# 20 REPORT

PROMOTING AVALANCHE SAFETY THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF COLORADO SINCE 1973.

#### LETTER FROM

# COLORADO AVALANCHE INFORMATION CENTER

The Colorado Avalanche Information Center (CAIC) is a program of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The program is a partnership between the DNR, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), and the Friends of the CAIC (FoCAIC), a 501c3 group. The mission of the CAIC is to provide avalanche information, education, and promote research for the protection of life, property and the enhancement of the state's economy. Colorado's avalanche safety program began in the United States Forest Service in 1973, as the Colorado Avalanche Warning Program, and moved to the Colorado Department of Natural Resources in 1983 where it continues to this day.

The 2018-2019 avalanche season was an amazing time to be in Colorado. The way the winter unfolded brought us an extended period with amazing conditions for winter recreation and we had front row seats for the most amazing avalanche cycle the state has seen in the last 100 years. The snow that fell in October and November changed into a very weak layer of depth hoar during a fairly dry December. Once it started snowing again we saw a very active cycle of human-triggered avalanches, releasing on this basal weak layer. The Center recorded 57 people caught in 42 avalanches by January of 2019 (34 people in January alone). Near the end of February the accumulated snowfall for the state blasted past the 30-year average and never looked back. Heavy snowfall in early March produced an extreme avalanche event beyond anything in recorded history in Colorado. The Center issued Extreme (Level 5) avalanche danger rating for four of our forecast zones and portions of US550 between Ouray and Silverton were closed for 18 days. Three people were killed, eight homes were damaged or destroyed, infrastructure delivering utilities was damaged in five counties, and Hinsdale County declared two separate states of emergency to address the avalanche cycle and the aftermath. The avalanches eventually stopped running through mature timber, but the snow continued and the snowpack in Colorado remained well above the long-term average until early June. During

the 2018-2019 avalanche season the CAIC documented over 4200 avalanches, with 92 incidents where 135 people were caught and eight people were killed. We recorded 87 avalanches in the D4 and D5 levels of the Destructive Size scale (D1 through D5). In the previous 8 years we recorded a total of 24 avalanches in this size range.

This was an extremely challenging year to be working in avalanche safety in Colorado and I am very proud of the work done by the Center's staff. They worked very long hours for days, weeks, and eventually months in a row. They provided support to federal, state, and local government groups, public utilities, private companies, and people just trying to get through the mountains to get home or enjoy all of the snow. This year followed one of the driest years since 1970. Between changing weather patterns, increasing population, and a sky rocketing interest in winter recreation; the only thing we seem to be able to count on is that the opportunity to face a new challenge is just around the corner. I sincerely appreciate all of the support this program gets from the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation, and everyone that contributes to the Friends of the CAIC. If the last year taught us anything it is that we are all working together to keep the mountainous areas of Colorado running and none of us can do it alone. I look forward to your continued support and to another year of working with you to keep the people in Colorado enjoying the snow and staying clear of avalanches.



Sincerely,

Ethan Greene

Director

Colorado Avalanche

Information Center

# **MISSION**

The mission of the CAIC is to provide avalanche information, education and promote research for the protection of life, property and the enhancement of the state's economy.

# friends of Calc www.friendsofcaic.org

# **MISSION**

The mission of the Friends of CAIC is to support avalanche forecasting and education throughout the State of Colorado.



# LETTER FROM

# FRIENDS OF CAIC

#### Dear Friends,

The 2018/2019 winter season was one for the record books here in Colorado. The historic avalanche cycle that took place in March 2019 was one that many of us may never see again in our lifetime. Watching the Colorado Avalanche Information Center (CAIC) team come together and work methodically and diligently to keep the public informed and in turn safe from the impacts of the cycle was incredible. I could not be more proud of the CAIC team.

The CAIC is largely funded by the State of Colorado, yet the program still relies heavily on donations to support its operations and education programs throughout Colorado. These donations fund avalanche forecaster positions, technology development, and the joint CAIC/Friends of CAIC Know Before You Go avalanche awareness program. Generous support from our donors also allows us to pursue special projects such as research around the March 2019 avalanche cycle, improved resources for avalanche investigations, and weather instrumentation throughout Colorado's mountains.

The Friends of CAIC is an integral voice in avalanche safety and education in Colorado. As we work to significantly increase our financial support to CAIC we encourage everyone – any individual, group, corporation, or business invested in public safety – to connect, learn, and donate to help us grow our collective impact on avalanche safety in Colorado. By uniting the vast network of backcountry users and partners, we can accomplish much more to drive avalanche safety forward.

