice during storms and going offline. For this reason, avalanche centers often use this data as they are dependable through big storm events.

⁶ The Sierra Crest, like the Continental Divide is the highest part of the ridge that separates the drainages that drain to the west from the ones that drain to the east. Wind speeds far in excess of 100 mph are common along the Sierra Crest during major winter storms.

Table 1: Comparison/Overview of nearby weather stations. Orange highlighted cells indicate the total amount of storm snow and SWE at the time of the accident. Trend information for temperature use these codes. RR=Rising Rapidly, R=Rising Slowly, S=Steady, F= Falling Slowly, FR= Falling Rapidly. (American Avalanche Association, 2022).⁷

Station	Date	Time	Temperature (Degrees F)	Trend	Wind Speed (mph)	Wind Gust (mph)	Wind Trend	Wind Direction	HS (in.)	HIT (in.)	HST (in.)	HITW (in.)	SWE/HSTW (in.)	Comment
CSSL SNOTEL 6,890'	2/16/26	0100	28.8	S	-		-	-	29	0	0	0	0	Day2 -Start of Storm
	2/16/26	1600	27.7	FR					44	17	17	1.5	1.5	Day2 - End of Skiing Day
	2/17/26	0700	19.8	RS					56	12	29	1.4	2.9	Day3 Guide Meeting
	2/17/26	0900	20.7	S					63	7	36	0.3	3.2	Day3 Hut Departure
	2/17/26	1000							64	1	37	0.1	3.3	Day3 Red Dot Pass Decision
	2/17/26	1100	21.7	S					66	2	39	0.1	3.4	Day3 Avalanche
	2/17/26	1800	20.5	FS					73	7	46	1	4.4	Day3 SAR leaves Accident Site
	2/19/26	1600	20.7	FS	-		-	-	100		73	3.2	7.6	End of Storm
Independence Lake SNOTEL 8,340'	2/16/26	0200	24	S					54	0	0	0	0	Day2 -Start of Storm
	2/16/26	1600	25	S					66	12	12	1.2	1.2	Day2 - End of Skiing Day
	2/17/26	0700	14.4	RR					72	6	18	0.7	1.9	Day3 Guide Meeting
	2/17/26	0900	15.8	RS					76	4	22	0.3	2.2	Day3 Hut Departure
	2/17/26	1000	16.3	R					78	2	24	0.2	2.4	Day3 Red Dot Pass Decision
	2/17/26	1100	16.9	RS					82	4	28	0.2	2.6	Day3 Avalanche
	2/17/26	1800	15.3	FS					90	8	36	1	3.6	Day3 SAR leaves Accident Site
	2/19/26	1400	19	S					109	19	55	2.3	5.9	End of Storm
Independence Camp SNOTEL 6,970'	2/16/26	0400	30.6	S					29	0	0	0	0	Day2 -Start of Storm
	2/16/26	1600	28.4	FS					36	7	7	0.6	0.6	Day2 - End of Skiing Day
	2/17/26	0700	20.5	R					41	5	12	0.4	1	Day3 Guide Meeting
	2/17/26	0900	21	R					42	1	13	0.2	1.2	Day3 Hut Departure
	2/17/26	1000	21.9	R					43	1	14	0.1	1.3	Day3 Red Dot Pass Decision
	2/17/26	1100	21.9	S					44	1	15	0.1	1.4	Day3 Avalanche
	2/17/26	1800	20.8	S					49	5	20	0.7	2.1	Day3 SAR leaves Accident Site
	2/19/26	1400	22.3	FS					67	18	38	2.8	4.9	End of Storm
Tahoe Donner Synoptic Data 7,399'	2/16/26	0133	27	S	10	16	RS	SSE	24.5	0	0			Day2 -Start of Storm
	2/16/26	1633	25	FR	15	25	RS	S	34.2	9.7	10			Day2 - End of Skiing Day
	2/17/26	0733	17	RS	14	14	RS	S	37.8	3.6	13.6			Day3 Guide Meeting
	2/17/26	0933	19	R	25	45	RR	S	40.2	2.4	16			Day3 Hut Departure
	2/17/26	1033	20	S	24	41	S	S	41.5	1.2	17.2			Day3 Red Dot Pass Decision
	2/17/26	1133	21	R	32	62	RR	S	40.6	-0.9	16.3			Day3 Avalanche
	2/17/26	1833	18	FS	12	33	S	SSW	43.1	1.6	18.9			Day3 SAR leaves Accident Site
	2/19/26	1633	15	S	7	15	FS	SW	71	27.9	46.8			End of Storm
Donner Pass Road Synoptic Data 7,636'	2/16/26	0200	26	S	9.7	19.9	S	S						Day2 -Start of Storm
	2/16/26	1600	24.9	FR	15	23.8	S	W						Day2 - End of Skiing Day
	2/17/26	0700	16.6	S	16.9	34.4	RS	WSW						Day3 Guide Meeting
	2/17/26	0900	17.3	S	19.6	42.4	RS	SW						Day3 Hut Departure
	2/17/26	1000	18.1	S	22.9	43.7	S	SW						Day3 Red Dot Pass Decision
	2/17/26	1100	18.3	S	22.2	44.9	S	SW						Day3 Avalanche
	2/17/26	1800	17.2	F	17.1	33	F	WSW						Day3 SAR leaves Accident Site
	2/19/26	1600	15.1	S	16.9	24.9	F	WNW						End of Storm
OV Siberia Synoptic Data 8,700'	2/16/26	0200	23.1	R	39.9	51.4	R	W						Day2 -Start of Storm
	2/16/26	1600	22.2	FR	50.5	70.2	R	W						Day2 - End of Skiing Day
	2/17/26	0700	12.8	S	63.7	84.3	S	W						Day3 Guide Meeting
	2/17/26	0900	13.8	R	66.2	88.9	F	WSW						Day3 Hut Departure
	2/17/26	1000	14.4	S	79.2	103.8	S	WSW						Day3 Red Dot Pass Decision
	2/17/26	1100	15.4	R	80.4	125	R	WSW						Day3 Avalanche
	2/17/26	1800	13.1	S	39.4	70.4	FR	WSW						Day3 SAR leaves Accident Site
	2/19/26	1600	13.7	S	41	57.1	S	WSW						End of Storm

Guides

All BMG guides are expected to be AMGA (American Mountain Guide Association)/IFMGA (International Federation of Mountain Guides Association) guide certified or be in the process of attaining guide certification in the specific field areas that they work (Ski/Split Board, Alpine, and/or Rock). The AMGA course flow is somewhat complicated, but a simplified view of the ski discipline follows.⁸

⁷ Note the storm total at the end of the storm for the CSSL station from this data set is significantly lower than the total cited in the SAC report.

⁸ This course flow was modified in mid-2025 but reflects the process that these guides went through in previous years.

Apprentice Ski Guide – this person has successfully completed the Alpine Skills Course (6 days) and the Ski Guide Course/SGC (10 days).

Prior to the start of the SGC the applicant must submit a resume of 20 different ski tours including 5 that are in terrain of 40 degrees or steeper, 5 days that include at least 4500 vertical feet of ascent and descent, and 5 of which are multi-day tours using huts or ski camping.

The Apprentice Ski Guide is allowed to work under the supervision of certified ski guides in the management of clients. Apprentices must have Pro 1 Avalanche certification (5 days).

Assistant Ski Guide – Has gone through the steps to become an Apprentice Ski Guide and additionally taken the Advanced Ski Guide Course/Aspirant Ski Guide Exam/ASGC (10 days).

In addition to the SGC prerequisites, the candidates for the ASGC course must lead, or share the lead on 10 different alpine routes (2 of which include mid 5th class rock, snow, or ice); 10 different ski descents (5 of which are in complex glaciated terrain); and have guided/mock-guided at least 10 days in ski mountaineering terrain.

Assistant Ski & Splitboard Guides can work independently on non-glaciated terrain and under the supervision of a certified ski guide on glaciated terrain.

Ski Guide/Splitboard Guide – Has successfully completed the Ski Guide or Splitboard Guide Exam (10 days).

Prerequisites prior to the start of the Ski Guide Exam/SGE include 10 guided days in ski mountaineering terrain (5 of which are allowed to be mock-guided) and 10 personal ski descents (5 of which are in complex glaciated terrain and 5 of which are slopes 45 degrees or steeper),

Ski guides/Splitboard Guides must have successfully completed the Pro 2 avalanche course (6 days). Certified Ski Guides work unsupervised in all ski terrain. They also serve as supervisors and mentors to assistant and apprentice ski guides.

IFMGA Guide – This guide is certified in all three disciplines (Ski, Rock, and Alpine)

Andrew Allissandratos (Trip Leader)

Andrew, age 34, was the most familiar of the guide team with the Frog Lakes/Castle Peak terrain. He was an AMGA Certified Splitboard Guide, Apprentice Alpine Guide, and Apprentice Rock Guide. As a fully certified Splitboard Guide Andrew could operate in all terrain and served as a supervisor and mentor to other guides operating on the same trip.

He had led 10 trips for BMG to the Frog Lake Huts and frequented the Castle Peak and Perry's Peak zone on personal tours. Andrew had worked for BMG for 4 years and was well on his way through the IFMGA certification process with the AMGA (49 Days AMGA Training, 25 Days Avalanche Training, 10 Days Wilderness First Responder medical training).

Andrew had ski guiding experience with a number of other companies including SWS Mountain Guides, Alpenglow Expeditions and helicopter ski guiding in Alaska with Pulseline Adventure. As prerequisites for his Splitboard Guide Certification, Andrew had completed numerous avalanche courses including Avalanche 1, Avalanche Rescue, Avalanche Professional Level 1 and Avalanche Professional Level 2 (the highest level of professional avalanche training in the United States). In addition to his professional avalanche coursework and qualifications, he was an experienced avalanche educator and was qualified as an AIARE⁹ Course Leader, able to mentor and manage instructions in the field during recreational avalanche courses.

Ryan Tilley

Ryan, age 29 at the time of the accident, is an AMGA Certified Rock and Alpine Guide, and Assistant Ski Guide. He can operate without supervision in all non-glaciated terrain and is one exam away from Ski Guide and IFMGA certification. He has Professional Level 2 Avalanche training and is an AIARE Avalanche Course Instructor. He has over 100 days of professional course work and guide training, not including prerequisites between those courses.

Ryan has guided and been a guide supervisor for Northwest Alpine Guides and is also a lead guide for Valhalla Mountain Guides. He has worked for Blackbird Mountain Guides since spring of 2024.

Mike Henry

Mike, age 30, was an Apprentice Ski Guide with Professional Level 1 Avalanche Training and was an AIARE Avalanche Course Instructor. Mike knew the terrain around Frog Lake from several personal trips, portering (food and gear carrying) trips, and two guided trips to the Frog Lake Huts prior to the February 2026 trip.

Mike was hired by Blackbird Mountain Guides in the winter of 2023-2024 after having guided for other companies in Alaska, California, Oregon and Washington including Northwest Alpine Guides and Shasta Mountain Guides. Mike had over 40 days of professional coursework and guide training, not including prerequisites between courses.

⁹ AIARE = American Institute of Avalanche Research and Education. AIARE is a recreational avalanche course curriculum provider and one of six professional avalanche course curriculum providers recognized by the American Avalanche Association. AIARE requires its course instructors and course leaders to attend training courses and meet prerequisites.

Nicole Choo

Niki, age 42, was an Apprentice Ski Guide with Professional Level 1 Avalanche Training and was an AIARE Avalanche Course Instructor. Prior to the February 2026 trip, Niki had shadow guided an AMGA Certified Ski Guide from Blackbird Mountain Guides on a Frog Lake Trip during considerable avalanche hazard in January of 2026.

Niki had over 40 days of professional coursework and guide training, not including prerequisites between courses. She started guiding with Blackbird Mountain Guides in the 2024/2025 winter season.

Frog Lake Huts Ski Trip

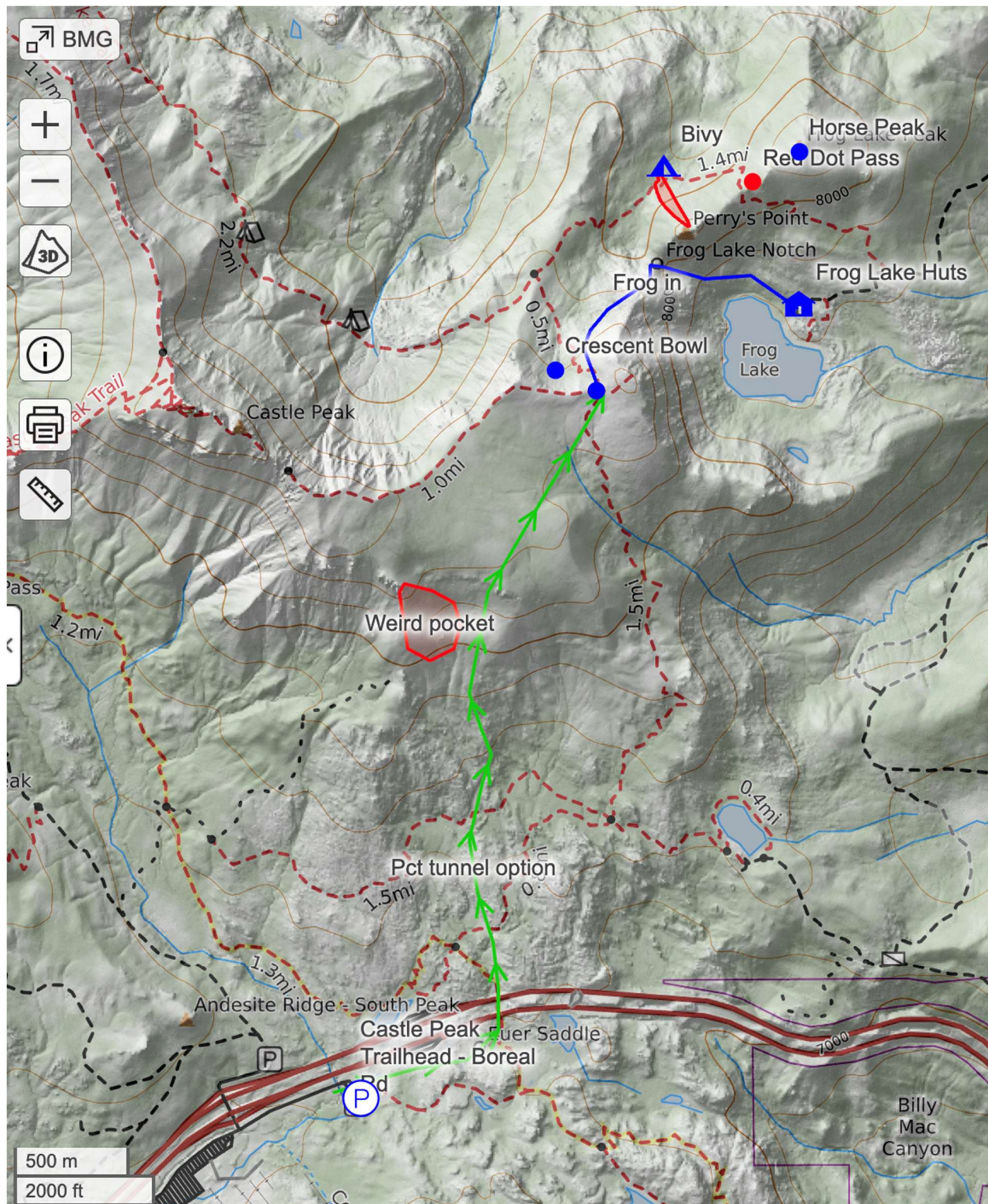


Figure 3: Picture of the typical operating area for Frog Lake Huts. Note Horse Peak is also known as Frog Lake Peak. Perry's Peak is labeled as Perry's Point in this map layer. The typical BMG ingress and egress route to Frog Pass is shown as the green line with arrows (Pct tunnel option). The route into the Frog Lake Huts that the team used on day 1 (2/15/26) is shown as a dark blue line (Frog in).

