Evaluating the Avaluator™ - First Reflections on the Canadian Decision Aid

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In 2006, the Canadian Avalanche Centre introduced the Avaluator, a decision support tool that offers amateur backcountry recreationists decision guidance based on expert opinion and historic avalanche accident records. Simultaneous with the launch, the curriculum of the standard introductory avalanche course (Avalanche Skills Training 1 - AST1) was revised to include the Avaluator as a central component. In this paper, we will take a first look at the reception of the Avaluator and its impact on the decision process and recreational behavior of AST1 course graduates. In a series of surveys, a conjoint rating task was used to assess the decision preferences of participating students before their AST1 course, right after the course, and after considerable additional personal experience in avalanche terrain. In addition, the Theory of Planned Behavior was used to identify the most influential factors for the use of the Avaluator on private winter backcountry trips among AST1 graduates. The preliminary results provide interesting first perspectives for the further development and delivery of the decision aid.