



2011-2012 Annual Report



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The winter of 2011 – 2012 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.

Some of the accomplishments from this past season include:

- The Board of Directors successfully raised \$51,000 to support the Sierra Avalanche Center's operating budget.
- The Tahoe National Forest hired avalanche forecasters Brandon Schwartz and Andy Anderson into permanent seasonal positions rather than the temporary seasonal positions of past years.
- The Tahoe National Forest provided \$6,847 in infrastructure support.
- The USDA Forest Service provided \$40,050 for forecaster salaries in the form of \$17,000 from Region 5, \$17,000 from the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, and \$6,050 from Region 4.
- The SAC website was accessed over 400,000 times by over 80,000 unique visitors from July 15th through April 28th. Due to the late start to winter and overall low snow year, this represents about a 30% decrease over last season.
- A new record of 13,553 page loads in a single day was set on March 2, 2012.
- The Sierra Avalanche Center issued 163 daily avalanche advisories and 3 early season snow condition reports.
- The Sierra Avalanche Center continued to improve its website with even more user friendly features.
- The forecasters continued to strengthen their working relationship with the National Weather Service in Reno, local ski patrols, and other professional organizations.

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
Tahoe National Forest

Advisories

From November 19th through April 28th, the Sierra Avalanche Center issued 163 daily avalanche advisories. The number of advisories issued for each danger level was: 69 Low, 70 Moderate, 22 Considerable, 2 High, and 0 Extreme. Additionally, three early season snow condition reports were posted during early November.

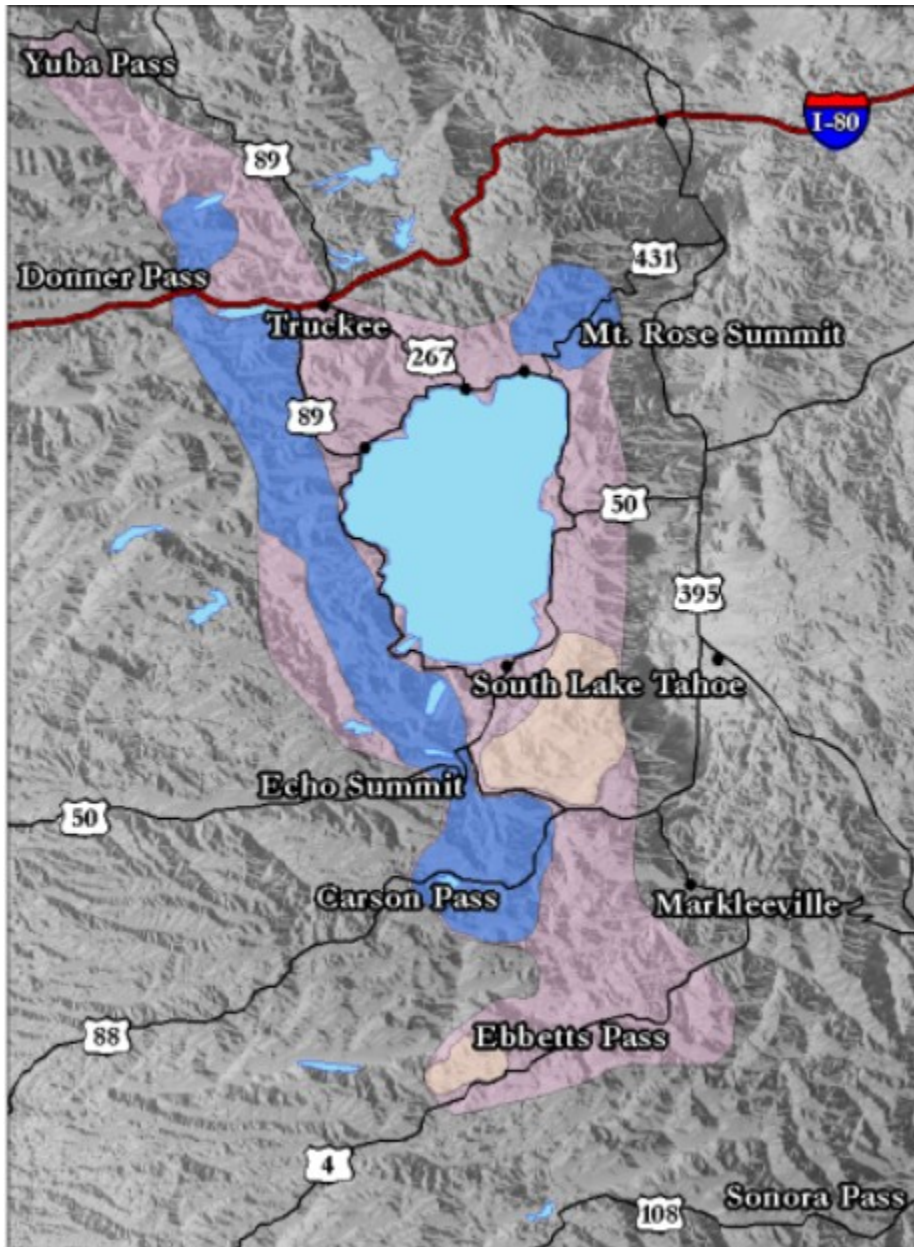
Advisories were available 24 hours a day, 7 seven days per week on the internet and by phone. The website experienced over 400,000 page loads this winter. During the forecasting season from November 19th to April 28th, the website was viewed an average of 2,049 times per day with a record single day maximum of 13,553 page loads occurring on March 2nd. The recorded phone message was accessed over 3,000 times. The total number of page loads decreased by approximately 30% compared to last winter. An online archive of advisories can be found at: <http://www.sierraavalanchecenter.org/archive>.