Thank you for your past support and in advance for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Aaron Carlson

Executive Director

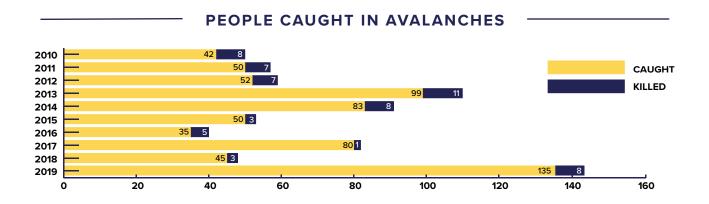
Friends of CAIC

# **AVALANCHES & ACCIDENTS**

STATEWIDE SEASONAL SNOWFALL

The CAIC recorded information on **4273 avalanches**, including **135 people caught**. Of those caught, **8 were killed**. The CAIC published **24 detailed accident reports**.

#### BY FORECAST ZONE **STEAMBOAT TOTAL 2019** <del>40</del>} **AVALANCHES:** Forecast zone: Steamboat Recorded Avalanches: 40 4273 Forecast zone: Vail & Summit County Recorded Avalanches: 478 Forecast zone: Grand Mesa VAIL Recorded Avalanches: 313 **DENVER** BRECKENRIDGE ASPEN Forecast zone: Aspen Forecast zone: Front Range **Recorded Avalanches: 397 Recorded Avalanches: 500** GRAND JUNCTION Forecast zone: Sawatch **Recorded Avalanches: 445** Forecast zone: Gunnison **Recorded Avalanches: 559** Forecast zone: Northern San Juan Recorded Avalanches: 1107 285 TELLURIDE Forecast zone: Sangre de Cristo Forecast zone: Southern San Juan **Recorded Avalanches: 19** DURANGO



# **SNOWFALL PATTERNS**

STATEWIDE SEASONAL SNOWFALL

The 2018-2019 total seasonal snowfall was above the long-term average in most parts of the state. The season started early, with above average snowfall in October and early November. Many sites fell below their average in December, but tracked close to the long-term trend through January and February. Heavy snowfall at the end of February brought most sites far above average and they stayed that way through March, April, May, and even into June. Statewide, Colorado's snowpack at peak accumulation on April 5 was 133% of the 30-year median value.

LOCATION	NOV.	DEC.	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APR.	TOTAL	% OF AVG
ARAPAHOE BASIN	59	30	41	33	83	40	286	104
BEAVER CREEK	45	59	53	42	88	34	319	119
BERTHOUD PASS	71	48	68	34	66	40	326	106
BRECKENRIDGE	80	64	60	34	124	53	414	161
COPPER MOUNTAIN	58	42	39	31	98	18	286	118
KEYSTONE (NORTH PEAK)	49	23	115	27	94	17	325	115
LOVELAND BASIN	84	43	69	34	108	50	388	117
STEAMBOAT	64	76	82	75	96	30	423	142
VAIL	72	53	68	46	95	37	369	122
WINTERPARK	68	44	59	43	78	45	336	104
ASPEN HIGHLANDS	30	39	41	36	93	28	276	114
ASPEN MOUNTAIN	32	36	39	32	80	13	233	107
GOTHIC	41	39	58	46	95	34	314	94
MCCLURE PASS	25	41	54	46	58	10	233	95
MONARCH MOUNTAIN SKI AREA	12	25	63	39	74	2	214	87
RED MOUNTAIN PASS	29	64	60	63	105	41	361	130
TELLURIDE	20	54	60	70	114	13	332	161
WOLF CREEK SKI AREA	138	37	93	147	129	10	554	138
MONUMENT PASS	17	48	49	47	69	20	249	121
COAL BANK PASS	14	36	78	125	117	24	392	138
MOLAS PASS	20	33	62	81	115	22	332	137

# **EDUCATION AND COURSES** ATTENDANCE & EVENTS 5,664 165 **STUDENTS EDUCATION** ATTENDED **EVENTS** YEAR OVER YEAR 12000 # OF STUDENTS 10000 OF COURSES 8000 8000 # 4000 # OF COURSES 2000 05-06 06-07 07-08 08-09 09-10 10-11 11-12 12-13 13-14 14-15 15-16 16-17 17-18 18-19

# **MEDIA CONTACTS**

WEBSITE, APP & SOCIAL MEDIA

CAIC staff gave **203 interviews** to press and media contacts, including Colorado, national, and international news organizations



