Photo: Heather Thamm captures a variety of persistent weak layers that plagued our region this season.
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Circular debris flow from a large wet avalanche running into the Placer Valley. Photo: Graham Predeger
Message from the Director

After seven seasons with the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center (CNFAIC), I count myself as very lucky. This is my dream job, I get to work with the most amazing, selfless group of individuals from all aspects of winter backcountry use - colleagues, the professional avalanche community, public users, dealers and industry professionals. The list goes on! We are fortunate to report that despite an uncharacteristically tricky snowpack, Alaska was under the yearly average of three avalanche fatalities this season, though we are sad to report, just barely. One snowmachiner lost his life in an avalanche near Cooper Landing and a 4-year old girl succumbed to injuries from a roof avalanche near Fairbanks. Many close calls were reported across the State. One of which was a deep slab triggered by a snowmachiner on a slope I had ridden earlier that same day. More on these incidents in the Fatalities and Near Misses section.

The internal workings at the CNFAIC are steadily growing. This season the center welcomed back all returning staff members. Heather Thamm, who we stole from the Alyeska Ski Patrol Snow Safety team, is a longtime Girdwood local and professional photographer. What would we do without her exceptional photos that gloss our observations and advisories? Aleph Johnston-Bloom contributes with the wide range of skills she developed as a 15-year veteran of professional avalanche education, forecasting (backcountry and DOT) and ski patrolling. Graham Predeger took a bit more of a back seat this season but continued to assist with outreach events and forecasting operations as needed. Alex McLain has been a Pro Observer in the Summit Lake area since the founding of CNFAIC in 2001, and continues to keep us apprised of happenings in the Southern Kenai zone. I began working with the CNFAIC in 2010/11, having mentored with the Utah Avalanche Center and earning a MS in Atmospheric Science at the University of Utah.

Looking back on this season, many memorable occasions come to mind. In reflection, they are based on public buy-in and appreciation. I recall one event in particular. In late November we hosted a snowmachine-specific evening talk at Alaska Diving and Mining Supply. We expected 20 - 30 riders for this early season event and 120+ showed up! The evening focused on discussing three snowmachine avalanche fatalities from the past few years. These events were still clearly remembered as many attendees were intimately involved. The group knew the details, took the reins, got serious and told their stories. They discussed what they wished they had done differently, what they did right, and what they wanted every future rider to know. It was a powerful evening and got significant attention on social media afterward. I’d like to think that moments like this save lives down the road. That is why we are in this business.

-Wendy Wagner, CNFAIC Director

CNFAIC Forecasters are all smiles after a staff avalanche rescue training session! Pictured from left to right are Aleph Johnston-Bloom, Wendy Wagner, Heather Thamm and intern Conrad Chapman.

Photo: Jaime Anderson.
Acknowledgements

It almost goes without saying: Staying safe in avalanche terrain is a community effort. From the public user to the avalanche professional, then further to industry and corporations, and on. To all of you that have become members, written observations, attended fundraisers, donated, THANK YOU immensely!! This is the foundation we continue to build upon. We would also like to thank our non-profit arm, the Friends of the CNFAIC. Their tireless work is a conduit to the community and we would NOT be here without them. Please see the “Finances and Fundraising” section at the end of the report for specifics on the Friends group!

When we get down to business at the Avalanche Center assessing snow stability and avalanche conditions, the entities listed below are absolutely integral for producing accurate avalanche forecasts. We would like to extend a special thank you to the following organizations and individuals for sharing valuable information and insight:

- Alaska DOT&PF
- Alyeska Ski Patrol and Snow Safety
- Chugach Powder Guides
- Alaska Railroad
- Alaska Avalanche School
- Alaska Pacific University
- The over 150 public users who submitted snow/avalanche observations through our website

Thank you to the Girdwood Brewery for hosting the 2017 Observer Appreciation Night. Invited guests were public users and professionals that submitted five or more observations during the season!!
Advisories and Statistics

This season started with intermittent updates during November until our first advisory was issued on November 19th. This marked the start of daily advisories, which lasted through April 16th. For the last two weeks of the season, we posted advisories 4 days/week with a final advisory on April 29th. The Summit Lake Weekly Snowpack Summary continued this season. It was posted on Saturday mornings starting in early December and running through early April.

