

June 16th, 2016

Dear Supporters,

A year ago members of the winter backcountry community came together to take positive action regarding the paucity of avalanche information and education for users of the Eastern Alaska Range. Over the course of the following 12 months, the newly formed Eastern Alaska Range Avalanche Center (EARAC) was busy and productive. Our broad goals for the year were to improve access to avalanche education, develop and provide a system for sharing avalanche observations, and to improve the meteorological resources of the Eastern Alaska Range.



In the mountains, early season storms (September to November) were followed by over three months of relative drought, wind events, and above average temperatures. This produced widespread and persistent weak layers throughout the area. These layers were then buried by successive storms in mid to late March, which resulted in an active snowpack with widespread natural and human triggered avalanche hazards.

We identified early on that having a prominent social media and web presence would be critical to our success as an organization. Volunteers worked diligently to develop a web page and manage our social media outlets. Our Facebook Likes have increased 93%, and we've had a Facebook Reach of 98,200 in the last year. Additionally, 38 community members have posted their observations of snow and weather conditions. In May 2016, a new web platform was launched with the Alaska Avalanche Information Center, which includes EARAC's new website. Our goal for the next year is to continue to refine and improve our media presence, and to further develop our observer network.



In the past, when winter backcountry users in Interior Alaska wanted avalanche education their options were fairly limited. Few courses were offered at the Awareness level and even fewer Level 1 or higher courses were available without traveling over 300 miles south. This year, however, EARAC was able to provide 16 courses to over 300 students, which included numerous Awareness courses in various interior communities, as well as Level 1 and Level 2 courses based at the Lodge at Black Rapids. We plan to continue to provide avalanche education throughout the interior in the coming year.

In recent years, weather resources for the Eastern Alaska Range have been marginal with regards to avalanche conditions. Many of the weather stations in the area lack sensors needed for monitoring the snowpack over the course of the season. We have worked with station

owners to improve this, and to help make the collected data available to users. Our volunteers have also been successful in collecting donated weather station parts. It is our hope that we will be able to install our own weather station in the area this year. Additionally, we hope to provide a webpage with consolidated meteorological information from all of the weather stations in the Eastern Alaska Range by the start of the 2016-2017 season.

Our efforts this year were supported by a start-up donation from The Greater Fairbanks Community Hospital Foundation. This seed money allowed us to join the Alaska Avalanche Information Center network. We were also able to fund our presence at the GO Winter! Expo. Despite expenses throughout the season, we raised additional money and currently have a balance near \$9000.



While we've had a successful year in many respects, the Eastern Alaska Range was the site of two avalanche fatalities and numerous close calls this season. These tragic events reinforce the need for organizations such as ours to help create and foster avalanche awareness and education with all winter backcountry users. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to making the Eastern Alaska Range Avalanche Center a reality. We appreciate your continued support.

Sincerely,

James Smith, EARAC Steering Committee Chair