

2025/2026 ANNUAL REPORT

HATCHER PASS AVALANCHE CENTER



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



This season was a huge one in so many ways. We had a major change in leadership, saying goodbye to one of our founders and welcoming Tim Rogers to the Lead Forecaster role. Returning forecaster Andy Paul stepped up in myriad ways, and Zach Peterson joined the team from the Sawtooth Avalanche Center and brought a wealth of experience in public forecasting and outreach. We introduced a Professional Observer program, filled by our strong team of returning instructors, Claire, Dylan, and Michael. You can read about our significant growth in outreach and education programming on Page 5, and more about our Forecasting operations on Pages 4 and 7.

For me and for our entire team, this season was marked with tremendous loss and heartbreak. Our beloved teammate and friend, Dylan Lenzie, was tragically killed in an avalanche while guiding for a heli ski operation in April. As I write this in September, I'm still processing the fact that my friend won't be joining us at our upcoming staff training. I met Dylan when he first arrived in Alaska to work at the National Outdoor Leadership School, my former employer. We were coworkers and fast friends; for me, Dylan brought an incredible sense of grounding calm, steadiness, and humor to a frenetic summer workplace where there were never enough hours in the day. It was truly inspiring to watch Dylan fall in love with Alaska and especially with Hatcher Pass, where he could be found most evenings after work on long and exploratory mountain runs through the tundra. I remember Dylan telling me a story of running the Bomber Traverse in a day, a classic Hatcher Pass test piece, and suddenly noticing a gaggle of tourists running and yelling behind him, having turned to follow him thinking he was running away from a bear. In classic Dylan fashion, he laughed his signature laugh and kept on jogging down the trail.

Our team's tribute to Dylan is on Page 12. His loss will be felt across Alaska as the snow flies this season, and we think of him as we begin again to traverse the snowy ridges and spines of Hatcher Pass that brought him so much joy.


MARISSA BIEGER

OUR TEAM

FORECASTERS



TIM ROGERS
LEAD FORECASTER



ANDY PAUL
FORECASTER



ZACH PETERSON
FORECASTER

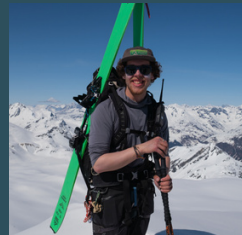
STAFF



MARISSA BIEGER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



CLAIRE BICKNELL
PRO OBSERVER/INSTRUCTOR

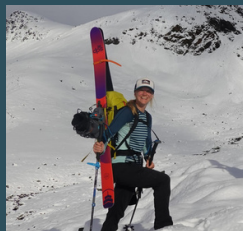


MICHAEL KERST
PRO OBSERVER/INSTRUCTOR

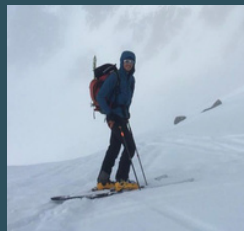


DYLAN LENZIE
PRO OBSERVER/INSTRUCTOR

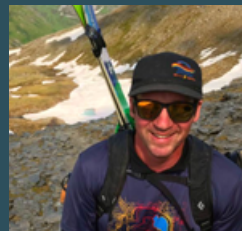
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CHAIR



KEEGAN KRANTZ
VICE CHAIR



BRIAN TEACHWORTH
TREASURER



KEETON KROON
SECRETARY



TIM LEACH



KIRSTEN TOLKKINEN



LARRY LYNN

OPERATIONS

HPAC was founded in 2008 and has been operating as a 501(c)3 non-profit avalanche center since 2019.

HPAC produces **weekly avalanche forecasts and professional observations** during its operational season from November through April. HPAC's website hosts a **public observation platform** monitored by the forecast team where members of the backcountry community can submit snow and avalanche observations. The center also maintains **three webcams and two weather stations**.

This season's forecasting team was led by Tim Rogers, Andy Paul, and Zach Peterson with assistance from the professional observer team of Claire Bicknell, Michael Kerst, and Dylan Lenzie. Together they provided **93 forecasts, 111 professional observations**, and regular **storm warnings and conditions updates**, with information on recent avalanches, detailed snowpack analysis, and safety reminders for skiers and riders on the 16-Mile and Paradise road runs.

