



**MOUNT WASHINGTON  
AVALANCHE CENTER**

**2025 | 2026**

**Impact Report**

[mountwashingtonavalanchecenter.org](https://mountwashingtonavalanchecenter.org)

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# Introduction

**The Mount Washington Avalanche Center is a US Forest Service program on the White Mountain National Forest, supported in partnership by the Mount Washington Avalanche Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.**

The Mount Washington Avalanche Center (MWAC) has deep roots in the New England mountain community and in the history of avalanche forecasting. In 1959, the Mount Washington Snow Ranger Program published the first backcountry avalanche advisory in the United States. Over the next 65 years, MWAC has grown and developed to meet the needs of the growing population of skiers, climbers, and hikers who travel in New Hampshire's avalanche terrain.

In 2026, the availability of advanced gear, accessibility of information, and the growing popularity of mountain sports mean an increased number of people traveling in dangerous avalanche terrain during all months of the winter season.

For us, this underscores the importance of accurate, timely, and publicly available avalanche information and mountain safety resources. Each year, our team works to make these resources more accurate and more accessible to a broader audience with the hopes of reducing backcountry accidents and fostering an informed, responsible, backcountry community.

None of our progress and success would be possible without you - our partners, donors, volunteers, snow observers, event attendees, guides, educators, and friendly faces on the trail.

## Director's Note

*"The close of the 2025–2026 winter season offers a moment to reflect not only on the snowpack and conditions we experienced, but on the strength of the community that surrounds this work.*

*This season brought its share of challenges, both in the field and in the broader environment around us. They reinforced something we have long known: avalanche forecasting, mountain safety, and rescue depend on more than any one person or team. They depend on partnership, trust, and a community willing to show up.*

*That has been true here for a long time. The Mount Washington Snow Ranger program began in 1951, and while the work has evolved over the decades since, its foundation has remained constant: public service, collaboration, and the people who believe this mission matters.*

*This past year, we were especially grateful for the support of the Mount Washington Avalanche Center Foundation and others who continue to stand behind MWAC. Their backing has strengthened the program in meaningful ways, from staffing and hiring to reinforcing the case that this is critical public safety work.*

*The year also marked the completion of *The Proving Ground*, an educational film project that would not have happened without community support. Carried forward on a limited budget by people who believed in its value, the film stands as a testament to what shared commitment can accomplish.*

*That support makes a real difference in everything we do. It strengthens our ability to forecast, educate, respond, and improve. As we look ahead, we do so with genuine gratitude and optimism. MWAC has a long history, a strong community behind it, and an important future ahead."*

*Jeff Fongemie, MWAC Director*

# Meet the Team

## U.S. Forest Service Mount Washington Avalanche Center



Jeff Fongemie



Patrick Scanlan



Charlotte MacDonald



Liz Bolton



Elizabeth Bois

## Mount Washington Avalanche Center Foundation



Mouna Goyette



Melanie Kulick



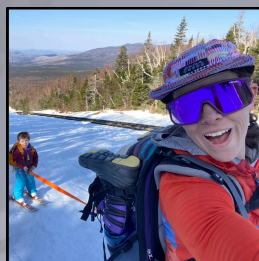
Aaron Hubbell



Ben Leoni



Jake Risch



Bethann Swartz



Dan Houde



Sam Juliano



Alex Roberts

# The Mission

## MWAC

The Mount Washington Avalanche Center works to **reduce the risk and impact of avalanches** in the White Mountains through **accurate forecasting, public education, search & rescue, and collaborative knowledge sharing.**

## MWAC Foundation

To support the Mount Washington Avalanche Center by **enhancing and expanding avalanche education** opportunities, advocating for **responsible and sustainable backcountry recreation** in New Hampshire's unique alpine ecosystems, and **expanding the reach** of US Forest Service avalanche forecasts and messages.

