

The Headwaters hosts two freeskiing competitions

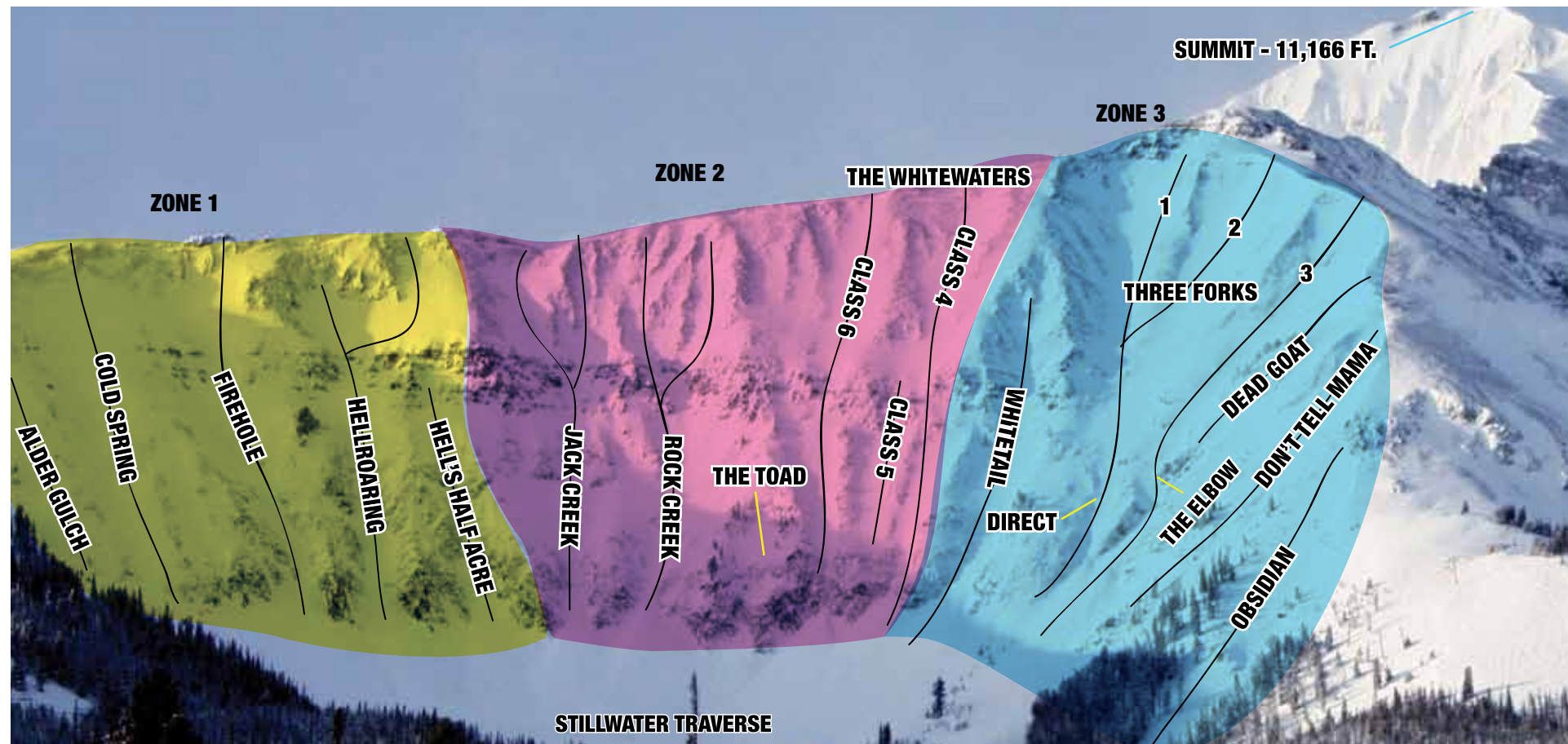
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BIG SKY WEEKLY MANAGING EDITOR

It's been dumping snow, and just in time for two freeskiing competitions in Moonlight Basin's Headwaters terrain: The Subaru Freeskiing World Tour qualifier (March 23 - 24) and the seventh annual Headwaters Runoff competition (March 31).