Day One

The clients brought in their own personal gear, and some lunch food, while the guides and porters brought in most of the food and group gear. This level of service opened the trip to people who were possibly less fit, and/or skilled than if they were fully self-supported. Although the trip was open to all, two groups were formed by the way that the spots were filled. Eight women who knew one another enrolled together and were assigned two guides. Three men who enrolled separately were also assigned two guides. These two groups functioned independently in the field on day one and two, but dined together at the hut, where the guides cooked breakfast and dinner for them.

On day one (February 15, 2026), BMG guides, California Guide Manager JC-G, BMG owner Blais, and five food/gear porters met at the BMG office in Truckee, CA for the morning guide meeting. These morning meetings are a standard of the guiding industry and address the weather forecast, anticipated hazards for the day, groupings of clients with guides and other concerns. Operations capture the weather and avalanche data that is being considered and the gist of the discussions on what is commonly referred to as the AM Form. JC-G led the meeting and covered the AM Form for all of the guides and avalanche course instructors in the room. The February 10 persistent weak layer (PWL) was discussed at length. Once the general plan for the day was covered, the other guides departed and the Frog Lake Team discussed the forecasted storm and the likely need to give the slide paths a wide margin on the hut trip's exit day from the field. AK, a BMG Guide, was at Frog Lake Huts and phoned into the meeting to brief the team on current conditions around the huts. The meeting utilized a large screen for presentation of surface snow conditions and travel routes exiting the Frog Lake Huts. At one point, JC-G highlighted north facing terrain on the screen where the February 10 persistent weak layer (PWL) likely existed. JC-G and the group agreed that Frog Lake Notch would not be a viable exit on day 3 and that Red Dot Pass presented the best exit route. BMG does not have an avalanche atlas or marked digital map of the Castle Peak/Frog Lake Terrain, but Senior Guide Smith did. His CalTopo¹⁰ map was shared amongst the guides and porters at Sunday's morning guide meeting.

BMG, like other guide services, typically builds their own operational avalanche forecast (as part of the AM Form) prior to when the local avalanche center publishes their avalanche bulletin. The BMG avalanche forecast also is focused on their areas of operation which are much smaller in scale than the entire region that the avalanche centers must cover. Typically, BMG also conducts evening meetings between the guides of each team (whether it be an avalanche course, day trip, or multiday trip). These observations, including

¹⁰ CalTopo is a digital mapping platform that allows users to mark routes, record tracks, change base layers, add waypoints and pictures, and share that data with others. Most of the maps in this report utilize CalTopo maps. Many other digital platforms exist, but CalTopo and SarTopo have become the industry standard within guiding and search and rescue organizations.

whether the morning's weather and avalanche forecast verified are recorded on the PM Form.

The Sierra Avalanche Center (SAC) rated the avalanche hazard as moderate in the alpine, near treeline, and below treeline for Sunday – the day of the meeting. Cited avalanche problems included wind slab and the potential for wet loose slides on solar aspects. Prior to February 10, there had been a six-week drought without any appreciable snow accumulation. A few inches of snow fell on February 10 which capped the weak surface snow (composed of near surface facets on northerly terrain) with graupel (BB-like snow) and wind slabs formed in the previous four days. (source: Sierra Avalanche Center and observations from AC-G¹¹). An Avalanche Watch¹² was issued on this morning forecast extending from 0745 on 2/15 to 0500 on 2/17.

The weather forecast discussed in the Sunday Morning Guide Meeting included a break in the storm on Tuesday (2/17/2026) morning. This “weather window” looked favorable for the exit to the roadhead.

The guides met their groups at 0830-0900 at the Castle Peak Trailhead on the west side of Donner Summit, where they had driven their own vehicles and parked at the SnoPark. Guides checked client gear and transceiver function at the roadhead and then headed into the field. Their route started at Boreal Road ascending the PCT Tunnel Route up “Rest Stop Bowl, over Frog Pass and into the Huts via Frog Lake Notch (Figure 3 – Rest Stop Bowl is the feature between 7,800’ and 8,360’ to the west of the “Weird pocket”). This route avoided the potential avalanche terrain in the “Weird pocket”. The groups moved from below treeline to near treeline elevations with strong south to southwest winds impacting them when they were in the alpine zone. No new snow fell during their travel on this day. Both groups proceeded separately to the hut via Frog Lake Notch (SE of Perry’s Peak) without incident. After they had dropped their overnight gear and lunch food at the huts, both groups circumnavigated Perry’s Peak climbing Red Dot Pass, descending into the drainage to the NW, and then skiing up drainage to Frog Lake Notch where they dropped back to Frog Lake and the huts. Alissandratos dug a pit on northerly aspects at Red Dot Pass and then Alissandratos and Henry dug on a NE aspect near Frog Notch around 8000’. Their goal was to assess the facets and crust from the snow drought. They found no reaction in their

¹¹ AC-G is a BMG Avalanche Instructor and worked as a porter on day one, bringing food to the hut.

¹² Watches and Warnings follow the same definitions as for National Weather Service weather criteria. An **Watch** means severe weather is *possible* (Be Prepared), while a **Warning** means severe weather is *occurring or imminent* (Take Action). A Watch covers a large area for an extended time, whereas a Warning is localized to the immediate threat area.

compression and extended column tests on the persistent weak layer, the crust nor any other layer (ECTX and CTN).¹³

Day Two

The AM form for this day showed that little snow had accumulated at the weather stations that were cut and pasted on to their form. SAC rated the hazard as Considerable at all elevations for storm slabs based on anticipated snow accumulation and wind transport throughout the day. The BMG forecast addressed the potential of “reactive¹⁴” wind slabs to size D2.5¹⁵ on S, W, and NW aspects and “stubborn” storm slabs to size D2 on all aspects. BMG rated the avalanche hazard as Considerable at all elevations (below treeline, near treeline, and alpine). Following breakfast, the two groups skied runs on Horse Peak functioning independently until the last descent to the huts. From the top of Horse Peak, the groups reorganized into three groups. Two of the groups took routes that were more wind protected but required another transition to climbing skins to return to the huts. Tilley, JH, and KW took a direct route that wouldn’t require a transition but was more exposed to the wind. On this more wind exposed route they were getting shooting cracks 3’-4’ out from their skis and 2”-3” deep. These “dinner plates” showed that wind slabs were starting to form in areas exposed to the wind. Snow fell throughout the day and winds were generally moderate from the south and west. At the time the groups returned to the hut in the afternoon the new snow depth was estimated to be two feet. In the afternoon meeting, Tilley told the other guides about the shooting cracks at the end of the tour. None of the guides observed or felt whumpfing¹⁶ in the snowpack in their travels and no avalanches had been observed. In the PM meeting, the guides felt that they had overestimated the avalanche hazard forecast in their morning meeting, but that instability was rising as they left the field.

In the afternoon following their return to the Frog Lake Huts Alissandratos and Blais had a short phone call discussing the plan for the next day. Of note, Alissandratos had exited the Frog Lake Huts before during High Avalanche Danger and felt confident of their planned exit route for the next day.

Day Three

Snowfall continued through the night bringing ~4-12 additional inches at the Frog Lake Huts location. At 0500 on this day, SAC changed their Avalanche Watch to an Avalanche

¹³ These results should be on the PM Form for 2/15/26, but that form did not sync from Andrew’s phone to the online platform.

¹⁴ Unreactive, Stubborn, Reactive, and Touchy are terms of sensitivity to triggering within the Conceptual Model of Avalanche Hazard (CMAH). These are standard terms used in the avalanche industry.

¹⁵ Avalanche Size Descriptions are explained in Table A-2 in Appendix A.

¹⁶ Whumpf is a noise that a snowpack can generate when a snow layer collapses beneath a slab. It is a sign of instability and can lead to a propagating fracture that releases an avalanche.

Warning. SAC rated avalanche hazard on all aspects and elevations as High for storm slabs.

0558¹⁷ Both Alissandratos (at the hut) and Smith (in town) are working on the AM form filling in weather data (past 24 hours and forecast).

0559 Smith contacts Alissandratos and says that he will fill out the AM form to give the guides more time to prep for leaving the huts.

0650 Smith sends Alissandratos a link to the radar loop indicating that precipitation intensity is likely to increase soon.

0655 Morning Guide Meeting with Alissandratos, Henry, and Choo with Smith attending via cell phone. Tilley did not attend the meeting but was brought up to speed at breakfast.

The primary points of discussion at the morning meeting were:

- No morning extra ski lap before leaving. The weather forecast was such that they should leave as soon as possible following breakfast and packing. The predicted Tuesday morning weather window was going to shut quickly.
- They should maintain wide margins in avalanche terrain. This included carefully managing the descent from Red Dot Pass. There was discussion of landmarks for the safest route down to the meadows.
- Smith stated that they should descend to the far side of the meadow so that they could create the widest margin between the north paths of Perry's Peak and themselves, ideally crossing to the west side of the creek at the NW side of the meadow.¹⁸
- Anticipating strong to extreme winds, high snowfall rates, and very poor visibility they discussed very careful client management when crossing Frog Pass, so that no one could wander off route for the short traverse of the alpine zone.

The BMG AM Form that day called for High avalanche hazard at all elevations with three potential avalanche problems. Wind slabs on NW, N, NE, SE aspects with touchy sensitivity up to size D2. Storm slabs on all aspects with touchy sensitivity to size D2. Persistent slabs on NW, N, NE and E with reactive sensitivity to size D2.5. Much of the weather forecast is cut and paste from the NWS products. On that day the BMG weather summary included:

“Crashing snow levels (possibly down to sea level), intense snowfall rates (potentially S20¹⁹), plus wind ridgetop winds gusting north of 80 mph will make for intense snow transport and challenging conditions to navigate in. This break in the storm activity will be short lived as the main portion of

¹⁷ Where exact times are used they are associated with text conversations.

¹⁸ Creeks prior to the storm, and during the storm had been open (not bridged over by snow), so that complicated crossing streams, creeks, and rivers.

¹⁹ Potentially S20 was likely inserted by BMG to express a high snowfall intensity of 20cm per hour or ~8"/hour. This may have been a typo or an exaggeration, but the point was made that blizzard conditions were likely.

the storm drops in from the Pacific Northwest. Snow will pick up in intensity around daybreak from Tahoe northward to the Oregon border, ...”

The weather forecast for the next 12 hours indicated that strong SW winds would continue and anywhere from as little as 7” and as much as 30” of snow between 8000’-9000’ could be expected. The comparative lull in the storm was expected to end immediately, and precipitation intensity was expected to be very high. This instilled a sense of urgency for the group’s departure. Their mindset for the day was “MAJOR Step Back.”²⁰ Closed terrain²¹ for the day included; “any avalanche terrain, any terrain in runouts, or with overhead hazard.”

Table 2: Height of Storm Snow on Day 3 (2/17/26). Depth in inches.

Time	CSSL 6,900’	Independence Lake 8,300’	Independence Camp 6,970’	Tahoe Donner 7,399’
0700	29	18	12	14
0900	36	22	13	16
1000	37	24	14	17
1100	39	28	15	16 ²²

~0900 Both groups merged into one for the task of breaking trail through deep snow up to Red Dot Pass. The 500’ ascent took ~45 minutes. According to KW’s Strava track they spent roughly 15 minutes on top of the pass making the transition to downhill ski mode. Snowfall continued on their ascent from the hut between 0900 and 1000, but it was not as intense as the snowfall had been between their guide meeting time and their departure time. The Frog Lake Hutkeepers accompanied the group to the top of Red Dot Pass, said goodbye to the group, and then returned to the huts.

~1000 The descent from Red Dot Pass involves negotiating a short area with slope angles in the low 30°’s mid descent. Tilley went down first to set the right boundary for the team and stopped where they had discussed doing a ski cut. Henry descended to him and had planned to do a slope cut on his split board in split-ski mode. Given the depth of the snow, they decided to have Tilley do the slope cut. The snow was so deep that he came to a stop mid-cut. Tilley and Henry agreed that the best way through this zone was to set a down track that people could follow and get some momentum in. Tilley continued to the

²⁰ Mindsets are now a guiding industry standard based upon the publications of Roger Atkins. Stepping Back is a strategy when conditions are worse than the day before and safe terrain choices become more limited. (Atkins, 2014)

²¹ Closing terrain is a common mitigation strategy for ski guiding. It may involve open and closed run names or identifying terrain by its features.

²² This decrease in the height of storm snow (HST) is likely due to strong to extreme winds stripping the snow from underneath the snow height sensor. This unconformable data is common during storms. HSTW or SWE is not recorded at Tahoe Donner weather station.

meadow, while Henry stayed at the slope breakover and staged clients 2 at a time from his position as they skied through. The guides all had radios and were able to keep people spaced apart on slope and in view of the guides on the way down.

