



**In Partnership with the US Forest Service**  
**SierraAvalancheCenter.org**

2013 - 2014 Annual Report



The winter of 2013 – 2014 marked another successful operating season. The Sierra Avalanche Center continues to function as a partnership between the Tahoe National Forest and a volunteer Board of Directors with 501(c)(3) not for profit organization status. This relationship continues to strengthen both operationally and financially while continuing to gain community support.

We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who has put forth time and effort to support the Sierra Avalanche Center.

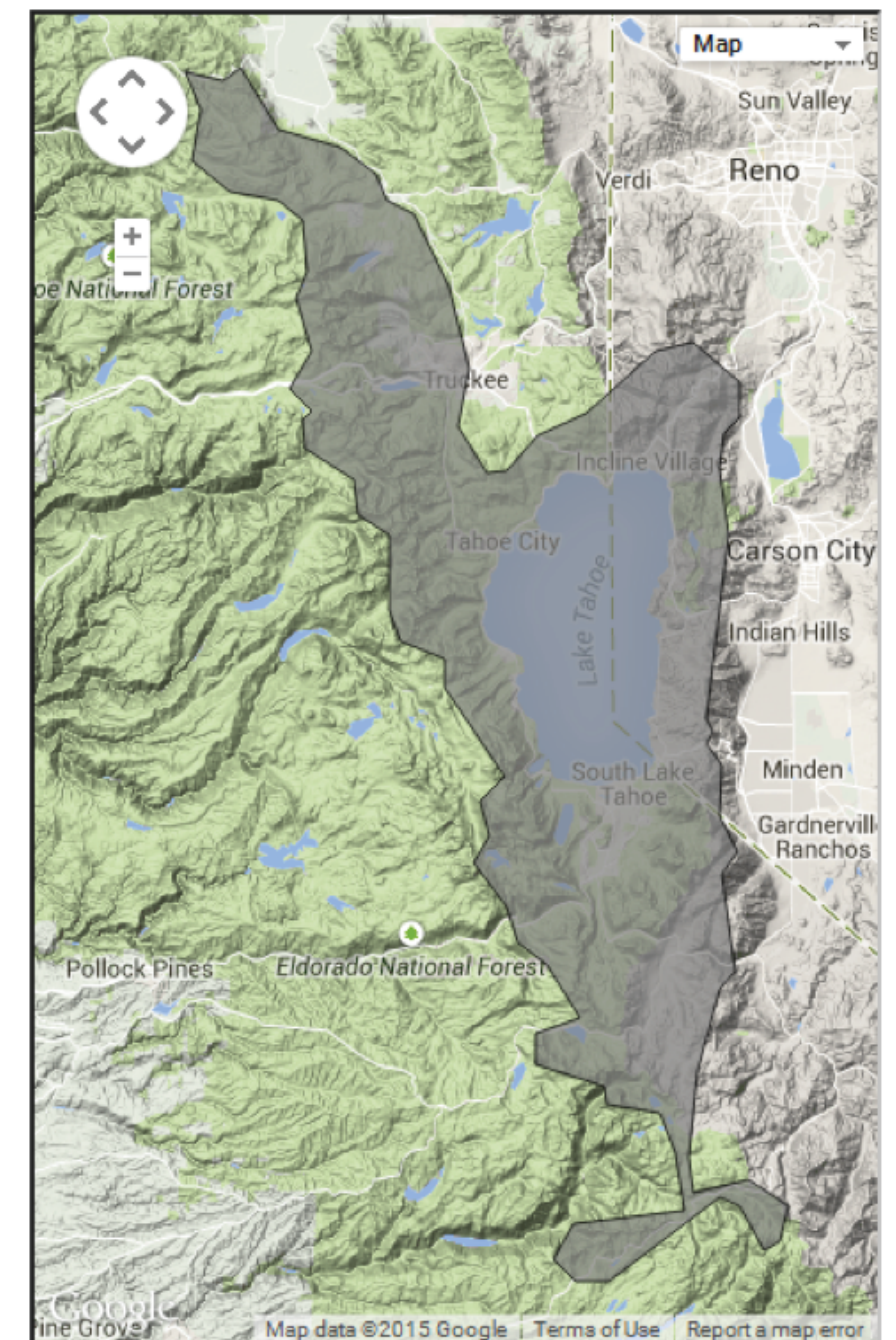
Brandon Schwartz and Andy Anderson  
Forecasters  
Sierra Avalanche Center Members and  
Volunteers  
Tahoe National Forest

