

The Catch

MARCH COCORAHS UPDATE

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, March 3, 2005

Fellow weather watchers:

March came in rather lamb-like but with some gusts of wind and a few squalls of snow and rain. All winter we have watched the storms come in from the Pacific, slam into California, roll into southern Colorado and northern New Mexico and then pretty much fall apart east of the mountains. There is rejoicing in the southern Rockies as snowpack is exceptional. Basin average snowpack is still up around 150% of average as of March 1 in southwest Colorado. Things drop off as you go north, however and here in northern Colorado and much of Wyoming mountain snowpack is below average. That's kind of disappointing, but if you look at the past several decades, it is very common for Wyoming and northern Colorado to be dry when southern Colorado and northern New Mexico are wet—and vice versa.

Now that it's March, it's crunch time. This is the time of year that storms move a bit slower and have more chance to pull moisture from the Gulf of Mexico up into eastern Colorado and southeast Wyoming. It is also Blizzard Time for the Great Plains. They don't come every year, but when they come it can be frighteningly amazing. Some of you may remember early March 1977 with barn-high drifts of snow and dirt intermingled. Thousands of cattle died, but we also lost quite a few good citizens who got caught in the fury. So please beware and be ready.

For the Front Range of the Rockies, the next 13 weeks are the most important of the year in terms of water supplies. Since the air and ground are warming up, plants begin to need moisture. Spring storms are worth twice as much as winter storms (my interpretation, not a statistical fact) because they not only contribute to the water supply by adding widespread snow accumulation to the mountains and foothills, but they also drop widespread moisture on the plains helping reduce the demand for irrigation water. Spring precipitation is critical for winter wheat crops and also for our vast areas of rangeland. Let's hope for a great spring, and a break from drought.

More than 650 of us have made it through this winter and are still sending in our reports. Perhaps our numbers will swell as spring arrives. For sure the interest in our data will reach an all-time high in the months ahead as we track the spring of 2005. As we saw in 2002, a warm dry spring can have catastrophic consequences, but as we saw in 2003, a single huge spring snowstorm can change the whole picture. Forecasters remain highly uncertain about the prospects for this spring, but I predict that whatever falls, WE WILL MEASURE IT!! SO GET READY.

Training Sessions

We had over 40 people attend our CoCoRaHS training session in Fort Collins last week but only 4 in Greeley on Sunday. Applications continue to arrive online every day, and at the rate we're going now, we'll add 1000 more volunteers by the end of 2005. Wow!

Thurs, March 3

Goodland, KS The Goodland, KS Office of the National Weather Service is hosting the first-ever CoCoRaHS Kansas training session this evening (Thursday, March 3) starting at 5 PM at the Murray Center at the Northwest Kansas Technical College (that's on the east side of Goodland). If you want to help get Kansas off to a good start, hope you can attend.

Tuesday, March 8

We'll be in Alamosa, if weather cooperates, for a San Luis Valley CoCoRaHS training session (click "Calendar" on the old site to see the specific times and locations).

March 9-11 CoCoRaHS Comes to New Mexico with a series of presentations in Albuquerque and Las Cruces. Already 65 applications have been received and processed from New Mexico, and many more are expected. If you have weather-loving friends or relatives down there, let them know.

March 29 or 30 Eagle County, Colorado

We've got a dandy little network of volunteers in Eagle County, so it's about time we have our first training session there.

April Check Calendar, but many events are planned including several in the Denver Metro area.

Website update

Thanks so much for putting up with us through this transition to the new website. Check it out today and you will see more changes have been made.

<http://new.cocorahs.org>

The "Total Precipitation Report" is back as well as the "Station Snow Summary Report" that many of you have been asking about. We almost have all the features of the old site working on the new, plus many more. We know it doesn't run as fast on dial-up connections as the old site, but we are streamlining it wherever we can. You can search and find almost any data now very quickly. Do check the "View Data" menu where you can select from a list of useful data summaries and reports. You can now map data for any individual county (and the maps are getting easier to read, finally). We are still lacking some of the regional and city maps that some of you rely on, but they will be coming soon as well as snow maps, hail maps and the ability to zoom in on target areas to get more details. We even have some surprises waiting for you folks with high speed connections.

You don't need your username and password to tour the new site and look at maps and reports, however, to see how to enter and retrieve your own data, you do. I recommend you log on, if you haven't already. Fill out the "find your login" box and the computer will automatically e-mail your ID to you. Try not to let your spam blocker block us out. I'm pretty slow when it comes to computers, but it's really pretty easy once you get started. Many of us are partial to the old site, but I think the new one will grow on you, if you give it a chance.

I am happy to say that you can change your own password, update your own e-mail address, edit your own data without having to enter a whole new report, and much more.

The new site still has a ways to go before we commission it. Now is the time to test it, and let us know what you think. We are trying to accommodate as many suggestions as possible. It will take us awhile to respond to all suggestions, but we will try.

As always, thanks for all that you do, both young and old. We have a nice batch of Junior High students in CoCoRaHS who attend the Branson School Online. This public school has students from practically every county in Colorado, and many of their earth science students have joined CoCoRaHS. WELCOME, BRANSON SCHOOL ONLINE. There was even something about the school in the New York Times recently.

Good night, all,
Nolan Doesken