The **snowmachine loaner program**, provided by BRP and Alaska Mining and Diving Supply, was once again instrumental in getting forecasters further into motorized terrain.



OUTREACH & EVENTS

RESCUE WORKSHOP IN HATCHER PASS

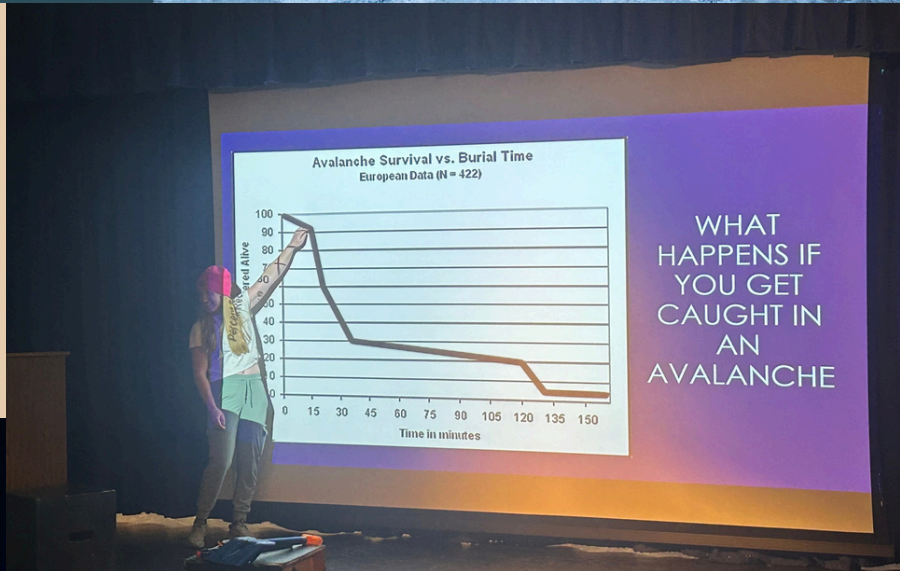
In December, HPAC organized a free avalanche rescue training in Hatcher Pass with support from our partners - Alaska Safe Riders, Alaska Avalanche School, Alaska Mining & Diving Supply, MAT+SAR Search and Rescue, Skeetawk, Anchorage Nordic Ski Patrol and the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center. Thanks to MTA Foundation and the Mat-Su Borough for sponsoring this event.

Over 50 participants from youth to seniors participated in workshops and scenarios to practice their rescue skills, whether on foot, ski, snowboard, or snowmachine.



SEASON KICKOFF MOVIE

For the fourth year, HPAC and Ira Edwards started the season with a screening of Matchstick Production's "After The Snowfall" at the Glenn Massay Theater. Stoke was high and lucky attendees took home some amazing raffle prizes.



EDUCATION

With the help of generous grant funding from the Mat-Su Health Foundation and Mat-Su Borough, HPAC's avalanche awareness trainings reached over 1000 local public middle and high school students. HPAC also provided eight scholarships to Mat-Su Valley youth and young adults seeking avalanche education.

OUTREACH & EVENTS



This year's **Cabin Fever Reliever**, our annual fundraiser and party for our community, was a tremendous success. The **Super Saturated Sugar Strings** brought amazing energy and kept us dancing, **Rabbit Rabbit Catering** once again delivered the best charcuterie spread in the valley, lucky attendees took home some incredible door prizes donated by our event sponsors, and our veteran HPAC bartenders kept the local beer, cider, and kombucha flowing.

STATE OF THE SNOWPACK

Thanks to our sponsorship from the Mat-Su Trails & Parks Foundation, we expanded our forecaster talk series this season to into monthly “State of the Snowpack” events at local businesses in Palmer and Wasilla. Forecasters presented on current conditions, facilitated educational activities, and fielded questions from the public.