## Highlights from the past season :

- The Board of Directors successfully raised \$89,628 to support the Sierra Avalanche Center's operating budget.
- The Tahoe National Forest provided \$6,847 in infrastructure support.
- The USDA Forest Service provided \$46,650 for forecaster salaries in the form of \$17,000 from Region 5, \$23,000 from the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, and \$6,650 from Region 4.
- The SAC website was accessed over 321,574 times by over 53,828 unique visitors from October 1st through March 29th. Website traffic increased in page views by 37% and unique visitors by 36% despite ongoing drought conditions.
- The Sierra Avalanche Center issued 131 daily avalanche advisories and 4 early season snow condition reports.
- The new Sierra Avalanche Center website was very well received by both public and professional users. The center collaborated on the design and development of the website providing a unified appearance and presentation consistent with other avalanche centers in Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming.
- The forecasters continued to strengthen their working relationship with the National Weather Service in Reno, local ski patrols, and other professional organizations.
- The Board of Directors put on third a very successful and well attended Professional Development Seminar in memory of Bill Foster.
- Three Snowmobile avalanche education courses..

## Advisory Area

The advisory area of the Sierra Avalanche Center covers approximately 1,500 square miles of the Central Sierra Nevada Mountains of California and Nevada. The advisory area is bound by Hwy 49 Yuba Pass on the north and Hwy 4 Ebbetts Pass on the south. The advisory covers the avalanche terrain along the Sierra Crest and extends to the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada. Two inroads to the west side of the Sierra Crest exist within in the advisory area at Carson Pass and at Ebbetts Pass, in order to include the backcountry terrain surrounding the established boundaries of the Kirkwood and Bear Valley ski areas.



## Advisories

From December 7th through April 20th, the Sierra Avalanche Center issued 131 daily avalanche advisories. The number of advisories issued for each danger level was: 45 Low, 71 Moderate, 12 Considerable, 3 High, and 0 Extreme. Additionally, four early season snow condition reports were posted during November and early December.

Advisories were available 24 hours a day, 7 seven days per week on the internet and by phone. The website experienced over 299,265 page loads this winter. During the forecasting season from December 7th to April 20th, the website was viewed an average of 2,040 per day. Website traffic decreased in page views by 36% and unique visitors by 39% over the previous year due to drought. An online archive of advisories can be found at:  
<http://www.sierraavalanchecenter.org/archive>

March 31, 2014. Full burial site of a snowboarder caught in a wind slab avalanche. No injuries were reported. Photo submitted by "Jc".



## Field Observations

The avalanche center's formal program of avalanche, snowpack, and weather information remained largely unchanged this season. The website continued to allow public and professional users to include video, photos, and maps in their observations.

Professional Guide services Mountain Adventures Seminars, Tahoe Mountain School, and Alpine Skills International shared their field observations with the avalanche center. The Central Sierra Snow Laboratory, Kirkwood, Mt. Rose, and Sugar Bowl also submitted observations to the avalanche center on storm mornings. Afternoon updates were submitted when possible. This information, combined with observations submitted by the general public, was an important supplement to the information gathered by USFS forecasters Brandon Schwartz and Andy Anderson, as well as SAC professional observers Steve Reynaud and Travis Feist.

The total number of professional level backcountry field observations collected by the avalanche center totaled 174 this past season. These were supplemented by an additional 35 backcountry field observations submitted by the general public.

First publicly submitted backcountry human trigger avalanche observation of the season, size D1. December 1, 2014, Round Top Peak Complex, Carson Pass, CA. Photo submitted anonymously.