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.

Map of the Sierra Avalanche Center forecast area.



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. The archive section was updated to include a searchable date range that displayed the Bottom Line and Danger Rose for the queried dates. Public feedback on the quality of the advisories remained very positive.

The Central Sierra Snow Laboratory, Heavenly, Kirkwood, Mt. Rose, Squaw Valley, and Sugar Bowl submitted observations to the avalanche center on storm mornings with afternoon updates often submitted. Mountain Adventures Seminars, a guide service in Bear Valley, CA also shared its field observations with the avalanche center. This information, combined with observations submitted by the public, was an important supplement to the information gathered by forecasters Brandon Schwartz and Andy Anderson, as well as professional observers Steve Reynaud and Travis Feist.

The Board of Directors worked with Thin Air Motorsports to establish sponsorship of the avalanche center by Polaris Industries. Two brand new 2012 Polaris 800 RMK Pro 155 snowmobiles were loaned to the avalanche center for some of operating season. With these snowmobiles, the forecasters were able to make observations in high snowmobile use portions of the forecast area that are difficult to access on skis alone in a single day.



Snowpack Summary

The winter of 2011-2012 was slow to start with minimal snowfall until January 20th. The January 1st snow survey for the Sierra Nevada came in at 17%. A persistent weak layer of crusts and faceted snow formed from late January through mid February. The majority of the seasonal snowpack formed during March. Snowfall for the month of March was 150% of average for the month. The April 1st snow survey for the Sierra Nevada came in at 54%. Numerous avalanches cycles occurred with large avalanches occurring during both periods of rapid loading and rapid warming. Large avalanches occurred in March on the persistent weak layer. For more details and a month by month breakdown of the winter snow and avalanche activity please see the table below.

November 19 - November 30

Total Snowfall	Number of Storms	Dates of Storms	Storm Snowfall	Dates of Avalanche Cycles	Reported burials
18	1	11/19-11/21	18	12/29	0

December

Total Snowfall	Number of Storms	Dates of Storms	Storm Snowfall	Dates of Avalanche Cycles	Reported burials
1	1	31-Dec	1	none	0

January

Total Snowfall	Number of Storms	Dates of Storms	Storm Snowfall	Dates of Avalanche Cycles	Reported burials
42	1	1/20-1/24	42	1/21-1/24	0

February

Total Snowfall	Number of Storms	Dates of Storms	Storm Snowfall	Dates of Avalanche Cycles	Reported burials
39	3	2/1-2/2	3		
		2/7-2/8	2		
		2/12-2/16	14	2/13/2012	0

