

The Catch

THE SNOW HAS MELTED AND THE MUD HAS DRIED -- CORAHS UPDATE

FORT COLLINS, CO — Tuesday, October 24, 2006

Greetings!

First snow here!

I can't believe we had our first snow here last week, and I was too preoccupied with life to send out a note or my normal 4-page reminder of how to measure the white stuff :-). Sorry about that. We had 2.6" of gorgeous snow here at my house -- wet at first and then dry and fluffy at the end. More accumulated on top of my hail pad than anywhere else. In some places it all melted as it landed, but on grass, cars, trees (especially the evergreens) and on my snow board and hail pad, it accumulated nicely. My precipitation total (rain plus melted snow) here for October stands at 1.48" -- about the most moisture we've had here any month since last October. In all, 544 of us sent in reports of fresh snowfall on the morning of Oct. 18. Most of the data looked pretty good, too. The biggest problem was that several folks measured the water content but not the accumulation of new snow, but they left the 0.0" in the "New Snow amount" field that the computer fills in for you. The zeroes were very obvious on the snowfall maps.

Next time, remember if it snows but you do not measure it, replace the default 0.0" with either NA or M so we know you didn't get zero.

Next snow on the way!

We may get some more practice measuring snow as another storm system is developing that could bring a burst of snow and wind to the Rockies and western Great Plains Wednesday night. Be ready! (Especially you newcomers to CoCoRaHS from southern Texas :-). Welcome aboard!)

What to do when the snow is melting?

When snow is falling but melting on contact with the ground and NO snow ever accumulates even on grassy surfaces, then report T (which stands for "Trace") for your new snow amount. If some snow accumulates, then the amount of new snow that you should report is the GREATEST depth of new snow that accumulates on your snow board or other representative measurement surface prior to melting or settling. So if it snows 2" in the morning but all melts during the afternoon, then you should report 2.0" for your new snow amount the next morning, but report 0.0" for your total depth on the ground at 7 AM.

If you have questions about measuring snow or have not attended a snow measurement training, then please refer to our snow measurement instructions on the website and/or watch the snow measurement video. This should be required for all new observers.

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

Still need a rain gauge?

We know that some of you signed up for CoCoRaHS but still have not received a rain gauge. Thanks to some successful research by our new CoCoRaHS partners in Illinois (starting soon!!) we have found a small company willing to distribute rain gauges to CoCoRaHS volunteers and sponsors at a very favorable price. Please check our home page and see the link to

<http://www.weatheryourway.com/>

You will need to enter a username and password, but it's easy to remember.

Your username will be: **coco**

and your password is: **rahs**

This is a great gauge for a great price, so I hope you can take advantage of this opportunity. But we also know that some of you don't have the extra money to get a gauge. We will continue to seek sponsors in many states to help provide a supply of complimentary gauges. (P.S. if your family, your business or organization would like to help CoCoRaHS by sponsoring some gauges, please let us know.)

Time for a vacation?

Many (actually all) of us are not as young as we used to be. Many CoCoRaisins are -- well, old enough to retire. There is no need to risk your body for a CoCoRaHS snow measurement. While we appreciate your efforts and your

great data, please don't slip and fall on our behalf. If you are a little unsteady on your feet or if you just can't stand the thought of going outside at 7AM on cold, dark, windy and snowy winter mornings just to check a silly rain gauge, then maybe this is a good time to take a little break from CoCoRaHS. Each year a few hundred of us take the winter off and then start again refreshed in the spring. Sure, we'll miss your data, but no data is a lot better than a broken hip.

Do you know El Nino?

It has been over ten years now since "El Nino" became a common meteorological term used by the media. The irregular cycle of changing winds, water temperatures and fish harvests off the west coast of tropical South America had been observed for centuries, but it took scientists until the 20th Century (with the help of satellites) to begin to put the puzzle together. I am not an expert on "El Nino" but it is one of the best indicators available to long range weather forecasters to give some clues about temperature and precipitation patterns months in advance. Furthermore, when the cold or warm phases of the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) are particularly strong, it can affect weather patterns over much of the globe. Right now "El Nino" is heating up, so climatologists are watching closely. You should too.

Here is a link that will provide some insight on the current and forecast status of El Nino, and what it may mean for weather this winter in the U.S. in general but in the Southwest in particular.

<http://www.cdc.noaa.gov/people/klaus.wolter/SWcasts/>

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) continually monitors global atmospheric and oceanic conditions. A wealth of information that we could scarcely imagine when I was in college is now available at our internet fingertips. If you have the time or inclination, here is a link to some exceptional information.

<http://www.elnino.noaa.gov/>

Water Year Summaries -- THANK YOU, THANK YOU

Several hundred of you were kind enough to check over and confirm your daily precipitation reports for the recently-ended 2006 Water Year and send me a monthly and annual compilation of your precipitation. I have a few t-shirts to send out. A whole bunch of you amazed us by sending in complete reports first thing on Sept 30. Crazy, perhaps -- but impressive!

Here in Colorado, the 2006 Water Year precipitation totals from CoCoRaHS volunteers ranged from a maximum of over 40.00" of moisture and more than 300" of snow at the home of our Gothic volunteer north of Crested Butte to a few stations near Fort Collins and out near Grand Junction where totals for the year fell short of 8.00". There were places in Colorado's northern mountains who received more moisture, but there were no CoCoRaHS volunteers there to measure it. Most Colorado observers got somewhere between 10" and 18" for the year. We also received summaries for New Mexico, Wyoming, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. We had two report of over 60" of rain from eastern Pennsylvania – kind of puts my 10" total to shame.

New Mexico precipitation totals ranged from only about 6" in northwestern NM for the year to over 30" in the Cloudcroft area (mountains east of White Sands National Monument). Most of that 30" fell from late June through mid September.

In Wyoming, precipitation from sites with complete data ranged from 28.33" south of Afton (on the western slope of the Grand Tetons) to a meager 4.39" near Powell east of Yellowstone National Park. That is definitely DRY. Remember, there were likely wetter and drier places, but these are the places we had CoCoRaHS volunteers and complete records.

We hope to be able to provide maps of water year precipitation totals from CoCoRaHS reports very soon. In all over 2500 volunteers contributed precipitation observations to CoCoRaHS in 2006 with an additional 800 in Nebraska. Of those, about 20% were complete for the entire year and another 20% were close to complete. Thanks so much!

Bedtime!

If I am going to be rested to watch and wait for tomorrow night's possible snow, I better get some sleep -- and you as well. Best wishes to all. I wish we could somehow make all the difficulties of our lives and ills of the world go away by cheerfully measuring our rain, hail and snow. I don't think it works that way, but we should try anyway.

Regards,

Nolan Doesken