

Messages of the Day
May 2015

Saturday, May 2, 2015

Day of the Last Spring Freeze?

Here is a very helpful message from the Midwestern Regional Climate Center:

Just when you think winter is over ...

Every spring, we are teased with intermittent warm periods that motivate us to plant flowers, plant our vegetable garden, or sit back and watch our local farms, orchards, and communities green up. If we are lucky, once we take that action, a freeze event will avoid us for many months - long after farms have been harvested and flowers have lost their luster. If we're unlucky, at least one more freeze event will make an appearance and damage our positive planting efforts.

So, how long to do we have to wait before we know it's safe? Every year is different, and weather forecasts can certainly help. However, climatology of past spring freeze can help remind us when there's still a chance. NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) has recently updated their map of the "[Day of the Last Spring Freeze](#)" based upon the 1981-2010 US Climate Normals. This product shows when the average last spring freeze occurred over that 30-year period.

If you're interested in when the latest last spring freeze occurred during that period, the earliest last spring freeze occurred, or multiple other combinations, check out the "[Midwestern Regional Climate Center's \(MRCC's\) Vegetation Impact Program's \(VIP's\) Frost/Freeze Guidance website](#)". This website provided various climatological products including not only a freeze event defined as $\leq 32\text{F}$, but also "hard freeze" events defined as $\leq 28\text{F}$. There are also a variety of climate monitoring tools on this site that provide daily, updated information such as:

- Date of the most recent freeze event
- Days since the most recent freeze event
- Number of freezing days over the past 2 weeks
- Lowest minimum temperature this past season
- Accumulated growing degree-days since the most recent freeze event

All of these products are designed for the public, gardeners, forecasters, and other stakeholders to understand the potential for spring (and fall) freeze events given what has happened in the past - both recent and over the past 30 years.

For more information about the MRCC's VIP Frost/Freeze program, please send an email to: vip-info@illinois.edu.

Tuesday, May 5, 2015

NOAA's Storm Prediction Center (SPC)

The Storm Prediction Center's mission is to provide timely and accurate forecasts and watches for severe thunderstorms and tornadoes over the contiguous United States. The SPC also monitors heavy rain, heavy snow, and fire weather events across the U.S. and issues specific products for those hazards.

The "[SPC](#)" has put together a fantastic web page that you will want to visit if you have any interest in severe weather.

Recently they have updated their Severe Thunderstorm Risk Categories to six (Thunderstorms, Marginal, Slight, Enhanced, Moderate and High). For more details on these categories click here: "[Severe Thunderstorm Risk Categories](#)"

If you have some time check out SPC's FAQ YouTube videos on "[How's a Severe Weather Forecast Made](#)" and "[What's a Watch?](#)"

Finally, remember to take shelter if severe weather approaches your area. Having a "[NOAA Weather Radio](#)" on hand or visiting "[NOAA's NWS webpage](#)" can give you advanced warning of potential or imminent storms headed your way.

Thursday, May 7, 2015

Measuring Reference ET . . . learn how you can be part of this national effort!

In 2012 CoCoRaHS launched a new opportunity for our observers to track the water cycle -- the literal "ups and downs" of water so to speak (over 100 observers participated). We are at it again for our third consecutive year. Since our observers already measure precipitation as it arrives at their locations (the down), we thought many would be interested to see how much of this water returns to the atmosphere? This is called evapotranspiration (going back up). For certain CoCoRaHS observers participating in 2015 will be a great opportunity to provide data for a whole new set of applications used in drought monitoring, irrigation and yard watering, remote sensing (satellite) and weather forecasting to name just a few.

There are several qualifications needed to become a CoCoRaHS observer for Reference ET, so don't feel bad if you are unable to participate. There will also be several things to consider on your part as you apply:

- 1) We are looking for "ideal" locations (open exposures with surrounding vegetation that is representative of your area) and highly motivated observers (you have reported on a consistent daily basis for CoCoRaHS over time).
- 2) You are up to the challenge of taking on a more complex daily observation.
- 3) You, or a sponsoring organization are willing to make the substantial investment in purchasing this delicate instrument, the ETgage (which sells for around \$222 at www.weatheryourway.com, plus tax and shipping).

Some of you have already signed up, we thank you for your interest. If you have yet to do so and are up for this challenge, please contact Zach at Info@cocorahs.org with a photo of the site where you will place your gauge and he will follow up with you.

For those of you who want to learn more about Evapotranspiration and the "up side" of the water cycle, please check out the CoCoRaHS ET page at: ["ETo"](#)

Monday, May 11, 2015

The PRISM-CoCoRaHS Climate Portal!

The PRISM-CoCoRaHS Climate Portal. What is that you might ask? The PRISM portal is a CoCoRaHS data analysis tool developed in collaboration with the PRISM Climate Group at Oregon State University. This is an exclusive feature available only to CoCoRaHS participants. It helps connect our daily precipitation measurements (weather) to seasonal patterns, long term averages and year to year precipitation variations (climate). This portal provides access to estimates of "normal" precipitation for any location in the contiguous United States. PRISM also provides estimates of total precipitation for each month and year since 1895. View the ["PRISM Portal Reference page"](#)

You can access the portal by going to the CoCoRaHS home page and clicking on "My Account" at the top of the page. From there you have two choices. One is to select the PRISM Portal section and click on on the "blue" words PRISM PORTAL to get access to the Continental United States or under the My Station heading click on the "blue" words PRISM DATA to get access to your specific station's PRISM estimates.

Once there you'll be able to find the estimated precipitation for any location in the continental United States or create a historical time series for monthly and annual precipitation.