Advisories
Turnagain: 163 (with danger ratings, does not include early season updates)
Summit Weekly Summaries: 20

Official Warnings
Avalanche Warnings: 4
Special Avalanche Bulletins: 1

Website
Total visits Nov-Apr: 391,380
Unique visitors Nov-Apr: 137,371

* compare to 2015/2016
Total Visits: 328,181
Unique visitors: 76,909

Observations
Total: 529
Chugach NF: 430
Hatcher Pass: 63
Public: 292
Pro: 51 (not including CNFAIC staff)
CNFAIC Staff: 186

* compare to 2015/2016
2014/2015:
Total: 445
Chugach NF: 347
Hatcher Pass: 71
Public: 212
Pro: 43 (not including CNFAIC staff)
CNFAIC Staff: 193

*compare to 2015/16
Total posts per season: 109  Followers: 3,458

*compare to 2015/16
Total posts per season: 104  Followers: 2,240

Social Media

Instagram
Total posts per season: 109  Followers: 3,458

* compare to 2015/16
Total Posts: 104  Followers: 2,240

Facebook
Likes: 4,056

YouTube
Videos: 44  Views: 7,575

Outreach
Total people reached: 1,433
Rescue Workshops: 150 (3 workshops)
Youth reached: 169

Traditional Media Appearances
TV- on camera: 8, Radio: 20
Print/Online news: 16

Aleph Johnston-Bloom speaks to Channel 2 news about upcoming dangerous avalanche conditions
Public Outreach

The CNFAIC had another successful season of avalanche outreach to the motorized and non-motorized communities. We continued with our “Fireside Chat” format, which offers free topic based avalanche presentations to the public. These “Chats” were hosted at various locations including Alaska Mining and Diving Supply (AMDS), Ski AK, REI, Blue & Gold Boardshop, Powder Hound Ski Shop, the Alaska Avalanche School and the Glacier Ranger District. Topics covered were navigating/understanding the CNFAIC website, Intro to Avalanche Rescue, Intro to Mountain Weather, the State of the Turnagain Snowpack, Understanding Avalanche Problems and Snowmachine Avalanche Awareness. CNFAIC staff also continued to offer free hands-on ‘Rescue Workshops’, including one in collaboration with the Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center, for the 3rd year running.

The outreach table listed below shows the variety of teaching opportunities that the staff participated in. Some highlights include 120+ snowmachiners attending an early-season presentation at our local Ski Doo shop, AMDS. Riders shared personal stories with avalanche fatalities and discussed common mistakes often made in avalanche terrain. A big emphasis of the talk was how to recognize avalanche terrain and how to “Get Out of Harm’s Way”. Graham and Aleph assisted with a new awareness evening in Soldotna. This event was hosted by The Flats Bistro and organized/led by Sean Thomas Sullivan (a.k.a. “Sully”). Over 70 Kenai Peninsula snowmachiners, skiers and snowboarders attended. Lastly, youth outreach is growing. Aleph collaborated with three other women from the Chugach National Forest staff to teach 120 girl scouts about avalanches at the Women of Science and Technology day at UAA.

A full house turn out at Alaska Mining and Diving for a snowmachine specific gathering to discuss leasons learned.

Photo: Nick Olzenak
Public Outreach (Continued)

Roughly 75 backcountry users joined CNFAIC for two basic Avalanche Rescue Workshos at Turnagain Pass this season.

Aleph Johnston-Bloom with two Girl Scouts at the Women in Science and Technology Day in Anchorage.

