

The Catch

COCORAHS—RAIN DOESN'T FALL THE SAME ON ALL

FORT COLLINS, CO — Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Good evening weather watching and rain/snow measuring folks, friends and/or family:

The headline of the front-page news story in yesterday's Corvallis, Oregon Gazette Times describes CoCoRaHS so well: "*Rain Does Not Fall the Same on All.*" That is a great saying, and it describes CoCoRaHS in a nutshell. That is why we keep checking our rain gauges each day and why so many people are interested in what we do.

http://www.gtconnect.com/articles/2007/12/19/news/community/6aaa01_rainspots.txt

Oregon has just joined CoCoRaHS and already their state maps are dotted with rain reports. Several days this month Oregon has claimed "wettest state in CoCoRaHS." Knowing our nation's climate, that shouldn't surprise us this time of year. But it's still neat to see. We also just heard from Washington State and they plan to join the CoCoRaHS network this coming summer -- and California is probably starting up next October. By this time next year we'll be capturing all the storms as they hit the West Coast.

For all of you Oregonians who are receiving your first CoCoRaHS e-mail message from us, "Welcome Aboard". We are really glad you signed up -- all 360 of you already.

Stumbling into Fund Raising

Well, we didn't make much of a splash today with our first-ever fund raising request. I was really nervous about doing this and was even trembling a bit when the time came to push the "Send" button. I am new to fund raising, and it doesn't come easy. I do better measuring snow. The fact that we immediately got a couple of "Take me off your e-mail list" messages didn't do much for my confidence, either. But that's to be expected, and we can't give up that easily. We've been thinking about starting a fund raising effort now for over a year -- and

realizing that our support from NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) won't last too many more months. If we want CoCoRaHS around for future years (and I think we do), we've got to come up with a plan to support it.

CoCoRaHS has gone so much farther than we ever imagined and the momentum is still building. We have literally thousands of "teammates" helping measure and report each day. There are already some parts of the country where we are approaching our goal of at least one observer per square mile.

Donations to CoCoRaHS?

I've been told that the link we sent out today for making donations to CoCoRaHS didn't format properly. I clicked on it and it said "page not found" That's a bummer.

The correct address is:

<https://advancing.colostate.edu/CSU.asp?COE/COCORAHHS/GIVE>

Our long term goal is to create an endowment fund that could support the work of CoCoRaHS for many, many years to come. That will require a lot of \$, but it's a big country, a worthy goal and we're committed to this. There are several ways you could help. If you know of organizations and charitable givers who appreciate our efforts and may be willing to help support us, please contact me.

Barnyard confusion

I'm going to have a difficult time tomorrow morning finding a place to measure the depth of snow remaining on the ground. This morning I measured 4" of old snow -- icy and granular. All those gorgeous lacy crystals have all turned to small rounded balls that are more like ice than snow. The water content in that 4" layer is 0.75" -- while the snow depth has decreased by several inches, all the water content that fell last week is still there.

Today a friend came over with her dog. Their family is going away for an extended Christmas trip and leaving us their energetic beast. For some reason we agreed to keep their young yellow lab. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but not today. It only took about 2 hours for the dog to track across pretty much every square foot of our yard. Some of it is no longer white. The young pup frightened the tail feathers off our geese who wouldn't come back to the coop tonight. The cats were all decorating the higher branches of our shade trees and wouldn't come down. And the stupid chickens all abandoned their normal roosts and laying boxes and took up residence on the cat shelf (where the barn cats

usually hang out to eat, sleep and keep warm at night). It took so little time to change our normal barnyard order into total chaos. As a result, I'll have to take some extra steps in the morning to find a new spot to measure snow depth and take core samples out in the pasture.

Weighing instead of melting

We have many ingenious people in our ranks. Several have contacted me to describe alternatives to the cumbersome and slow process of melting the snow in order to accurately measure water content. If you happen to have a good quality scales that reads in grams and can handle up to 600 gm, you can weigh your gauge and get a direct measure of the amount of water in it -- without having to melt anything. I'll describe this better in a future letter.

We also found a small business right here in Fort Collins that sells a little kit for taking core samples and weighing them to immediately determine the water content. We are "negotiating" right now to see if they could offer a discounted price for CoCoRaHS volunteers. Here is their website if you want to take a look at the snow measurement goodies they have to offer.

<http://www.snowmetrics.com/store/>

In closing

Thanks for all you do to help CoCoRaHS. If you are a grandparent and have some grandkids coming over for the Holidays, remember to tell them a few of your very best weather stories (OK to exaggerate a little) and then take them out to show off the ole rain gauge! Who knows, they might be the next CoCoRaHS generation.

Longer and brighter days are soon ahead—so hang in there.

Nolan
from Colorado