The Catch

COCORAHS—TOUGH TIMES, GOOD TIMES

FORT COLLINS, CO — Friday, June 30, 2006

Ten+ inches of rain

I just did a quick "Total Precipitation Report" for the past week and found three dozen CoCoRaHS volunteers from VA, MD and PA who received more than 10 inches of rain in the past week. That's more rain than we've seen in the past year! There were four or five observers whose totals exceeded 13". No wonder Washington D.C. flooded.

Thanks so much to all of you who hung in there through this heavy rain -- pouring out one tube full of water after another -- day after day. The data you collected were used far and wide to help document and map rainfall patterns and calibrate weather radar. The term "CoCoRaHS" showed up on many news reports thanks to the efforts of the National Weather Service who identified and credited each report. People in the D.C. area may have had no earthly idea what "CoCoRaHS" is, but it sure did get publicized nonetheless. And now that the storm is over and the research and engineering investigations begin, your data will become even more important. Thanks again!!

Nice storms in New Mexico

After months of dry, dry, dry -- the summer thunderstorms have erupted over New. Mexico. Each day we've seen examples of dramatic gradients in precipitation over short distances. Parts of Albuquerque have gotten more than an inch of rain two or three days this week, while other parts of the city got nothing -- which usually means "We Need More CoCoRaHS Volunteers" to capture and report the rain patterns accurately.

CoCoRaHS goes to school

On Wednesday morning, 29 middle school students from various parts of Colorado spent an hour learning about weather observations and then spent two hours in the CSU computer lab analyzing CoCoRaHS precipitation data. Students selected the county they were from plus one or more counties in other

states that they were interested in. They then used the CoCoRaHS "Rainy Days Report" and imported that into Excel. Within minutes, they were comparing annual rainfall totals from one county to the other. Precipitation for the first 6 months of year varied from less than one inch in a few counties of New Mexico up to 2 inches in some of Colorado's driest counties up to 24" or more in a few counties in Maryland and Pennsylvania. At first the students were not very thrilled with CoCoRaHS, but after awhile, many became experts at analyzing, comparing, and graphing the data. We'll try this again in a few more weeks.

CoCoRaHS goes to South Dakota

Last week, the American Association of State Climatologist met in Rapid City, S. Dakota. Many of our CoCoRaHS collaborators from other states were there along with many friends from the National Weather Service. We had great fun exchanging stories and suggesting new ways to recruit new volunteers and keep them interested. After dinner last Thursday a bunch of us got together and went -- -- -- b-o-w-l-i-n-g   Yes, you heard me right. It is a new tradition we are making -- when CoCoRaHS goes to a new place, go bowling. Our new Oklahoma CoCoRaHS Coordinator was the winner-- bowling close to 200 each game. The rest of us were - - - well, let's just say we had a good time.

Nolan goes on vacation

Tomorrow we head eastward on our annual cross country journey ending up in the eastern upper peninsula of Michigan. I will not check e-mail and will not enter my CoCoRaHS precipitation reports. I am hoping to feel, smell, watch and listen to a few nice Great Lakes thunderstorms where each thunderclap rumbles for a full minute across the water. And I am hoping that the drought breaks here in Colorado while I'm gone. May our house/pet/horse sitter find out what mud is all about. I'll be back in touch sometime after the 17th of July. Then we will be gearing up for our July 25th CoCoRaHS training session and a recount of the Fort Collins flash flood of July 1997 that first launched CoCoRaHS.

Time to pack, so I will say farewell. Later this summer, we'll let you know how we are doing with fundraising.

Have a fun 4th of July, and don't start any fires.

Nolan