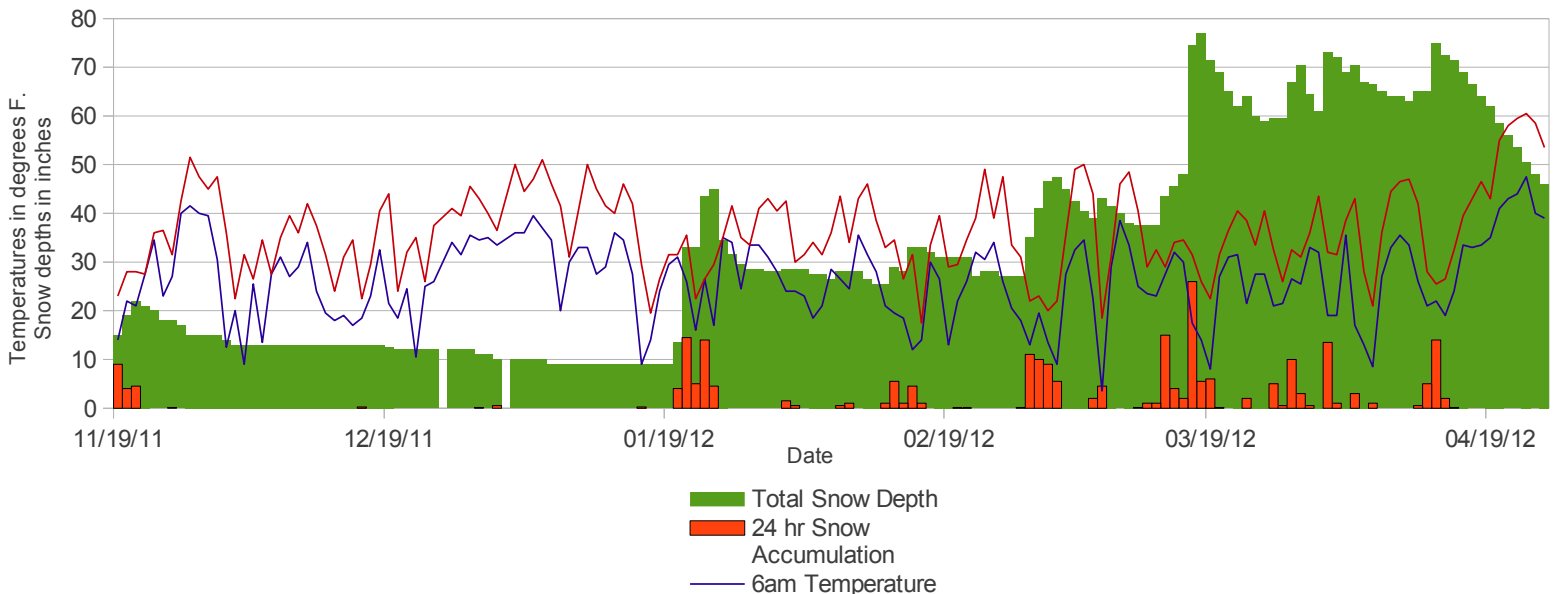
March

Total Snowfall	Number of Storms	Dates of Storms	Storm Snowfall	Dates of Avalanche Cycles	Reported burials
103	5	2/28-3/2	36	2/28-3/02	2
		3/6-3/7	7		
		3/12-3/19	61	3/15-4/1	0
		3/23	8		
		3/26-3/30	19		

April 1 - April 25

Total Snowfall	Number of Storms	Dates of Storms	Storm Snowfall	Dates of Avalanche Cycles	Reported burials
40	3	4/1-4/2	19	4/1	0
		4/4/2012	3		
		4/11-4/14	22	4/13	0

Weather Observations from along the Sierra Crest between 8200 ft. and 8800 ft.



Board of Directors

The Sierra Avalanche Center operates as a partnership between a Board of Directors with 501(3)(c) not-for-profit status and the Tahoe National Forest. The mission of the Sierra Avalanche Center includes disseminating current snowpack stability information to the general public; providing educational information, knowledge, and understanding of avalanches to recreational users and groups; and facilitating communication in the region to reduce the impact of avalanches on recreation, industry, and transportation. The Board of Directors includes Justin Broglio (CEO), Bob Moore (Secretary), Randall Osterhuber (CFO), Dave Beck, David Fiore, Larry Heywood, Jeremy Jacobson, Chip Morrill, Jason Oelkers, Todd Offenbacher, Dave Paradysz, and John Swanson. The Advisory Committee to the Board of Directors includes: Cameron Bordner (Legal Advisor), Debby Broback, and Don Triplat.

The Board of Directors is the financial backbone of the Sierra Avalanche Center. Through soliciting donations from the public and organizing/marketing fund raising events, they are the major source of funding for the Sierra Avalanche Center. Money raised by the Board of Directors covered approximately 44% of the operational costs for the Avalanche Center in 2011/2012. In past seasons, Board of Directors contributions have accounted for up to 95% of the avalanche center's annual operating costs when less USDAFS 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.



