

# Central Oregon Avalanche Association

## 2014-2015 Annual Report



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## **Background**

The Central Oregon Avalanche Association (COAA), an Oregon 501c3 non-profit, was founded in 2009 as a result of an identified need to promote increased avalanche awareness and bolster local forecasting opportunities in the Central Oregon region. Our present focus is to organize and support bolstered avalanche educational opportunities in the Central Oregon area.

The Central Oregon region addressed by COAA encompasses the Cascade Range from south of Mt. Hood to Klamath Falls / Pelican Butte, and is centered on the Three Sisters Wilderness.

COAA is run by a volunteer Board of Directors. The current board is made up of the following individuals: Trevor Miller, Kevin Grove, Aaron Hartz, Adam Stroup, Tim Peterson, and Jon Tapper. The COAA Board seats run on a 2-year term, with a possible total of 7 Board Member seats.

COAA is presently involved in:

- Community avalanche education events,
- Web-based distribution of relevant mountain snow and weather data via the COAA Pro Observer Network,
- Physical “Are You Beeping?” signage at top backcountry entry points,
- Coordination with entities such as National Weather Service, U.S. Forest Service, the Northwest Avalanche Center (NWAC) and the Wallowa Avalanche Center (WAC) to identify potential future partnerships, coverage gaps and equipment needed to bolster and improve forecasting,
- Provide funding to support the Pro Observer Network, maintain the COAA website, and to assist in the purchase of equipment identified as the best benefit to the general public (i.e. backcountry weather stations),
- Community events that promote backcountry travel, safety, and gear and raise funds for COAA-identified needs.

Future activities entail:

- Coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, National Weather Service, NWAC and WAC to staff a forecast center for the Central Oregon Range,

With the implementation of the Pro Observer Network, COAA has effectively begun transitioning to a Type 3 avalanche center (meaning it employs part-time avalanche specialists who work for the avalanche association in addition to other non-COAA related duties). Type 1 and 2 avalanche centers have a minimum level of funding necessary to meet personnel and equipment requirements, issue daily advisories, and provide ample avalanche education throughout the season. In their inaugural season, COAA Pro Observers collected snowpack and weather data from various locations within the advisory area.

Pro Observers are contracted by COAA for the season for a predetermined number of observations during the winter months. Avalanche information 2014-2015 season totals:

COAA Pro Observer observations = 69 Public observations = 16

### **Website – [www.coavalanche.org](http://www.coavalanche.org)**

The COAA website was updated during the summer and fall of 2014 to improve the back-end functionality. The COAA Board of Directors has approved the further updating of the website to make it more intuitive, user friendly, and consistent with other avalanche centers in terms of iconography and graphics, as well as providing promotional space for organization sponsors.

The implementation of the Pro Observer network had a significant impact on website statistics. Site visits and use increased substantially between the 2013-2014 and the 2014-2015 seasons. COAA believes that last year’s below average snowpack impacted the overall visits to the website, and that an average or above-average snowfall year could increase the numbers significantly.

35% of the Page Views were associated with the Home page and 13% were to the Observations page. Individual observations averaged between 250-300 page views.

Website analytics for the COAA website for 2014-2015:

<b>Total Visits</b>	<b>Total Unique Visitors</b>	<b>Page Views</b>	<b>Pages/Visit</b>
11,299 visits (34% increase over prior year)	4594 unique visitors (7% decrease over prior year)	31,366 page views (20% increase over prior year)	Average of 2.78 pages per visit

### **Media**

COAA staff conducted several interviews throughout the season with television and print outlets. COAA was featured on KTVZ TV, KTVZ.com, MyWindow, The Bend Bulletin newspaper, The Source newspaper, and Off Piste Magazine. Most of these interviews focused on avalanche awareness and education opportunities in Central Oregon, as well as the coverage of the discussions between COAA and the Northwest Avalanche Center and the Wallowa Avalanche Center on the topic of formal partnerships.

COAA started an Instagram account late 2014. It currently has 258 followers and made 56 posts throughout the 2014-2015 season.

The COAA Facebook page has 748 page likes.

The COAA Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/coavy>) has 47 followers and 134 tweets.

COAA's mailing list grew from 388 to 554 subscribers during the 2014-2015 season. Eight mail campaigns were sent for the 2014-2015 season and open rates averaged around 40%.

## **Education**

COAA presented 9 "Know Before You Go" avalanche awareness classes during the 2014-2015 season.



The target audience for these clinics was either motorized or non-motorized winter backcountry enthusiasts. Attendee experience with backcountry travel and avalanche education spanned the spectrum from novice to Avy Level 2-3.

The primary focus at the Know Before You Go presentation was to introduce attendees to what avalanches are, the dangers associated with avalanches, basics in avoiding avalanches, and an overview of avalanche rescue. The secondary focus was to inform those attending to what COAA is about and how COAA can assist them with finding additional avalanche education opportunities, avalanche advisories, and web-based avalanche information products. It was also stressed that the success of COAA is dependent on community involvement and financial support.