# Events

Fall started out with promise, both for early season snowfall and for avalanches. Snowfall events on October 28, 2013; November 20, 2013 and December 3, 2013 left a faceted base on snow covered slopes. A storm on Dec. 7-8 added enough snow to the snow pack for an avalanche cycle with storm and wind slabs failing on those basal facets. Then things came to a halt, and the drought took over in earnest. The snow pack metamorphosed to a very well developed layer of near surface facets on top of the basal facets. Significant weak layers lingered in place as dry weather persisted for almost two months until the next storm. During this time, Extended Column Tests (ECTs), Propagation Saw Tests (PSTs), and their 2 meter wide research project versions readily propagated across the full column. A strong Pacific storm finally arrived Jan 28-31, 2014. Rain gauges recorded about 4 inches of rain and snow level rose to an elevation of 10,500 ft. (most of terrain within the forecast area is between 6,000 ft and 10,000 ft). Snow level eventually dropped, depositing 15 inches of new snow at the tail end of the storm. This high elevation rain event destroyed an entire snowpack worth of facets and depth hoar. Additional snowfall events were limited in number. The most notable storm cycles during the rest of the season occurred February 6-11, 2014; February 27, 2014; March 7, 2014 and March 26, 2014-April 5, 2014. During this time a total of 5 individuals were caught in 3 different backcountry avalanche incidents that were reported to the avalanche center. These incidents resulted in 2 partial burials and 1 full burial. No injuries were reported. Despite the severe drought conditions, 29 avalanches were reported to the center. Countless others went unreported. More info can be found online at: [www.sierraavalanchecenter.org](http://www.sierraavalanchecenter.org).

On April 1, 2014 the snowpack measured just 30% of average for the date. Total snowfall amounts for the season were less than 200 inches. Additional snowfall events were limited in number. The most notable storm cycles during the rest of the season occurred February 6 - 11; February 27; March 7; March 26, and April 5. During this time a total of 5 individuals were caught in 3 different backcountry avalanche incidents that were reported to the Sierra Avalanche Center. These incidents resulted in 2 partial burials and 1 full burial. No injuries were reported. Despite the severe drought conditions, 29 avalanches were reported to the Sierra Avalanche Center. Countless others went unreported. On April 1 the snowpack measured just 30% of average for the date. Total snowfall amounts for the season were less than 200 inches.

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	Total Snowfall inches	Number of Storms (Consecutive days of snow with more than 1 inch total accumulation)	Dates of Storms	Storm Snow Total	Dates of Avalanche Cycles	Reported People Caught, or Buried
December	20"	2	12/7-12/8	18"	12/7 - 12/9	0
			12/19-12/20	2"	12/13	
January	19"	1	1/28-2/1	15"	1/27 (wet snow)	0
February	73"	4	1/28-2/1	15"		
			2/3	4"		
			2/6-2/11	50"	2/6 - 2/12	0
			2/16 - 2/17	5"	2/16 - 2/17	1 Person Caught
			2/19 - 2/20	2"	2/24 (wet Snow)	0
March	56"	2	2/27-3/7	34"	2/17 - 3/1	0
					3/5 (wet Snow)	0
					3/10	0
April	17"	1	3/26 -4/15	48"	2/28	0



## SIERRA AVALANCHE CENTER SUPPORT GROWS DESPITE DROUGHT

Don Triplat | Board President

When you add up what goes into a season of avalanche forecasting in the Northern Sierra Nevada, a couple of numbers stick out. First there is 131: the number of avalanche advisories written and posted by Sierra Avalanche Center's professional forecasters based on 190 observations provided by SAC staff and the public. Then there is 85: the approximate number of new donors who became members of Sierra Avalanche Center since the nonprofit began a membership drive last fall.

These are just two figures in a mountain of data that the Sierra Avalanche Center compiles each year at the end of the ski season to track a winter's worth of work — but they encapsulate the identity of Sierra Avalanche Center, a non-profit partnership with the Forest Service that provides a daily safety resource for backcountry travelers and is supported by a passionate group of donors and members.

By adding in a couple more numbers, it is even more evident that Sierra Avalanche Center's work is a useful tool for thousands of backcountry travelers. Sierra Avalanche Center's website generated an average of 2,040 page views each day of the season, totaling 299,265 (Dec. 7, 2013 - April 20, 2014) page views throughout the winter.

But back to the first two numbers. The 131 avalanche advisories represent a monumental amount of work by two very experienced avalanche forecasters and two part-time avalanche observers who put in hundreds of miles on the skin tracks and on snowmobiles, and countless hours of avalanche observation, testing, and analysis each winter to inform backcountry skiers, snowboarders and snowmobilers about daily avalanche dangers. If you have been out skiing the backcountry the last several years, chances are you have run into Brandon Schwartz or Andy Anderson, the forecasters who take on the huge task of analyzing the snowpack across a vast area that runs from Yuba Pass north of Truckee to Ebbetts Pass south of South Lake Tahoe.

