

The Catch

COCORAHS SPRING

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, May 5, 2005

Well, we made it up to Alberta and back. We began in the deep of winter but returned to beautiful spring. Other than snow and fog, we didn't see much in Wyoming last Thursday, but we made it through OK. The roads were plowed before we got there. The trip back with our daughter was more relaxing and scenic, and it was great to see lots of green and growing grass and hundreds of healthy-looking antelope.

When I checked the CoCoRaHS maps and saw the measurements our house sitter had taken, looks like we missed another 8" of snow here in Fort Collins after we left on Thursday. Alberta didn't have the snow, but it was very cold and blustery. We took a short drive west into the Canadian Rockies on Monday. They were beautiful, as always, but they were also surprisingly barren, with much less snow than I expected. Farmers and ranchers up there were talking "drought".

When I got home it was fun to look at our Precipitation and snowfall maps. After first hitting southern Wyoming and parts of Colorado pretty hard, this recent storm then settled southward and dumped on parts of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico again. I ran some "Total Precipitation Reports" and found that some areas of Las Animas and Huerfano Counties in southern Colorado have had over 10" or moisture (water content) already this year.

Analyses Galore!

I ran the "Rainy Days Report" for April and May. We hit a high for the year of 906 reports on April 28. Nine times since April 1 we've had days where at least 500 CoCoRaHS volunteers reported measurable (at least 0.01 inches) precipitation. On four days, over 700 of us reported measurable moisture. 760 out of 906 stations had measurable precipitation for the 24 hours ending at 7 AM April 28. Many of the dry stations were in New Mexico. Only twice (April 2 and 3) were all of us dry at the same time.

Now that we cover several states all the way from the Montana border to El Paso, TX, it will be extremely rare for all of us to receive rain or snow on the same day. But likewise, it will be uncommon for the whole area to be dry.

Check your data

Remember, it is really easy on the new site to summarize the data for your station and see what days you may have forgotten to report. You can also easily spot and correct errors. Click "My Data" on the top menu of the CoCoRaHS website www.cocorahs.org and then select "Daily Precipitation" under the "List/Edit My Reports" on the left hand menu bar. Wow—I've entered 2266 daily reports for my home station since the project started back in 1998. I also see that I've reported hail at my house 15 times with the largest stone 1" in diameter.

Remember, you can go back at any time and fill in data from previous days, months or even previous years. It is never too late to complete your records. To fill in zeroes for days when no precipitation fell, just click "Monthly Zeros" on the "Enter My new Reports" menu.

Your Zero matters

When it doesn't rain or snow, there is not much motivation to get on the CoCoRaHS website and enter your 0.00. I understand. But please know 0.00 is a very important report. Now that we are headed into summer—the time of year where we watch the towering cumulonimbus clouds (thunderheads) form, grow and often miss us, this is where your 0.00 reports are especially important. Since our data are often used to compare and interpret satellite and radar data, it is just as important to know who got missed by the storm as well as who got hit.

Rural volunteers needed

This is also the time of year where CoCoRaHS data are used a lot to evaluate soil moisture and crop conditions across our agricultural lands. These areas may be sparsely populated. We definitely need more volunteers from all of our rural areas. If you know farmers, ranchers and other rural residents—most all of whom are interested in the weather—tell them about this project and encourage them to join.

As you can see by looking at the maps, we are especially sparse in rural New Mexico.

Weld County volunteer coordinator(s) needed

We are looking for one or more people in Weld County, Colorado to help us with recruiting, distributing supplies, and staying in touch with volunteers. This is a very large county with a huge agricultural industry and many important research and operational uses for CoCoRaHS data. If you live in or near Weld County and would like to help us, please let me know.

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Local leaders are really important, especially now that we cover so much territory. If you would like to help in other parts of the region, just let us know. Many areas have designated local coordinators but many already have fulltime jobs and large responsibilities. If you can offer them a hand, it will be appreciated.

Website suggestions

Many of you have submitted ideas and suggestions for our website. As you can see, we continue to make changes—slowly but surely. If you have pet peeves about the new CoCoRaHS website, please vent and let us have it. We'll do our best to accommodate you—if you're patient :-)

Best wishes to all,

Nolan Doesken