

The Bottom Line

Do you ski? If so, I know what you are thinking: there can't be many weekends left with good skiing in the ravines, and you'd be correct. As our snowpack level decreases, spring hazards increase. Warm rain today (Friday) will further undermine snow and increase the size and depth of waterfall holes. Warm weather over the last week has increased the size of moats near rock faces and deepened melt holes. Large rocks at the bottom of some ski runs have emerged and pose an additional threat to sliding falls. The good news is that spring hazards can be managed and there's still plenty of snow in the ravines. For example, limit your exposure to dangerous waterfall holes by avoiding travel near the obvious waterfalls. Friday's rain will increase the water flowing over the Lip area, and the stream flowing through the Little Headwall. You can avoid your exposure to huge chunks of ice that can fall from above areas like Lunch Rocks by...avoiding Lunch Rocks and areas in the fall line of ice chunks remaining in the Headwall.

This weekend in Tuckerman Ravine, Hillman's Highway, Left Gully and Lobster Claw may offer ski runs with reduced hazards from icefall and waterfall holes if the surface snow warms and softens. Many other backcountry zones also have fewer of the potentially deadliest spring hazards. Crampons and ice axe will be necessary tools to travel on steep slopes on Saturday, including the Lion Head Winter Route as cooler temperatures limit snow softening to the slopes getting the most direct sun. The tops of gullies may not soften at all on Saturday though this depends on subtle factors such as cloud cover and wind speeds. Sunday is forecast to be much warmer, with a mix of clouds and sun.

Mountain Weather

After a rainy day on Friday, the summit temperature is expected to drop, leading to a chance of mixed precipitation late, possibly continuing into Saturday morning. Summit temperatures will remain in the 20sF during the day Saturday as the skies gradually clear. After a refreeze Saturday night, Sunday is forecast to be mostly sunny and warmer with a summit high temperature in the upper 30sF. Wind should remain consistent at 45-55 mph from the NW through the weekend. Looking ahead, Monday and Tuesday bring the chance of mixed precipitation and possibly snow.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Prolonged periods of melt have opened deep cracks and holes in our snowpack, as flowing water exacerbated by rain Friday further undermined snow and opened stream channels. Areas of very icy snow will keep skiers on their toes Saturday, though the return of warming conditions on Sunday should restore some degree of edgeability to the surface snow. Minor sluffing becomes likely during warm conditions and the resulting sluff channels may complicate descents. Keep the following hazards in mind as you make terrain decisions in our dynamic spring backcountry conditions: **Moats and other deep melt holes, Waterfall holes, Opening streams and undermined snow, Glide cracks, Falling ice and rock, Avalanches, Long sliding falls, Sliding falls, even short ones**

Steep snow and ice in gullies and trails, such as the Lion Head Winter Route, become very hard during any frozen periods in our spring melt/freeze cycles requiring crampons and an ice axe to climb with security. The tops of many ski descents also fit this description.

Additional Concerns

Due to heavy snow and wind loading this winter, the Lion Head Winter Route remains the preferred, easier route to the summit from the east side. The Sherburne and Gulf of Slides ski trails are no longer completely snow covered to Pinkham Notch. Expect ice, open stream crossings, rocks, bare patches and plenty of mud. The Sherburne is currently closed at the #7 crossover, 0.7 miles downhill of Hermit Lake though this section may not survive Friday's rain.

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Please Remember: Safe travel in avalanche terrain requires training and experience. This forecast is just one of many decision making tools. You control your own risk by choosing where, when, and how you travel. Understand that the avalanche danger may change when actual weather differs from the weather forecast. For more information contact the Forest Service Snow Rangers, the AMC at the Pinkham Notch Visitor Center, or the caretakers at Hermit Lake Shelters.