Skiing down from Red Dot Pass in the deep snow was difficult for KW and JH and they took ~25 minutes to descend ~250 vertical feet to the next transition point. Most of the group had made the transition for the next leg of uphill travel and were ready to leave as KW and JH arrived.

~1030 Alissandratos, Henry, and the crew of women pushed off and headed up the drainage. The women's group, who had been waiting the longest at the transition point, were quite cold and left bundled up in much the same gear that they had skied down in (e.g. helmets and goggles on, parkas/jackets zipped up). JH was having difficulties with his ski binding. Tilley, Choo, AA, and KW held back with JH for a few minutes until KW decided to start after the rest of the group. Choo soon followed KW and quickly passed him. Examining Choo's Strava track (Figure 12) from 2/17/2026 the group appeared to make 2 to 3 separate attempts to cross to the far side of the creek, but were most likely turned back by open water and vertical creek sidewalls.

~1100 After "roughly 10 more minutes" of travel KW caught sight of the group "20'-30' away and above him." Almost immediately afterwards he heard one of the male guides yell "Avalanche!"

Avalanche

It is not known, nor will ever be known, whether the avalanche was naturally triggered, or triggered by the weight of the group. None of the survivors report hearing or feeling a 'whumpf' or collapse prior to the avalanche. Sadly, the result was the same no matter the trigger. The group at this point had very little space between them²³ on the skin track and had no time to get out of the way. No one in the runout zone of the avalanche escaped being caught by the avalanche. Alissandratos, Henry, and Choo along with the women's group were completely buried by the avalanche debris. KW was fully buried but had his hand and ski pole near the snow surface and was able to establish an airway for himself (but nothing was visible except the tip of his ski pole). AA was able to get below a tree and was partially buried up to his chest. Tilley and JH skied on to the scene and heard AA say that there were people buried in the avalanche (they did not witness or hear the avalanche). The debris was so soft that it appeared to Ryan to be just snow, and it was not

²³ The most likely explanation for the lack of spacing between skiers was that the guides did not recognize that they were in an avalanche path. The tight tree spacing, trees between the group and the start zone above, and the similarity to the terrain that they had just been crossing does not make the path easily recognizable. Navigating by a digital map on a phone can be impossible in blizzard conditions.

immediately clear that he was on the avalanche debris pile. When he pulled his beacon out, he was getting many signals at less than 8 meters. There were so many signals that his beacon would not lock onto any of them and allow him to fine search efficiently. Once Tilley was able to isolate a signal to 1.5 meters he probed once and immediately got a strike. After he shoveled to ND's airway, AA was able to free himself and come over and assist with further digging. Meanwhile JH noticed the ski pole moving and moved to KW and asked if he was OK. KW said yes and to go find the others. JH stayed and helped dig out KW so they could both contribute to the rescue efforts.

~1130 The next person that Tilley and AA located was AS, who was cyanotic and moaning when they exposed her airway. At this point Tilley used the SOS feature on his Garmin® InReach and AA asked whether he should use the Satellite 911 feature on his iPhone. Tilley said yes, so there were two outgoing 'calls' for help. AS's legs were entangled with another person's legs and next they found LC in a more horizontal position (ND and AS were oriented with their skis uphill and their heads downhill). LC was pulseless, so Tilley resumed searching. On the sidewall of the trench that they had now excavated he spotted the water bottle of Alissandratos that he knew that was attached to his pack. Knowing where the pack was, Tilley and AA quickly headed for Alissandratos' head. Alissandratos was also pulseless, despite his head only being one foot under the surface. Subsequent searching by both KW and JH proved extremely challenging as their beacon signals jumped erratically between 3 and 15 (given the very close proximity of the burials). At this point Tilley shifted his focus to caring for the survivors.

When AA asked about sending the satellite 911 message, he also suggested that they move out of the slide path (given the potential for subsequent avalanches). Tilley made the call to keep searching. By the time they had found Alissandratos it was clear that ND and AS needed to be fully extricated and cared for²⁴.

ND complained of the snow compressing her ribs and was coughing up a small amount of blood. After two hours she stopped coughing and no more blood was produced. AS's chief complaint was of being cold. Tilley had the survivors move out of the slide path and then set up a tarp over a hole dug by JH to create a small shelter. They were carrying their sleeping bags that they had used in the hut, so they were able to maintain or regain warmth while waiting for rescuers to arrive. After three hours all survivors were warm and speaking clearly.

²⁴ Avalanche multi-victim rescue triage dictates that if the person has a patent airway then you continue searching for more victims under the snow. As resources arrive, or time passes by, then the rescuer should return to the live finds and extricate and perform secondary survey, render aid, and treat for hypothermia.

Rescue and Recovery

~1440 Blais (BMG owner) and Smith (BMG Senior Guide) left the Boreal roadhead and started breaking trail up to Frog Pass. Three members of Tahoe Nordic SAR and one member from Nevada County Sheriff SAR later caught up to Blais and Smith below Rest Stop Bowl following their broken trail toward the accident site. Blais and Smith brought extra puffy jackets and stoves if the SAR team had chosen not to respond and that they would need to care for the survivors overnight. A second rescue team left from the Tahoe Donner Nordic Center with three snow cats. Tilley had radio communication with Smith once the team reached Frog Pass. Smith moved more slowly down the drainage as he served as a communication liaison between the survivors and follow up rescue teams.

~1730 As the first rescuer arrived (Blais), they immediately started searching for the missing members of the party. Blais, Smith, Tilley and subsequently more SAR team members located 8 of the remaining avalanche victims (two of the victims previously located by Tilley and AA on the initial search had been re-covered by the snowfall between ~1230 and ~1730). Some victims who were found and determined pulseless were left in place while the search continued. The snowfall intensity was such that some of these people ended up being found again. Eventually all avalanche victims that were found were brought to a central site closer below the victim recovery zone.

There was confusion about the number of avalanche victims and the rescue team thought they needed to locate eight victims (this was confirmed with the incident commander prior to their arrival on scene). It wasn't until the debrief that Smith and other rescuers were informed that there were 9 total victims.

Between 1730 and 1830 there was a large group of TNSAR and NVSSAR members that responded from the huts to the accident site (brought in by snow cats from Tahoe Donner Nordic Center). There was some confusion as additional SAR members arrived on scene with their avalanche transceivers on transmit, but overall their assistance was critical to finding the remaining victims and helping the survivors to the road.

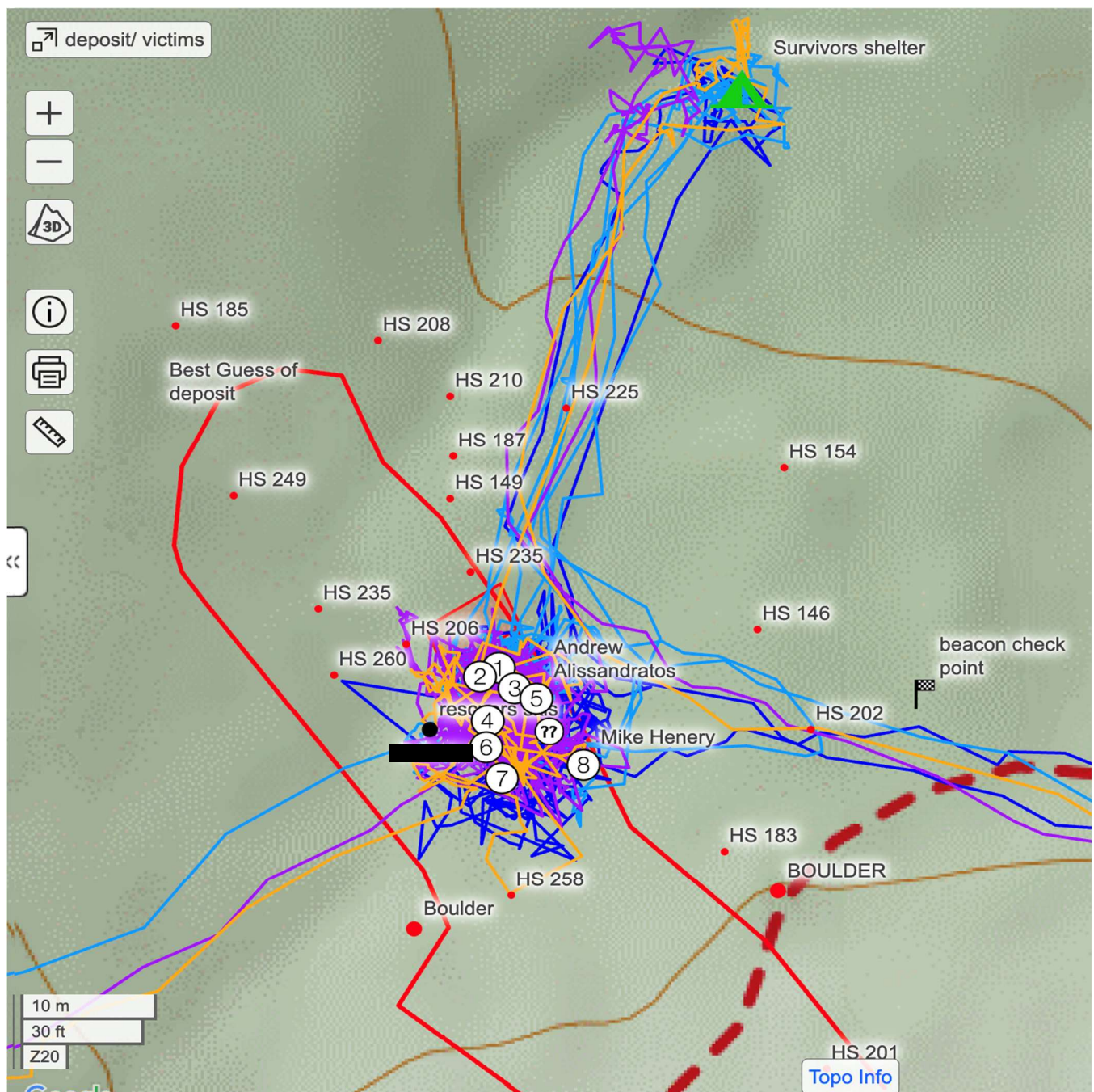


Figure 4: Map and snow depth (HS) measurements provided by Smith. This is a close-up view of the bottom part of the debris field. North is to the top of the image. The avalanche traveled downhill from the bottom right corner of this image. The blurry dashed red line in the bottom right corner is the Red Dot Trail. Brown pixelated lines are elevation contours. Colored thin solid lines are tracks of the rescuers. Three tracks have been deleted to add clarity to the image. Circled numbers represent the approximate order in which the victims were found. Black redaction is the name of one of the rescuers whose tracks was being recorded. "beacon check point" is the place where rescuers ensured their beacons were back in transit mode prior to returning to the Frog Lake Huts. Snow depth measurements were taken on 2/28/26.

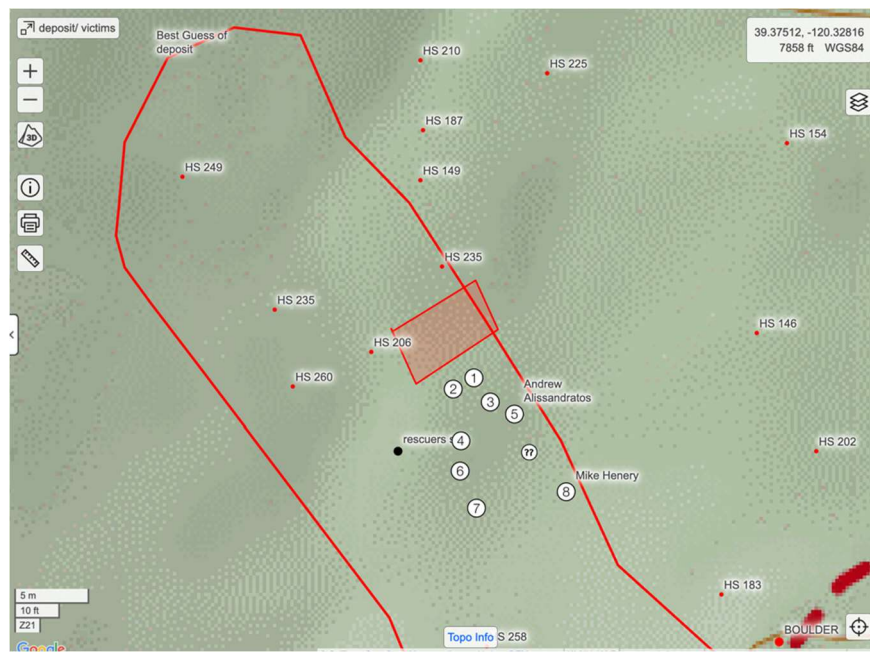


Figure 5 is the same as Figure 4, except the rescuer's tracks have been removed. The black dot indicates where the rescuers placed their skis to avoid their gear being confused with those of the victims. The red rectangle indicates where the victims were moved to. Removing the victims from their burial position helped with further searching and subsequent recovery. Victims were covered with tarps and probes were set on the downhill edge to help with subsequent recovery efforts. There are differing accounts of whether victim #8 was indeed Mike Henry vs position #7.

Figures 4 and 5 show the relative position of the recovered avalanche victims. The deepest burials were on the uphill (south) side of this “horseshoe” deposit where victims 7 and 8 were under ~3 meters (~10’) of snow. Victim 6 was ~2.5 meters deep. Victims 1, 2 and 3 were ~one meter (~3’) deep. It is unknown why the guides who were breaking trail were found where they were (opposite the general direction of travel). Conjecture is that they may have just made a switchback to get around the marked boulder (the size of a UPS truck); or that they may have realized they were in a bad spot and were reversing direction; or that they may have been going back to safety when they realized an avalanche was coming. It is impossible to determine which scenario is correct without information from the survivors that were in the lead group.²⁵

Height of snow (HS) measurements were taken on 2/28/26 following a lot more snowfall and then copious rainfall in that part of the mountain range. The areas with snow depths of 140-185 cm (55”-73”) likely did not have avalanche deposition on them. Areas that were equal to or greater than 235cm (100”) were likely in the deposition zone for this lowest finger of the debris field. This information informed the shape and extent of the estimated avalanche polygon in this report.

²⁵ Attempts to interview ND and AS were unsuccessful.

~1830 The rescue teams assessed the survivors who had been buried in the avalanche and considered them able to travel. Several survivors were missing skis so the rescuers used skis from the decedents to allow them to travel. By ~6:30 PM all the survivors and the rescue team started their ski ascent back to Red Dot Pass and then back down to the Frog Lake Huts. After a brief rest at the huts, the survivors and the SAR team made their way out in three snow cats via Crabtree Road.