Financial Summary

The Board of Directors successfully raised \$50,907 from the local community this season. These funds were used to pay 44% of the operating costs of the avalanche center including \$21,068 towards salaries for two Tahoe National Forest avalanche forecasters and \$10,630 for two contracted professional field observers. The Board of Directors of the Sierra Avalanche Center raised funds for the season through several different avenues including private donations, online donations, resort donations for the SAC Ski/Ride Days, advertising, and fund raising parties/movie premiers. A complete itemized budget of Sierra Avalanche Center expenditures is listed below. The remaining 56% of this year's operating funds were government contributions in the form of \$6,847 in infrastructure support from the Tahoe National Forest, \$17,000 in salary funding from USDA Forest Service Region 5, \$6,050 in salary funding from USDA Forest Service Region 4, and \$17,000 in salary funding from the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

The "Ski Days" continue to serve as the primary fund raising events for the Sierra Avalanche Center. The Board of Directors used their connections in the Tahoe ski industry to partner with eight ski resorts for these Ski Days. Each resort donated between 150 and 500 lift tickets for a specific day. The Board of Directors set a fixed public donation amount necessary to receive a lift ticket for the Ski Day as a thank you gift.

Backcountry ski gear was donated by Backcountry Access, The North Face, Marmot, Patagonia, Voile USA, Mountain Hardwear, Black Diamond, and Atlas and used as raffle prizes throughout the season. Several local organizations made cash donations to the avalanche center. The El Dorado Nordic Ski Patrol, South Lake Tahoe Crossfit, Mountain Adventure Seminars, Tahoe Adventure Film Festival, Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue, Care Flight, TGR, The Echo Lakes Splitfest, The Divided Sky, Bar of America, and the Heavenly Ski Patrol were all significant contributors.

The Board of Directors encouraged donations from the general public via the website, by mail, or in person. The Board of Directors accepted cash, checks, and donations via credit card or electronic transfers through a PayPal donation link on our website. Through these avenues, the Board of Directors received \$15,271 in donations.

On a smaller scale, the Board of Directors raised awareness for each of the SAC Ski/Ride Days and the possibility of online donations through donated advertising received from local newspaper stories, radio and TV public service announcements, local utility bill mailers, and through several online communities (i.e. – forums and discount websites).

Ski Resorts – SAC Ski/Ride Days Fundraisers – Details

- Alpine Meadows Ski Resort
 - Donated XXX adult all day lift tickets to be used by the Sierra Avalanche Center as fundraising incentives.
 - Funds raised - \$X,XXX

- Bear Valley Mountain Resort
 - Donated 200 adult all day lift tickets to be used by the Sierra Avalanche Center as fundraising incentives.
 - Funds raised - \$X,XXX
- Heavenly Mountain Resort
 - Donated XXX adult all day lift tickets to be used by the Sierra Avalanche Center as fundraising incentives.
 - Funds raised - \$X,XXX
- Kirkwood Mountain Resort
 - Donated 500 adult all day lift tickets to be used by the Sierra Avalanche Center as fundraising incentives.
 - Funds raised - \$XX,XXX
- Mt. Rose – Ski Tahoe
 - Donated 500 adult all day lift tickets to be used by the Sierra Avalanche Center as fundraising incentives.
 - Funds raised - \$XX,XXX
- Northstar-at-Tahoe
 - Donated 300 adult all day lift tickets to be used by the Sierra Avalanche Center as fundraising incentives.
 - Funds raised - \$XX,XXX
- Sugar Bowl Resort
 - Donated 500 adult all day lift tickets to be used by the Sierra Avalanche Center as fundraising incentives.
 - Funds raised - \$X,XXX
- Squaw Resort
 - Donated XXX adult all day lift tickets to be used by the Sierra Avalanche Center as fundraising incentives.
 - Funds raised - \$X,XXX

Fundraising partners and the services they provided:

SnowBomb.com

- Primary e-ticketing partner. Donated their service to facilitate online lift ticket distribution for the SAC Ski/Ride Days. Through these services the Sierra Avalanche Center raised \$XX,XXX.

Porters Tahoe

- Cash donation of \$2,000. Product donation of \$1,000 for giveaway during SAC Ski/Ride Day fundraisers.