Heather Thamm discusses what happens “If you are caught” at the Powder Hound Ski Shop in Girdwood.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Outreach Type</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
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<td>APU Snow Science: Intro to CNFAIC</td>
<td>Aleph</td>
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Southcentral Alaska Avalanche Workshop (SAAW)

On November 7th CNFAIC hosted the 4th Annual Southcentral Alaska Avalanche Workshop (SAAW) in partnership with Alaska Pacific University. This workshop has been a popular event within the professional community as an opportunity to network and continue professional development. SAAW’s audience includes local agency forecasters, ski guides, ski patrollers and avalanche educators. We also have an assortment of public recreationalists and active community members who participate yearly. This season we opened the afternoon sessions free to the public – a big hit with over 150 attendants.

The financial support from the American Avalanche Association Professional Development Grant has allowed this event to be sustainable while making it possible to invite a guest presenter from outside our community each year. This year Utah Avalanche Center’s Drew Hardesty presented on two topics: *Expert Intuition, Uncertainty and Pattern Recognition* and his thoughts on *Freedom and Anarchy in the Backcountry.*

SAAW Speakers capture the crowd’s attention. From upper left to right: Drew Hardesty (Utah Avalanche Center forecaster), Jocelyn Cramer (Alaska Pacific Unv. Student) and Conrad Chapman (Unv. Of Alaska Fairbanks student and 2017 CNFAIC Intern). Photos: Heather Thamm/Aleph Johnston-Bloom
**Internship Program**

This season’s Internship Program recipient was Conrad Chapman from Fairbanks, Alaska. Conrad embedded with the forecasting team from early January through March. He became an integral member of the team with his genuine enthusiasm and curiosity. Conrad is a born and raised Alaskan who became interested in snow through mountaineering, snowmachining and the desire to understand snow processes. He is a founding member of the recently formed grassroots Eastern Alaska Range Avalanche Center (ERAC) based in Fairbanks. He was interested in the CNFAIC internship to gain exposure to professional avalanche forecasting and experience a different snow climate. Conrad took a semester off from his Earth Science Studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks to participate in the internship.

Conrad’s internship project and focus was to develop the observation and writing skills necessary to produce the Saturday Summit Summary. Each forecaster worked with him in the field and office sharing their personal methods for targeting information and developing focused questions. Conrad worked on his attention to detail, snow pit craftsmanship, snowpack assessment, photography and clearly communicating his thoughts on snowpack stability. It was a pleasure to see the improvement over the season and how much he appreciated the experience. Conrad successfully wrote the Summit Summary throughout the month of March.
Partnerships

The CNFAIC relies heavily on its vast array of partners, both within the professional avalanche community and outside. Local partners include: Alaska DOT Avalanche Program, AKRR Avalanche Program, Alyeska Snow Safety, Chugach Powder Guides, Alaska Avalanche School, Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center, Alaska Pacific University and the National Weather Service. Other partners include Alaska Mining and Diving Supply for providing the staff a “loaner sled” for the 5th year in a row now and BeadedStream/KCI for the Tincan Snow Study plot and more.

Nick Olzenak, Alaska Mining and Diving Supply (AMDS) owner, presents the keys to a brand new loaner Ski Doo Summit SP 850 G4 snowmachine to CNFAIC’s Graham Predeger. This ‘loaner’ program is hosted by BRP and facilitated by AMDS.

BeadedStream and Kasteler Consulting, Inc. (KCI) worked with the CNFAIC to install and maintain a snow temperature array and snow depth sensor on Tincan Ridge during the fall of 2016. This equipment brings MUCH NEEDED snowfall and snow depth information to forecasters - amongst many other benefits!