We recommend watching the PRISM Portal Guide YouTube instructional video on how to use the portal by clicking here: ["PRISM PORTAL VIDEO"](#)

Please enjoy and use this great feature to explore the climate of the U.S.

Thursday, May 14, 2015

Weatherwise Magazine's 2015 Photo Contest

"Some people are weatherwise, but most are otherwise" -- Ben Franklin

Weatherwise Magazine is an exciting bi-monthly magazine that provides the weather enthusiast with fascinating articles regarding all aspects of weather and climate. CoCoRaHS regards this magazine as one in which everyone interested in weather would benefit from having on their coffee table

Now thru June 1st, Weatherwise Magazine is accepting submissions for its "2015 Photo Contest". There are great prizes awaiting the winners. This annual event provides an opportunity for you to share your potential prize winning photos with a nationwide audience. Click here to find out more about the magazine and photo contest: [Photo Contest](#).

Check it out today, you'll be glad you did!

Saturday, May 16, 2015

Time to plant your late spring garden? Check out the CoCoRaHS "Climate Resources Guide for Master Gardeners"!

CoCoRaHS has an on-line guide for gardeners out there on our master gardeners: [Climate Resources for Master Gardeners Page](#). The HTML version of this "[Guide](#)", introduces elements of large scale and local climate important to gardeners. An overview of climate patterns and differences are shown. Links to local climate information are provided. Topics include: Climate & Gardening, Sunshine, Temperature, Humidity and Dew Point, Precipitation, Wind, Evapotranspiration, Climate Resources, Climate Change and CoCoRaHS.

We hope that you'll take a look at it, use it for your own gardening needs and pass along the URL link to other gardeners you know who may be interested in gaining a better understanding of climate and how climate might effect their local gardening efforts . . . it won't be long now before your seeds (here in Colorado we are just starting to plant) will start to yield those early summer vegetables.

Thursday, May 21, 2015

"Field Photo Weekend" May 23-25th . . . Celebrate Memorial Day Weekend by taking a photo or two!

What does your landscape look like in mid-spring? Have you participated in the CoCoRaHS Field Photos Weekends before? If not, here's your chance to join hundreds of other CoCoRaHS users to see what our landscapes looks like. If you have participated before, this is a great chance to go back to your favorite spots and see what has changed. During May 23-25th, you can help by participating in our ninth "Field Photo Weekend".

All you have to do is take your camera or smartphone, find a landscape in your community (streams, lakes, rivers, reservoirs, a forest, a crop field, a pasture, etc.) and take a single photo or a panorama in four different directions (N, E, S, W) from where you are standing. After that you can either email your photos with your location to: fieldphotos@southernclimate.org, or upload them directly to the Earth Observation and Modeling Facility's photo archive website: "<http://www.eomf.ou.edu/photos>". For detailed instructions, click here: "[FIELD PHOTO WEEKENDS](#)"

If you have a smartphone, you can use the "Field Photo" app, which is now freely available in the "[Apple Store](#)" and "[Google Play Store](#)". You can use your smartphone to take a photo in the field, enter metadata to describe the landscape, and then upload the photo and metadata into the EOMF photo archive website directly from your iPhone when you have access to WI-FI. When your enter metadata, you may add "#CoCoRaHSMay15" keyword.

If you want to see what others have submitted before, go to "<http://www.eomf.ou.edu/photos/cocorahsfeb15/>" and click on any of the dots (these photos were from President's Day weekend last February). We are working on going back to the earlier events and tagging all those photos so you will be able to easily find all the ones from our past weekends. If you upload photos

directly to the EOMF website, you can help us by adding a tag #CoCoRaHSMay15 in the Field Notes section.

Field Photo Weekend is a partnership between CoCoRaHS, the Southern Climate Impacts Planning Program (SCIPP) and the Earth Observation and Modeling Facility (EOMF) to help ground truth through photos, what is going on with our landscapes throughout the country. It's not just drought we are looking for either, it could be flooding, or whatever state the landscape is now in. There is the possibility that we may hold additional "Field Photo Weekends" during the year to show how conditions to your landscape may have changed over time. This should be fun!

In a few weeks this weekend's photos will be posted and you'll be able to see your photos and those taken by other volunteers. Reference the ["FIELD PHOTO WEEKENDS"](#) page to see how to view the photos.

Remember you don't have to email your photos this weekend, just take them, but we do encourage you to email them soon afterward. That address again is: fieldphotos@southernclimate.org. When uploading your photos please include the words #CoCoRaHSMay15 in the notes field.

Just think if all 20,000+ CoCoRaHS volunteers take photos! Wow!

Thanks in advance for participating and have a great Memorial Day weekend!

Tuesday, May 26, 2015

Our Memorial Day "Field Photo Weekend" has come and gone. Thanks for participating. Please remember to upload your photos or email your photos in!

Thanks to all of you who took the time to take photos this past weekend. Your efforts helped our ninth collaborative "Field Photo Weekend" take a look how drought or lack of drought has affected the landscape of our local communities.

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In a few weeks this weekend's photos will be posted and you'll be able to see your photos and those taken by other volunteers. Reference "Viewing Photos" on the ["FIELD PHOTO WEEKENDS"](#) page to see how to view the photos.

Please don't forget send us your photos of this past "Field Photo Weekend". You can either email your photos with your location and the words (#CoCoRaHSMay15) to: fieldphotos@southernclimate.org, or upload them directly to the Earth Observation and Modeling Facility's photo archive website: ["http://www.eomf.ou.edu/photos"](http://www.eomf.ou.edu/photos). When uploading your photos please include the words #CoCoRaHSMay15 in the notes field. For detailed instructions, click here: ["FIELD PHOTO WEEKENDS"](#) Thanks again for participating!

Thursday, May 28, 2015

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