**13,745**APP DOWNLOADS

**2,768,019**WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS

SOCIAL MEDIA				
	friends of Calc www.friendsofcalc.org	<b> <b> <b> </b></b></b>		
Facebook	<b>16,918</b> FOLLOWERS	<b>13,455</b> FOLLOWERS		
Instagram	<b>13,238</b> FOLLOWERS	<b>14,646</b> FOLLOWERS		
Twitter	<b>1,924</b> FOLLOWERS	<b>2,885</b> FOLLOWERS		
You Tube	N/A	<b>1,255</b> FOLLOWERS		

# STAFF

#### CAIC & FRIENDS OF CAIC

#### **CAIC STAFF**

Ethan Greene Director

**Brian Lazar**Deputy Director

**Liz Gideon**Program Assistant

**Rebecca Hodgetts** Lead Avalanche Forecaster

Mark Mueller Lead Avalanche Forecaster

Spencer Logan
Lead Avalanche Scientist

**John Snook** Weather Specialist

Mike Cooperstein
Weather and Avalanche Forecaster

**Jason Konigsberg**Weather and Avalanche Forecaster

**Jeff Davis**Avalanche Forecaster

**Brandon Levy** Avalanche Forecaster

Kreston Rohrig
Avalanche Forecaster

Ann Mellick Avalanche Forecaster

Ron Simenhois Avalanche Forecaster

#### Colin Mitchell

Avalanche Forecaster

**Matt Huber** Avalanche Forecaster

Ryan Zarter

Avalanche Forecaster

**Chris Bilbery**Avalanche Forecaster

Ben Pritchett

Avalanche Forecaster

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Aaron Carlson
Executive Director

**Laura Mack**Development Director

Laraine Martin
Program and Events Coordinator

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**Rusty Perry** 

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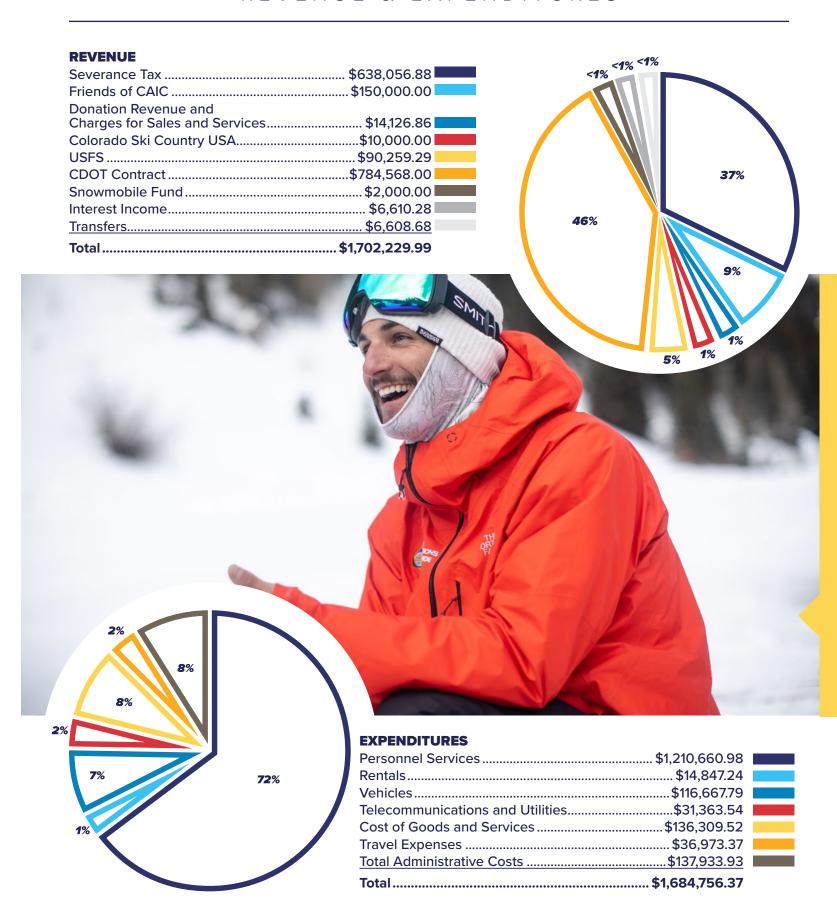
**Brent Brown** 

