

The Bottom Line

High pressure will clear the skies today, with moderate wind and unseasonably cool temperatures reaching only the upper 20sF on the summit before dropping to the upper teens F tonight. The sun should soften surface snow on sunny aspects, however an ice ax and crampons may be necessary to travel safely on steep terrain, especially higher up in the gullies. Also, keep your eye on the sun and the time as falling afternoon temperatures can quickly re-freeze the snowpack creating hazardous sliding fall conditions. Thursday is forecast to be mostly sunny and warmer, with high temperatures in the mid 30sF on the summit. After tonight's freeze, snow on most or all aspects should soften nicely making for good spring skiing tomorrow. Rain is expected on Friday, and clearing for the weekend. Rain will speed the undermining process and open moats and crevasses in the Lip and Headwall. A descent of the Lip will carry greater and greater consequence as the snow continues to collapse and creep downhill.

Among the many spring hazards, are the emerging large rocks as the snowpack recedes in the run-outs of some ski runs. Sliding falls are always dangerous, and these rocks increase the consequence of even a short fall as one skier experienced this past Saturday while skiing Right Gully. Think ahead and ask yourself: if I fall, can I stop? If I don't stop will I hit anything?

Mountain Weather

The summit recorded .54" of water on Tuesday, none of which was snow. Temperatures dropped overnight with the summit at 19F this morning reaching into the upper 20sF for a high. Skies will clear Wednesday and remain so overnight and into Thursday when clouds return in the afternoon. Thursday is forecast to be the warmer of the two days with summit temperatures in the mid 30sF. NW wind at 25-40 mph will shift south and decrease to 10-25 mph on Thursday. Looking ahead, mixed precipitation is expected to begin falling Thursday evening before transitioning to rain with more than 1.5" through the day Friday, possibly lingering into Saturday morning.

Snowpack and Avalanche Discussion

Prolonged periods of melt have opened deep cracks and holes in our snowpack, as flowing water undermined snow and opened some stream channels. Areas of very icy snow have kept skiers on their toes, though the return of warming conditions 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.***

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. This weekend, you'll find plenty of exposed ice mixed in with softer, rotten snow. Currently, the Lion Head Winter Route as well as areas of the snowpack that have been scoured by wind are icy and require 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 Winter Lion Head Route remains the preferred, easier route to the summit from the east side. It is steep and icy sections make crampons and ice axes necessary.

The Sherburne and Gulf of Slides ski trails are no longer completely snow covered to Pinkham Notch and is closed at the #7 crossover .7 miles downhill of Hermit Lake. A rope directs skiers to the Tuckerman Ravine Trail to prevent damage.

Jeff Fongemie, Snow Ranger; USDA Forest Service, White Mountain National Forest; (603)466-2713 TTY (603)466-2858

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 or at the Harvard Cabin.