The instrumentation is donated by BeadedStream and the hardware, installation and maintenance is provided by KCI. Thank you to these two entities!!
Partnerships (Continued)

The CNFAIC Stability Meeting, or as some have coined it - the “Forecaster Meeting”, has become a weekly staple. Held every Friday morning, this is open to all avalanche professionals. Most regular partakers are AK DOT, CPG and Alaska Avalanche School.
Snowpack and Weather Summary

Seasonal Snowfall = 238”  Seasonal SWE = 21.1”  Seasonal H2O = 34.4”

*Data from the Turnagain Pass SNOTEL on Center Ridge (1880’) from Oct 1 – May 1

This season the Northern Kenai Mountains experienced a Continental to Inter-mountain snow climate. Temperatures and precipitation were below average. This was a welcomed occurrence for a temperate rainforest accustomed to rain at lower elevations. “Higher elevation sites had snowpacks that were generally below 70% of normal. Low elevation snowpacks, this year, were more varied, ranging from 80-148% of normal.” (The Snow Survey Report put out by the NCRS on April 1, 2017.) By early January there was enough snow at sea level for the Chugach National Forest to open the Placer and Twentymile River drainages to motorized use as the Forest typically looks for a 24- 36” base. This was the first time in three years these sea-level zones have opened and the first time since 2011/2012 that they remained open for a prolonged period.

Image courtesy of Tim Glassett, Alaska DOT Avalanche Program
2016/17 - THE SEASON OF PERSISTENT WEAK LAYERS

Long periods of clear skies and cold temperatures created the perfect environment for persistent weak layer development. The most notable high-pressure periods were in December and March, forming near surface facets that blanketed all aspects and elevations. Thinner snowpack zones suffered the most with advanced basal facets and depth hoar persisting the entire season. Furthermore, a moist but clear sky atmosphere created widespread surface hoar growth, which became another culprit in dozens of human triggered avalanches and near misses over the winter. In fact, we had 7 unique layers of buried surface hoar that produced avalanches. Last but not least, several ‘outflow’ wind events caused unusual loading and contributed to natural avalanche activity during clear sky conditions.

CNFAIC staff spent significant time tracking the myriad of persistent weak layers. Uneven snow depths across the region (including elevation and aspect inconsistencies) made it challenging to accurately map the problems. For example, some Western aspects were very thin with advanced depth hoar, while others were deep and well bonded near the ground.

One of the 7 surface hoar events that produced avalanches once buried

Long needle-like facets (spaghetti grain) formed through a Radiation Recrystallization process

#snowtosealevel
November
Monthly snow = 42", Monthly H2O = 11.1"

The season started off warm and wet with several rain events in late October and early November. These storms produced anywhere from 1-3 feet of wet heavy snow in the alpine (above 2,500’). Precipitation continued into mid November and snowline eventually made it down to 1000’ with just enough snow for skiers to skin from the parking lots at Turnagain Pass. These warm wet conditions were also ripe for several glide avalanches to release. On November 16th, there were just the right conditions, cool temperatures, high humidity and light winds, to create a widespread layer of surface hoar. This was immediately followed by snowfall that buried the surface hoar 12-20” deep over a three-day period. Our first forecast, 7am on November 19th, was right in the middle of the snowfall and so we kicked off the season with a CONSIDERABLE avalanche danger. Numerous D1-2 skier triggered and natural avalanches ensued. The snowpack eventually adjusted with a period of cold clear weather. By the end of November, the slab had lost its cohesion as it transformed into the year’s first layer of near surface facets.

"WHUMPF... There it is! Winter is here and so are the avalanches. Snow falling over the past two days landed on a widespread layer of surface hoar."

Two shallow skier triggered soft slab avalanches on Sunburst, failing on buried surface hoar, November 21st.
December
Monthly snow = 53”, Monthly H2O = 4.6”

December started out with a generally thin snowpack (1-3’ thick) below 3000’. The first half of December experienced a blocking high-pressure and cold clear weather created widespread near surface facets and basal facets in parts of the region. Girdwood, Summit Lake and the Southern end of Turnagain Pass received significantly less total snow in November and depth hoar was more widespread in these areas. In mid December, 6-10” of snow fell over a three-day period covering up the facets as well as another layer of surface hoar. Christmas arrived with 30” of snow and strong winds that quickly elevated the avalanche danger. This was also enough snow for the Chugach National Forest to open Turnagain Pass to snowmachining on December 26th. Luckily, folks kept their terrain choices and slope angles conservative, as the motorized opening coincided with High danger, a day after our first issued public avalanche warning. On December 29th three skiers were caught and carried in a D2 avalanche the SW shoulder of Lipps. This marked the first big near miss of the season and thankfully resulted in no injuries. The following day, a strong Westerly wind event initiated numerous natural avalanches. Wind loaded slopes in the Summit Lake area broke near the ground, overloading the basal facets. Avalanche activity in Turnagain Pass with its thicker snowpack was minimal.
January

