

"THE CATCH"

SUGGESTIONS FOR COCORAHS – AND CHECK YOUR LOCATION

FORT COLLINS, CO — Friday, December 30, 2005

Dear CoCoRaisins:

We've been buffeted by powerful down slope winds today here along the eastern base of the Rockies -- gusts pushing 70 mph for sure. The snow clouds have hung thickly up over the Continental Divide all day. I'm sure we'll see plenty of reports of new snow tomorrow morning. But all we could muster, before those clouds totally evaporated here on the "lee side" of the mountains were a few sprinkles of rain from dissipating clouds.

Calendar year ending:

As the year comes to an end, there are a few bookkeeping things we need to take care of.

- 1) Do we have your best e-mail address?
- 2) Are the data for your station all correct and as complete as you want it to be for 2005?
- 3) Do we have your name, address and location correct on our maps and on our master station list?

If not, please update us.

Some of you have tried our new "Google Maps" feature, but I really recommend you test it out to see if we have you located correctly.

"Google Maps" are a bit slow on standard dial-up connections, but it's not too bad.

Here is what you can do. Make sure you are logged into CoCoRaHS. If not, click "Login" on the top right menu bar of the CoCoRaHS website and type in your username and password. If you haven't hit our website recently, it's www.cocorahs.org If you forget your username and password, just click "Find My Login" and we will send you the info you've forgotten.

When you are successfully logged in, then you will see "My Account" on the upper right hand menu bar. Click on that and it will display some basic contact info for your station. Is it correct?

At the bottom of that page it lists your station number, name, State, County, and even your old station number if you've been in CoCoRaHS for more than one year. At the end of that line it says "View"

Click on the word "View" and it will show what we think we know about your station. If anything is NOT ACCURATE, you can update it by clicking "Edit" in the upper right hand corner. If your e-mail address is wrong, change it, but then also SEND ME A MESSAGE with your new e-mail address so I get that info, too. (Soon my e-mail system will interact with the data base so we don't have to keep track in two places.)

Near the top of the station report it gives the latitude and longitude. It is very important that this information be as correct as possible. We've made a few mistakes and typos over the years. Most have been fixed, but some of your weather stations may still be plotting in the wrong place on our CoCoRaHS maps. We want to fix that.

To check for yourself, click on "View Station in Google Maps". Based on the latitude and longitude that we have for your station, it will bring up a road map overlaid on an aerial photograph (if it was available) and will plot your point on that map. Take a close look and see if we have you in the right place. These maps are not perfect, either, so as long as we have you on the right street and the right block, that's probably OK. But if you can find better coordinates for us, or if you can describe how far off we are, we can try to fix it. We have a little time over the holidays to clean up our records, so this is the time to do it. Google Maps makes this really fun -- but a bit tedious on slow connections.

Thanks very much for checking this for us.

Donations?

I am sort of embarrassed to ask, but I know that some of us have the means and motivation to share our resources with non profit organizations. 2006 is a year of uncertainty for CoCoRaHS as our funding from the National Science Foundation that helped us expand to new states comes to an end. We have written new proposals that, if supported, could lead CoCoRaHS to become a nationwide project within a few years. We also have other fund raising ideas. But it will be several months before we know where CoCoRaHS will be headed. Our future is exciting -- and uncertain-- just what we should expect in the weather business :-)

Please know that as a non-profit education and research project, we benefit greatly from contributions from individuals and organizations. We received over \$30,000 in local contributions in 2005 to help support our efforts and that made a huge difference. Some of these contributions were pleasant surprises and totally unsolicited. Awesome!!

So as the year ends and some of us write out our donation checks to our favorite organizations, give your first priority to the many critical social, spiritual and environmental needs of our world. But if you have something left, CoCoRaHS would also be very appreciative.

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Thank you very much.

Wish list for 2006!

Finally, this is a good time to put your suggestions on our "CoCoRaHS Wish list". The better our website has become, the more we want it to be even better. We have a long list already of improvements we want to make in 2006. Already, our list is longer than what one part-time web developer (Julian) can do. But we would love to be able to hire Julian full time and make more progress on improving our maps, data, training materials and other web pages.

So if you have suggestions for what you would like to see added or changed anywhere on our website, please let me know. We will compile the list in January, and then set priorities and see how much we can get done.

nolan@atmos.colostate.edu

I will be writing soon again, but if 2005 slips away before I get another message written, please know how much we appreciate your participation in CoCoRaHS. Have a Happy New Year, as best you can, and may you have plenty of precipitation to measure and enjoy.

Nolan

Sorry to bother you so soon again, but I misspoke yesterday (see below).

I told you that you would see an "Edit" button in the upper right hand corner of your station information. It does show up on my screen and other project leaders, but most of you will not see this "Edit" button. Thanks to several of you for pointing this out. So if you want to make changes, you will have to send them to me.

nolan@atmos.colostate.edu

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Also, as several of you pointed out and I should have mentioned, if you use Google Maps as I suggested in yesterday's message and you find that we do not have you plotted at the right place on the maps, there is a way for you to look up your coordinates (latitude and longitude and maybe your elevation).

If you have broadband, you can go to <http://earth.google.com> and you can find the coordinates for your gauge.

There are also a few other free services that allow you to find your own coordinates. Please know, they may not all give the exact results which is why we consider it good enough if we get within a couple hundred feet of the right location. We just want to make sure we're close.

When you send us your corrected coordinates, we prefer decimal units for latitude and longitude (such as 41.35673 -105.48920

For example:

39.50000 would be the same as 39 degree 30 minutes, zero seconds

Some of the mistakes made in the past have involved unit conversions.

No training? No volunteer?

Several of you have also questioned why we show that you have not been trained and are not a volunteer even though you've been with the project for years? Well, that's a little problem on our end. When we rebuilt the database this year, some of the information fields that had not been filled out in the past, were filled out by default values and we've never had time to go back and check. We don't use these fields very often, so it hasn't been a problem. But let us know and we can update the info and make sure it is correct now.

Weather summary for the end of December

I went home last night and found a 10" diameter tree limb on the side of the road right in front of our house that fell from one of our trees during the big windstorm. Today is much calmer, I am happy to say.

At the official Fort Collins weather station on the campus of Colorado State University, our season-to-date snowfall now stands at just 3.5". This is the slowest start to a winter snow season that we've had here in decades and one of the slowest in our 117 year history. We average 57" per year here. Meanwhile, up in the mountains a few dozen miles west of here the snows continue to tumble. Several of our volunteers up in the mountains have had over 100" of new snow already and have current snow depths of 20" or greater. Here, we're just brown.

Also, we were on track for a very cold December but the last 10 days have all been 10-20 degrees above average and now we are ending up near average for the month and well above average temperatures for the year -- a temporary pause in "Deep Winter".

Thanks for helping improve our maps

Thanks to so many of you for checking and correcting your station information.

Nolan Doesken