SEASON HISTORY

WEATHER AND SNOWPACK

Conditions in the Talkeetnas are **notoriously cold, dry, and windy**, and this year was an exception only in how strong these factors played. A couple of weak storms failed to provide us with adequate early-season coverage, and as December arrived, conditions were bleak. **A series of dry, bitterly cold, and extremely gusty northerly wind events raged throughout December**, leading to downed trees, prolonged power outages, and disaster declarations for our small borough. In the mountains, the winds ravaged our meager snowpack, relegating what little snow we had to small ribbons in gullies and lee-side bowls.

A **weak atmospheric river in January** got us on the board and brought about our first real avalanche cycle. With improved coverage, skiers and riders started venturing out and interacting with our poor, shallow structure that offered limited feedback beyond some belching collapses. **A slow trickle of storms in February gradually increased coverage** and provided some of the best riding conditions of the season. Through March, our snowpack remained exceptionally thin and weak, composed of our notoriously faceted “square pow”. However, avalanche conditions remained relatively quiet, and the forecast area only received a handful of reported human-triggered avalanches during this time.



SEASON HISTORY

In early April, board member and NRCS Hydrologist Keegan Krantz confirmed what we all assumed, **the snow survey from the Fishhook Basin was the lowest in over 60 years of observations.** Not surprising but still remarkable for just how much coverage and traffic we'd had in the forecast area.

All of this changed in mid-April as a series of late-season storms impacted Southcentral Alaska and effectively doubled our snowpack in a couple of weeks. With weak snow on the ground, heavy precipitation, and a strong warming trend, the Department of Transportation decided to preemptively close the Fishhook Road, a decision that ended up being favorable and timely. **Marmot Gully 2 released and covered the road with about 20' of debris, with numerous other paths in Independence Bowl releasing and coming close to the road and crossing winter trails.** When the dust had settled, Independence Mine Snotel had picked up about 45" of snow at over 5.5" of snow water equivalent and contributed to this season's most extensive and sizable avalanche cycle.

ACCIDENTS AND NEAR MISSES

In late April, the forecast team had transitioned to General Information products, and on April 29th, the team departed Independence Mine on snowmachines for a tour of the western forecast area. That afternoon, the team triggered a large section of cornice which subsequently released a large avalanche on basal facets. Two forecasters were caught and carried in the slide but miraculously came to rest on top of the debris and were uninjured. This near-miss will no doubt continue to provide thoughtful context to our field safety, forecast, and decision making paradigms moving forward.

Tragically, the same day, one of our professional observers, Dylan Lenzie, was working as a heli-ski guide in the Chugach Mountains and lost his life after triggering and getting buried in a large avalanche. This loss was devastating for our team and the entire southcentral avalanche community.

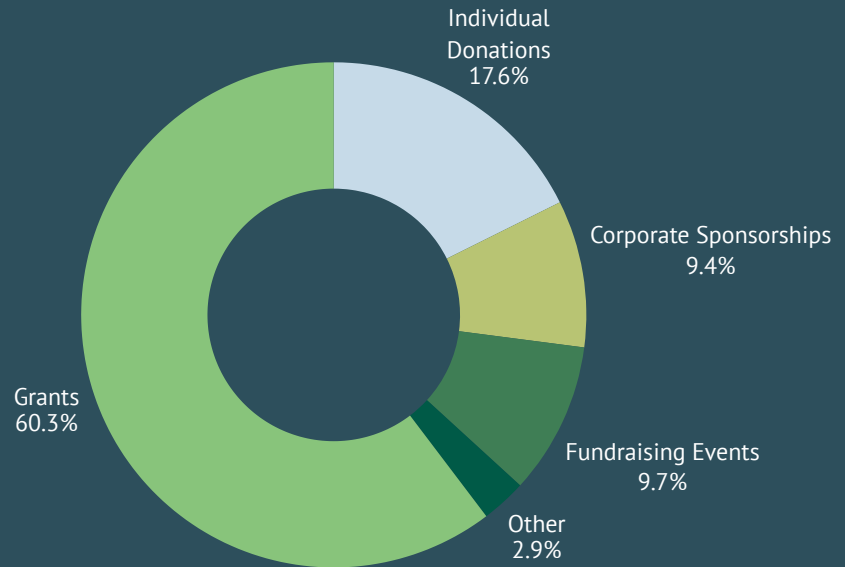
Dylan was an astute observer, a talented educator, and an experienced guide, working on honing his skills as an avalanche professional. He touched the lives of many skiers and riders throughout southcentral as an educator with the Alaska Avalanche School and the outpouring of support from the community has been touching. Donations can still be made to a scholarship in his name on the HPAC website.

