

The Catch

COCORAHS—NEW DATA ENTRY FORM FOR HEAVY SNOW—AND NEW OPPORTUNITY

FORT COLLINS, CO — Sunday, February 18, 2007

Hello CoCoRaHS weather enthusiasts.

Melting continues—but not everywhere

Much melting of old snow here in Fort Collins on this our 61st consecutive day with snow cover. More bare ground is showing although all open fields remain totally covered. When we get to less than 50% of the ground covered with snow, our snow depth becomes a "Trace" and our long period of snow cover will officially end. If melting continues like it did today, we'll reach the 50% threshold in just a few days. By sunset today, we were down to about 80% snow cover and 20% bare ground. Remember, that when snow is retreating it is helpful to report the approximate percentage of the ground that is covered with snow in your "Observations Notes".

Meanwhile, no melting has taken place in Illinois, Indiana and Pennsylvania where there were still many reports today of snow depths in excess of 10" for the 5th day in a row. Not bad, for those of you who've been craving some real winter! The snow is compacting now, but it will have to warm up more later in the week before the melt will begin.

Opportunity to report "Heavy Snow"

We have some good news that has been a long time coming. We now have a report form where you can report "Heavy Snow" in progress. We have revised the "Intense Precipitation" report form so you can report heavy snow or heavy rain on the same form. Reports of heavy snow or heavy rain in progress are EXTREMELY valuable for doing research on storms but especially for the National Weather Service, private weather forecasters, media, and others involved in tracking, predicting or responding to severe weather.

If you are at home to observe heavy snow or heavy rain, please make use of the "Intense Precipitation" report to share your information. When you select "My Data" from the clickable menu, you will then see the "Enter My New Reports" menu on the upper left-hand side of the screen.

Select "Intense Precipitation" and take a look at this new data entry form.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Admin/MyDataEntry/IntensePrecipReport.aspx>

Reports of intense rain (at least 0.30" in a 1-hour period—or other values that you feel are locally significant) and reports of heavy snow are greatly appreciated. We do not employ a strict definition of heavy snow, but snow accumulation rates of at least 0.5" per hour are significant and could be reported. Do not clear your snowboard after each measurement, but simply watch accumulating snow to determine when heavy snow should be reported. Clear your snow board each day at your normal observation time when you complete your daily measurement.

Another way of reporting that is much appreciated by the National Weather Service is measurements of new snowfall, water content and total depth of snow on the ground at 0600Z, 1200Z, 1800Z and 0000Z so that CoCoRaHS data can be compared to data from "First-Order" weather stations across the country. Z stands for "Zulu" or the traditional "Greenwich Mean Time" that is now known as "Coordinated Universal Time—UTC. You folks that have been in the Military or the weather business are very familiar with this way of tracking time.

If you send in a special "Intense Precipitation" report, you still need to provide your regular "Daily Precipitation Report" that includes the total amount of precipitation that fell in the 24-hour period ending at or near 7 AM.

Plant growers and plant lovers—a special opportunity!! READ ON

This week CoCoRaHS headquarters got a formal invitation to join the National Phenology Network (NPN). This is a new and exciting (if you like plants and their relationship to climate) special nationwide project to measure, track and map the dates when various plants begin to bud, bloom and leaf out in the spring and change color and loose leaves in the fall. These dates are affected by weather patterns and are a great way of studying climate variations and long-term changes.

If you are interested in spending a few minutes this spring noting the development of selected types of plants in your neighborhood, please considering joining this effort. We will post more information about this soon including instructions on how to participate. You can get a glimpse into this new project by going to: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Geography/npn/>

Change of e-mail address, or change of actual address

Let us know if you have changed or are planning to change your primary e-mail address. If you move to a new location, you can pick up your rain gauge and move it with you, but please let us know immediately when you start collecting data at your new location so we can issue you a new station name and number with new, accurate latitude and longitude coordinates.

Tired of CoCoRaHS?

Yes, it happens. If you no longer wish to get CoCoRaHS e-mails, just drop me a note and say "Unsubscribe"

Prepare for storms!

With the inevitable warmer weather of March and April, we quickly transition into severe weather season. If you would like to become a severe weather spotter for the National Weather Service, please check your local NWS homepage for information on local spotter training classes. Also, review CoCoRaHS instructions on how to measure and report hail and heavy rain. It may still seem like the middle of winter, but severe weather seasons can come on very quickly. Be prepared.

As always, thanks so much for sharing your interest in weather and helping the CoCoRaHS effort.

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