Heidi Ruckriegle



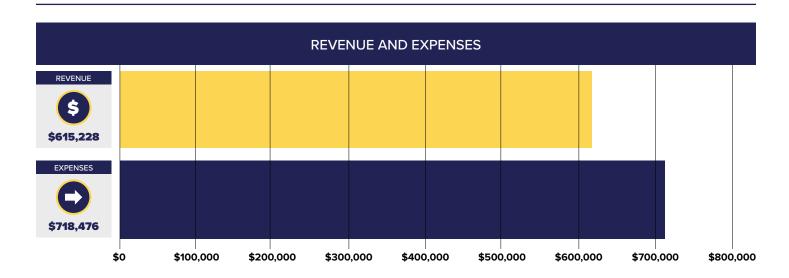
## FY19 CAIC

#### REVENUE & EXPENDITURES



# **FY19 FRIENDS OF CAIC**

FINANCIALS





# LETTER FROM FRIENDS OF CAIC DONOR

TRAVIS SPITZER

Climbing, mountaineering, and skiing have been a big part of my life since I was a kid. My first big mountain skiing trip and avalanche course were on Mount Sneffels during the winter of 1985/86; I was hooked! Getting out in the backcountry, away from the resort, is not only great exercise, but it brings climbing and skiing back to the soulful roots of our sport. It's just you, a friend or two and the freedom to explore.



However, the mountains are a dangerous environment. We understand the risks every time we tie-in or skin-up. It's what we love to do. The only way to mitigate these risks is to travel with the proper equipment, know how to use it and continually pursue the skills and knowledge

base necessary to be as safe as possible. Resources like the Colorado Avalanche Information Center (CAIC) help build that base.

Education and awareness are key. The CAIC data is at your fingertips, however; knowing how to use it and continually develop your skills is paramount. I encourage everyone, especially the young chargers to become educated. Attend a Know Before You Go (KBYG) presentation, sign up for an avalanche course, or hire a professional mountain guide. We can always learn more and continue developing our knowledge base to be a better partner. We are relying on each other every time we go into the backcountry.

Over the years, our San Juan community and Colorado have lost some incredible souls; many of them dear



friends. It hurts to think about it, and it has made me quite a bit more cautious than I used to be.

I have supported Friends of Colorado Avalanche Information Center (FoCAIC) over the years because it's important for our community to have access to the information and the educational outreach CAIC provides. These resources make our backcountry experience safer. It's not glamorous work to collect the data and then advise the public on the potential hazards and ever-changing conditions. But, it is important work and extremely valuable to our community.

If you love the data and outreach the CAIC provides as I do, it is important to give back. Although part of CAIC's budget comes from the Colorado Department of Transportation and the State of Colorado, FoCAIC is a key part of that budget. We all love to recreate in the backcountry. Help keep CAIC alive and well with your gift to FoCAIC. Give what you can!

Tours Solver

# CAIC FORECASTER HIGHLIGHT

REBECCA "BECS" HODGETTS

# "OPPORTUNITY CAN BE MISSED BECAUSE IT IS DRESSED IN OVERALLS AND LOOKS LIKE HARD

**WORK."** - Thomas Edison



After a childhood spent mostly in the urban centers of New Zealand, I was exposed to the thrills of the great outdoors while attending Otago University in Dunedin. My career in the snow began after I graduated university and took a job as a lift operator at a ski area on Mt. Ruapehu, a volcano located on the North Island of New Zealand. Here I was fortunate to gain the mentorship of Heidi Godfrey, a pioneering female snowboarder, patroller, and mountain guide in New Zealand. Her enthusiasm for the snow and working in the outdoors added fuel to my fire, and there was no looking back.

While I burnished my credentials as a lift operator, I learned to ski, earned my medical certifications, and began my avalanche coursework through Canadian Avalanche Associations' professional program. I eventually convinced the ski area to hire me on the patrol squad and then give me access to the elusive "keys to cache" when I became an avalanche mitigation route leader. My fear of responding to trauma calls on the ski hill led me to volunteer for avalanche work at every opportunity as a more attractive alternative. I found a special comradery in the avalanche group, and a way to spend the majority of the day outside. I eventually moved to Colorado, and finally found my tribe at Arapahoe Basin Ski Area, where I worked my way into an avalanche technician spot and eventually Assistant Ski Patrol Director.

