

# The Catch

## **COCORAHS—DRIEST DAY IN AGES!**

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, September 13, 2007

Weather reporters, young and old, new and not so new.

### **2,000 Zeros**

This may not sound like much, but this is sort of exciting. For all of you who take the time each day to get on the computer and send in your precipitation report **EVEN WHEN IT DIDN'T RAIN**, I really want to say thanks. Today, September 13th, has been the least rainy day in a long, long time across our participating 22 states. More than 2,000 of us got online this morning to report **NO RAIN**. That's a lot of Zeros, and that's a lot of commitment. Thank you very much!

In fact, from the coast of Virginia and North Carolina to the southern tip of Texas to the shores of Lake Superior to the desert of Nevada, hardly anyone had significant rain to report. In fact, as of a few minutes ago, only 74 people out of a total of 2,161 who have reported so far today received at least 0.01" of rain in the past 24 hours. We have to go all the way back to April 21, 2007 to find a drier day. That day only 44 out of 2,168 reporters had measurable precipitation. I'm guessing that about 1000 more of us will report our zero for today -- later.

Interestingly after many days with locally heavy rains, today only 6 people today had rainfall amounts over one inch -- and just barely. Three stations south of Amarillo got just over an inch, one station in southeast New Mexico, and two locations on the Coast of Alaska. In fact, for the second time since we started expanding, the wettest reporting station among all CoCoRaHS volunteers was in Alaska (1.22" was the morning maximum -- from Valdez, Alaska). We have to go back to May 21, 2007 to find a day when nobody anywhere in our network got over an inch of rain -- the maximum station report that day was 0.88". If you want to look at statistics like this, select "View Data" from the top menu of the CoCoRaHS website and then click on "Rain Days Report".

Ever since CoCoRaHS expanded from Colorado and the Central Plains eastward to the mid Atlantic states, we have not had a single day that was dry everywhere. The old "sprinkling can in the sky" seems to always be busy somewhere. Looking at the current National Weather Service national radar image:

[http://www.nws.noaa.gov/radar\\_tab.php](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/radar_tab.php), most of the country remains dry today, but there is a swirl of activity over Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi (looks like a tropical system) as well as some storms in Georgia. None of those states have joined CoCoRaHS yet, so you'll need to find other sources to confirm rainfall amounts there. It looks like some activity is crossing Wisconsin now, too, so we'll look at those reports tomorrow.

## **Clean Rain Gauges**

Based on the responses I received the last 2 days, a lot of you must do a better job than I do of keeping your rain gauge clean and shiny. It is really good to see that many of you actually read our "Message of the Day" -- even though we don't always get it updated. You all sent excellent suggestions. Some of you are using bleach to successfully clean your gauge. White vinegar seems to be a real favorite as well. Some of you also sent suggestions on protecting your gauge from damaging ultraviolet radiation that can eventually make your gauge hazy, yellow and form hairline cracks. Armor all and similar protectors that people use on their cars can be used to protect your gauge, but be careful because the gauge gets slippery. The message below from a very diligent observer here in Colorado was very informative. He also has a home electronic weather station and is the official National Weather Service cooperative observer for his city. Here is his message:

*"Hi, Nolan!*

*The way I keep my gauge looking clean and like new is to take a wooden dowel, about 2 ft long, and wrap a paper towel around the bottom 6 inches. Then drop a little soapy water into the inner tube and twist the dowel into the tube. You have to be careful not to tear the paper towel so you don't scratch the tube. Then you can get all the dirt that has collected in the tight spots. After cleaning the inner tube, I wash the outer tube with a soapy sponge and dry it with a soft, non-abrasive towel. Then I spray Rain-X onto the funnel (and wipe it dry) so that every drop goes into the inner tube. Rain-X tends to not collect dust and gunk like Armor-All or similar type products. I use Rain-X on my Vantage Pro and NWS gauges, too. There you have it. I still have my original gauge I bought in 2002. Still looks like new, with only a few blemishes."*

So thanks, everyone, for sharing your suggestions -- I could write a book.

## **Leaves changing!**

I was at a flood managers conference yesterday at Breckenridge, Colorado high in the Rocky Mountains. The aspen leaves are beginning to change color. The inevitable change in seasons is upon us. That brings to mind that some of you signed up to become a part of the network of observers tracking seasonal

changes in vegetation across the country. The program, known as the "National Phenology Network" will be looking to document regional patterns, year to year changes, and long-term trends in the dates that certain plants bud out and blossom and also when some species turn colors and drop their leaves in the fall. Since many new CoCoRaHS volunteers have signed up since I last wrote about this, I thought I should mention it again. Here is the link to find out more about this important project. All of you who love watching and growing plants as much or more than the watching the weather, this is a good opportunity to help.

<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Geography/npn/>

### **Inevitable snow**

Those of us in colder places in the country need to begin to think about our rain gauge and the fact that the inner tube can crack if water collects and freezes before we empty it. Be watchful, and when the time becomes right remember to bring the funnel and inner tube inside and just leave the outer cylinder outdoors to collect snow. Somehow, you folks in Brownsville, TX probably won't have to worry about that. :-)

### **Some not feeling so well**

We've heard from some of you who are suffering with illness and medical conditions that are making rain gauge reading impossible. Thanks so much for staying in touch even through your difficulties. It makes us all appreciate life just a bit more. Regardless of our struggles, and we all have some, every day we have the energy and good health to march out to check the rain gauge is probably a good day!

Best wishes,

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