

The Catch

Silt got soaked —CoCoRaHS update

FORT COLLINS, CO — Wednesday, June 15, 2005

Thunder rumbles and winds blow as I type out this Wednesday evening message. Most rain is evaporating before it reaches the ground, but the lightning does make life interesting.

This morning, only 2 of us had measurable rain in our gauges. That is the driest day across the region in many weeks. For the last month or so, over 1000 of us are reporting in routinely, with another 600 or so reporting to the NeRAIN website. Gaps on our maps are gradually filling in, and the National Weather Service and various other scientists, agricultural specialists, and water officials are checking our maps and reports regularly. This is wonderful!!

CoCoRaHS Travels—Doesken Misses Hailstorm

While Henry (CoCoRaHS Project Coordinator) and I were down in Alamogordo last week for the New Mexico Master Gardener 2005 Conference (signed up a bunch more volunteers, by the way), we enjoyed classic New Mexico sunshine and summer heat. White Sands National Monument was spectacular, and we recruited a new volunteer up at the Sunspot Solar Observatory up in the Sacramento Mountains. Meanwhile up north things were a bit different. I called home Thursday night only to discover that we had just had 1 1/4 inch hail at my house (In all my days of studying hail, I've never personally seen hail larger than 1"). My daughter, who has never been much interested in weather, managed to note the exact minute the hail began and ended, annotated the hail pad nicely, and collected a bag of stones to show me when I got back. (Nice job, Gail).

The streets were still paved in green leaf debris as we pulled into town late Saturday night. This week, roofs are being repaired in a few parts of town. I seem to always miss it. 26 years ago when Fort Collins had the softball sized hail (one fatality and many injuries), I had just left for Wyoming and missed that storm, too. I guess that was OK. I probably would have been out trying to pick up stones, and who knows what would have happened.

Silt got Soaked

Western Colorado is normally a dry place in June, but last weekend's weather was a notable exception. CoCoRaHS volunteers from Rifle to Glenwood Springs got up to 2.50" of rain over a 4-day period. And it came cool and gently -- mostly soaking into the soil. At the same time, parts of Goshen County, Wyoming (near Yoder) got around 2.75". A few parts of Kansas got over 7" of rain during the same period. Meanwhile, southern New Mexico got nothing but sunshine.

Come out of Retirement?

If you are one of many (over 2000, we think) that once signed up for CoCoRaHS but never got started or have since given it up, consider coming back to help just for the summer. This is the season where it truly can be pouring rain across the street and shining sun in your back yard. Every data point helps.

If you haven't used the new system to enter data, remember you need a username and password. As long as your e-mail hasn't changed, all you need to do is go to "Login" and click "Find my Login". Fill in your station number or your e-mail address and we will immediately e-mail you your login info. If you do have problems, just drop us a quick message at

info@cocorahs.org

If you've forgotten our web address, the easiest one to remember is

www.cocorahs.org

www.cocorahs.com still works, too

Recruiting Contest

The rules will be posted shortly. We now have several prizes (and some very unique ones, at that) that have been donated to help encourage us to go out and recruit more volunteers. It is not too late to donate more goodies for the contest. It will begin July 1. Stand by for the details.

Rain, Hail and Wind Study Underway

There was great response to our call for help to study how well we are catching wind-driven rain and hail out on the Great Plains. We already have 2 farms set up with bunches of gauges and three more are waiting for gauges. One school may join, too. I know that others of you were also interested in helping, but that's all the gauges we can spare now.

In just one week, we've already learned that having the funnel in or out makes a difference in what we measure, and a gauge that isn't level doesn't catch the same as a level gauge. I guess that's probably obvious, but we have some quantitative numbers now and will have more as the summer progresses. Hopefully we'll catch a few of those summer squalls and we'll see how much of an effect buildings and trees have on gauge catch. We'll report back later in the summer. The end result will be some better instructions on where and how to mount your gauge if you live in one of those squall-line prone areas where rain and hail come horizontally.

Big Rain Drops Dent Hail Pads

We've been getting quite a few hail pads returned to us lately that do not appear to have been hit by hail. Remember, large rain drops will leave gently curved impressions in the foil that make you think something has happened. But all it was was rain. But when real hail hits, you'll know it! Do leave those rain-dented pads outside until the hail eventually comes.

Thanks so much for getting those hail pads out and turning them in after each storm. We've got boxes full already. Our student data analysts are in for a busy summer.

National Weather Service Says Thanks, Too

And keep those hail and intense rain reports coming. The NWS has issued and verified several severe thunderstorm warnings thanks to CoCoRaHS reports. It really does help.

Some of us are having a great summer while others are struggling with failing health, family challenges, and all that sort of stuff. Stay encouraged as best you can.

Nolan