## Our Vision

*We envision a community of backcountry users who are aware of avalanche risk and mountain hazards, make informed decisions, and return home safely.*

25 | 26

# Forecasting

Our daily avalanche information products empower backcountry users to make informed decisions that increase individual and collective safety.

4



139

Forecast Products Published

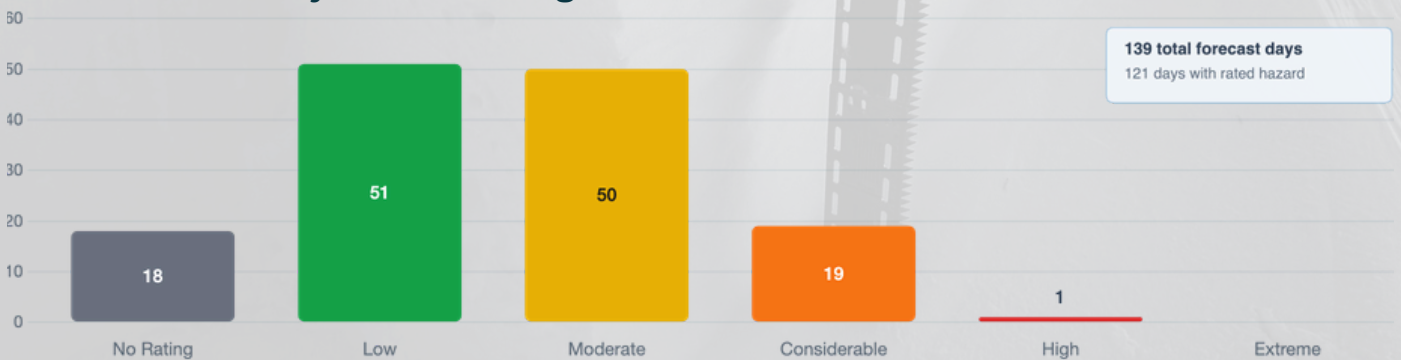
494

Forecaster-Days in the Field

16

Weekly Snowpack Summaries

## Forecast count by hazard rating



## Highlights

Adopted & formalized a **'backcasting' process** to understand accuracy and forecasting trends leading to **improved forecasts and hazard rating alignment.**



MWAC is rebuilding its **data infrastructure capabilities to prepare for the information & AI era** as advances in snowpack modeling become exponential.



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# Snow & Avalanche

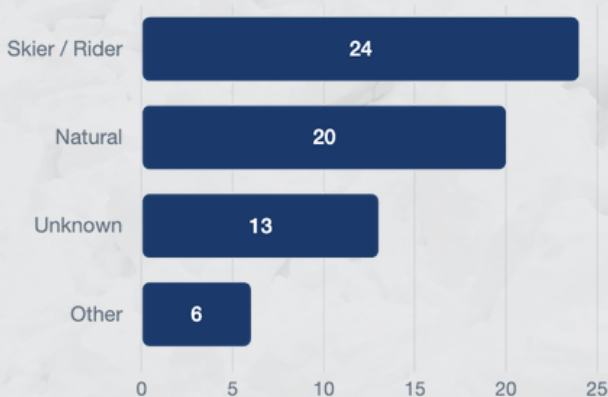
### Monthly snowfall by station



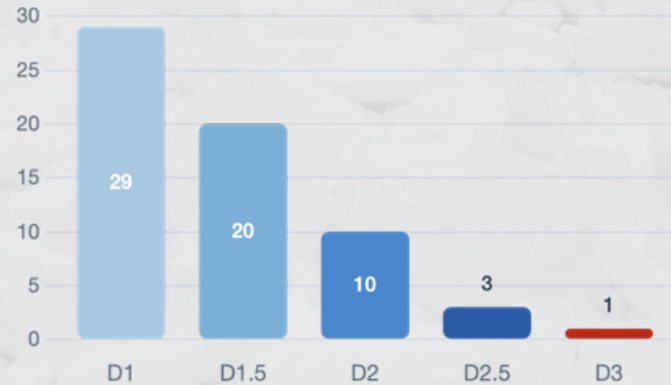
### Observed avalanches by month



### Avalanches by trigger type



### Avalanches by size



25 | 26

# Observations

Snow and avalanche observations are a cornerstone of accurate forecasting. Each submission gives our team real, on-the-ground data to work with. Beyond the forecast, observations help the broader community understand what to expect in a given area, sharpens field skills, and are one of the most direct ways to give back to mountain safety.