Thin Air Motorsports and Polaris Industries

- Full season loan of two Polaris Dragon RMK 800cc 164” snowmobiles. Donated all cost of service labor incurred during operating season. Estimated product and services value \$24,000.

Backcountry Access

- Product sponsorship. Donated product for giveaway during SAC fundraisers. Estimated product value \$3,000.

KTKE 101.5 Truckee and Tahoe's Independent Radio

- Product sponsorship. Donated services to broadcast the avalanche advisory and to advertise SAC fundraisers. Estimated product value \$3000.

Resort Sports Network

- Product sponsorship. Donated advertising services to advertise SAC fundraisers. Estimated product value \$3000.

TGR

- Provided movies and venues for movie night fund raisers.

Divided Sky

- Hosted a fund raising party and collected over \$1000 in donations.

Bar of America

- Hosted a fund raising party and collected over \$1000 in donations.

Echo Lakes Splitfest

- Hosted a raffle and collected over \$1500 in donations.

Heavenly Professional Ski Patrol

- Pending cash donation from their annual fundraising party.

Tahoe Adventure Film Festival

- Hosted a raffle and collected over \$1500 in donations.

South Lake Tahoe Cross Fit

- Hosted a fund-raising workout day and collected over \$1000 in donations.

Pacific Sierra Group

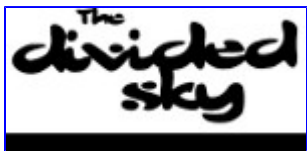
- Product sponsorship. Donated product for giveaway during SAC fundraisers. Estimated product value \$1,000.



Extreme - Sponsors who donated more than \$3,000 to SAC



High - Sponsors who donated between \$1,000 and \$2,999 to SAC



[Pacific Sierra Group](#)



Considerable - Sponsors who donated between \$500 and \$999 to SAC



Moderate - Sponsors who donated between \$100 and \$499 to SAC

Voile-USA	Martha Campbell	Bobbie Morrison	Joshua Levine	Eli Levine
Rob Bixler	Karl Marlowe	Jay Chung	Patrick Mauri	Kirsten Ostroff
Matthew Beller	Jeff and Joan Jacobson	Paul Wisheropp	Matt Tucker	Mark Cullen
Kimberly Woods	Anthony Guerrero	Scott Clark	Timothy Pfafman	Leo Szumel
Peter Loer	Matvey Nemenman	Peter Czerpak	Sierra at Tahoe Ski Patrol	Tahoe Moonshine Distillery
Bret Dezordo	Mark Bunge	Paul Gradeff	James Doucette	Marusa Bradac
Curt Slater	Isaac Menashe	Alexis Lussier Desbiens	Bill Parker	Jason Cohen
William Kelly	Gordon Gravelle	Jim Sloves	Doug Bonelli	D Valentine
Susan Travers	San Francisco Bay Backcountry Ski Section	Mark Hansen	Julian Wixson	Neal Lischner
Theodore Bragdon	Nick Washburn	Nicoli Ames	Roderick Beaton	Terence Vachon
Robert Rye	Roger Yang	Kaichi Sung	Graham Archer	Daniel Switlick
Rob Bixler	Alexis Lussier Desbiens	Nicholas Schweitzer	Leonard Holmgren	Benjamin Majewski
Jennie Jones	Brad Altman	Alan Ramadan	Ivar Chhina	Eli Levine
Michael Hench	Phillip Schlenker	George Maier	Lynne Reilly	Booker Bense
Martin Wagner	Sergio Aragon	Matthew Calcutt	Tod Francis	Elizabeth Wright
Deborah Fajans	Robert Zanetti	Julin Maloof	Stephan Schoenfield	Russell Dermody

Peri Kurshan	Eszter Tompos	David Noble	James Powell	David Passmore
In memory of Seth Kline	Michael Bechauf	David Blindheim	Dylan Ryder-Loomis	David Valentine
Richard Kurz	Huy Nguyen	Jennie Markoff	Joe Bittaker	Alexis Lussier Desbiens
Amber Crezee	Joe Shimek	Genti Cuni		

Low - Sponsors who donated between \$20 and \$99 to SAC

Alexander Sheehy	Cameron Stewart	Jay Oshiro	Lukasz Lempart	Douglass Spilman
Spark R&D - Splitboard Bindings	Scott Sadlon	Jason McLachlan	David Erskine	John Allen
Justin Marion	Rose Demoret	Dong Liu	Jerry Hapgood	Konrad Motzek
Brian Quines				