Monthly snow = 50”, Monthly H2O = 5.4”

Similar to December, the first half of January was dry. Surface conditions were wind stripped and wind hardened practically everywhere due to December’s wind event. Interestingly, during this time there were several days and nights with a significant inversion with temperatures consistently above 32F in the alpine. However, the solar output from the sun was minimal and no affect on the snowpack or snow surface was observed. In mid January, multiple small storms dropped 20” of snow to sea level over ten days. This allowed the Chugach National Forest to open Placer and Twentymile River Valleys to motorized use. On January 25th and 26th, a widespread natural avalanche cycle followed due to a warm low-pressure system that impacted all of Southcentral Alaska. Strong Easterly winds and 30” of heavy wet snow fell in the alpine with rain below 1000’. Dozens of large D2 and D3 avalanches released naturally and with artillery along the Seward Highway. Several large avalanches released to the ground on basal facets in Girdwood and Summit Lake. On January 29th, two snowmachiners were caught and one fully buried and killed in a very large (D3) avalanche near Cooper Landing, Alaska on the Seward Ranger District (described in the Fatalities and Near Misses section).

“Cold arctic air rushing down from the North battered the mountains. What soft snow did remain after the Dec 30th wind event was likely taken away with this Jan 5th wind event - a bit like salt on the wound!”

This large natural avalanche was caught live by avalanche specialist Heather Thamm while performing ‘Road Obs’ during the late January avalanche cycle.
February
Monthly snow = 40”, Monthly H2O = 4.0”

February started off calm and clear (is there a theme here?). After the big January storm and avalanche cycle, backcountry users were getting back into avalanche terrain. This period marked the beginning of a Deep Slab avalanche problem; a high consequence, low likelihood event that requires a big trigger and/or finding a thinner area of the snowpack. On February 3rd there were two separate large snowmachine triggered avalanches in our advisory area. The first was in the Lynx Creek drainage and the second avalanche occurred in the Seattle Creek drainage. Both were on NE aspects around 3000’, but failed on different weak layers. A facet/wind crust combination was the culprit in Lynx Creek, while facets near the ground proved problematic in Seattle Creek. Clear weather continued until Feb 9th when 10” of new snow covered up yet another batch of near surface facets and surface hoar. The following day, a skier triggered a 1’ deep hard wind slab on the Raven Headwall near Crow Pass. The skier was carried 600’ without injury. The next day the weather socked in and a series of storms impacted Southcentral, Alaska with strong winds, rain to 2000’ and 3 feet of wet snow in the alpine. This lasted three days and produced an active natural avalanche cycle. Crow Creek zone in the Girdwood Valley and the Summit Lake zone had full depth avalanches releasing on basal facets. The next four days there were several skier triggered and snowmachine triggered avalanches, these all failed on buried layers of surface hoar or facets. February ended with high pressure and 6 days of strong Westerly winds that caused another natural cycle in the Summit Lake zone and Lynx Creek drainage.