- Tim Rogers, Lead Forecaster

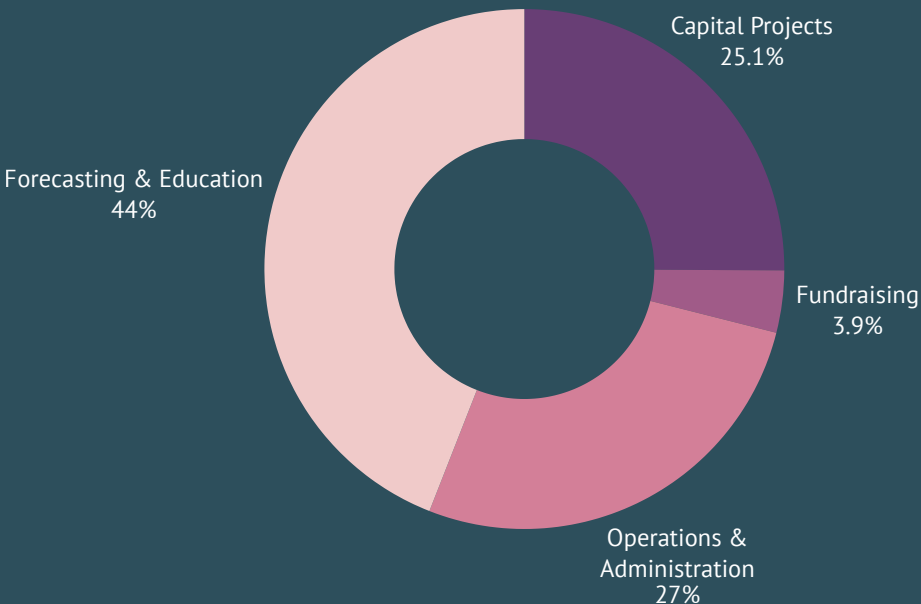
FINANCES

HPAC runs a nonprofit avalanche center with 100% of funding sourced from grants, corporate sponsorships, individual donations, and fundraising efforts. All funds go directly to support our mission, providing avalanche forecasting and education to our community.

INCOME (\$277,900)



EXPENSES (\$291,400)



DIGITAL REVIEW

HPAVALANCHE.ORG



DURING THE 2025-2026 SEASON,
30,000 USERS ACCESSED HPAC'S WEBSITE



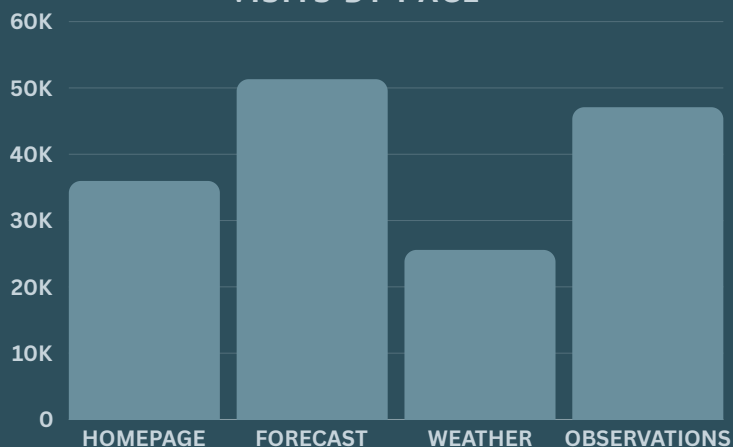
57% of users viewed our
site using a mobile device



The average user session
duration was 2 minutes,
down from 3.6 minutes
last season