~2100 The survivors reached the Tahoe Donner Nordic Center around 9 PM. I-80 was closed overnight, but the team was able to return to Truckee. ND and AS were taken to a hospital in Truckee for examination. The survivors stayed with local friends or at the house of the BMG owner. The roadhead that they used was at the Tahoe Donner Nordic Area, but their cars remained at the Castle Peak Trail Head until the following morning when I-80 reopened.

The storm continued into the afternoon of 2/19/26 with snowfall ending by 2 PM- 4 PM. The next day the Pacific Gas and Electric supplied a Blackhawk helicopter and “Bambi Bucket” and performed avalanche mitigation on the slope above the avalanche victims. At first, they dragged a full bag of water (660 Gallons) up the slope for several passes, before releasing the bag onto the top of the start zone.²⁶ Once the area was deemed safe for rescuers, they were helicoptered into the site and performed the recovery of 5 victims. Strong winds challenged the exfiltration efforts in the afternoon, so the recovery of the last 4 victims followed the next day (2/21/26).

Terrain

When the group was caught by the avalanche, they were at an elevation of 7,850’ crossing a broad, flat-bottomed drainage in treed terrain that was 10°-11° in steepness. The start zone is believed to be ~390 vertical feet above their traverse.

The avalanche path on the north side of Perry’s Peak has an open start zone that has a NW trending ridge on its eastern edge. The start zone itself faces north. Tall white pine trees and fir trees border the path and cross the width of the path ~180-200’ below the top of the start zone. Delineations between the start zone, track, and the runout zone are difficult to pinpoint as the path maintains angles above 30° for most of its distance. Start zone angle varies between 30° and 39° with an average slope angle of 32°-33°. Photos of the avalanche path indicate that it is cross loaded by southwest and west winds for much of its length. South winds favor loading the top of the path. Ground surface in the start zone is

²⁶ This unconventional mitigation technique has been used by PGE before, following the massive storm of early March 2023. California is the only state or province to use this technique. The use of explosives deployed from a helicopter is more the standard nationwide, but CALOSHA permitting issues prevented that from happening on February 20, 2026.

mixed bedrock and scree but was fully covered by snow prior to the start of the BMG trip. While the exact extent of the avalanche is not well defined, it appears that the top most part of the crown was at ~8,250' and the center of the deposition where the group was buried as ~7,860'.

The runout zone is where the slope angle eases to the point that the moving avalanche debris slows down and deposits. The angle measured on CalTopo at the burial site and likely very close to the traverse track that the skiers were on was 10°-11°. There is a subtle gully axis that leads to that tree-lined alley and that is likely what channeled the moving debris to travel as far as it did. The alley that the snow traveled between the trees is 60 feet wide at its widest.

Route

For the duration of the hut trip, the BMG guides were working off the same CalTopo map of the Frog Lake Huts, Horse Peak²⁷, and Castle Peak Area. This map was created by Smith, a Senior Guide for BMG (see Figure 5) and is an excellent resource for BMG guides operating in this area. This map shows prominent landmarks, common ski runs with their ATES designation²⁸, Helicopter LZs, and good ingress and egress routes.

²⁷ Locals, SAC, and BMG guides use the name Horse Peak for the feature that is marked on some map layers as Frog Lake Peak – the peak 850' NE of Red Dot Pass. Elevation 8,430'

²⁸ ATES means Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale. This system was created by the Canadian Avalanche Association and is gaining more and more use by the recreational public and guide services in the USA. On Smith's maps non-avalanche terrain is green, simple terrain is light blue, challenging is dark blue, complex terrain is black, and extreme terrain is red. The ATES Communication Model for Backcountry Travel is in the Glossary in Appendix A-1.

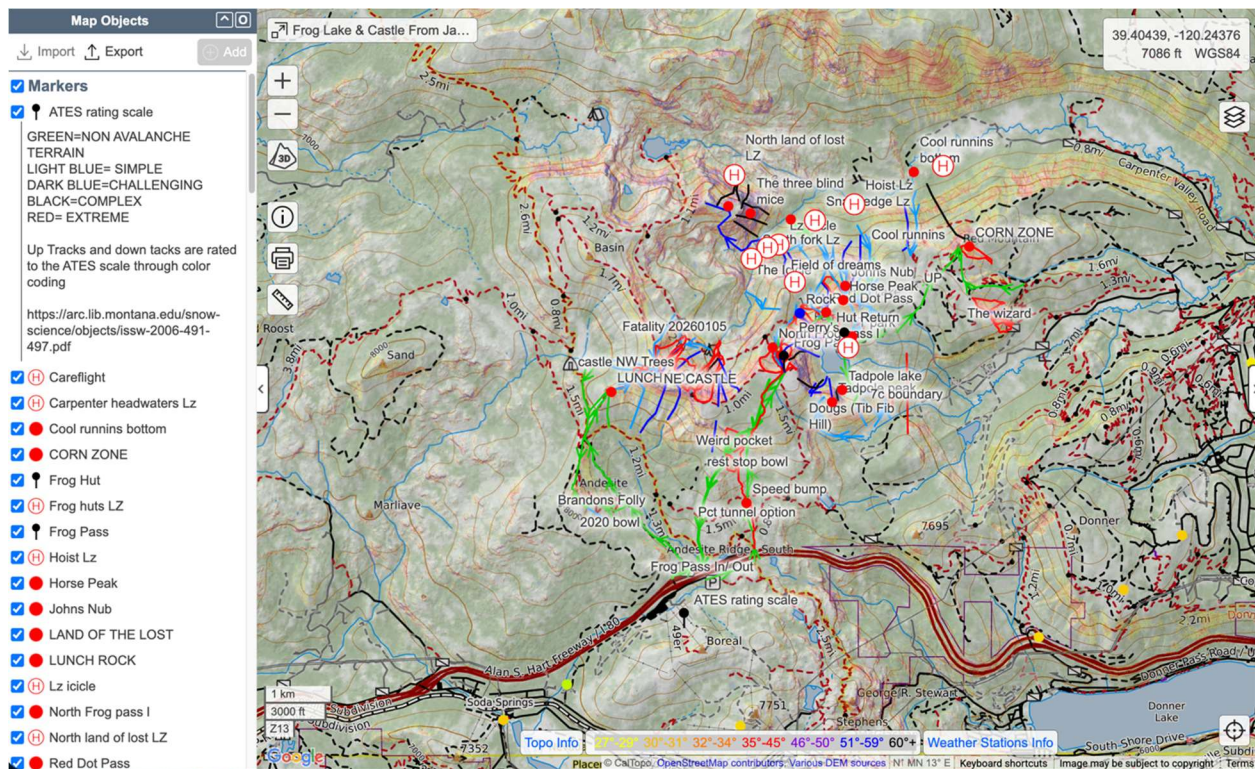


Figure 6: This map is Smith's CalTopo map that was shared with the BMG guides. The ATES scale is shown on the upper left of the image (all capitals). Red H's with a circle around them indicate places that helicopters could land. This map becomes more user friendly as you zoom in – while using the app.

Notably, the map includes routes for exiting Frog Lake Huts during High Avalanche Danger. “high danger exit ski” shows a route descending northwest from Red Dot Pass into the drainage (Figure 6). “High danger UP”²⁹ (Figure 8) shows an ascent route up the drainage that is beyond the expected reach of the avalanche paths off Perry’s Peak. This route was created with the intent of staying on the far side of the creek, but it was not intended to be followed precisely. These routes (indicated in light blue as “simple terrain” on the ATES scale) were created on January 18, 2026 – one month before the accident. The “High danger UP” route is generally located on the far side of the creek axis (which is very subtle) in the area that the group was caught. Based on field observations of the burial site, the group was ~30-50 feet away from the toe of the avalanche and ~50 feet away from the marked route “High Danger UP” on the map. It is unlikely that the group was moved a significant distance from their traverse track to their location in the avalanche debris pile given the orientation of their bodies – typically with their skis/splitboard uphill and their heads downhill as if they had been knocked over but not tumbled. This is also echoed by KW’s and Choo’s Strava tracks.

²⁹ High danger UP is the name chosen to identify the potential exit route when high avalanche hazard exists.

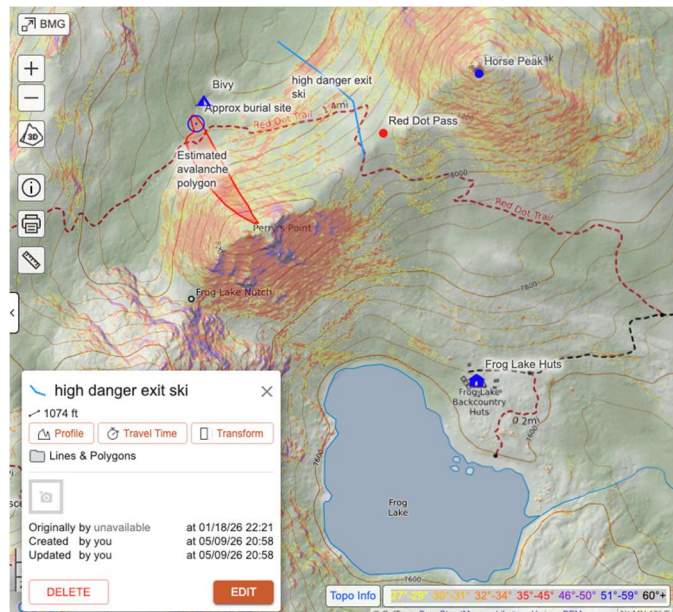


Figure 7: “high danger exit ski” is the light blue line descending to the north off Red Dot Pass. This map was generated by the report author but includes information originally from Smith’s map. The line “high danger exit ski” was plotted on the map on 1/18/26. “high danger exit ski” route is unmodified from the original.

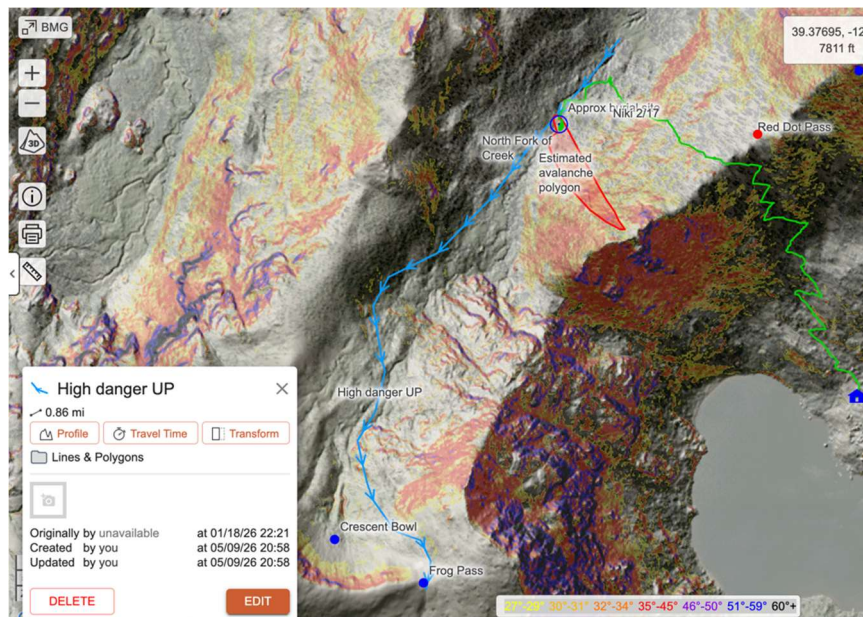


Figure 8: “High danger UP” is the light blue line with arrows that runs from the bottom of the descent of Red Dot Pass to Frog Pass at bottom center of the image. Light blue indicates the “simple terrain” ATEs designation – defined as “Exposure to low angle or primarily forested terrain. Some forest openings may involve the runout zones of infrequent avalanches. Many options to reduce or eliminate exposure. No glacier travel.”

The Shaded Relief Layer (71% opacity) is turned on to illustrate the course of the creek relative to the avalanche and travel routes. The lime green line is Choo’s Strava track on the day of the avalanche. This map was generated by the report author but includes information originally from Smith’s map. High danger UP is unmodified from the original.

The “estimated avalanche polygon” was drawn by the report author based on slope angles, terrain characteristics, photos of the site taken by SAC, and maps and video provided by BMG Senior Guide Smith. The “Approx burial site” and “Bivy” site are estimated based upon KW’s GPX track and by the TNSAR team recorded tracks on their SARTopo map as well as from the map that depicts Smith’s observations of snow depth and avalanche burial position (Figure 4).

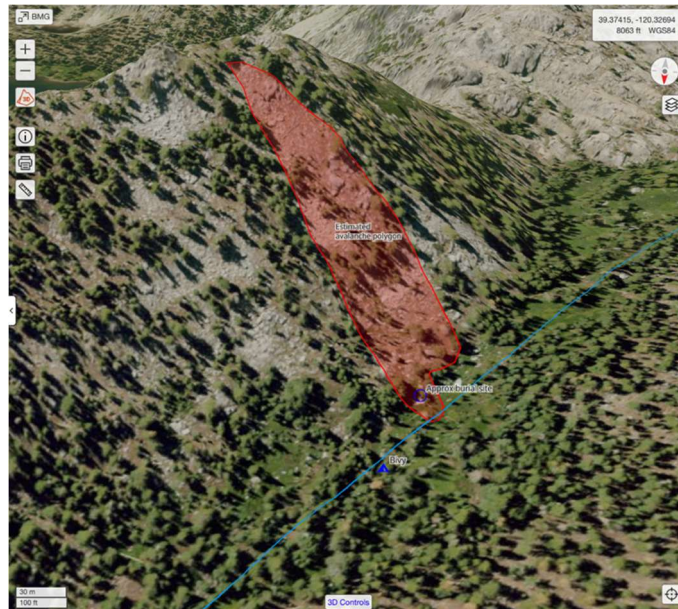


Figure 9: The light blue track is the High danger UP route drawn on 1/18/26. The “Approximate burial site” and “Bivy” sites are marked based upon best available data. Slope is viewed in 3D mode. North is toward the bottom of the image.

