

# The Catch

## **COCORAHS—WINTER HOLDS ON—STAY FLEXIBLE**

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, April 12, 2007

Hello weather folks!

It was quite the cold Easter weekend for many of us across the country. As we move into mid April, northern Illinois and parts of Wisconsin have just experienced another snow. Our mountains here in Colorado have been pounded with snow and wind these past days, and Wyoming and parts of Montana are still melting their big snow from a few days ago. Weather patterns are LIVELY and will continue to be so.

Today, a new storm is taking shape over the SW U.S. Snow is in our forecast for eastern Colorado. I am heading to Rocky Ford (small town in southeastern Colorado) for the annual Arkansas River Basin Water Forum. This group has been extremely supportive of CoCoRaHS and I look forward to joining them—except for the fact that the National Weather Service has a "Blizzard Watch" out for that area for tonight and tomorrow. Wish me luck.

### **Rolling Snow**

Snow is always interesting since it takes so many forms and shapes. During this recent cold wave we had nearly 48 hours of rolling snow. What do I mean by that? We got tiny little snow "grains" that were nearly spherical in shape—nothing 6-sided about them. I had the funnel in my gauge but none of the snow stuck in the gauge. Each "grain" simply rolled down the side, through the funnel, and collected in a mound of tiny beads in the bottom of my tube. In all my many years of snow watching, I had never seen anything like it—simply fascinating! The snow didn't amount to much—only a few tenths with a few hundredths of an inch of water content over a 2 day period, but it was still amazing to watch. It made the fact that the temperature was only in the low 20s in April somehow worth it.

### **Rain gauge funnel—in or out?**

Most of us can usually keep our funnels and measurement cylinders in our gauges now at this time of year. It makes reading the gauge easier and it reduces evaporation loss from the larger open cylinder. However, with winter still holding on, it gets tricky. If heavy snow or below freezing temperatures are expected, the funnel and inner tube should come back inside. You need to be the judge. We've heard from several of you whose gauges cracked this winter. With care and planning, that can be avoided while still getting good measurements.

### **Lilacs Slowed —not too late to join the National Phenology Network**

After our warm March, early flowers were out already two weeks ago and our lilacs were beginning to bud. Now that winter weather has retired, everything is on hold. Weather folklore has long claimed that the best crops await us if the early blossoms tarry and springs remain cool and damp.

Many of you have signed up to be a part of the new National Phenology Network to help track the seasonal progression and development of plants. If this sounds interesting, it is never too late to check this out and perhaps join. <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Geography/npn/> This is a great way for CoCoRaHS volunteers to contribute to other important climate research.

### **Hail Pads—WeatherYourWay may help**

We've heard from a bunch of you from states where CoCoRaHS hail pads are not being provided. Thanks for the efforts to make your own hail pads. Awesome! We just had a great hail pad party here in Fort Collins (our volunteers in Denver had one on Saturday, too), and we are now shipping a few boxes to WeatherYourWay.com. This small home business is working hard to help CoCoRaHS and will be offering hail pads for sale on a test basis. We're not sure how the economics will work out, but keep an eye on the WeatherYourWay.com website and you will soon be able to order pads there and have them shipped to your door. Here in Colorado and surrounding areas, we will continue to offer hail pads via local distribution centers and **STRONGLY ENCOURAGE** you to have your pads out and ready. It is hail season and hail pads are great for our measurements and research!

WeatherYourWay is also carrying spare parts for rain gauges, so if a giant hail stone cracks your funnel—you have options. Perhaps some day a giant CoCoRaHS "benefactor" will step forward to donate gauges so all of us volunteers can have complimentary equipment. But for now, this system is working well.

## **Turn Around—Don't Drown!!!**

This is a critically important slogan of the National Weather Service. Know it, do it, and share it with others! We are in flood season now, and water can rise quickly after local or widespread heavy rains or rapid snowmelt. Every year, dozens of people in our country die from flooding—often by driving into fast moving and rising water. This can be avoided. Please don't be a victim. Please take heed, and share the message.

## **Report Heavy Rain**

I know I have said this before—but I won't stop. Your timely report of heavy rain (at least 0.30" in one hour, or 2" over a period or several hours) using the CoCoRaHS "Intense Precipitation" form will send a message to us and, more importantly, to your local National Weather Service Forecast Office. Your reports are used to help verify and calibrate NWS radar and also to identify local areas of intense storms. Your report could be used to issue local flood warnings or advisories. Without leaving your own yard, you might help others downstream from you. Thanks so much. I am sorry to always harp on this, but it is important and you can make a difference.

## **Tennessee is rolling!**

Tennessee joined CoCoRaHS April 1st and already much of the state is dotted with precipitation reports coming in. We are thrilled, and we greatly appreciate the coordination and advanced planning that several organizations there conducted to help get the project rolling.

## **Snow in Nevada and Wisconsin**

Our other two new states, Nevada and Wisconsin, have also been adding new volunteers at a good clip. Checking the maps this AM, I see that both states have observers reporting new snow this AM. Winter won't quit.

## **Alaska at last**

Alaska has been on board with CoCoRaHS for several months, but winter is a lousy time to start a project like this—especially on the Yukon Delta where many of our first stations appeared. This was a landmark week for Alaska. The snows are melting and the first precipitation reports are beginning to trickle in. We

found that we had botched the maps a bit, but we have that fixed now so reports should show up in the right place.

### **Thanks and encouragement**

We have more CoCoRaHS volunteers than ever before. We are thrilled! It's only 8:30 AM here in Colorado and over 1,200 reports have already arrived—and likely to surpass 2,000 today. It is a pleasure and honor for me to work together with all of you on such a fun and important project. Your efforts are greatly appreciated, and continue to tell others about this opportunity.

Best wishes,

*Nolan Doesken*  
Colorado State University