

The Catch

COCORAHS EVENTS AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

FORT COLLINS, CO — Tuesday, February 22, 2005

CoCoRaHS update:

Weather

Looking like snow here. The moisture keeps tumbling down in SW Colorado. Totals since January 1 are now in the 7-10" range down around Durango, and Wolf Creek Pass has at least 150" of snow on the ground now. I bet you're glad you're not living there. Others of us are much drier, but there were some spring like rain showers Sunday out in Eastern Colorado. Its late February now, so it's the time of year when pretty much anything can happen. So polish up your rain gauge, find a stake to mark the location of your snowboard (in case of a blizzard) and get ready for action.

Training Schedule

This is a reminder that there will be several opportunities in the days ahead to learn about CoCoRaHS and train to become "skilled" precipitation observers—sort of. If you have never been to a training session and any of these upcoming sessions are near you, then plan to attend. It's not as boring as you may think. If you have friends/family that have been hearing you talk about CoCoRaHS and want to join the fun, let them know. Or if you are an experienced observer, but need to pick up supplies or drop in to ask a few questions, you're certainly welcome, too.

For more specifics, maps, etc. go to <http://www.cocorahs.org> and click "Calendar"

Thursday, Feb 24th (THIS WEEK!!) 6 - 8 PM Fort Collins—here at the Dept. of Atmospheric Science on the Colorado State University Foothills Campus on W. Laporte Avenue

Sunday, Feb. 27 2 - 4 PM in conjunction with the Greeley Home and Garden Show and the Greeley Conservation Fair at Island Grove Park, 4-H Building, Room 5

Thursday, Mar. 3 5 PM First-ever CoCoRaHS Training session in Kansas—Murray Center, Northwest Kansas Technical College, Goodland, KS.

Tuesday, March 8 6:30 PM San Luis Valley Training Session, Alamosa County Building, "The People's Place"

Wednesday, March 9 1:30 - 3:30 PM Albuquerque, NM

Thursday, March 10 3 PM Public Seminar presented by Nolan Doesken, "The Weather is our Water Supply: Public Involvement in Monitoring Climate" New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM

Friday, March 11 2 - 4 PM CoCoRaHS Training Session New Mexico State University, Las Cruces NM

Saturday, March 12 Texas Panhandle Severe Weather Workshop—Amarillo, TX For more information contact our first and currently only Texas CoCoRaHS volunteer, Joe Willey at tornado chaser <weatherprof@hotmail.com> He will have a CoCoRaHS booth set up at the workshop.

Thursday, April 21 2-4 PM Pueblo and SE Colorado Training session Lamb Branch Library Pueblo, Colorado

Tuesday, May 17 4-6 PM Logan County Cooperative Extension Office

In addition, several other training sessions are planned but not yet confirmed:

5 sessions in and around the Denver metro area March–April—info coming soon

Western Colorado trainings (schedule tentative)

Sunday evening, April 17 Craig, Hayden or Steamboat Springs

Tuesday AM, April 19 Grand Junction

Tuesday evening, April 19 Norwood/Naturita

Wednesday, April 20 Durango/Cortez

Thursday evening, April 21 Delta

We are also planning some educational events for this coming summer. We don't have dates set yet, but here are some of our planned activities.

Field Trips to

National Center for Atmospheric Research—Boulder,

CSU CHILL Radar—Greeley

TV stations—Denver

Fort Collins Historic Weather Station

Rocky Mountain Weather and Climate Workshop—most likely in Boulder in Sept.

Website update

It looks like about 20% of us regular reporters have transitioned to the new site successfully. Now that some of you really like the new site, we are changing it quite a bit. It's just too slow for dial-up users. We're also still cleaning up quite a few deficiencies that have been spotted. New maps should be a little easier to read, and some of the problems should be fixed (like the fact that it automatically inserts NA instead of 0.0 for snowfall reports

The next round of updates should be completed this week. We'll evaluate the site performance, do some more testing, and then we'll decide when we'll be ready to commission the new site.

Passwords

Yes, you will need to login to the new site to enter or edit data. It's a bit of a nuisance at first, but I think you'll get used to it. It's not so bad.

SWE

Many of you have written to ask "What in the world is SWE?" The new data entry forms do have a column for SWE and I apologize for not explaining it. You snow hydrologists in the group know exactly what we're talking about. It's the measurement taken up in the mountains to determine the water content of the total accumulation of snow on the ground—both new and old. SWE stands for "Snow Water Equivalent." It's the same as the "core" measurement that we've

been taking except instead of just being a core of the new snow in the past 24 hours, it is a core sample of any and all snow that remains on the ground that day.

The reason we have added this parameter is because several of our sponsors and data users, most notably, the National Weather Service National Operational Hydrologic Remote Sensing Center, asked if any of our volunteers might be able to provide this incredibly valuable observation.

SWE is measured simply by taking a core of the total snow on the ground in a location that represents the average for your area. As long as the snow depth is less than 12" and not too icy, you can do that measurement with the 4" diameter outer cylinder of your gauge. You then melt the contents and measure the depth of water in your inner cylinder. When the snow is deeper, or contains layers of ice, then things get harder. The snow surveyors up in the mountains have special tubes with a cutting edge to grab and weigh samples of deep snow. A few of you have sent us photos of devices you have created to take snow cores—PVC pipes, heating ducts, stove pipe—you folks are creative.

Either way, SWE is an optional measurement that will help scientists determine the water content of our snowpack and that helps predict future runoff, water supplies, soil moisture and more.

Again, sorry for not explaining this sooner.

So long for now. I hope I get to see a few of you at the upcoming training sessions.

Nolan Doesken