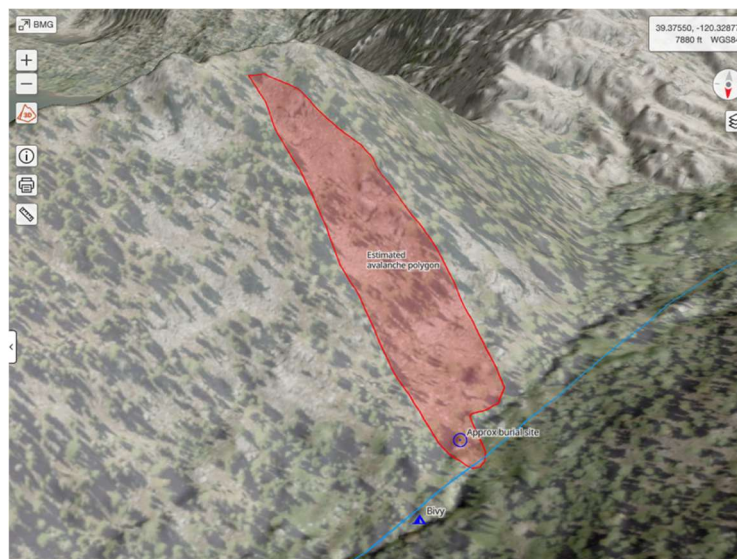


Figure 10: This is the same view as Figure 6, but with the Shaded Relief layer at 52% opacity. The Shaded Relief Layer helps to show the course of the creek within the drainage. Slope is viewed in 3D mode. North is toward the bottom of the image.

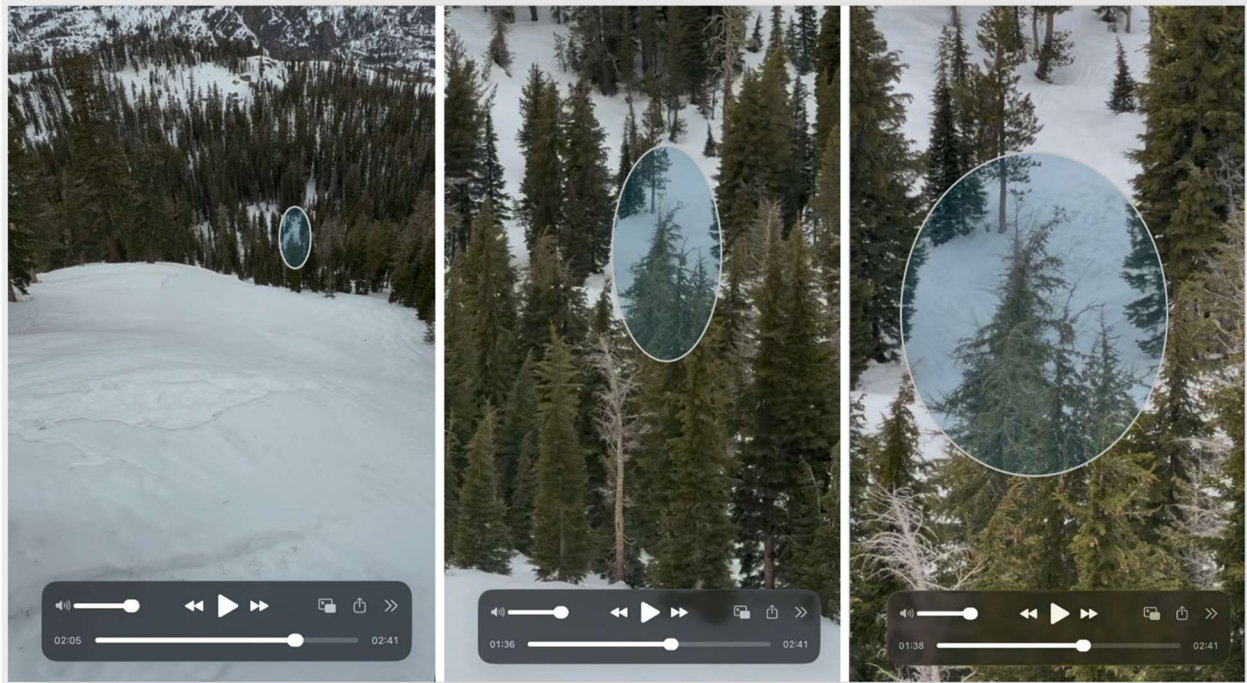


Figure 11: These screenshots are clipped from a video taken by Smith on 2/28/26. The video was taken from the upper start zone of the avalanche path. The ellipses in the photos indicate the finger of debris that penetrated through the comparatively dense timber to the location where the group was caught and buried. Snow and rain following the avalanche on 2/17/26 have obscured much of the debris, crown, and flanks, but the debris finger and debris from the rescue and recovery shoveling are visible in the right-most photo.

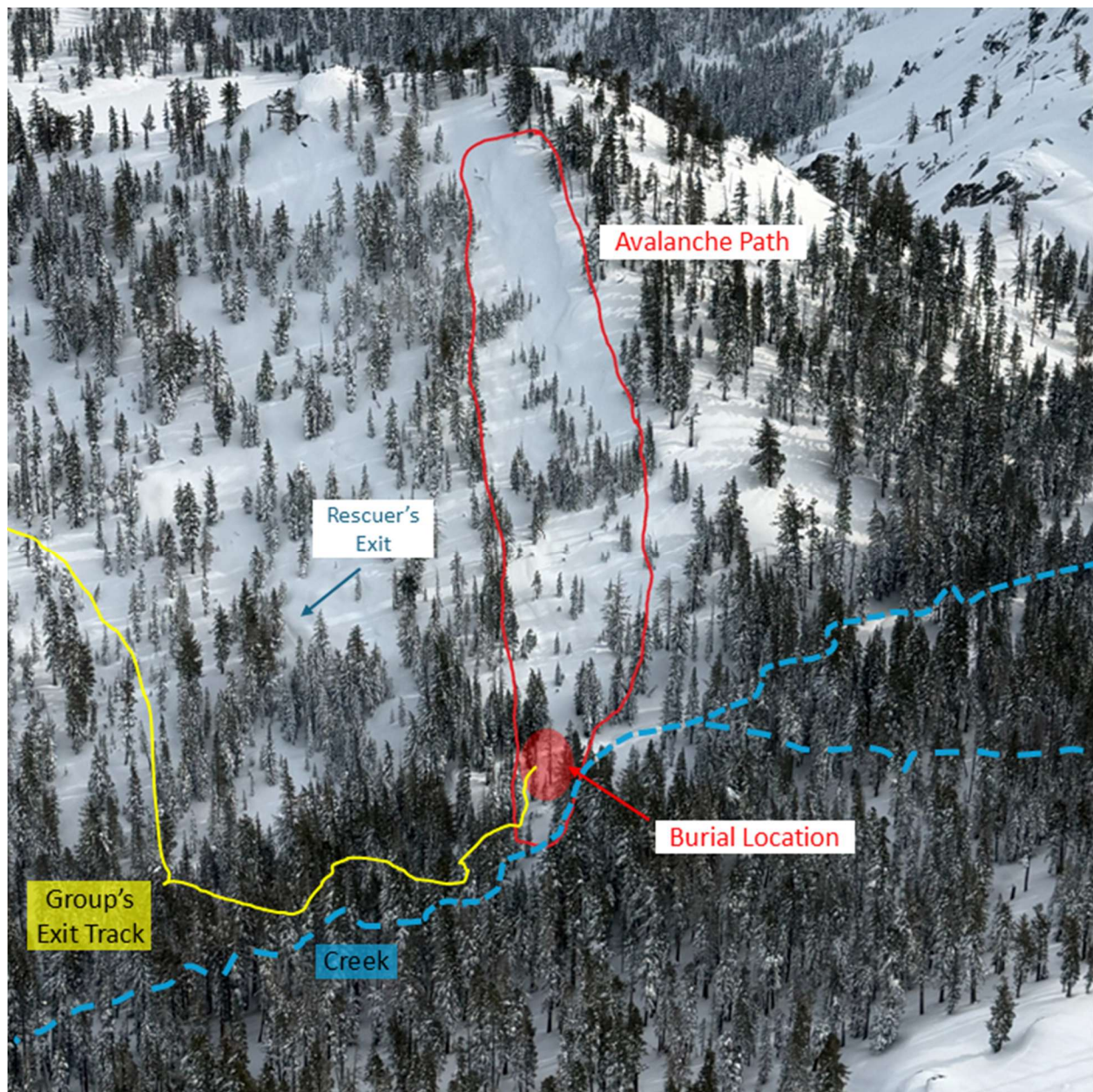


Figure 12: This photo shows the avalanche path on 2/20/26. This was taken by TNSAR from a helicopter prior to avalanche mitigation efforts. The crown and flanks are partially filled in, but the upper crown appears to be visible at the top viewer's right of the avalanche polygon. This line appears to run horizontally and seems more likely to be the crown than a depositional feature. The jagged form on the ridge in the sun/shade line appears to be a partially filled in crown line as well, though it blends into the wind pillows further down the ridge.

- The bottom red circle is the debris finger between the trees where the victims were found.
- The blue arrow in the bottom third of the photo points toward the track that the rescuers used for ingress from the Frog Lake Huts and that the survivors & rescuers used to return to the huts.
- The yellow line is the route that the BMG group followed prior to the avalanche (based on Choo's Strava tracks). The actual Strava .gpx tracks can be seen in Figure 14.
- The light blue dashed line is the approximate creek axis.



Figure 13: This photo was taken by Smith on 2/28/26. The foreground is the debris pile where the victims had been buried. Vertical stripes on the snow surface are a result of a large rain event following the 2/16 – 2/19 storm event. These stripes are called runnels and are not related to the avalanche. The view up toward the start zone is obscured by comparatively thick stands of white pine, white fir and red fir. This alley where the deposition was funneled is not obvious from the start zone (see Figure 10).



Figure 14: These images show the tracks from KW (dark blue) and N. Choo (lime green). The creek axis is traced with the light blue dashed line. Choo's Strava was likely set at a higher resolution than KW and captures where she likely viewed the creek crossings. The large green blob is where she was buried. Approximately 3-5 meter variations in position data are common when people remain stationary.

The burial site and assumed traverse track (based on Choo and KW's Strava GPX tracks) are approximately 80' downhill from the Red Dot Trail summer trail and well below the "common ingress/egress route" based on public Strava tracks (Figure 15) and BMG guide comments.

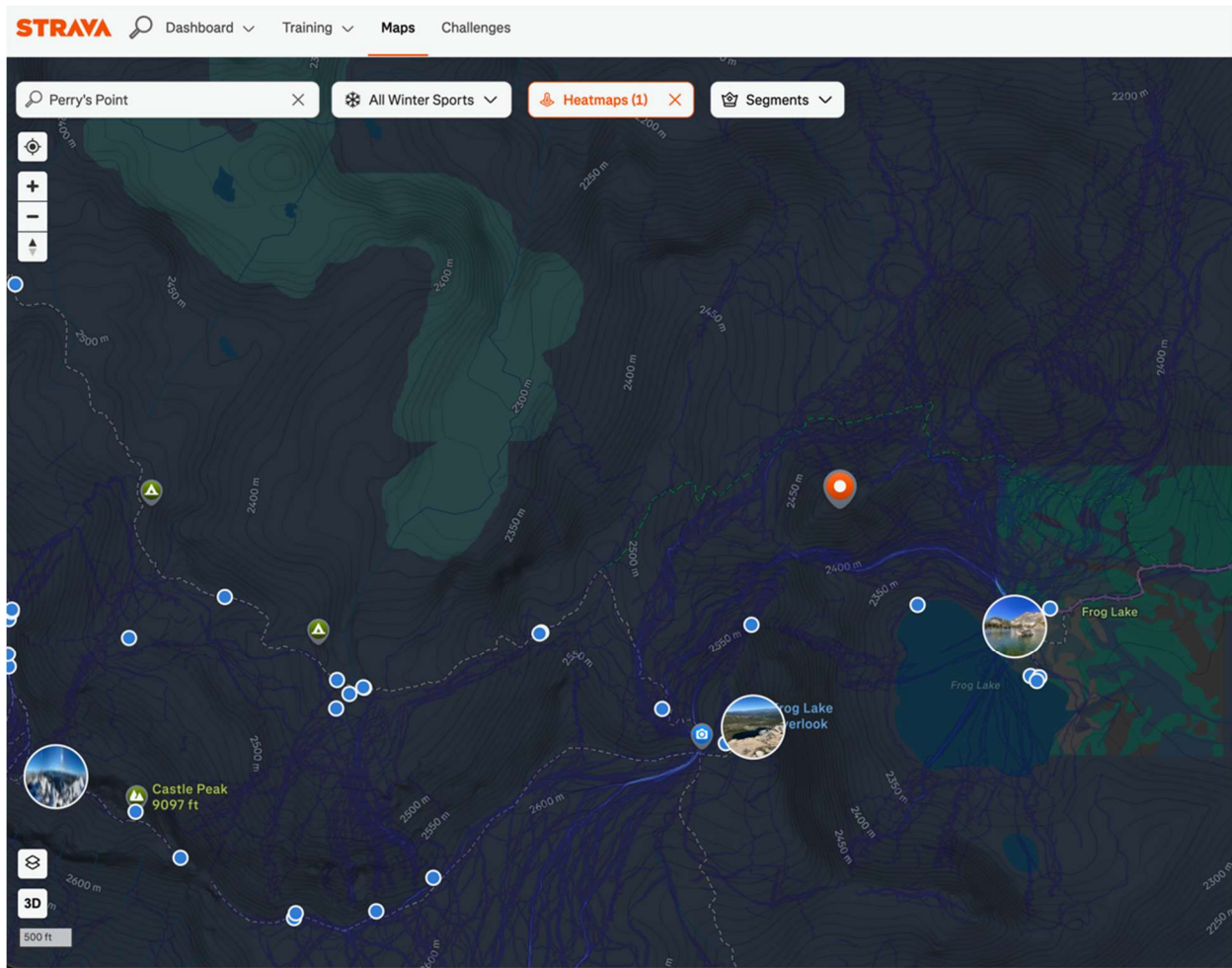


Figure 15: This heat map from Strava shows the Red Dot Trail as a light green dashed line (visible above the red waypoint). The orange waypoint is Perry's Peak, and the dark blue tracks represent 2026 winter tracks. These tracks trend well above the Red Dot Trail. This has little bearing on the accident other than showing that the commonly used way out from Red Dot Pass was typically further upslope from where the group was caught and buried.

