

Central Oregon Avalanche Association

2015-2016 Annual Report



Table of Contents

Background..... 3

Website..... 4

Media..... 4

Education..... 5

Fundraising and Events..... 6

Volunteers..... 8

Partnerships..... 8

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. We have a large and rapidly growing winter backcountry user base in Central Oregon. There have been two avalanche fatalities in Central Oregon in the last six years and eight avalanche fatalities in Oregon in the past ten years. There have also been numerous near misses during this time period.

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 explore development of 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.

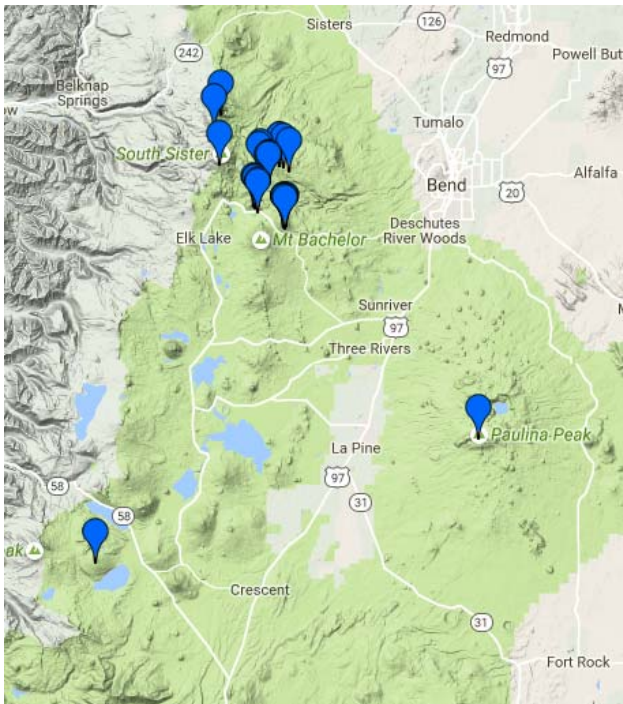
Pro Observers are contracted by COAA for the season for a predetermined number of observations during the winter months. Avalanche information 2015-2016 season totals:

Total 2015-2016 Observations: 154 (81% increase over 2014-2015 season)

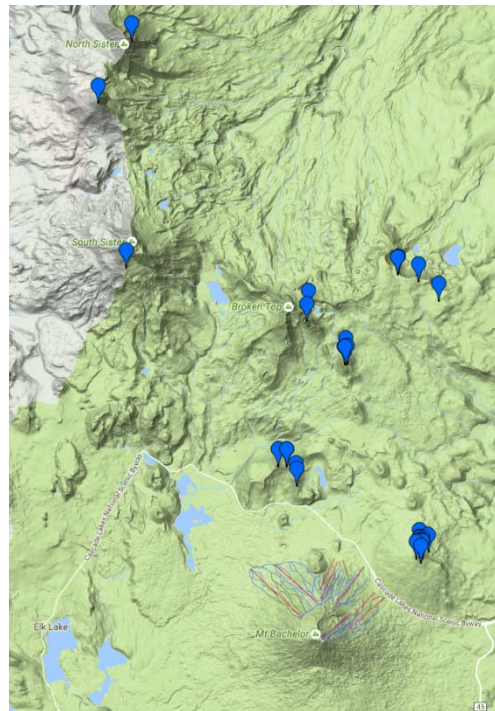
- COAA Pro Observer observations = 100 (44% increase over 2014-2015 season)
- COAA Public observations = 54 (235% increase over 2014-2015 season!)

The Pro Observer program was considered a huge success this year, due to the increased observation totals from our Pro Observers and the massive increase in public observations and engagement (see web traffic totals). Pro Observers were compensated at \$106 per observation. Total cost of the Pro Observer program for the 2015-2016 season was \$8,638.

Map of 2015-2016 Observations



Three Sisters Detailed Observations



Website – www.coavalanche.org

COAA continues to contract with an outside agency on the design and maintenance of the COAA website. Last year the COAA Board of Directors 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; this update had significant impact on the website statistics.

Site visits and use increased substantially between the 2014-2015 and the 2015-2016 seasons. COAA believes that last year's average snowpack, along with the updated and improved website, regular observations, and awareness efforts contributed to the significant increase in traffic.

WEBSITE DATA (12/1/2015 – 3/14/2016)

<u>Sessions*</u>	<u>Users**</u>
2015-2016: 25,890 (↑135.06%)	9,338 (↑95.93%)
2014-2015: 11,014 (↑11.06%)	4,766 (↓4.68%)
2013-2014: 9,917 (↑40.73%)	5,000 (↑73.67%)
2012-2013: 7,047	2,879

* A session is the period time a user is actively engaged with the website.