This large slab avalanche was triggered by a snowmachiner hill climbing in the Lynx Creek drainage on Feb. 3rd. The rider did not know he had triggered the slide till his descent. Luckily the remainder of the group was out of the way at the bottom. No one was caught. Photo: Aleph Johnston-Bloom
**March**

Monthly snow = 32”, Monthly H2O = 2.7”

Although the Westerly winds backed off in early March, a long stretch of clear arctic air remained over the region for several more weeks (25 days of no snow). For the most part the surface conditions were wind stripped, hard and less than ideal. In places that still had soft snow, near surface facets and surface hoar was found. However, with two weeks of LOW danger folks were venturing into more obscure terrain for soft turns! By this time of the season the sun has ample power and sun crusts were forming on steep East and South aspects. On March 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th}, an unexpected “sleeper” storm dropped 30+” of low density snow with little wind in the Placer/Skookum zone, yet only 12” was recorded in Turnagain Pass and Girdwood. There were a few skier triggered slabs and a few natural avalanches, but otherwise little avalanche activity was noted. High pressure continued through March 26\textsuperscript{th}. Widespread surface hoar growth was observed at this time before the arrival of a major pattern shift. A series of low-pressure systems stacked in the Gulf of Alaska brought very warm temperatures, wind and precipitation; rain/snow line fluctuated between 1500’ and 3000’, Easterly winds averaged in the 40’s mph with gusts in the 80’s, and a widespread natural cycle pushed on for TEN days, well into early April. This was coined the “April Fool’s” storm cycle.

Gouging from a very large avalanche during the April Fool’s storm cycle rendered the popular entrance to Squirrel Flats “impassable” by local riders. Photo: Travis Smith

“With a bit of a “Groundhog Day” feel our weather remains cold and clear and our snowpack is in a holding pattern of sorts.”
April
Monthly snow = 21”, Monthly H2O = 4.4”

By the time the April Fool’s storm ended on April 6th, there had been 9 days of HIGH avalanche danger. A total of 6” of SWE (snow water equivalent) was recorded in Turnagain Pass and over twice that in Portage Valley. Widespread wet avalanche debris filled all of the channeled terrain between Girdwood and Turnagain. A very large avalanche (D4) occurred in Portage Valley on Maynard Mountain just above the Anton Anderson Memorial tunnel (access to Whittier). Avalanches ran on an assortment of weak layers including a few failing near the ground. Following the storm there were several near misses in the core advisory area of Turnagain Pass. Multiple large snowmachine triggered slabs 3-8’ thick were failing on buried surface hoar under the storm snow resulting in at least 2 instances of snowmachiners being caught and carried. To make matters more complicated, the spring-time shed cycle started in mid April with warm daytime temperatures and significant solar input on Southerly aspects. On April 13th a skier triggered a D2 wet slab on Sunburst that ran on basal facets. Clear weather and cool nighttime temperatures kept Northerly aspects dry until April 22nd with the arrival of overcast skies and light rain. Snow depths over the last few weeks of April declined rapidly with daily melting. The last week of April continued to slowly melt out on the South, East, and West aspects. Northern aspects were left mostly intact, which still had a potential to produce large avalanches should May see a rapid warm up with rain.

Maynard Mountain, just South of the Whittier tunnel, produced a very large D4 avalanche during a 10-day storm cycle ending early April. Debris channeled well into the flats with the tunnel entrance just out of sight and lookers left of the debris. Photo: Aleph Johnston-Bloom
Near Misses and Fatalities

After six years without an avalanche fatality on the Chugach National Forest, sadly a snowmachiner lost his life riding in the V-Max Hill area of the Kenai Mountains, not far from the Snug Harbor road trailhead. A synopsis of the accident report is detailed below. Alaska averages 3 avalanche deaths per season. The 2016/17 winter tragically saw two. The other fatality occurred in the town of North Pole, just South of Fairbanks, where a 4 year old girl succumbed to injuries sustained from a roof avalanche at her home.

V-Max Hill Avalanche Fatality

Location: V-Max Hill area, Cooper Landing, Kenai Mountains
Date: January 28, 2017
Classification: HS-AMr-D3-R4-O

Synopsis:
Two snowmachiners were caught and carried in a large slab avalanche triggered remotely from a lower bench. Rider 1 was fully buried with just his hand breaking the surface. Rider 1 was found within minutes by an unaffiliated group and dug out uninjured. Rider 2 was buried approximately 8 feet deep. After 20-25 minutes the unaffiliated group, with help from Rider 1, was able to reach Rider 2. Rider 2 was recovered unresponsive and flown to an area hospital where he was pronounced deceased.