Alternative Exit Routes

On the Truckee Donner Land Trust website there are three ingress and egress routes listed for the Frog Lake Huts.

1. Castle Peak Trailhead via Notch Route
2. Donner Summit Rest Area via Notch Route
3. Johnson Canyon Exit

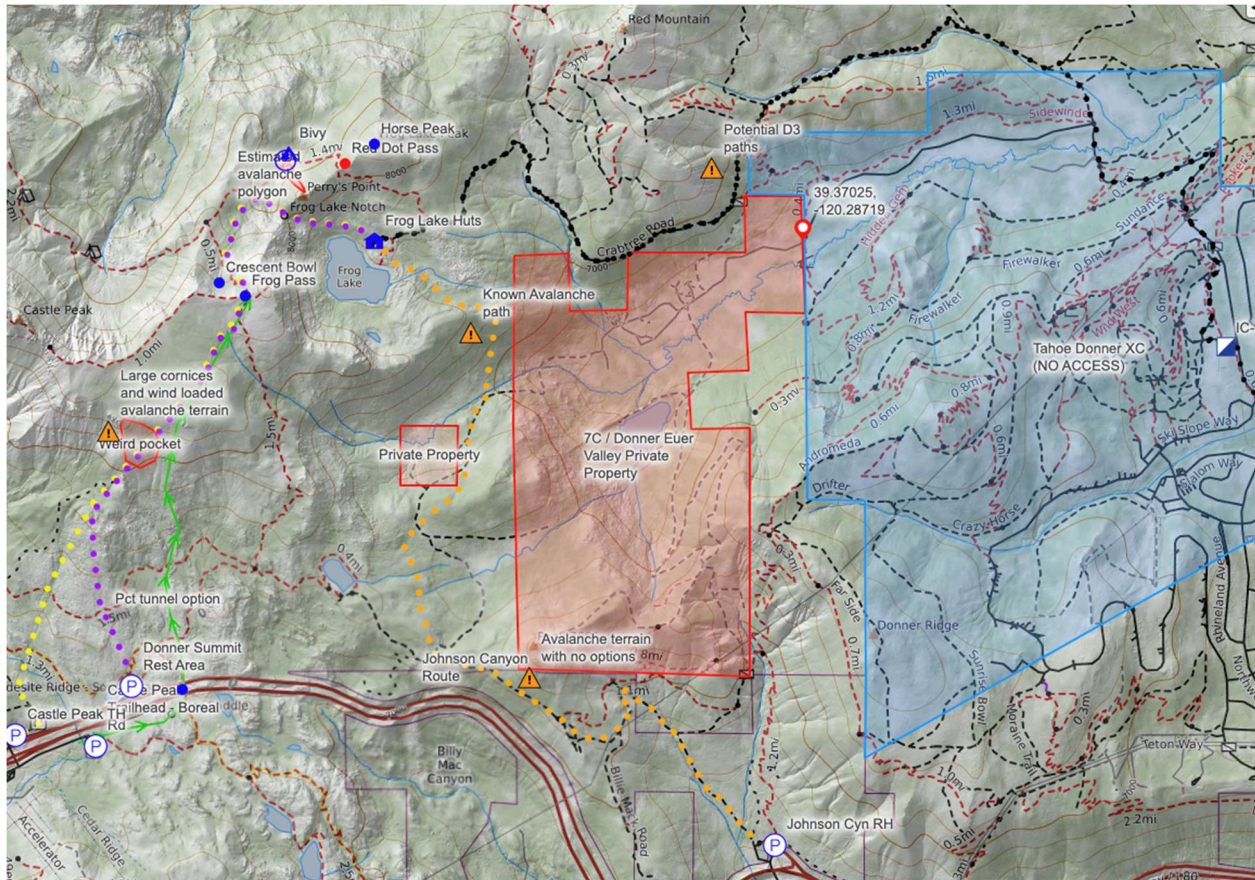


Figure 16: Overview of ingress and egress routes for the Frog Lake Huts. The large red polygon and blue polygon indicates private property. The blue and white square on the right edge is the Incident Command Post where plowed roads end. This is also the parking area for the Tahoe Nordic Center. Blue circles with a blue P indicate potential roadheads for access to the Frog Lake Huts.

- Purple dots indicate the Castle Peak Trailhead via Notch Route.
- Yellow dots indicate the Donner Summit Rest Area via Notch Route.
- Orange dots indicate the Johnson Canyon Exit.
- Black dotted line indicates the TNSAR snow cat route from the Tahoe Donner Nordic Center.
- The light green line with arrows indicates the typical route used by BMG to access the huts via Frog Pass.

Castle Peak Trailhead via Notch – 3.5 Miles. 1500' ascent. 1100' Descent.

See Figure 17

This route is somewhat similar to the route that BMG used to access the huts (light green line with arrows). One notable exception exists though. This route, as mapped on the Truckee-Donner Land Trust website, encounters the avalanche terrain in “Weird Pocket”.

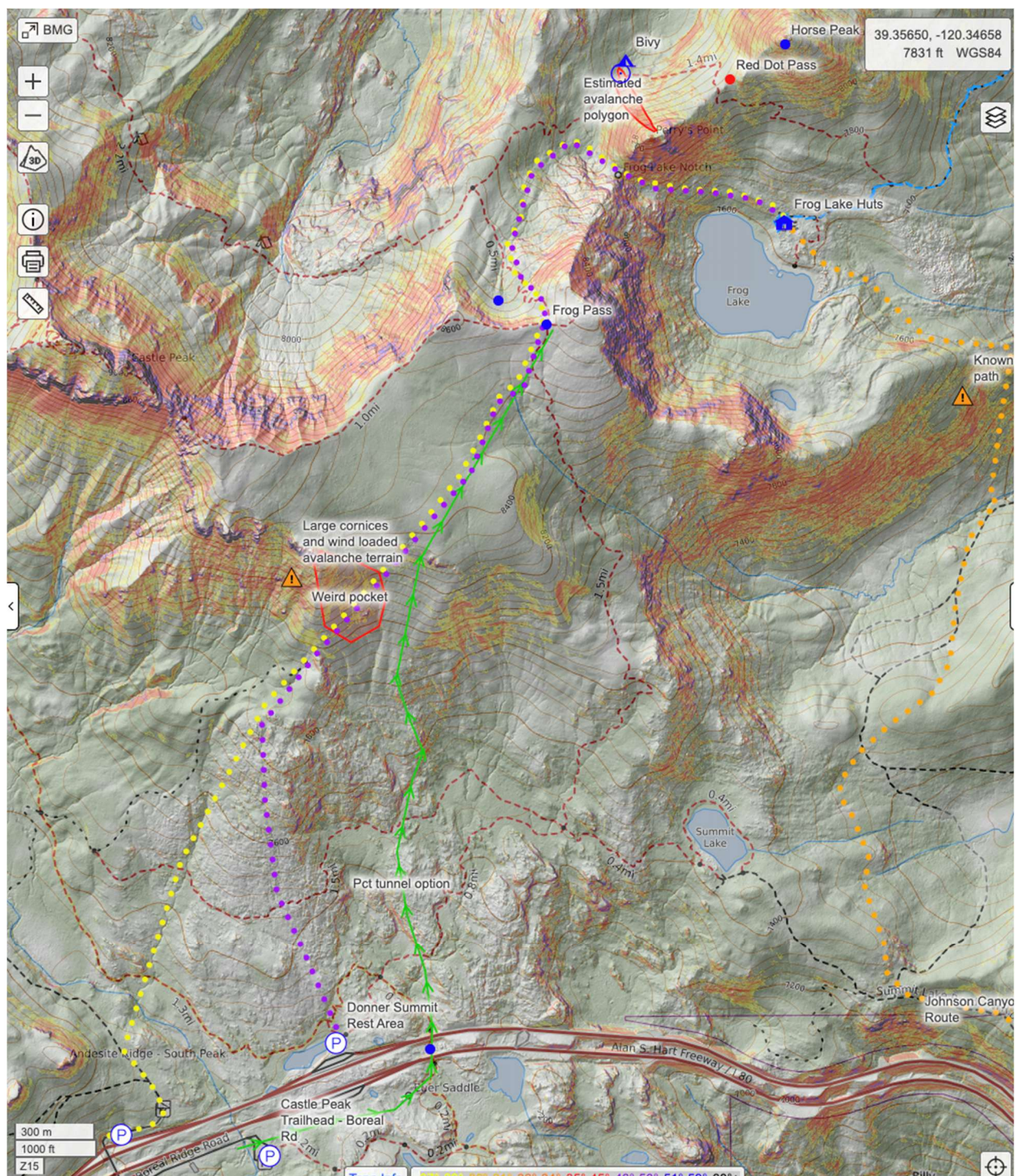
Travel from this roadhead to the route can be complicated by open water on Castle Creek. The creek is rarely covered by snow except during winters with a deep snowpack at lower elevations.

The entirety of this route was not considered as an exit route from the huts on 2/17/26 as the ascent from the Frog Lake Huts to Frog Lake Notch is exposed to steep and large south facing avalanche paths off Perry's Peak. Also on the descent to the roadhead from Frog Pass this route as marked encounters the avalanche terrain noted above as the “Weird Pocket”.

Donner Summit Rest Area 3 Miles. 1450' Ascent. 1050' Descent.

See Figure 17

This is essentially the same route as the previous one except it uses a different roadhead. This is not commonly used for guests using the huts as overnight parking is not permitted. It has the same avalanche terrain issues as the Castle Peak Trailhead.



This topographic map displays the terrain of the Donner Euer Valley. Key features include:

- Topography:** Contour lines indicate elevation, with peaks such as Peak 7695 and Summit Lake (elevation 1400).
- Roads:** Major roads shown include Johnson Canyon Route, Summit Lake Road, and Johnson Canyon Road. A red dashed line indicates a "Known Avalanche path".
- Property:** Several areas are marked as "Private Property", including the "7C / Donner Euer Valley Private Property" and "Donner Lake Rim View".
- Water Features:** Summit Lake, Frog Lake, and various creeks like the "Solitude Creek" and "Andromeda" are depicted.
- Infrastructure:** The "Alan S. Hart Freeway / I-80" is visible at the bottom. A "Donner Lake Rim View" area is also marked.
- Map Tools:** A scale bar (0 to 3000 ft) and a north arrow are present in the bottom left. A legend in the bottom right identifies symbols for "Topo Info", "Donner Lake Rim View", and "Johnson Canyon".

Orange dots indicate the route from the Johnson Canyon roadhead.

Preliminary Report on the February 17, 2026 Perry's Peak Avalanche

Leaving Frog Lake Huts the route crosses SE facing avalanche terrain that varies between 28° - 37° . This avalanche terrain could be bypassed to the west but that would involve crossing on to private property. The 7C property has aggressively pursued trespassers in past years and knowledgeable parties avoid crossing that property boundary (Figure 19). The Truckee Donner Land Trust also tells visitors not to trespass on this land on their website directions.

Approximately 3 miles from the huts the route to the Johnson Canyon roadhead follows the Summit Lake Road which crosses SW facing avalanche terrain. This avalanche terrain is unavoidable given the private property to the north. The Summit Lake Road is under 300 vertical feet of avalanche-capable terrain of 30° - 40° for 900 linear feet of exposure.



*Figure 19: Warning/No Trespassing signs at the 7C entrance gate. NW corner of the 7C property.
39.37025, -120.28719*

TNSAR Access Route (Tahoe Donner Nordic Center to Crabtree Road to Frog Lake Huts).

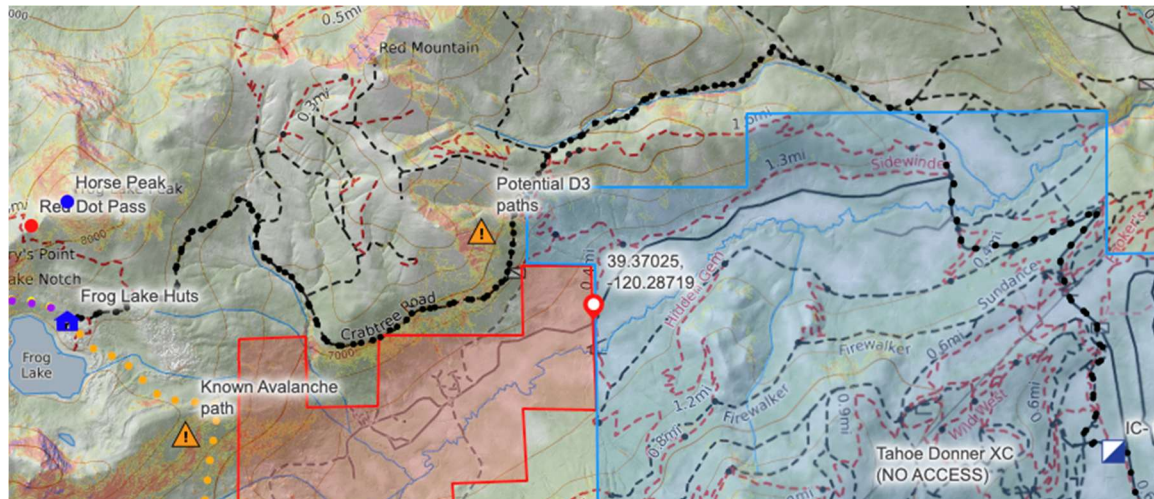


Figure 20: Overview of the TNSAR Access Route via Crabtree Road used on 2/17/26.
This route is marked by the dotted black line.

This access route is the longest way to access the Frog Lake Huts and involves crossing a commercial property. Tahoe Donner Nordic Center strongly discourages ski touring skis and splitboards on its trails and would require a commercial permit for concessions to use its trails for hut access. Crabtree Road is generally through non-avalanche terrain, with the notable exception of a 500-600 vertical foot ESE-facing complex of avalanche paths. These paths are marked as “Potential D3 paths” in Figure 20. Aerial imagery shows three distinct avalanche paths with runouts crossing the Crabtree Road elevation (Figure 21).

Crossing these paths on the Crabtree Road with a snow cat lowers the time of exposure and vulnerability, but ski touring underneath results in much longer exposure time and higher vulnerability.

There is no viable route that entirely avoids these large slide paths that does not cross onto the 7C property.

