

The Catch

COCORAHS—HAIL PADS, HAIL CANNONS, AND A LITTLE TASTE OF THE NORTH

FORT COLLINS, CO — Friday, June 9, 2006

Greetings,

After another week of unfortunately hot, dry weather, I am thrilled to report that it finally rained today here. This has been the hottest start for the month of June in 118 years of record at the official Fort Collins weather station on the campus of Colorado State University. We got a whopping 0.05" of rain—not enough to settle our thick layers of dust. But it is a start. The evening air is cool, damp and fragrant—a pleasant change.

Thanks for your messages!!

In response to our last e-mail, we have received some very kind letters and some offers to help CoCoRaHS work more effectively with small-town libraries. This is great. This is one of our goals as we try to recruit more volunteers from rural areas. Also, it became clear that many of us deal with significant disabilities. Your suggestions on how to make CoCoRaHS work even better for citizens with disabilities are very much appreciated.

It is not too late to send us letters that we could include in our next proposal about your experiences with CoCoRaHS and what you have learned.

North American Monsoon

If you've had a chance to look at satellite pictures yesterday or today, you can see that the first dose of monsoon moisture has moved up from Mexico across eastern AZ and western NM to bring clouds and scattered precipitation to portions of the Southwest and the Rocky Mountains. This is a very early onset of the monsoon, but it is good to see and hopefully is the beginning of a long a productive season. If you would like to learn more about the North American Monsoon and what it is, do a Google Search (www.google.com) on "North American Monsoon" and you can learn quite a bit. Since winter was so dry over

the SW, and fire danger is high over many areas, an early onset of the monsoon would really be wonderful.

Hail Pads—PLEASE!

(this applies to those states that are actively distributing hail pads—Colorado, Wyoming, and parts of Kansas and New Mexico)

We have gone to a lot of effort and cost to make thousands of hail pads for this season. Based on past history, we expect an average of 4 hail pads will be needed each year for those of us living on the western Great Plains. But we are seeing one report after another saying, "Sorry I did not have a hail pad". We have tried to get supplies of hail pads out to our coordinators and will ship more as needed. So please make sure you have a few hail pads on hand and get them outside!! This is the time! Your hail reports are invaluable and please continue to fill out the on-line form when it hails. But there is nothing like a dented hail pad to let us know what each storm was really like. Likewise, when it does hail, please turn your damaged hail pad (properly marked with your station name, number, date and direction) to the nearest hail pad collection point. Don't waste gas and make a special trip, but do bring it in the next time you're in the vicinity. Our student assistants are standing by ready to analyze more hail pads (well, actually we're not done with 2005 yet, but we're trying :-)

If you find that your local source of hail pads is depleted, please let us know ASAP so we can provide more.

Reporting Hail.

Quite a few hail reports have come in this year when the skies are clear. It is OK to send your on-line hail report the day after a storm, but remember that hail reports are different than our precipitation reports. For hail, always report the date that the hail actually fell.

Have you heard of hail cannons??

Here in hail country, hail damage is a real and ever present danger. Farmers with high value crops such as fruits and vegetables are especially fearful of hail damage. There is a long history dating back at least into the 19th century of firing cannons into storm clouds to try to stop hail. In recent years, that has become more sophisticated with special cannons developed to transmit powerful sound waves into approaching clouds in an effort to break up ice crystals in their early stage of formation before they become large hail stones. A number of these cannons are currently in use in Colorado. Owners must apply for "weather modification permits" before they can operate these cannons.

While there is not much scientific research proving whether or not these devices are effective, there has not been much controversy in recent years. But this year, with our very dry weather in much of Colorado and surrounding areas, tempers have been a bit short. In fact, CoCoRaHS has been invited to southern Colorado to help collect data needed to evaluate a local hail cannon permit that has gotten contentious. The State is actually pitching in funds to expand CoCoRaHS in the San Luis Valley (south central Colorado) over the agricultural areas northwest of Alamosa.

Come to the meeting!!

If you live in or near that area, you may want to join us next week. Here are the details excerpted from a recent news article.

"Residents interested in hail cannons in Center, Colorado are encouraged to participate in an informational meeting about the data collection project on June 14th, at 5:00 PM with dinner hosted by the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Colorado Climate Center, and CSU Cooperative Extension. The dinner and meeting will be at El Azteca de Oro (also known as migrant housing restaurant) at 980 South Broadway in Center, Colorado. Attendees will be fed, there will be a demonstration of CoCoRaHS, and then rain gages will be made available to residents that want to participate in the data collection project for hail cannon operations. Residents are encouraged to RSVP for the meeting and dinner. To RSVP and with questions contact Marvin Reynolds at (719) 852 .7381 or Joe Busto at (303) 866 - 4807."

Those of you living in the rainy, humid lands of the eastern and central U.S. may find this all very amusing, but here in the land where "Every Drop Counts" this is a big deal. I hope to see a few of you in Center, Colorado next Wednesday evening.

Day Over

May tomorrow bring more rain to us parched westerners. Meanwhile, our record is intact as precipitation continues to be observed somewhere in our network each and every day as is has been for many months. (in fact, the max. rainfall observed by a CoCoRaHS volunteer each day has been over 1" for 46 out of the last 51 days. Indeed, we have a large country with diverse weather. If you want to see this information for yourself, just run a "Rainy Days Report" from the "View Data" menu. Instead of selecting a particular state, click "Select State" from the top of the list and then it will compute summary statistics for the whole network.

By the way, we're getting very close now to 1500 reports per day. We're at 1489 for May 23. Up until this month, Colorado has always contributed the majority of

all CoCoRaHS reports, but that is now dropping to just below 50%. At last, we're outnumbered. :-)

Regards,

Nolan