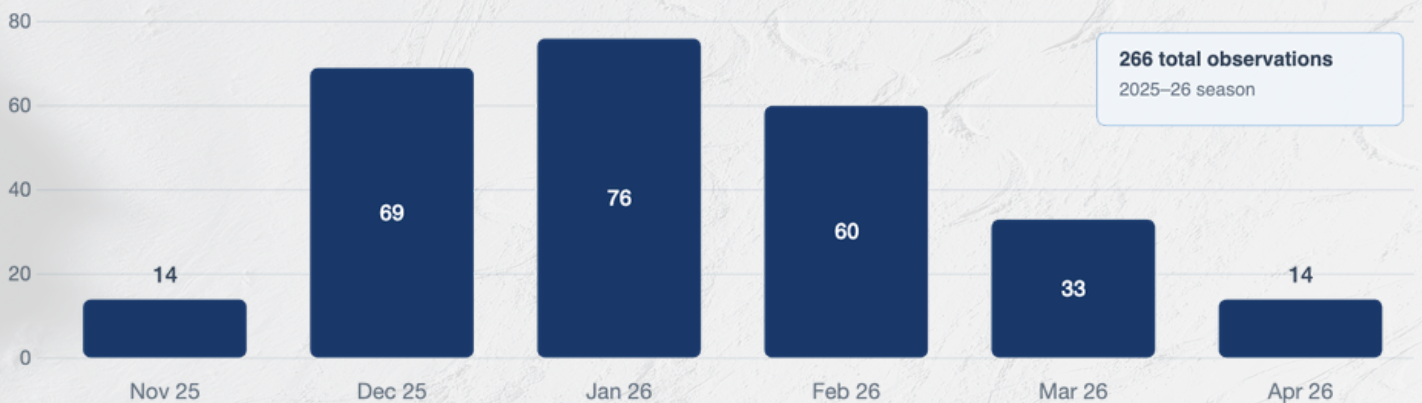
## 190

Public Observations

## 76

Professional MWAC Observations

### Observations by month



**11 people** submitted **4 or more observations** this season. Thanks for your consistent willingness to share information with the community.

**Bradley Small**

**Mark Renson**

**Ryan DeLena**

**Tyler Patno**

**Aaron Hubbell**

**Caitlin Kelly**

**Lucas Robdau**

**Paul Rachele**

**Ryan Kirkey**

**Alexandra Zvezdin**

**Daniel Feller**

25 | 26

# Community

Our community is a structural pillar of MWAC. This year, the actions and engagement of our community enhanced MWAC operations and promoted a safer mountain environment.



36

MWAC Volunteers

2500+

Volunteer Hours

35

Avalanche Courses Reached

9

Live Outreach Events

## Highlights

MWAC completed a **redesign of avalanche information kiosks** with new signs and maps to be **installed Fall 2026**. Signs aim to reach critical, less-familiar user groups.



Efforts continued to reach our younger community members with **in-person sessions with Kennett High School, regional 4<sup>th</sup> graders, & Newfound Middle School**.



MWAC continues to innovate **creative solutions for capturing, applying, and sharing data publicly** in support of our mountain safety mission.



# 25 | 26 Reach

We strive for our safety products and messages to reach far and wide across the backcountry community. This year, we significantly expanded our reach and user engagement.

- 750,000** Unique Website Views
- 42,000** Social Media Subscribers
- 1.2 M** Social Content Views
- 1,050** Live Event Participants
- 2,200** Avy App Users



## Highlights

Launched a **monthly email newsletter** to highlight MWAC news, infrastructure updates, education opportunities, informational resources, and support fundraising.