As if putting out 131 high-quality avalanche advisories was not enough work, this season SAC has also developed a snowmobiler avalanche awareness program funded by the California State Parks Off-Highway Vehicle Grants Program. Throughout the winter, SAC put on three, free, two-day education courses that included both classroom and field instruction. The avalanche center also built a comprehensive educational campaign from the ground up that included a public service announcement video, printed education material, social media marketing, and outreach to regional snowmobile dealers and clubs. Sierra Avalanche Center has applied for grants in the hopes of continuing this program and developing a youth "Know Before You Go," avalanche awareness program next year as well.

Which brings us to the number 85. This number represents the support of the Truckee, Tahoe, Northern Sierra, Sacramento and Bay Area community members that ensure that Sierra Avalanche Center can continue to provide this vital resource for backcountry travelers. It is no secret that this year was a drought year with a snowpack well below normal. But avalanches still occurred, and avalanche danger was still present. Over the course of the winter, 29 avalanches were reported to Sierra Avalanche Center (and many more went unreported). Two people were partially buried and one person was fully buried in avalanches in Sierra Avalanche Center's forecast area, thankfully with no serious injuries or loss of life.

Those 85 new members, and all the recurring donors to Sierra Avalanche Center, are critical to the non-profit's success. All of the ski resorts in and around Tahoe that donated lift tickets for Sierra Avalanche Center ski days — Squaw Valley/Alpine Meadows, Sugar Bowl, Northstar, Homewood, Mt. Rose, Kirkwood, Heavenly, and Bear Valley — funded almost half of Sierra Avalanche Center's budget this year.

SAC is also grateful to all the Extreme Sponsor partners who showed their support. International Mountain Guides, Alaska Snowboard Guides, Lite Pro Gear, Jones Snowboards, Tahoe Mountain Sports, The Real Graphic Source, Alpenglow Sports, Polaris, KTKE 101.5 Radio, Outside Television/Lake Tahoe TV, Liftopia, and Granite Chief all generously donated \$3,000 or more in support of the avalanche center this winter.

SAC thanks every member, donor, sponsor, partner, and volunteer for supporting another successful season.

Profit and Loss Standard  
August 2013 through July 2014

Income

Expenses

Ordinary Income/Expense		
<b>Income</b>		
	Autumn fundraiser	13,970.25
<b>Deposit</b>		
	Ski lift ticket sales	39,066.75
	Deposit - Other	1,207.44
	<b>Total Deposit</b>	40,274.19
<b>Donation</b>		
	Donation thru mail	9,504.75
	Online donation thru PayPal	16,410.67
	Donation - Other	6,882.94
	<b>Total Donation</b>	32,798.36
	Interest/Dividends	1,072.50
	Realized Gains	1,513.32
	<b>Total Income</b>	89,628.62
	<b>Gross Profit</b>	89,628.62

Expense		
	Administrative fees	324.27
	Advertising	6,015.00
	Awards	364.83
	Board of Directors meeting	1,001.59
	Brochures	15.40
	Business Trade Fair	3,357.48
	Chamber of Commerce	415.00
	Education contractor	275.00
	Field Observations	6,260.00
	Forecaster equipment	1,000.00
	Insurance	5,795.34
	Leased Forest Service Employees	38,560.00
	Marketing Contractor	2,300.00
<b>Non-profit status fee</b>		
	Tax status filing fee	
	Tax preperation	854.90
	<b>Total Tax status filing fee</b>	854.90
	Non-profit status fee - Other	50.00
	<b>Total Non-profit status fee</b>	904.90
	Office Supplies	69.25
	Payroll	0.00
	Pro Development Workshop	1,202.00
	Program development	1,715.38
	Program Development contractor	31,588.54
	SAC Logo wear	4,391.17
	Snowmobile equipment	5,350.88
	TD Chamber of Commerce	180.00
	Travel/Training	1,694.73
	Unrealized Gains	--4,022.91
	website development contractor	4,000.00
	Website server fee	700.49
	<b>Total Expense</b>	113,458.34
	<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	--23,829.72
	<b>Net Income</b>	<b>--23,829.72</b>