To the casual observer, these clinics may appear to not have much of an impact, as they are short in duration and only provide a basic overview of avalanche safety and the avalanche center. But these avalanche awareness clinics are a vital part of the avalanche safety loop. Clinics provide the foundation to attendees who may have never considered hazards associated with avalanches, where and how to obtain avalanche-related information, and perhaps advancing their avalanche safety skills by taking a more in-depth avalanche course. These clinics are critical to improving avalanche safety in our region and for our family and friends.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>City</b>	<b># of Attendees</b>
12/3/2014	Know Before You Go	Cascade Lakes Brewery	SheJumps	Bend	25-30
12/9/2014	Know Before You Go	Pringle Hall	Oregon Nordic Club	Salem	20-25
12/9/2014	Know Before You Go	Broken Top Bottle Shop	COAA	Bend	35-40
1/13/2015	Know Before You Go	Broken Top Bottle Shop	COAA	Bend	20-25
12/16/2014	Know Before You Go	Salem Summit Outdoor Shop	COAA	Salem	9
2/10/2015	Know Before You Go	Broken Top Bottle Shop	COAA	Bend	15-20
2/12/2015	Know Before You Go	Western Oregon University	COAA	Monmouth	10-14
2/13/2015	Know Before You Go	Bend Parks and Rec	Bend Parks and Recreation	Bend	20-23
3/10/2015	Know Before You Go	Broken Top Bottle Shop	COAA	Bend	2

## **Fundraising and Events**

Continuing a partnership that began in 2009, COAA was again able to leverage a relationship with Teton Gravity Research to host two movies at the Tower Theater – “Almost Ablaze” on October 1<sup>st</sup> and “Jeremy Jones’ Higher” on October 18<sup>th</sup>. With tickets on sale at Skjersaas Ski Shop, Crows Feet Commons, the Tower Theater, and online at tetongravity.com, both movies sold out the 480-seat Tower Theater and provided an exciting start to the winter season. Teton Gravity Research generously provided the rental and insurance fees for both events and sent sponsor product to be used as a fundraiser for a COAA raffle. Other raffle items were provided by outdoor and local at COAA’s request, with over \$3,000 in items available between the two events. Raffle proceeds from the movies totaled \$4,500, and TGR subsequently donated \$300 to COAA.

On October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014, COAA helped host the Powderwhore Productions movie “Something Else” at Pine Mountain Sports. Over 80 people attended the event and donations to COAA were approximately \$800.

A new event for 2014, the New Year’s Snowball, was created by a joint partnership between Bend-based ski shops Crows Feet Commons and Pine Mountain Sports as an end-of-year movie night and New Year’s Eve party. Hosted at the Old Stone Church, funds raised were used to cover expenses.

For the third year in a row, COAA partnered with Outdoor Research and Mt. Bachelor to host Subaru Vertfest – A Festival of Freeride and Mountain Mettle on February 7-8<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at Mt. Bachelor. Vertfest Mt. Bachelor is a full weekend celebrating winter and backcountry culture with races, clinics, demos, and beer and party. Vertfest is a multi-stop mountain festival dedicated to raising the level of snow safety education and stoke for backcountry enthusiasts, and supporting the efforts of avalanche centers everywhere.



Registration in the Vertfest race increased over 70% over the prior year (from 49 in 2014 to 85 in 2015). Product donations totaled over \$3,000. Several clinics were offered during the weekend and attendance was stronger on Saturday than Sunday. Ski and snowboard demos were provided by Crows Feet Commons, Pine Mountain Sports, Mountain Supply, and Jones Snowboards. The total funds raised by the 2015 Vertfest were \$6,800.

Since its inception, COAA has seen phenomenal product support from outdoor recreation and local companies for its raffles and prizes. COAA would like to acknowledge the donations of the following companies over the past year:

Spark R&D ON3P Skis Patagonia Jones Snowboards Arcteryx Frequency / the snowboard journal  
Outdoor Research Surface Skis Smith Optics SnoPlanks Venture Snowboards Blackstrap  
Pine Mountain Sports Sunnyside Sports Skimo Cascade Lakes Brewery Skjersaas Ski Shop  
Velvet Lounge Kebaba Pizza Mondo Strictly Organic Coffee Hydroflask Blackstrap Arcteryx Voile  
Mt. Bachelor Oregon Ski Guides Giant Loop OffPiste Magazine

## **Volunteers and Valued Supporters**

The many events put on by COAA would not be possible without the help of a great group of people, including: Stirling Cobb and Mt. Bachelor, Bruce Moffatt, Matt Baker, Betsy and Curtis Norsen, Carlos Cummings, Lindsay Clark, Elena Pressprich, Jim Gross, Adam Haynes, Pete Keane, Dan McGarigle, David Marchi, Jeremy Nelson, Chris Justema, Timmy Crawford, Anouk Tapper, Lauren Shapiro and many others.

## **The Future of COAA**

Approximately ten phone conference meetings were held that included representatives from COAA, NWAC, WAC, NAC (National Avalanche Center), and the Deschutes National Forest Service. These meetings are early brainstorming sessions and visioning sessions outlining plans for an avalanche forecast center in Bend, Oregon. Potential future collaborations and partnerships with these organizations are still being explored.

Additionally, Kevin Grove (COAA Board Member) travelled with Simon Trautman (NAC) to visit four different avalanche centers around the Northwest in March 2015. They spent a week travelling and visiting with forecasters in Ketchum, Bozeman, Missoula, and the Flathead to make contacts and to learn about the operations of these different centers. These relationships will be very valuable moving forward with developing an avalanche forecast center in Bend.