** Includes both new and returning users.

DEVICES

<u>Desktop</u>	<u>Mobile</u>
2015-2016: 47.67% (-24.35%)	52.33% (↑33.16%)
2014-2015: 63.01% (-12.06%)	34.98% (↑18.95%)
2013-2014: 71.65% (-11.51%)	28.35% (↑32.88%)
2012-2013: 80.97%	19.03%

ACQUISITION CHANNELS

	<u>Social Sites</u>	<u>Search</u>	<u>Direct</u>
12/1/15 - 3/14/16:	40.97% (44.23%)	33.75% (18.48%)	17.37% (37.34%)

USER LOCATION 2015-16

<u>City</u>	<u>Sessions</u>	<u>% Sessions</u>
1. Bend	8,864	42.59%
2. Portland	4,015	19.29%
3. Redmond	873	4.19%
4. Vancouver	581	2.79%
5. Seattle	558	2.68%
6. Anchorage	533	2.56%
7. Eugene	432	2.08%
8. Corvallis	238	1.14%

Social and Traditional Media Exposure

COAA social media presence continues to grow significantly. This growth is organic and is not a result of paid promotions.

INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/coavy/>

- 626 followers (142% increase over prior season)
- 79 posts (41% increase over prior season)

FACEBOOK: <https://www.instagram.com/coavy/>

- 1,141 page likes (52% increase from prior season)

TWITTER: <https://twitter.com/coavy>

- 91 followers (93% increase)
- 319 tweets (138% increase).

MAILING LIST: COAA collects emails at events as well as via its website. Open rates average around 38%.

Subscribers

2015-2016: 673 (↑21%)

2014-2015: 554

Emails

14 (↑75%)

8

TV/RADIO/NEWSPAPER: 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. Most of these interviews focused on avalanche awareness and education opportunities in Central Oregon.

Education

COAA presented 10 “Know Before You Go” avalanche awareness classes during the 2015-2016 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 constitutes an avalanche, the dangers associated with avalanches, basics in avoiding avalanches, and an overview of avalanche rescue. The secondary focus was to inform those attending to COAA’s mission 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.



Date	Class	Location	Sponsor	City	# of Attendees
12/7/2015	Know Before You Go	Broken Top Bottle Shop	SheJumps	Bend	40
12/15/2015	Know Before You Go	Broken Top Bottle Shop	COAA	Bend	35-40
1/12/2016	Know Before You Go	Pringle Hall	Oregon Nordic Club	Salem	20-25
1/14/2016	Know Before You Go	High Desert Museum	COAA	Bend	20-25
1/16/2016	Companion Rescue Clinic	High Desert Museum	COAA	Bend	5
1/19/2016	Know Before You Go	Salem Summit Outdoor Shop	COAA	Salem	15
2/16/2016	Know Before You Go	Western Oregon University	COAA	Monmouth, OR	20-25
2/16/2016	Know Before You Go	Broken Top Bottle Shop	COAA	Bend	15-20
3/5/2016	Know Before You Go	Elk Lake Resort	COAA	Elk Lake Resort	25-30

Fundraising and Events



COAA initiated a new level of engagement with the community through a membership drive. COAA created a unique 2016 Member sticker, available to individuals who donated \$35 to COAA during the 2015-2016 season. Promoted via social media and at events, members were entered into a drawing for a free Avy Level 1 class (purchased by COAA with funds raised). Approximately 65 memberships were sold throughout the year, raising \$4,600, and board member Adam Stroup ensured that each individual received a tax-donation acknowledgement letter. Additionally, COAA was the recipient of year-end private and corporate-sponsored donations, specifically from an anonymous donor at the Santa Barbara Foundation, and via a Morgan Stanley matching donation.

Movie Events

The COAA fundraising season officially kicked off on September 17th with the Bend film premier of “Balance” by David Carrier-Porcheron, hosted at the Summit Stage and Saloon. Organized by Bend local and industry veteran Matt Baker, proceeds totaled \$720 to COAA.

Continuing a partnership that began in 2009, COAA was again able to leverage a relationship with Teton Gravity Research to host 2 showings of their film “Paradise Waits” at the Tower Theater on October 1st. Tickets were sold at Skjersaas Ski Shop, Crows Feet Commons, Pine Mountain Sports, the Tower Theater, and online at tetongravity.com, and attendance exceeded expectations with both showings selling out the 480-seat Tower Theater. For the second year in a row, TGR athletes Angel and Johnny Collinson were on hand, and their gracious presence at the shows helped provide 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, and Mt. Bachelor provided 2-for-1 lift ticket vouchers for the first 100 attendees. Other raffle items were provided by outdoor and local companies at COAA’s request, with over \$3,200 in items available between the two events. Raffle proceeds from the movies totaled \$3,600.