While working at the Basin I met Colorado Avalanche Information Center (CAIC) highway forecaster Lee Metzger, who would become another pivotal mentor in my career. He and Ray Mumford introduced me to the life of a highway forecaster. Something about the challenge was alluring. When an opportunity to work with the CAIC as a backcountry forecaster presented itself, I took the leap. That season was a particularly deadly one with multiple avalanche involvements and multiple tragic fatalities. This triggered a lot of soul-searching and long talks with other forecasters discussing the darker side of our job. That same year, a workplace accident occurred involving the I-70 highway forecasting crew. As we all stepped up to help on the highway, I realized this role was a good fit for me. For once my timing was impeccable when a highway position opened up the following year, and I was offered the job. I truly enjoy working with the CDOT crews, Colorado State Patrol, and other stakeholders to manage this avalanche problem. One of the greatest breakthroughs for me as a forecaster was realizing the confidence I saw in other, more experienced, forecaster's eyes was actually just them becoming more comfortable with the uncertainty.



With change being the only constant, I thrive in the opportunity for growth working for the CAIC. Our leadership is continually innovating, and I often find myself hanging on for

Amanda Kay

the ride, hoping I can wrap my brain around the next progression in the industry. During my tenure at the avalanche center, I've had the opportunity to become a lead forecaster, working more closely with an amazing group of dedicated avalanche professionals. I am honored to be a part of the team.

# **2019 SUPPORTERS**

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**Edward Espinoza** 

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**Edward Fornataro** 

Edward Schaefer

Edward Wasserman

Eileen and Walter Kintsch

**Edward Smith** 

Erin Johnson Erin Kearns Erin Oliver Erin Vargas Eryka Thorley Espen Karlsen Ethan and Dana Greene **Evan Ross** Evolucion Innvoations, Inc **Faction Skis** Falcon Guides Fidelity Charitable Fishpond USA FlyLow Francis Culkin Francisco Oyague Francisco Tharp Frank Bowman Frank Mapel Fred Schibi Fred Zapp Frederick Larke Friends Hut Friends of Berthoud Pass Friends of the San Juans Gabe D'Luzansky Gabe Magtutu Gail Binder Garan Mangan-Dimuzio Garmin USA, Inc. **Garrett Anderson** Gary Osteen Gary Smith Gaylan Hellyer Gayle Moore Gear Dryer Gearmunk **Geoffrey Peck** George Walton Gerrit Padgham Gifford Cutler Giro Graham and Paula Johnson Graham Brush Graham Geiselman Graham Kane **Grant Mason** GrassSticks Greg Buchanan **Greg Bushey** 

**Greg Dumus Greg Mears Greg Wagner Greg Wheltle Gregory Bean Gregory Foy Gregory Hansen Guinevere Jones Guy Thorsby** H. Merritt Kinsey Halsted Morris Handlebar Tap House Hanna Whirty Hannah and Brent Nordhaus Hans Johannes **Harold Orner** Harry Sandler Harry Zinn Harvest Skis Heather Bradford Heather Lauritzen Heidi Ruckriegle Heidi Smith Henrik Forsling Henry and Catherine Shands Hestra Gloves, LLC **Hidden Treasure Yurts Hideaway Brewery High Mountain Creative** Honey Stinger Hotel Aspen/ Molly Gibson Lodge **Howard Cox Howard Cribbs Hunter Maddox** Ian Burke Ian Fowler Ian Pond Ilia Kossilov International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association Irina Overeem Jack Hodge Jack Mott Jack Nyquist Jack Rueppel Jack Wilkinson Jack Wolfe

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**Greg Demmin** 

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Jake Birchard and Dani Totten	Jeff Schatz	Joe Forish	John Warner
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Janice Law	Jeremy Dobish	John Cevaal	Jordan Lipp
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Janine Prout	Jeremy Harlam	John Dowling	Joseph Chervenak
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Jason Bushey	Jess Knowles	John Graham and Lorrin Lear	Joseph Kenney
Jason Finch	Jesse and Margaret Littleton	John Hatlelid	Joseph Mcmahon
Jason Isherwood	Jesse Colangelo	John Hereford	Joseph Preiss
Jason Luck	Jesse Filippelli	John Hickey	Joseph Ryder
Jason Lundin	Jesse Lanci	John Hillman	Josh Jaffe
Jason Maurer	Jessica Beacom	John Kohnke	Josh Mcknight
Jason Mcgowin	Jessica Diner	John Lashbrook	Joshua Baruch
Jason Moore	Jessica Keil	John Lind	Joshua Butson
Jason Regan	Jessica Lebo	John Mackinnon	Joshua Felix
Jason Zerbe	Jessica Long	John Maurer	Joshua Hmielowski
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Michael Krieves	N
Michael Lutek	N
Michael Maple	N
Michael Petrik	N
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Michael Rosen	N
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