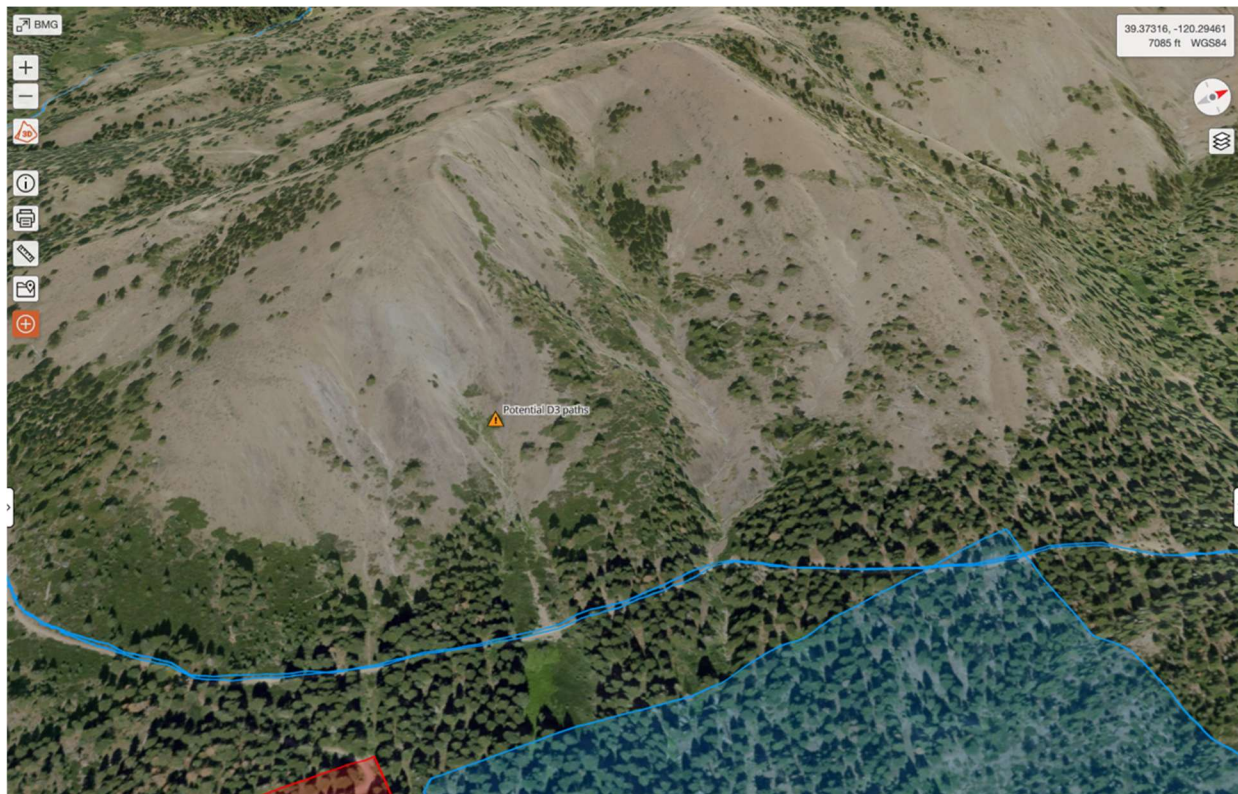


Figure 21: This is a 3D image of the avalanche terrain above Crabtree Road. These east facing slide paths load quickly during storms and can generate very large avalanches. Several openings in the trees below the road indicate that these are active avalanche paths that run well below the road.

References

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Statham, G., and Campbell, C., 2023, *The Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale V.2*, Proceedings of the International Snow Science Workshop, Bend, OR, pp. 597-605

Strava Tracks from N. Choo for February 15,16, and 17, 2026

Surviving Client Statement and Strava Track – KW

Truckee Donner Land Trust – Winter Navigation and Safety Page <https://www.truckeedonnerlandtrust.org/frog-winter-routes>

Appendix A – Glossary

Avalanche Danger/Hazard: The avalanche danger and associated travel advice are based on the likelihood, size and distribution of expected avalanches.

Table A-1 (American Avalanche Assoc., 2022).

North American Public Avalanche Danger Scale				
<i>Avalanche danger is determined by the likelihood, size, and distribution of avalanches.</i>				
<i>Safe backcountry travel requires training and experience. You control your risk by choosing when, where, and how you travel.</i>				
Danger Level		Travel Advice	Likelihood	Size and Distribution
5 - Extreme		Extraordinarily dangerous avalanche conditions. Avoid all avalanche terrain.	Natural and human-triggered avalanches certain.	Very large avalanches in many areas.
4 - High		Very dangerous avalanche conditions. Travel in avalanche terrain not recommended.	Natural avalanches likely; human-triggered avalanches very likely.	Large avalanches in many areas; or very large avalanches in specific areas.
3 - Considerable		Dangerous avalanche conditions. Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding, and conservative decision-making essential.	Natural avalanches possible; human-triggered avalanches likely.	Small avalanches in many areas; or large avalanches in specific areas; or very large avalanches in isolated areas.
2 - Moderate		Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify features of concern.	Natural avalanches unlikely; human-triggered avalanches possible.	Small avalanches in specific areas; or large avalanches in isolated areas.
1 - Low		Generally safe avalanche conditions. Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features.	Natural and human-triggered avalanches unlikely.	Small avalanches in isolated areas or extreme terrain.

Avalanche Path - An avalanche path is the area involved in an avalanche or a location where an avalanche can occur. Avalanche paths are subdivided into three sections: the start zone, the track, and the runout zone (Figure A-1):

The start zone is where avalanches typically release. Significant characteristics of the start zone include the slope incline, orientation to wind, orientation to sun, roughness of ground, forest cover, elevation, and trigger points.

The track is the area covered by an avalanche in motion. It connects the start zone to the runout zone.

The runout zone is the part of an avalanche path where an avalanche slows down and stops.

At treeline and below, large avalanche paths are frequently evident from their impact on forests. They can damage or destroy forests, resulting in treeless paths through the forest where avalanches regularly occur.



Figure A-1: Schematic showing the key sections on an avalanche path
 (Source: <https://avalanche.org/avalanche-encyclopedia/#avalanche-path>)



Figure A-2: Schematic showing the components of an avalanche.
 (Source: <https://avalanche.org/avalanche-encyclopedia/#avalanche-path>)

Avalanche Size

The Avalanche Size – Destructive Force classification is based on potential destructive effect of snow avalanches. The maximum size class (destructive effect) for a given avalanche path relates to the snow supply (depth of avalanches) and terrain (area, length, configuration, and incline of the avalanche path).

Table A-2: Avalanche Size – Destructive Force (American Avalanche Assoc., 2022).

Size	Avalanche Destructive Potential	Typical mass	Typical path length (m)
D1	Relatively harmless to people.	<10 t	10 m
D2	Could bury, injure or kill a person.	10 ² t	100 m
D3	Could bury and destroy a car, damage a truck, destroy a wood frame house, or break a few trees.	10 ³ t	1000 m
D4	Could destroy a railway car, large truck, several buildings or substantial amount of forest.	10 ⁴ t	2000 m
D5	Could gouge the landscape. Largest snow avalanche known.	10 ⁵ t	3000 m

Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale – Originally developed by the Canadian Avalanche Association. This scale rates terrain based on terrain characteristics and consequences. (Statham, G., and Campbell, C., 2023)

Terrain rating	Class	Description for Backcountry Travel
Non-Avalanche	0	No known exposure to avalanches. Very low-angle or densely forested slopes located well away from avalanche paths, or designated trails/routes with no exposure to avalanches.
Simple	1	Exposure to low-angle or primarily forested terrain. Some forest openings may involve the runout zones of infrequent avalanches and terrain traps may exist. Many options to reduce or eliminate exposure.
Challenging	2	Exposure to well-defined avalanche paths, starting zones, terrain traps or overhead hazard. With careful route finding, some options will exist to reduce or eliminate exposure.
Complex	3	Exposure to multiple overlapping avalanche paths or large expanses of steep, open terrain. Frequent exposure to overhead hazard. Many avalanche starting zones and terrain traps with minimal options to reduce exposure.
Extreme	4	Exposure to very steep faces with cliffs, spines, couloirs, crevasses or sustained overhead hazard. No options to reduce exposure; even small avalanches can be fatal.

HS = Height of snow. Measured in the slope normal direction (perpendicular to the snow surface).

Runout Angle: The angle between the toe of a given avalanche and the top of the crown.

This can be measured in the field with an inclinometer or calculated on a map.

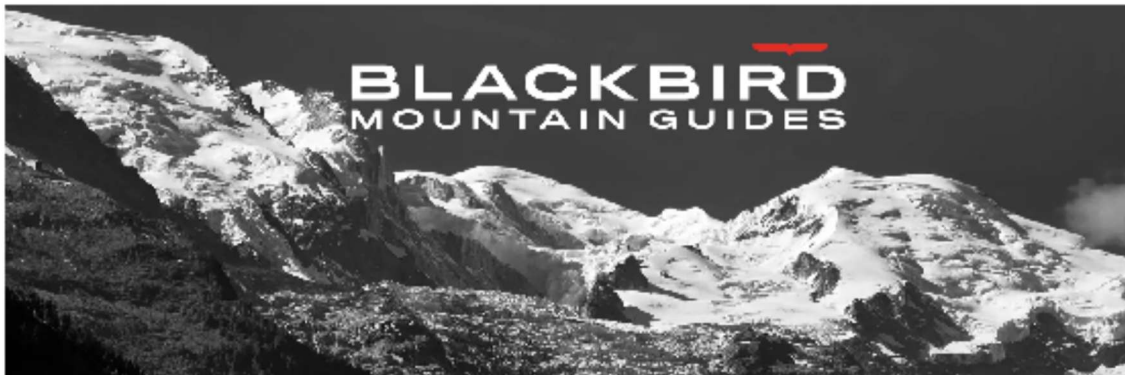
Runout angle calculation = $\tan^{-1}$ (Vertical Fall/Horizontal Run)

Wind Speed Estimation

Table A-3: Wind Speed Estimation (American Avalanche Assoc., 2022).

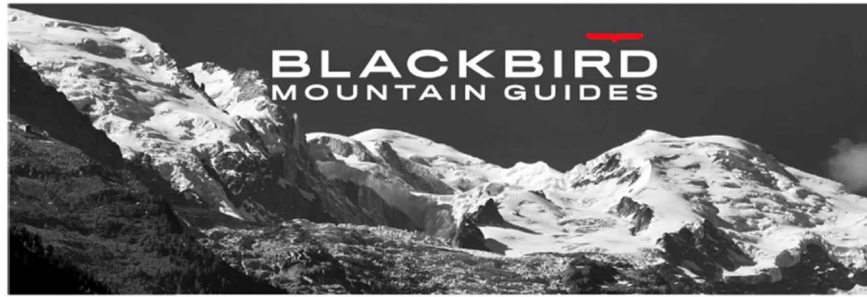
CLASS	DATA CODE	KM/H	M/S	MI/HR	TYPICAL INDICATOR
Calm	C	0	0	0	No air motion. Smoke rises vertically.
Light	L	1-25	1-7	1-16	Light to gentle breeze. Flags and twigs in motion.
Moderate	M	26-40	8-11	17-25	Fresh breeze. Small trees sway. Flags stretched. Snow begins to drift.
Strong	S	41-60	12-17	26-38	Strong breeze. Whole trees in motion.
Extreme	X	>60	>17	>38	Gale force or higher.

Appendix B – Client Registration Questions and Acknowledgement of Risk Form



Contact Information

First Name *	Nickname / Preferred First Name
Last Name *	
Email *	Alt Email
Phone *	Alt Phone
Country *	
City	US State (If applicable)
What type of activity have you booked & are you completing this for? *	
☐ Avalanche Education (AIARE Course)	☐ Alpine Climbing
☐ Ski & Splitboard	☐ Rock Climbing
☐ Wilderness Skills & First Aid (WFA/WFR)	
Is your Program Domestic (USA) or International? *	
☐ Domestic (USA)	☐ International



Skier & Rider Experience Questionnaire

We're looking forward to working with you in the mountains! Before we do, we'd like to understand a bit more about your prior experience, fitness and motivations.

We aim to match clients as closely as we can with groups tailored to their abilities and with guides who will support your goals and help to develop key skills - whether you are skier, splitboarder, rock or alpine climber.

Filling out this form will make your program a much more productive and engaging enoagino experience!

How would you rate your fitness and uphill movement while touring in the backcountry? *

Think about how long you can sustain uphill travel with a pack, and your comfort using skins and touring gear.

1 Star = Very limited fitness or experience
5 Star = Can tour efficiently for 3,000+ days with ease

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Please add any notes on your ski/split fitness or touring experience.

How would you rate your skiing or riding ability in backcountry terrain? *

This includes powder, variable conditions, trees, and steeper terrain.

1 Star = Stick to groomers
5 Star = Confident in all snow and terrain types

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Please add any notes on your downhill ability.

How would you rate your mountain sense in backcountry environments? *

Mountain sense includes terrain awareness, route finding, familiarity with group travel dynamics, and risk assessment.

1 Star = I follow others without much input
5 Star = I regularly lead or contribute to route decisions

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

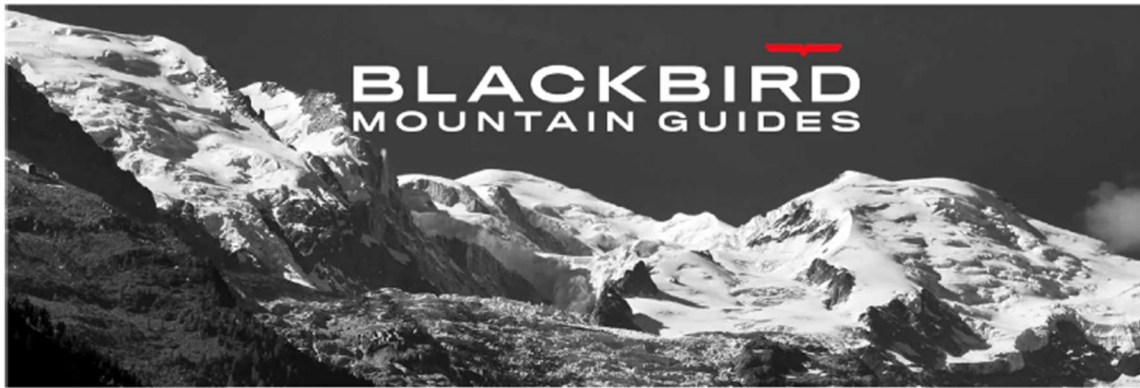
Please share more on your backcountry decision-making experience.

