

The Catch

COCORAHS—A LOT OF RAIN GOING AROUND!

FORT COLLINS, CO — Monday, August 20, 2007

CoCoRaHS greetings!

Hello fellow weather watchers. This is Nolan Doesken from Colorado. Sorry for the long silence, but our family just got back from two weeks in upper Michigan on the shores of Lake Huron with relatives and friends. As seems to be the case wherever I go, weather conditions were of great concern and a frequent topic of conversation. Wild fires were raging in parts of upper Michigan. Also, several of the Great Lakes are experiencing extremely low lake levels due, at least partially, to recent and prolonged drought conditions. Even on vacation, everyone wanted to talk about rainfall and climate issues. We even saw an article about CoCoRaHS in the Detroit Free Press that caught me by surprise. CoCoRaHS isn't even in Michigan yet. But it is good to know that measuring precipitation is important for many, many reasons.

For several hundred of you, this is your first e-mail update from us. We have a tradition of staying in touch at least once or twice each month -- sharing tips on how to more accurately measure and report rain, hail and snow. Since Iowa joined CoCoRaHS on August 1st, we've had another huge surge in participation. It seems like we are getting one or more new applications to join CoCoRaHS each hour. This is really amazing.

Furthermore, it looks like I've been missing out on some incredible and frightening rains. Check out the maps of rainfall these past few days -- everywhere from Texas and OK to South Dakota and many of the Midwestern States local rains have been huge and flooding has been locally extreme.

I found a nice e-mail from one of our observers apologizing for reporting late. They were unable to get home to check their gauge due to flooding but wanted me to know they had followed NOAA's advice. "Turn Around, Don't Drown!"

First spill!

Well, it was inevitable this would happen and it finally did. On Sunday morning, one of our CoCoRaHS observers in west central Oklahoma woke to find the

gauge full to the top. Actually, they probably hadn't slept all that well since most of the rain fell overnight. The weight of a full gauge makes it very difficult to deal with. While trying to measure it, they spilled some of the contents. They went ahead and reported 11.00" but check out their remarks. If you want to practice measuring, go ahead and fill your gauge to the top with the hose and then try to measure each increment. It's tough!! Hats off to all of you who have had to deal with heavy rains recently! Your efforts are appreciated.

Minnesota is not a part of CoCoRaHS, but they have a long-standing volunteer rain gauge network too, and one of their observers reported a gauge full to the top on Sunday morning. That equates to devastating flooding when more than eleven inches of rain falls in a day.

It even rained in Fort Collins, Colorado

Earlier this month, we had our own heavy rain experience right here. In a matter of 3 hours, parts of Fort Collins picked up over 5" of rain -- about 1/3 of our ANNUAL AVERAGE. But true to form, the main core of the storm missed my part of town and I ended up with only about 0.50". If you want to see some amazing local variations and a whole lot of data, check out the maps for Larimer County, Colorado or Fort Collins, Colorado for August 3, 2007. No matter how many of us there are out with our rain gauges and our enthusiasm, we still need more of us to capture the amazing variability in convective season precipitation.

3,000+ daily rainfall reports.

The number of CoCoRaHS active participants also continues to grow. Since I've been away, we've gone from about 2600 rainfall reports each day to as many as 3100 now. In addition, close to 2000 others are reporting sporadically so if we actually all made the effort to check and report in, we could easily have 4,000 - 5,000 data points on our maps. South Dakota has lit up with well over 100 reports coming in daily. Illinois is now well over 200, and Iowa is quickly headed toward the century mark. Texas has also added lots and lots of new volunteers in the past few weeks. This came in handy when the recent tropical storm brought copious rainfall to parts of the state.

Who's next?

Next on the list to join CoCoRaHS is North Carolina and New York. They are both scheduled to begin September 1st. North Carolina has an aggressive plan in hopes of being ready with hundreds of willing rainfall volunteers should a hurricane take aim on them soon. New York plans a slower and more relaxed approach hoping to add volunteers gradually in the coming months.

While I was away, another "CoCoRaHS State" appeared on our maps. Alabama is planning to come on board later this fall.

Catching up

I need to cut this short as I have a lot of catching up to do at the office. There is much more to report and share, but that will have to wait. For now, keep up the good work and thank you so much for helping track the weather and climate of your state and region. Feel free to invite others to join.

Checking past messages

For those of you new to CoCoRaHS, we keep an archive of the messages we send out. If you want to catch up on CoCoRaHS correspondence check out "The Catch" <http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=catch>. Then go to the "Archives".

Content suggestions?

Feel free to contact us with your questions and suggestions for training tips, "messages of the day" and other materials to help volunteers.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University