“Raise-A-Pint” Weather Station Fundraiser

One of the major fundraising goals for the 2015-2016 season was the purchase of a Campbell Scientific GRWS100 weather station, to be installed on Moon Mountain, just outside the Three Sisters Wilderness. The Campbell Scientific GRWS100 weather station on Moon Mountain would monitor wind speed, wind direction, air temperature, relative humidity, and barometric pressure, and the data would be uploaded to the COAA website for the public's benefit. The foundation for the weather station fundraising was a donation from local hydration company Hydroflask of 200 COAA-engraved True Pints to COAA. Local ski shops Pine Mountain Sports and Crows Feet Commons helped create two “Raise A Pint” events on October 28th (at PMS) and November 19th (at CFC), where for \$20, COAA supporters would get a True Pint, free beer from Deschutes Brewery, a \$10 Pine Mountain Sports “Pine Bucks” coupon, a free drink coupon from Crows Feet Commons, and free food from local favorites Pizza Mondo and New York City Sub Shop. Demand for the True Pints exceeded supply, and they sold out...netting \$4,000 to COAA and enabling the purchase of the weather station. The weather station will be installed in the Fall of 2016 and data will stream to the COAA website for the upcoming season. Maintenance on the weather station will be performed by COAA Pro Observers and volunteers.



Vertfest

For the fourth year in a row, COAA partnered with Mt. Bachelor to host Vertfest – A Festival of Freeride and Mountain Mettle on February 6th, 2016 at Mt. Bachelor. 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. While a full weekend in prior years, the 2016 version of Vertfest at Mt. Bachelor was scheduled as a single day event in order to maximize engagement in the races, clinics, and demos.



Registration in the Vertfest race decreased somewhat (60 racers in 2016 vs. 85 in 2015), which might have been due to overcast and somewhat soggy conditions the weekend of the race. Racers received awesome swag bags with gear from Hydroflask, ClifBar, Voile, Outdoor Research, Coast Mountain Culture, and others. The clinics offered by Oregon Ski Guides (Introduction to Backcountry Skiing/Snowboarding, Companion Rescue, and Identifying Avalanche Problems) were very well attended and generated a lot of enthusiasm. The Vendor Village was located at the base of Red Chair and was a huge success, with tents, a fire pit, free beer tastings offered by Deschutes Brewery (in conjunction with their Red Chair Rally), a Mountain Hardware expedition tent, and Ski and snowboard demos were provided by Crows Feet Commons, Pine Mountain Sports, Mountain Supply, Snoplanks, and Jones Snowboards. Product donations totaled over \$3,000. Between racer registration and sponsor support, the total funds raised by the 2016 Vertfest were approximately \$5,000 (a decrease from the prior year's \$6,800).



Amazing Industry and Local Support

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 product and cash donations of the following companies over the past year:

Hydroflask | Outdoor Research | Clif Bar | Spark R&D | Mt. Bachelor | Cheetah Factory Racing | ON3P Skis
Smith Optics | Patagonia | Snoplanks | Ortovox | Voile | Giant Loop | Patagonia | Zeal Optics | K2
Oregon Ski Guides | Three Sisters Backcountry | Pine Mountain Sports | Crows Feet Commons |
Mountain Supply of Oregon | Sunnyside Sports | Skjersaa's | New York City Sub Shop
Teton Gravity Research | The Ski Journal | Frequency – The Snowboarder's Journal | BCA | Pizza Mondo
Kebaba | Strictly Organic | Pacific Pizza & Brew | The Cottonwood Café | Cascade Lakes
Bend Dental Group | Rack Stash | Ruffwear | Stand on Liquid | Blackstrap
Patagonia of Bend | Progressive Screen Printing | Broken Top Bottle Shop

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: Bruce Moffatt, Stirling Cobb and Mt. Bachelor, National Ski Patrol, Matt Baker, Betsy and Curtis Norsen, Pete Keane and Oregon Ski Guides, Dan McGarigle and Pine Mountain Sports staff, David Marchi and Crows Feet Commons staff, Jeremy Nelson and Skjersaas Ski Shop staff, the staff of the Tower Theater, the staff at the Broken Top Bottle Shop, Jim Gross and the Bend Radio Group, Andrew Gaultier and Teton Gravity Research, John and Angel Collinson, Caroline Gleich, Gerry Lopez, Elk Lake Resort and Todd McViney, Lauren Shapiro and many others.

The Future of COAA

COAA's goal is to raise enough funds to start and maintain an avalanche forecast center. Phase 1 to accomplish this goal is to start with a Type 2 avalanche forecast center with one avalanche forecaster. A Type 2 avalanche forecast center provides observations and a weather, snowpack, and avalanche summary 1-3 times per week. A Type 2 center can also issue an avalanche warning provided resources allow full-time staffing during the duration of the warning. Once the avalanche forecast center is up and running, the goal for Phase 2 is to staff a Type 2 avalanche forecast center with 2 forecasters in a more full-time capacity. Phase 3 transitions to a Type 1 avalanche forecast center and time will tell if resources and a need warrant this transition. Additional expenses

seen below will also help increase avalanche safety and the forecast center will purchase items as resources allow. Timing on all of this is based on funding, but our goals are the following:

Phase 1 – Winter 16-17

Phase 2 – Winter 17-18

Phase 3 – 3-5 years out depending on funding and need.