How familiar are you with backcountry ski and avalanche gear (beacon, shovel, probe, skins, touring bindings)? *

1 = Never used
5 = Fully proficient with regular practice

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Please share more on the gear you've used or practiced with



Medical Information

This information is important for us and your guide to have access to in case of emergencies. It will be kept confidential in compliance with Federal HIPAA regulations.

Date of Birth *

MM/DD/YYYY 

Weight *

Weight in pounds (ex: 175)

Field is required

Height

Feet *

Inches *

Medical Issues *

Do you current have or have a history of:

- ☐ Allergies (including food allergies)
- ☐ Altitude illness
- ☐ Bone, joint, or muscle injuries (including spine)
- ☐ Blood issues (bleeding/clotting disorder)
- ☐ Cold or heat-related injuries
- ☐ Diabetes or endocrine issues
- ☐ Gastrointestinal issues
- ☐ Heart or circulation issues
- ☐ Infectious diseases
- ☐ Kidney, bladder, or reproductive system issues
- ☐ Neurologic issues (fainting, seizures)
- ☐ Mental health issues
- ☐ Recent illness, surgery, or physical disability
- ☐ Currently pregnant

- ☐ Currently using medications
- ☐ Other health/medical issue not listed
- ☐ None of the above
-

Dietary Restrictions

Only applicable if you are joining us on a multi-day overnight trip where food is provided (e.g., Hut or Lodge Ski Trip)

Food Restrictions

- ☐ Food Allergy
- ☐ Vegan
- ☐ Vegetarian
- ☐ Halal
- ☐ Kosher
- ☐ Preference
- ☐ None
-

Emergency Contact

Emergency Contact Name *

First Name & Last Name

Emergency Contact Phone Number *



Emergency Contact Email *



Emergency Contact Relationship *

What is this person's relationship to you?



Personal Experience

What is the hardest physical challenge you've completed? *

What is the hardest physical challenge you've been unsuccessful with? *

There is no such thing as failure, only gaining experience, but it's helpful for us to know something that was challenging for you where you found your limits.

Interests

Which activities are you interested in? *

Check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Avalanche Education (AIARE Course) | ☐ Alpine Climbing |
| ☐ Ski & Splitboard | ☐ Rock Climbing |
| ☐ Wilderness Skills & First Aid (WFA/WFR) | ☐ Mountain Biking |

Which destinations are you interested in? *

This could be for Ski/Ride, Alpine or Rock Climbing. Check all that apply.

- ☐ California
- ☐ Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon)
- ☐ Rocky Mountains (Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Montana)
- ☐ Western Canada (British Columbia, Alberta)
- ☐ The Alps (France, Italy, Switzerland)
- ☐ Northern Europe (Norway, Iceland, Greenland)
- ☐ Japan (Hokkaido, Honshu)
- ☐ The Andes (Chile, Argentina, Peru)

How did you hear about us?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Webinar | ☐ Organization (AIARE, Sierra Avy Center, NWAC, etc.) |
| ☐ Google/search engine | ☐ Returning client |
| ☐ Community forum / group | ☐ Event |
| ☐ Friend/Family Recommendation | ☐ Social media |
| ☐ Other | |



Participation Waiver

Participant Name *

First Name & Last Name

Parent/Guardian First & Last Name

If applicable

Leave blank if not applicable

Participant Email *

Or email of Parent/Guardian if applicable

Parent(s) or court-appointed legal guardian(s) must sign for any participating minor (those under 18 years of age) and agree that they and the minor are subject to all the terms of this document, as set forth below.

1. ASSUMPTION OF RISK

Express Assumption of Risk Associated with Mountaineering, Climbing, Skiing, Snowboarding, Biking, and Other Activities offered by Blackbird Mountain Guides, LLC.

In consideration of the services that Blackbird Mountain Guides, LLC, a California limited liability company, its agents, owners, members, managers, officers, volunteers, affiliates, participants, employees, and all other persons or entities acting in any capacity on their behalf (hereinafter, collectively referred to as "Blackbird Guides"). I do hereby affirm and acknowledge that I have been fully informed and understand the inherent hazards and risks associated with Alpine Mountaineering, Rock Climbing, Ice Climbing, Backcountry Ski/Snowboard Touring, Ski/Snowboard Mountaineering and Mountain Biking activities, transportation of equipment related to the activities, and traveling to and from activity sites in which I am about to engage.

These risks include, but are not limited to:

Conditions that can make skiing, snowboarding, hiking, biking, or climbing difficult and dangerous and that may result in significant injury or death as a result of a fall or an impact with another object; these include, ski lifts and other ski area infrastructure and signage, steep slopes, ice, snow cornices, poor snow conditions, poor visibility, bad weather, low temperatures, extreme heat, sun exposure, trees, tree-wells, rocks, creeks, boulders, holes, depressions and other obstacles that may be below the snow surface, deep snow and other backcountry users, including those that may be untrained and making poor decisions.

Risks related to environmental conditions, such as cold weather and heat related injuries and illness including but not limited to frostnip, frostbite, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, sunburn, hypothermia and dehydration, or food or water-borne illness.

Risks related to outdoor elements, including but not limited to avalanches, rock fall, inclement weather, thunder and lightning, severe and or varied wind, temperature or weather conditions.

Risk of injury from the equipment utilized the activities guided by Blackbird Guides, such as ski retention systems not functioning properly, boots that

malfunction, crampons which do not stay in place, which combined with other factors can result in significant injury or death.

Risks associated with mechanized access to skiing or climbing, including helicopters, snowcats and ski area infrastructure, such as chair lifts, lift towers, ski area signage, snow grooming equipment, snow making equipment.

Risks associated with lodging, including hotels, backcountry lodges, yurts, huts, etc and the associated grounds and facilities.

Injury or death may be caused by my own negligence and/or the negligence of others, including employees, agents, independent contractors or representatives of Blackbird Guides. Blackbird Guides may make mistakes in judgment, be unaware of a participant's fitness or abilities, misjudge the weather or other avalanche conditions, or give incomplete or confusing warnings and instructions. Injuries may occur from exposure to high altitude, which may affect judgment and coordination, may cause altitude sickness, including high altitude pulmonary edema and high-altitude cerebral edema, which may be irreversible and cause death.

Risks of injury or death as a result of attacks by or encounters with insects, reptiles, including snakes, and/or animals, such as bears, mountain goats, mountain lions, or others.

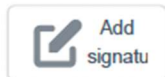
Risks associated with infectious disease which may be caused by Blackbird Guides or other participants, including the risk of infection from COVID-19 or other diseases, which may be more prevalent due to the nature of common cooking or sleeping arrangements in wilderness settings.

In addition, due to the remote nature of many operating areas, evacuation to definitive medical care may be difficult or impossible. As a result, there is a risk that medical or other emergencies may be difficult or impossible to effectively handle, increasing the risk of more substantial injury or death, than might occur if such an emergency occurred in an urban setting.

I understand the description of these risks is not complete and that unknown or unanticipated risks may result in injury, illness, or death.

I expressly agree and promise to accept and assume all of the risks existing in this activity. My participation in this activity is purely voluntary, and I elect to participate in spite of the risks.

Signature of Adult Participant or Parent/Guardian *



2. RELEASE OF LIABILITY, WAIVER OF CLAIMS, AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT.

Please read carefully and be certain you understand the implications of signing as you are agreeing to waive certain rights.

I hereby voluntarily release, forever discharge, and agree to indemnify and hold harmless Blackbird Guides, and its owners, members, managers, employees, agents, volunteers, contractors, guides, participants and all other persons or entities acting in any capacity on their behalf, from any and all claims, demands, or causes of action, which are in any way connected with or related to my participation in this activity or my use of Blackbird Guides' equipment or facilities, including any such claims which allege negligent acts or omissions of Blackbird Guides.

To the extent that Blackbird Guides or anyone acting on their behalf be required to incur attorney's fees and costs to enforce this agreement or defend any claim by you that has been released pursuant to the terms of this agreement, I agree to indemnify and hold them harmless for all such fees and costs (including reasonable attorney's fees).

I certify that I have adequate insurance to cover any injury or damage I may cause or suffer while participating, or else I agree to bear the costs of such injury or damage myself. I further certify that I am willing to assume the risk of any medical or physical condition I may have.

In the event that I file a lawsuit against Blackbird Guides, I hereby agree to do so solely in the state of California, and I further agree that the substantive law of California shall apply in that action without regard to the conflict of law rules of that state. I agree that if any portion of this agreement is found to be void or unenforceable, the remaining portions shall remain in full force and effect. I understand that the Activities may occur on lands owned by the United States Government, Foreign Governments, State or Local Governments or Private Landowners (together, the "Landowners"), but that the Landowners are not responsible for my safety in any way and have warned that there are hazards on their lands (both natural and man-made) which may be hidden and not obvious and which may include, but are not limited to cliffs, crevasses, avalanche and other dangers. I hereby agree to release, indemnify, and discharge the Landowners, on behalf of myself, my spouse, my children, my parents, my heirs, assigns, personal representative and estate from and against any and all claims which relate to or may grow out of my participation in helicopter, snowcat, backcountry skiing, ski mountaineering, alpine mountaineering, rock climbing, ice climbing or other activities administered by Blackbird Guides.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that if anyone is hurt or property is damaged during my participation in this activity, I will likely be found by a court of law to have waived my right to maintain a lawsuit against Blackbird Guides on the basis of any claim from which I have released them herein.

I HAVE READ THIS RELEASE OF LIABILITY, WAIVER OF CLAIMS, AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT, AND I FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS TERMS.

I UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE GIVEN UP LEGAL RIGHTS BY SIGNING IT, AND I SIGN IT FREELY AND VOLUNTARILY, WITHOUT ANY INDUCEMENT, AND AGREE TO BE BOUND BY ITS TERMS

Signature of Adult Participant or Parent/Guardian *



3. MEDIA RELEASE

For good and valuable consideration, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I authorize Blackbird Mountain Guides, LLC ("Company") and their respective affiliates, subsidiaries, licensees, successors and assigns to make use of my appearance for the Company.

I agree that you may tape and photograph me, and record my voice, conversation and sounds, including any performance of any musical composition(s), during and in connection with my appearance and that you shall be the exclusive owner of the results and proceeds of such taping, photography and recording with the right, others to use, in any manner, all or any portion thereof or of a reproduction thereof in connection with the Company or otherwise. For purposes of clarity, I expressly waive any and all moral rights I may have in connection with my appearance.

I further agree that you may use and license others to use my name, voice, likeness and any biographical material concerning me which I may provide, in any and all media and in the promotion, advertising, sale, publicizing and exploitation of Blackbird Mountain Guides and/or otherwise and ancillary products (e.g., merchandise) in connection with Blackbird Mountain Guides and in connection with Company's affiliated services, throughout the world in all media, an unlimited number of times in perpetuity. I further represent that any statements made by me during my appearance are true, to the best of my knowledge, and that neither they nor my appearance will violate or infringe upon the rights of any third party. I hereby waive any right of inspection or approval of my appearance or the uses to which such appearance may be put. I acknowledge that you will rely on this permission potentially, at substantial cost to you and hereby agree not to assert any claim of any nature whatsoever against anyone relating to the exercise of the permissions granted hereunder.

I VERIFY THAT I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS MEDIA RELEASE STATEMENT BY CHECKING THE FOLLOWING "I AGREE" CHECK BOX:

☐ I Agree *

4. TRIP INSURANCE

By checking below, you are confirming that you have read and acknowledged Blackbird's [Company Policies](#) including [Cancellation Policies](#), and information provided about [Trip Insurance](#). You acknowledge that that if you cancel, or notify that you cannot attend, your program within 30 days of its start date no refund, reschedule, or credit will be issued.

I VERIFY THAT I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS TRIP INSURANCE INFORMATION BY CHECKING THE FOLLOWING "I AGREE" CHECK BOX:

☐ I Agree *

What are your plans regarding Trip Insurance? - *

☐ I have, or plan to purchase, trip insurance for this program.

☐ I do not have, and do not intend to purchase, trip insurance for this program. I assume any potential financial losses involved by not purchasing trip insurance.

ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE CONSENT

By checking below, you are consenting to the use of your electronic signature in lieu of an original signature on paper. You have the right to request that you sign a paper copy instead. By checking here, you are waiving that right. After consent, you may, upon written request to us, obtain a paper copy of an electronic record. No fee will be charged for such copy and no special hardware or software is required to view it. Your agreement to use an electronic signature with us for any documents will continue until such time as you notify us in writing that you no longer wish to use an electronic signature. There is no penalty for withdrawing your consent. You should always make sure that we have a current email address in order to contact you regarding any changes, if necessary.

I VERIFY THAT I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE CONSENT STATEMENT BY CHECKING THE FOLLOWING "I CONSENT" CHECK BOX:

☐ I Consent *

Completed on: *

03/24/2026



Appendix C - Report Author Resume

Don Sharaf compiled the information in this report.

Don has worked as an avalanche professional for 35 years. An abbreviated resume follows.

Experience:

- Backcountry Ski Guiding in NW Wyoming and South-Central Alaska for the National Outdoor Leadership School. 1991-2003
- Snow and Ice Mountaineering Guiding – AK, BC, Chile, India, WA, WY for the National Outdoor Leadership School. 1991-2003
- Helicopter Ski Guiding in the Chugach Range and Tordrillo Mountains of Alaska for Valdez Heli-Ski Guides, Chugach Powder Guides, and Tordrillo North. 2001-2025
- Avalanche Education – Instructor, Course Leader, and Company Owner – AK, CA, CO, ID, MT, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY. Worked custom courses for Ski Patrols, Guide Services, and the Military. Helped design Professional Avalanche Curriculum for the American Avalanche Association. Presenter at many regional Snow and Avalanche Workshops and International Snow Science Workshops. 1996-2025
- Avalanche Forecasting and Mitigation for Mining and Electric Utilities – Alaska – 2007-2008, 2021-Present
- Avalanche Forecasting for Heli-Ski Operations – Alaska – 2001 - 2024
- Avalanche Risk Management and Consulting - Ski Areas, Mines, Electric Utilities, Guiding Operations, Departments of Transportation, Municipalities. AK, CA, CO, ID, UT, WY. 2021 – Present
- Avalanche Investigation and Reports – AK and WY – 1996, 1999, 2001, 2024, 2026

Certifications:

- American Avalanche Association – Professional Member since 1992
- American Mountain Guide Association – Certified Ski Guide since 2004