The Headwaters are a true big mountain venue, said FWT judge Paul Herberger. "It's rocky, there aren't many trees, it's got big vertical and it's fairly steep from top to bottom."

Herberger has competed on the national and world tours since 1998, and has judged the Runoff since its inception. Last year, after he showed FWT head judge Jim Jack around Moonlight and Big Sky, Moonlight was added to the tour. Jim Jack, a major influence in the sport of freeskiing, was killed this winter in an avalanche in the Stevens Pass backcountry, in Washington. The event at Moonlight will include a ceremony in his honor.

"I think [FWT] competitors are going to be really excited once they look up at the mountain and the venue," Herberger said. And having such a big event here will make the Runoff even cooler.



The Headwaters on March 20. PHOTO BY COLTER MILLER

The Headwaters

For the FWT, specific venue boundaries will be announced to athletes the day prior to the competition. For the Runoff, competitors can use all the terrain between Alder Gulch and the top of 6th Class. These descriptions highlight the Headwaters' main runs.

ZONE 1

Top elevation: 10,025 feet
Slope angle: 37 - 44 degrees
Vertical: 1,050 feet to Stillwater Traverse
Characteristics: Multiple start zones. Many fingers, rock outcroppings, convex rollovers and terrain variations until below buttress-level, where both chutes constrict to narrow, steep gullies that then fan out on the apron.

Firehole

Direct fall line, starts gentle and rolls over until it reaches maximum pitch in the constriction. Room for creativity and linking into both neighboring chutes.

Hellroaring

The wide open football field at the top is called the Dance Floor. It opens up into a medley of options through the buttress, including a gutsy huck into Hell's Half Acre.

Hell's Half Acre

Enter from Hellroaring or Jack Creek. Two mandatory airs.

ZONE 2

Top elevation: 10,150 feet
Slope angle: 38 - 50 degrees
Vertical: 1,200 - 1,400 feet
Characteristics: Steep, exposed, complex terrain with multiple start zones and features.

Jack Creek

The most obvious chute down the center of the cirque: Everybody loves Jack. Tons of interesting features. Show us some style.

Rock Creek

Intricate terrain and lots of exposure. Be creative—and careful. This one's a knockout. Looking for air? Don't miss the Toad and the Lilly Pad.

The Whitewaters

High consequence skiing. Named for whitewater river grades, 6th Class is looker's left, and has the largest cliff at the bottom, 5th Class is in the middle, and 4th Class is furthest looker's right, with the smallest drop. The upper pitch is pure pleasure, the constrictions are techy, and the cliff drops are serious. If you're going to hit them, get some speed and boost out—there's some ground to clear.

ZONE 3

Top elevation: 10,240 feet
Slope angle: 40 - 52 degrees
Vertical: 1,320 - 1,500 feet
Characteristics: Multiple steep start zones followed by planar slopes into constrictions. This area catches a lot of snow and is variable and complex.

Whitetail

Oh, whimsical Whitetail. If you can get it from the top, do it. Can be accessed from both 4th Class and 1st Fork.

1st Fork to Direct

There's so much love in the world, and this line proves it. Perfect pitch down to the confluence, open 'er up for a few turns, then drop into the ever-steepen-ing sluice through Direct.

2nd Fork to the Elbow Room

This is in the running for best in-bounds line in Montana. A classic.

3rd Fork, Dead Goat, Don't Tell Mama, Obsidian

Choose your own adventure; that's a lot of terrain to cover. In fact, it's at least 10 acres of complex fall lines through corniced ridgelines, steep chutes, a handful of trees, and gnarly cliffs. There are some things that haven't been done here. Step it up.

RIDGETOP ELEVATIONS

Firehole	9,990'
Hellroaring	10,025'
Rock Creek	10,077'
Whitewaters	10,160'
1st Fork	10,150'
2nd Fork left	10,145'
3rd Fork	10,070'
Dead Goat	9,710'
DTM/Bermuda Triangle	9,400'
Obsidian	9,400'