**+ 12%**  
social followers

**50%**  
email open rate

**+ 41%**  
website user  
engagement time

# 25 | 26 Rescue

MWAC maintains search & rescue (SAR) authority for the east side of Mount Washington. All 911 calls from the Cutler River Drainage are routed to MWAC staff to execute a safe & efficient emergency response. SAR activity increased over the previous season.

## 20

Major SAR Incidents

## 197

Responder Hours

## 6

Emergency Services & SAR  
Partner Organizations



## Insights



**Trailhead messaging is a key prevention tool.** Communicating risk at trailheads reaches visitors earlier, while they can still adjust their plans, choose appropriate gear, or turn around before committing.



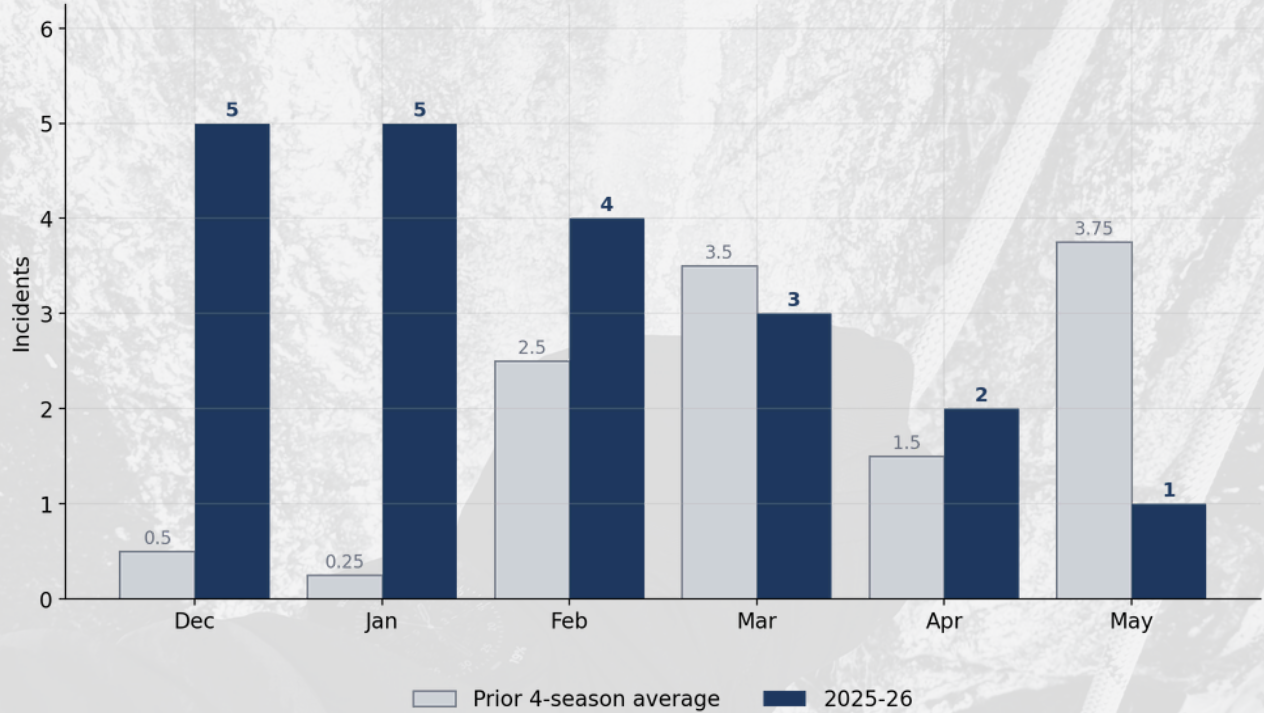
**SAR activity shifted earlier in the season.** December and January produced unusually high incident volume.