VISITS BY PAGE

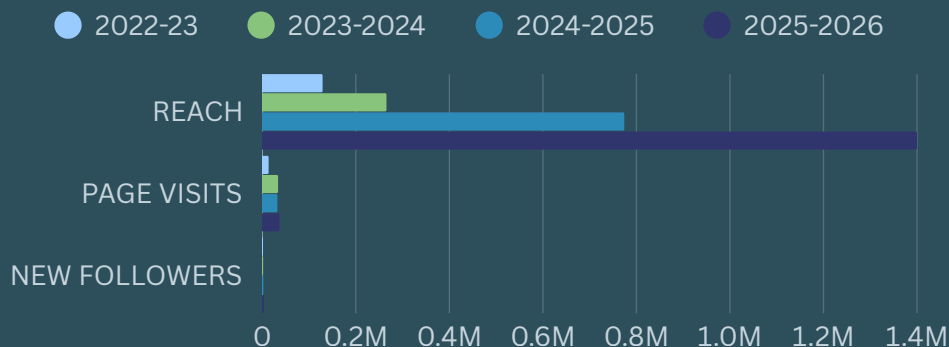


WHERE ARE USERS TUNING IN FROM?

45% ANCHORAGE
19% PALMER, WASILLA & SURROUNDINGS
12% OTHER ALASKA REGIONS
25% UNDISCLOSED

SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM ENGAGEMENT



Social media reach **increased significantly** this season. This is especially notable given a season with **few large avalanche cycles** and long periods of **stable conditions**.

We attribute this growth to the **significant energy our staff invested in growing our outreach and education programs during the season.**

LOOKING AHEAD

HPAC is dedicated to making improvements and growing our operations to meet the continued trend of increased backcountry usage in Hatcher Pass. We strive to produce the effective and accurate forecasting and outreach in service of our ultimate goal: giving our community the information and skills they need to avoid avalanches.

HPAC is guided by four-year strategic plans, with our current plan covering our 2024-2028 seasons. We have identified the following goals for the coming season:

Outreach

- Expand existing public school avalanche awareness education in the Mat-Su Valley, including schools outside our core area of Palmer and Wasilla, by connecting with partner organizations to further our reach
- Continue monthly Meet the Forecasters programming and free annual rescue workshop at Hatcher Pass
- Increase outreach outside of HPAC's core user group, through partnerships with Revel Treks & Tours and Alaska Safe Riders, and participation in local workshops including Mat-Su Emergency Preparedness Expo
- Effectively utilize newly constructed "HPAC Headquarters," located in Hatcher Pass, to improve public access to forecasting staff and information exchange
- Replace and upgrade avalanche information signage for "16 Mile" road run area

Forecasting

- Continue the professional observer program to increase the quality and quantity of information available to the public and support forecasters in gathering snowpack information
- Work toward implementation of daily forecasts with hazard ratings in Hatcher Pass, to meet growing public need and lower the barrier to entry for new backcountry users

Development

- Recruit new board members to add depth and experience to HPAC's leadership team
- Secure stable operational funding for forecasting and outreach/education. Thank you to all of our grantors, donors, and sponsors for continuing to invest in this work.

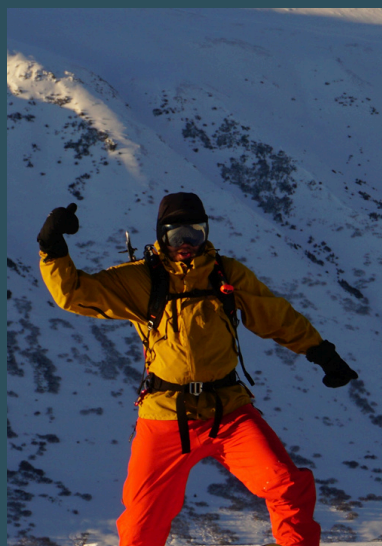
IN LOVING MEMORY

We dedicate this season to our dear friend, coworker, and forever partner in adventure, Dylan Lenzie.

