

# The Catch

## **THE AFTERMATH OF A GREAT PLAINS SNOWSTORM**

FORT COLLINS, CO — Friday, March 24, 2006

What a difference a couple of days can make. Today as of 4:15 MST, 714 CoCoRaHS participants have entered their data reports -- 684 zeroes, 26 traces, and only 4 reports of measurable precipitation 0.01, 0.01, and a whopping 0.02" at Radford, VA. and 0.04" at Silverthorne, Colorado. This is the driest day in CoCoRaHS since we started expanding east of the Mississippi River last fall. This is quite a contrast to just 4 days ago when snow was sweeping across the plains with 823 out of 1110 of us reporting measurable precipitation -- most in the form of snow.

### **How well did we handle the storm?**

As I look at the maps and data reports from this past week, I am very impressed. Many of you had snow melting as it landed. Others had blowing and drifting snow. Some of you had snow plastered to the side of your gauges. Some of you had freezing rain. Some of you had snow piled up on the rim of your gauge. Some of you had ice layers hidden in the bottom of your gauge. Some of you had gauges frozen solid to your posts. A few of you had all of the above, and a few of you had NOTHING AT ALL. Put it all together and, with the help of more than 1000 of us (and several hundred more in the NeRAIN project in Nebraska) and our maps and reports and "observer notes" paint a very thorough picture of the spring storm we just experienced. It wasn't the worst storm of all time by any means, but it was a fine spring storm -- what the Great Plains are known for -- and rich with much-needed moisture (I can hear the winter wheat giving thanks.)

Were our measurements perfect? No, it is very difficult to measure blowing and melting snow. But with many of us trying our best, and with many measuring both gauge accumulations and core samples, we are painting a very good description of each passing storm. Over 400 of us typed notes on the morning of March 20 to help describe and explain what we had experienced. This is REALLY GOOD STUFF. Even if our measurements are imperfect, our explanations help make it all make sense now and years into the future.

By the way, several of you wrote to apologize for not going out in the snow and ice to take measurements because of concerns for your health.

For heavens sake, please take care of yourself and don't do anything silly just to get a precipitation measurement for CoCoRaHS. What we are doing is useful, but in the big scheme of life, it's pretty trivial. You DO NOT have to do this. The older I get, the more I realize that snow and ice have a beautiful side and a very ugly side (injuries, accidents and sometimes even death). It's serious stuff -- not just for fairytales.

### **Last week of "CoCoRaHS March Madness"**

On a lighter side, we have 7 days to go in the great "March Madness" where we are keeping track of the number of new applicants from each state. As of midnight last night, Indiana is clearly in first place with 40 new CoCoRaHS applicants since March 1st. Several more applications appeared from Indiana during the day today, so they are now nearly unbeatable.

Here are the current standings (and it's OK if you JUST DON'T CARE)

- 40 Indiana
- 17 Missouri
- 16 Kansas
- 13 Maryland
- 10 New Mexico
- 8 Pennsylvania
- 7 Colorado
- 3 Virginia
- 3 Wyoming
- 3 Texas
- 0 District of Columbia

So far, CoCoRaHS hasn't caught on in TX, but if it does, we could all be in trouble. It finally rained there this week and our observer near Dallas measured over 6" of precipitation. The Panhandle shared in the fun with several inches of snow in some spots.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS -- There are Several**

In many parts of the country, the National Weather Service is recruiting and training volunteers to help spot and report severe weather. We strongly encourage you, if you haven't already, to attend one of their training classes and learn how to detect and report severe storms in your area. Just go to: <http://www.weather.gov>

Click on the location where you live and the local NWS website will appear. Many have posted the schedules of their spring training classes, and hopefully you will

find one close to where you live. If you do attend,, tell the group about CoCoRaHS. We make a great one-two punch.

### **Central Plains Severe Weather Symposium**

If you have a compelling reason to be near Lincoln, NE next weekend, they are hosting the 2006 Central Plains Severe Weather Symposium. CoCoRaHS will be represented. It's an all-day event with a number of well-known speakers. It typically attracts over 2000 attendees. Here is their website to get more details.

<http://www.hprcc.unl.edu/nebraska/cpsws2006.html>

If you attend, please stop by the CoCoRaHS booth and say "Hi" We'll have a prize waiting (haven't figured out what yet -- maybe a snow swatter :-)) for whoever comes the farthest.

### **Rocky Mountain Weather and Climate Workshop**

Plans are being finalized, and the schedule and registration will be posted very soon, for the May 20, 2006 Rocky Mountain Weather and Climate Workshop. This is a one-day (Saturday) educational program for CoCoRaHS volunteers, friends and family. It will be held at the incredible meteorological facilities of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in Boulder, Colorado. We'll be sending out registration information very soon, so please mark your calendar. Seating is limited to 100, so register early. Also, because of Federal security issues, everyone must register well in advance, and last second "drop ins" may not be able to attend. Photo identification will be required for everyone over the age of fifteen.

### **Local CoCoRaHS Training**

If you still need to get a rain gauge and/or instruction on how to get your weather station set up and your data reports sent in, then please contact your state or county coordinator.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=coord>

### **First Weekend of Spring**

Now that our snow has melted, I'll be out in the yard with a huge "things to do soon" list. The new growing season is soon upon us!!

I wish you all a great weekend.

Sincerely,  
*Nolan*