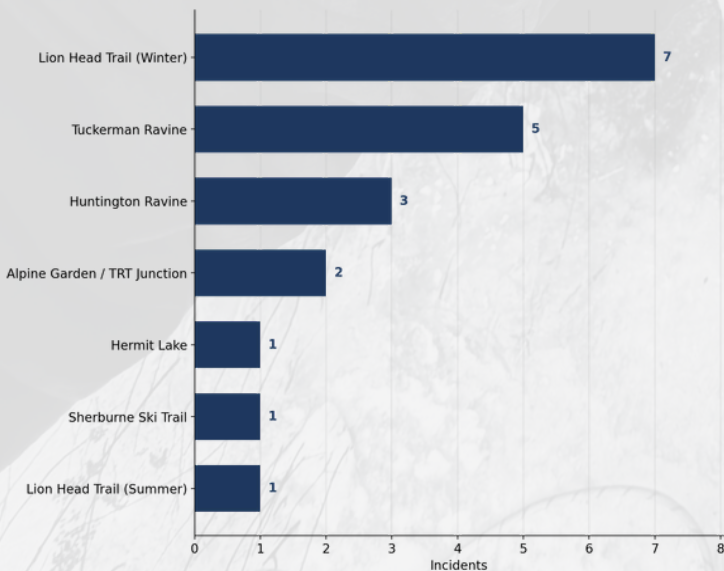
**Lion Head Winter Route remains a sliding-fall problem.** Lion Head is producing more incident volume, especially among hikers, while Tuckerman more commonly produces severe or fatal incidents.

# 25 | 26 Rescue

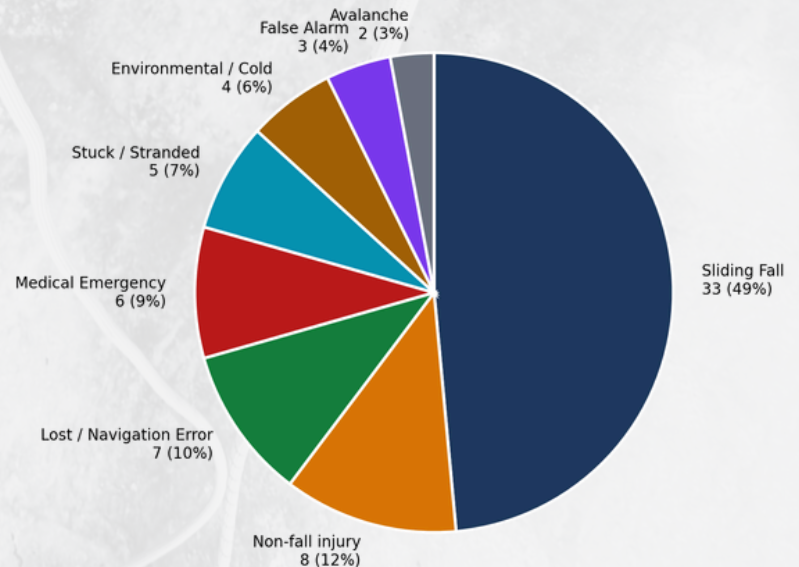
2025-26 incident volume by month vs prior seasons



2025-26 incidents by location



MWAC SAR incident mechanisms, 2021-22 through 2025-26



n = 68 incidents across 5 seasons

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# John Donnellan Scholarship

This season, the John Donnellan Scholarship, administered in partnership with the Mount Washington Avalanche Center Foundation, awarded funds for avalanche education to aspiring community members. John's connection to the White Mountains runs deep, from Boy Scout hiking trips in the 80s to leading more than 20 springtime trips into Tuckerman Ravine, and his scholarship reflects a personal commitment to sharing the safety tools he gained through his own avalanche education.

Recipients demonstrated financial need, a commitment to community safety, and a meaningful connection to the Mount Washington region. The scholarship continues to lower barriers to formal avalanche training for both recreational backcountry travelers and emerging professionals.