## Board of Directors

The Sierra Avalanche Center operates as a partnership between a Board of Directors with 501(c)(3) not-for-profit status and the Tahoe National Forest. Sierra Avalanche Center's mission is to inform and educate the public about backcountry avalanche conditions in the greater Lake Tahoe area. The Board of Directors includes Don Triplat (President), Bob Moore (Secretary), Randall Osterhuber (Treasurer), Mark Bunge, David Fiore, Chip Morrill, Jason Oelkers, Todd Offenbacher, Dave Paradysz, Jonathon Laine, and Holly Yocum. The Advisory Committee to the Board of Directors includes: Dave Beck, Cameron Bordner (Legal Advisor), Debby Broback, Justin Broglio, and Larry Heywood. During the 2013-2014 season the Board of Directors employed Program Manager Jenny Hatch.

The Board of Directors is the financial backbone of the Sierra Avalanche Center. Through soliciting donations from the public and organizing & marketing fundraising events, they are the major source of funding for the Sierra Avalanche Center. Money raised by the Board of Directors covered approximately 50% of the operational costs for the Avalanche Center in 2013- 2014. In past seasons, the Non profit Sierra Avalanche Center has contributed up to 95% of the avalanche center's annual operating costs when less USDA Forest Service money was contributed.

Through a collection agreement with the Tahoe National Forest, these funds pay for forecaster salaries and the costs of professional level continuing education. Additionally, the Board of Directors provides compensation for contracted professional observers and some equipment needs for the forecasters.

### Board of Directors

President | Don Triplat  
Secretary | Bob Moore  
Treasurer | Randall Osterhuber

### Board Members

Mark Bunge, David Fiore, Chip Morrill,  
Jason Oelkers, Jonathan Laine, Todd Offenbacher, Dave Paradysz,  
Holly Yocum, and David Bunker.

### Advisory Committee

Cameron Bordner (Legal Advisor), Debby Broback, John Swanson,  
Jeremy Jacobson, Justin Broglio, and Larry Heywood

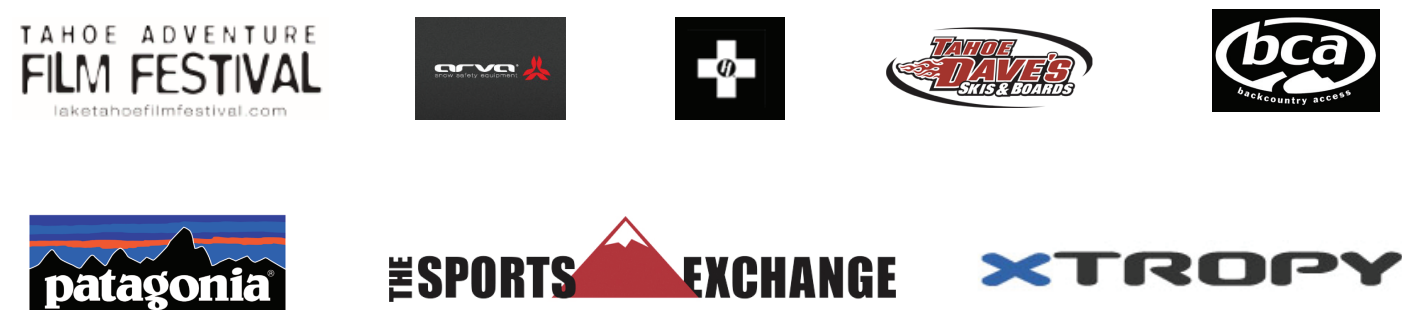
### Staff

Forecasters: Brandon Schwartz and Andy Anderson  
Observers: Steve Reynaud and Travis Feist  
Non-profit Program Manager: Jenny Hatch

## EXTREEM PARTNERS - Donations of more than \$3,000



## HIGH PARTNERS - Donations of \$1,000 to \$2,999



# Special Thanks to

California State Parks Off Highway Motor Vehicle  
Recreation Division Grants Program!

SAC would like to extend a special thanks to California State Parks (CSP) for choosing Sierra Avalanche Center as a beneficiary during the 2013 grants cycle. For more information about the Division's grant program can be found on their website at [www.ohv.parks.ca.gov](http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov).





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