Looking up at the avalanche from the burial site of Rider 2 who did not survive. Photo: CNFAIC
Seattle Creek Headwall Near Miss

Location: Seattle Creek drainage, Turnagain Pass, Kenai Mountains
Date: February 3, 2017
Classification: HS-AMu-D2-R3-O

Synopsis: A snowmachiner triggered a large avalanche on the decent of a high mark. He was caught and carried. His avalanche airbag failed to deploy (later determined it was not ‘armed’) and he was fully buried except for his right hand breaking the surface. Two of his partners were watching from a safe zone and a third arrived just as the avalanche occurred. Two more riders from a separate group heard the avalanche and rode over to assist in the rescue. They immediately started a beacon search and one member of the second (unaffiliated) party saw the victim’s hand. The rescuers got to him within a few minutes and immediately uncovered his head to reach his airway. He was breathing, uninjured and fully uncovered within 15 minutes. Of note: this avalanche was during a time of low likelihood, the tracks on the slope (from earlier in the day) are from Wendy Wagner, CNFAIC Director, please see the full report linked below:

http://www.cnfaic.org/miscuploads/SeattleCreekHeadwall-NearMiss.pdf
Lipps Ridge Near Miss

**Location:** Lipps Ridge, Turnagain Pass, Kenai Mountains  
**Date:** December 29, 2016  
**Classification:** HS/SS-ASu-D2-R1-I/O

**Synopsis:** Three skiers ascending on skins triggered an avalanche that broke above them while ascending the lower Southwest aspect of Lipps Ridge. All three were carried around 300’, 2 skiers ended up on the surface of the debris and one skier was partially buried. No injuries incurred, skis and other gear was lost. Authorities were notified by an observant motorist who saw tracks leading into the avalanche. Detailed report can be found on the link below.  

Google Earth Imagery of Lipps Ridge (imagery date: 12/13/15) with Skier B’s GPS track of the ascent, carried by the avalanche and the walk out.
Finances and Fundraising - The Friends of the CNFAIC

The Friends of the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center (F-CNFAIC) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, organized to support and contribute to avalanche awareness and educational activities. Formed in 2003, F-CNFAIC works to help bridge the gap between available US Forest Service funding and the actual expenses of operating the CNFAIC.

The F-CNFAIC is instrumental to our operation as they provide just half of our total annual budget! Fundraising continued on a successful streak this year with the annual Fall FUNdraiser selling out the Beartooth Theatrepub (425 seats) for a moving slideshow by Girdwood local and professional skier Elyse Saugstad. The 3rd Annual Snowball, a budding mid-winter fundraiser, drew a sold out crowd as well. Annual memberships, corporate and private donations all saw an uptick during the 2016/17 season.

Ongoing Goals:
- Enhancing avalanche awareness by providing information to the public
- Promoting avalanche education
- Supporting CNFAIC forecaster salaries
- Maintaining, expanding, and updating weather stations
- Purchasing and maintaining Avalanche Center equipment

Operating Costs:
F-CNFAIC spends a significant portion of its budget on expenses directly related to CNFAIC. This graph reflects how these expenses are divided. To continue this work, it needs to raise a minimum of $80,000. If you see value in this public service, please consider donating so that the F-CNFAIC can continue to provide avalanche information, forecasting activities and avalanche education to Southcentral Alaska! (donation link on cnfaic.org)
The Friends of the CNFAIC (Continued)

Industry and Individual sponsorships are instrumental in providing CNFAIC products and programs. The following are the F-CNFAIC Platinum and Gold Level Sponsors!!

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THANK YOU from the CNFAIC Team!!

The forecasters would like to thank everyone who has extended such incredible support to the Avalanche Center. This service would not be possible without such a strong community desire to make it happen. Have a great summer everyone and we look forward to seeing you next fall!!