## 28

applicants

## 7

scholarships  
awarded

## \$5,226

in total  
funding

**4 professional** recipients | **3 recreational** recipients

### Recipient testimonial

"I chose to apply for the Donnellan Avalanche Education Scholarship because the cost of avalanche training was the single greatest barrier to taking the next step into the backcountry, even as my ability has grown over consecutive seasons. This year's award made it possible for me to attend a 3-day AIARE 1 course with Synnott Mountain Guides, which included both classroom instruction and fieldwork.

Beyond learning terrain, rescue, and snow science, the most impactful part of the experience was understanding the value of good planning and decision-making as part of a team.

I am deeply grateful for the Donnellan family's generosity and hope to inspire others to seek the skills, knowledge, and community needed to recreate in the backcountry safely and with confidence."

-2026 JD Scholarship Recipient: Recreation Course

# The Proving Ground

MWAC partnered with Warden Co. to create a groundbreaking film that aims to raise awareness about the hazards and potential consequences of backcountry skiing on Mount Washington. Our goal is to spark a cultural shift that prioritizes safety, knowledge, and preparation in the ski mountaineering community leading to awareness and accident reduction.



## Impact

**200 people attended** the live premiere

**40,000 views** on YouTube

Featured articles in **NHPR, Conway Daily Sun, Unofficial Networks & Backcountry Magazine**

Watch now  
on  
 **YouTube**



# MWAC x MWOBS Internship

In partnership with the Mount Washington Observatory, MWAC supported a joint internship program for the third year in a row. Our intern split time between the MWAC forecasting operation and the MWOBS forecasting and research operation between January and April.

"Within my first week, I felt reactive windslabs collapsing beneath my feet on a sheltered, low-angle trail. In the same week, I had the chance to test column stability near a crown line in the bowl, and separately feel isolated cracking while on my splitboard. It was a rapid and remarkable introduction to the avalanche center and the complexity of terrain management. I expected to come out of this winter with a deeper understanding of the MWAC forecast area, and I certainly did. I did not expect to appreciate how the rugged terrain shapes access and extraction strategies – including which SAR team to call on."

Ryan Tanski, 2026 Intern

## Research Effort:

Explore one-dimensional physics-based snowpack modeling to investigate applicability in analyzing weak-layer formation and identify necessary steps to implement three dimensional modeling of snow metamorphism and instability across the MWAC forecast area.

More information about this year's intern research can be found here:

<https://mountwashington.org/research/current-research-projects/solid-to-liquid-ratio-analysis/>

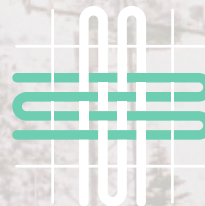
We couldn't do this work without support from our partners:



**NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE**  
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



AMERICAN  
AVALANCHE  
ASSOCIATION



Dartmouth  
Health

# Our donors from the past year have made many projects possible. Thank you!

## INDIVIDUALS

Aaron Hubbell	David Strauss	Joe Masley	Matthew Stein	Sarah Emily Colby
Aaron Rice	Derek Brandon	John Kousch	Max Wright	Scott Posocco
Alex Biron	Dylan Thomas	John Plummer	Meredith Harrington	Sean Zahran
Alexander Dyson	Edward Brewer	Jonathan S Shefftz	Michael Dube	Sebastian Bravo
Andrew Coutts	Elise Ringgenberg	Josh Kaplinsky	Michael Gibson	Sindhudweep N Sarkar
Andrew Levin	Elizabeth Drolet	Joshua Lent	Michael Haenn	Steve Rodriguez
Anthony Mirandi	Erin Arai	Joshua Werblin	Michael O'Brien	Steve Street
Bertrand Lefebvre	Ethan Call	Joshua M Caron	Michelle Saltsburg	Sven McCall
Beth Burke	Filip Janku	Ken Norton	Nabeel Ahmed	Tabatha Ferreira
Bjorn M Bellenbaum	Frank Marowitz	Kevin Plona	Nancy Benedix-Morse	Thomas Reed
Blue Ridge Mtn Guides	Greg Bartick	Kimberly Haller	Nicholas Fiore	Thomas Van de Velde
Bradley Small	Gus Shuster	Lance Campbell	onX Backcountry	Tiffany Beck
Brian Wolk	Heidi L Waddell	Lianna Altieri	OVIS Archambault	Timothy Shea
Brian Zagata	Ian Ogilvie	Lyndsey Meyer	Patrick McCoy	Tom Folan
Charles Lopresti	J Bradford Parker	Mackenzie Frackleton	Paul Nicknish	Torey Brooks
Chris Gelinas	Jake Ford	Mark Cahill	Peter Corti	Torin K Clark
Chris Massad	James Lawson	Mark Renson	Peter Thorne	Victor Guevara
Christian Eaton	Jason Parkin	Mary DeLena	Ricardo Carvajal	Warren Terrell
Christine Borg	Jeff Robidoux	Matt Bause	Rick Jenkinson	Will McKay
Christopher Radford	Jeffrey Fongemie	Matt Cymanski	Rob West	William Rose
Dale Edmunds	Jesse Morrow	Matteo Riondato	Robby McAlpine	Zachary Blanchard
Daniel Terk	Jim Laquerre	Matthew Bass	Robert Ticho	Zachary McCarthy
David Kurtz	Jim Thornhill	Matthew Grant	Samuel Rinaldo	

## ORGANIZATIONS

**NEW HAMPSHIRE  
OUTDOOR COUNCIL**

**WHITE MOUNTAIN  
INTERPRETIVE  
ASSOCIATION**

**THE RANDOLPH  
FOUNDATION**

# Thanks for an incredible season!

## A Note from the Chairwoman of the MWAC Foundation

The strength of our partnership with the Mount Washington Avalanche Center (MWAC) is deeply enriched by our connection to the community. This year, that connection resulted in significant achievements defined by a commitment to safety messaging, shared experience, and accessibility.

### Impact and Education

I am incredibly proud to share that we doubled our scholarship impact this year. This growth was made possible by the continued and generous support of John Donnellan, whose commitment to avalanche education is helping us build a safer, more informed community.

Additionally, this spring saw the release of *The Proving Ground*, produced by Warden Co. This film is more than just a public safety message; it is a reflection of our community's resilience and dedication to one another. Thanks to the expertise of our snow rangers and film crew, the support of the New Hampshire Outdoor Council, The Randolph Foundation, and the White Mountain Interpretive Association, and the incredible generosity of our local donors, we have created a resource that will save lives in our mountains for years to come.

### Advancing our Mission

For a second season, we supported the use of the Avy App to help share forecasts, weather, and observations more efficiently. These technological strides complement the core programs that continue to drive our mission:

- **Flagship Education:** The Eastern Snow and Avalanche Workshop (ESAW) remains a cornerstone educational event for the East Coast backcountry scene, bringing together professionals and enthusiasts to share critical knowledge.
- **Community Engagement:** The Tuckerman Inferno continues to be a vital fundraising pillar, thanks to the hardy racers who raised funds on their personal pledge pages and our dedicated volunteers and partners who make this event possible.
- **Operational Excellence:** We remain dedicated to supporting the MWAC forecast team by funding mission-critical gear, continuing education, and weather station improvements.

### Growth and Leadership

This year, we were thrilled to welcome three new members to our Board of Directors: Melanie Kulick (Vice Chair), Sam Juliano (Treasurer), and Alexandra Roberts (Secretary). We are also expanding our volunteer subcommittee programs and have already begun recruiting new members, offering even more ways for you to help shape the future of the Foundation.

To our donors, partners, and volunteers: your dedication is what allows us to push these initiatives forward. Thank you for being an essential part of this endeavor.

Warmly,  
Mouna Goyette  
Chairwoman, MWAC Foundation



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