Dylan joined HPAC in 2019 as an instructor and volunteer field partner. He was a skilled educator who shared his passion for snow safety and mountain sports with thousands of Alaskan youth in their school classrooms over the years. Dylan's love and aptitude for splitboarding, snowmachining, and skiing drove him to expand his career to include field-based teaching and heli ski guiding. He continued to grow with HPAC this season, stepping into the Professional Observer role. He generously shared his time between each of these pursuits, and we as his team members, clients, and students were profoundly impacted by his leadership, care, and joy in sharing what he loved.

Dylan fell in love with Hatcher Pass upon arriving in Alaska in 2018 and explored more miles on snow, rock, and tundra than most do in decades. His love for the mountains, determination to push himself physically and mentally, and humble stoke were infectious and inspiring. He quickly became a leader in the Hatcher Pass backcountry and acted as a bridge between the “old guard” and “new guard” in our tight-knit community.

Dylan was a grounding presence—someone to remind you of what is important in stressful times, and to do it with a few carefully chosen words and his disarming laugh. We will not easily heal our broken hearts, but we'll know where to find our friend as we return to snowy spines and tundra ridges.



OUR SUPPORTERS

The work of HPAC would not be possible without the generous support of local businesses and individual donors. Thank you for investing in community avalanche safety.

SKYSCRAPER (\$5000+)

Alaska Mining & Diving Supply
BRP
Drover Construction
Fishhook Community Council
Gateway Community Council
Hilcorp
Matanuska Susitna Borough
Mat-Su Health Foundation
Mat-Su Trails & Parks Foundation
Rasmuson Foundation

ARCHANGEL (\$2500-\$5000)

Alaska Airlines
Kaladi Brothers Coffee
Mat-Su Trails & Parks Foundation
Sutton Community Council
Third Edge Heli

MARMOT (\$1000-\$2500)

95.5 The Pass KNLT FM
Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking
Backcountry Bike & Ski
Chevrolet of Wasilla
Chugach Powder Guides
City of Palmer
Diversified Tire
Matanuska Valley Federal Credit Union
MTA Foundation
NOLS Alaska
Red Mountain Consulting
Rossignol
Silverton Mountain Guides
Third Edge Heli

HATCH (\$500+)

4imprint
Alaska Guide Collective
Bear Tooth Theatrepub
Caltopo
Centinel Pacific Accounting
DG Signs & Lighting
Farm Loop Coffee
Girdwood Backcountry Guides
Hatcher Pass Lodge
Red Raven Guides
Sherman Technologies
Summit Ski Co
Team CC
Toby Harriman
Toko

Individual Donors

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The Byrne Family
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Brian Dreeszen
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Eric Fiedler
Kristen Fiedler
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Michael Nienow
Toby Ovod-Everett
Margaret Perdue
Spencer Perry
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James Sykes
Emily Abrams
Chelsie Bidney
John Bidney
Alexander Brown
Brad Casar
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Kierre Childers
James Colles
Janet Curran
Eric Dahl
William Dent-Kincaid
Galen Dossin
David & Diana Evans
John Evey
Amelia Fatsi
Jack Fry
Jack Hebert
Alex Kabatski
Kristian Knutson
Joseph Kurtak
Alex Loan
Linda Lozanoff
Andrew Maguire
Brian McNamara
Nancy McWilliams
Everet Megli
Adam Merculieff
Elizabeth Miner
Allen Mortensen
Victoria Parks
Dave Rector
Charlie Ross
Lesley Seale
Matti Silta

David Vancleve
Kristin Vantrease
Willie Webster
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Jeremy Wood
David Apperson
Zoe Ash
Brianna Beswick
Theron Bidney
Rowan Bidney
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James Burritt
William Byl
Christine Byl
Corbin Carpenter
Elliott Carr
Brendan Cassidy
Brady Deal
Gavin Dixon
Brant Dornisch
Emily Forstner
Leah Glasscock-Sanders
Heidi Halverson
Meri Harrington
Peter Hinds
Bobby Hsu
Anne Johnson
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Lang Van Dommelen
Kristin Wouk
Trevor Wright



HATCHER PASS AVALANCHE CENTER

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