

## **DEEP WINTER**

FORT COLLINS, CO — Wednesday, December 7, 2005

CoCoRaHS folks:

It was 28 degrees F when I woke up this morning. The air had finally stilled following a siege of relentless winds (gusts in the 60s) that lasted for what seemed like weeks -- but was really just over 24 hours.

The good news was our cats and chickens had not blown away. The bad news was our obnoxious geese had also not blown away. I took a shower, got dressed, and did indoor chores. By the time I went outside the wind was blowing again, the temperature had dropped to 10 degrees and it was snowing. Furthermore, we weren't the only folks having winter. I checked the CoCoRaHS maps and reports and found that our new recruits in VA and MD had a widespread moderate snow to contend with.

(btw, congratulations on a good job of measuring )

Eventually I set CoCoRaHS aside and settled into a day of work. All day it snowed and temperatures hovered just above zero. I knew it had arrived

### **-- Deep Winter.**

"Deep winter" is that time of year when the sun is lowest in the sky, the day length is shortest, the winds have the sharpest bite, the snow is most likely to fall but least likely to melt, and spring seems just too far away. I have always loved winter -- and especially snow. But I was younger then with fewer responsibilities and better balance. Now when the temperatures drop below zero, ice forms on the inside of the window panes, the sun comes out but you can't feel it, and it's only early December, I start counting the days to spring. I'm becoming a deep winter sissy.

There can be warm days even in mid winter and their usually are, but our climatological statistics tell us this is the time to hunker down and snuggle up because the next 10 weeks (that's 70 days!!) are the coldest and darkest. This deep winter season is prime time for hibernation and I wish we could. 70 days from now, which coincidentally is Valentine's Day) it may also be chilling cold with snow and wind. But by then things are different. By mid February (as long as you've been able to pay your heating fuel bills) there is hope. The sun rises higher and shines brighter, the days warm more quickly, snow melts easier, and we all know that the worst of winter is behind us.

What does this have to do with CoCoRaHS precipitation measurements??

Not much, I suppose, but I will admit that these are the hardest days of the year to be a weather observer. It is most difficult to go outside at 7 AM when it's still dark, with snow ruler in hand trying to figure out how much snow really fell, how much water is in it and how much is still on the ground. Who talked you into this, anyway?? It is sort of amazing that we do stick with this, isn't it?

Deep winter or not, please know your work is appreciated. Some day we will need to have a big party -- maybe in Florida :-)

More snow measurement instructions??

Not this time! Let it suffice to say that we're doing better every day

-- not perfect yet, but better. Just be careful, always check your data and make sure the readings make sense. If you have questions, please ask!

**Training Sessions:**

We will soon be posting the schedule for upcoming weather observer training sessions for CoCoRaHS volunteers. If none are posted in your area, then please recall that most of the training materials, including a snow measurement training video and a detailed digital slide show are on our website. Please review these materials and perfect your snow measurement technique!

Stay warm!

Nolan Doesken