



# Alaska CoCoRaHS Newsletter

## Hello there CoCoRaHS volunteers!

This message is coming to you from the desk of Peter Q. Olsson, the State Climatologist at the Alaska State Climate Center (ASCC) in Anchorage. What does the ASCC have to do with CoCoRaHS, anyway? We will get to that in a bit.

First, I'll point out that these news letters used to be a monthly item here in Alaska. After a hiatus of about two years, we are starting it up again, though probably on a quarterly basis. There are several topics I want to briefly address in this "re-inaugural" news letter.

## Who is Who In Alaska CoCoRaHS?

I have received several inquiries in this vein in the last year, and these have proven to be difficult to answer. According to our state page on the CoCoRaHS web site:

<http://www.cocorahs.org/state.aspx?state=ak>

Alaska has four regions:

- **Alaska Native Villages**  
(Mike Smolen, remote regional coordinator)
- **Anchorage**  
(Peter Olsson, regional coordinator)
- **Southeast/Panhandle**  
(Nikki Becker, regional coordinator)
- **Fairbanks**  
(currently no coordinator)

Most states also have a coordinator at the state level, but according to the CoCoRaHS site – Alaska has none. Hard to say what the status is here. At this point, I have informally assumed these duties till informed otherwise. Which brings us to the next issue.



Early fall snow over Eagle River Valley, Alaska

## Alaska CoCoRaHS Web Site

As part of our overall web site upgrading project at the Climate Center, we are building an Alaska-specific CoCoRaHS web-site. Note that this is separate from the site given earlier. Why two web sites? The site at the ASCC is MUCH easier to maintain and upgrade.

The address is:

<http://climate.uaa.alaska.edu/CoCoRaHS.html>

Please give us until Nov. 1 to get this new site deployed and functional. Then, come to the new [ASCC Home Page](#) and see all kinds of information pertaining to Alaska climate (including CoCoRaHS).

## The Cold Season is Upon Us

As the length of day dwindles, no one needs to tell Alaskans that the cold season is upon us. As I write this, the lower half of the state (mountains excepted) is mostly still snow-free. Snow-

up is happening in most of the interior and northern Alaska. This, of course, means it is past time to remove the funnel and inner tube from your precipitation gauge. It is also time to deploy your snow board and establish a good general location to make your “snow-on-the-ground” measurements. For in-depth on-line instructions on snow-measurement protocols, [go here](#). I also recommend these presentations as a good review for even the more seasoned CoCoRaHS observers.

If you have questions, special needs/issues peculiar to your site (lots of us in Alaska have these) that you would like to discuss, please contact your regional coordinators, the [ASCC](#), or me at: [olsson\(at\)aeff.uaa.alaska.edu](mailto:olsson(at)aeff.uaa.alaska.edu).

### Your CoCoRaHS Water Year Summary

Recently available on the CoCoRaHS web site is a summary for your past water year (historically, water years run from the beginning of October through the end of September). Go to **My Account** on the top bar menu to get more information on how to download an Excel file with information about your site for the past water year.

### Status of CoCoRaHS In Alaska

As of this writing, there are 122 observer records for Alaska on the CoCoRaHS admin web page. Some of these sites are no longer active (CoCoRaHS is reticent to decommission a site) and others are still “active” but seldom report. So... It is hard to say how many reports we have on a given day, especially when Alaska is in a large-scale, quiescent weather pattern. This morning the count was not so good, there were about 15 reports logged in by 11:00 AM. I hope that when things get stormy, this count will increase – it usually does. But, *even if you have no precipitation to report, your report of “0.00” (daily zeros) is still important to CoCoRaHS.* You

can catch up on, or just monitor, your “Monthly Zeros” by clicking on **Monthly Zeros** on the left menu bar under **Enter My New Reports** on the data entry page. Again, your zeroes *do* count.

### New CoCoRaHS Observers

As always, we are constantly looking to expand the CoCoRaHS network within Alaska. After all, 122 observers for a state the size of Alaska is sparse at best. One of our most consistent sources for new observers is our existing base of observers.

Frequently, the main obstacles in getting a new member up and observing is the initial outlay for the gauge. *While they last*, the ASCC is providing free gauges to new CoCoRaHS participants. Contact me for more details. (And no, we cannot reimburse you for a gauge you have already purchased.) Just new gauges for new observers, or in special circumstances replacement parts for damaged gauges.

So, if you know someone that is interested in becoming a CoCoRaHS observer, please entice them further with the prospect of a free gauge. And please, do your part in helping us enlarge CoCoRaHS participation in Alaska.

### Summary

Once again, as the State Climatologist, thank you for all your precipitation observations. They will be a data source of lasting value for understanding the changing and varied climate of Alaska. The longer you continue to observe at one site, the more valuable your record will become. It takes several consecutive years of data before it is possible to clearly establish trends. This is not meant to discount those observers (such as myself) that are relatively new. Your observations are important, too!

*Peter Q. Olsson, State Climatologist  
907.786.7234*