

The Catch

COCORAHS GROWS AS ACTIVE WEATHER TAKES A SHORT BREAK

FORT COLLINS, CO — Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Good morning,

A brief lull in active weather

I don't know if you noticed, but yesterday (our ~7 AM reports for 3/25/08) was the driest day across the U.S. since early November. Of the 3,500 observations that were sent in from 30 states as of last night, nearly 3,200 reported a big ZERO. An additional 165 stations reported just a trace, leaving 175 reports of 0.01" or greater. Most of these were just a few hundredths. Only 19 of us received more than 0.10" (one tenth of an inch). The wettest CoCoRaHS stations in the country were in the Afton, Wyoming area -- just west of the Grand Tetons in NW Wyoming -- where a few tenths of an inch of moisture was measured from about 5" of new snow.

Contrast with last week

This lull comes in sharp contrast to the heavy rains of last week. Looking back to the March 18-20th period across the central U.S., there were 10 CoCoRaHS volunteers who measured 10" or more of rain including an incredible 3-day total of 14.59" in the town of Cape Girardeau, Missouri. No wonder there was so much flooding (and still is). This week's lull is greatly appreciated there as they clean up after the floods. There were 55 CoCoRaHS stations where rainfall last week exceeded 7" in a swath from NE Texas and Oklahoma across southern Missouri, southern Illinois, southern Indiana, and northwest Kentucky. 75 additional stations reported 6-7" and another 130 stations were in the 4-6" of rain range. Had Arkansas been a part of CoCoRaHS (and they will likely join early next year), there would have been even more large numbers reported.

Your reports of "Intense Precipitation" make a difference

Many of you have now made use of the special "Intense Precipitation Report" that appears on your data entry menu. This form is specifically designed to allow

you the opportunity to report unusually heavy rain or snow while it is occurring so you don't have to wait until the next morning to share that information. As of this morning, nearly 900 intense precipitation reports have been submitted so far this year. Reports of Intense Precipitation (either rain or snow) are sent immediately to your local National Weather Service office to help them issue and verify important severe weather warnings.

We know this is an extra effort, but we GREATLY APPRECIATE your doing this. Similarly, there is a special entry form to report hail. We've only had about 200 hail reports submitted so far this year, but we really hope you do send in specific hail reports when those rare hail storms do occur. Just click "My Date" at the top of the CoCoRaHS webpage and then you will see the menu of "Enter My New Reports" over on the left side of the page. Check them out to get familiar with each of the report forms.

Most days you will simply use the "Daily Precipitation" form, but your timely reports of heavy rain, hail or snow can help alert others who may not know of the severe weather in your area.

CoCoRaHS keeps growing

Welcome to the hundreds of new volunteers who have joined the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow network this month. South Carolina was our latest state, and now tiny Rhode Island is starting up this week. Our next state will be Georgia. This means we will have the entire Gulf Coast and most of the Atlantic Coast covered well in time for the next hurricane season.

With our annual "March Madness" competition underway, a friendly competition where we see which states can recruit the most new volunteers, we have seen a remarkable number of new applications come in (well over 600 so far this month). Several states have been making a strong showing this year with dozens of new volunteers. But South Carolina jumped to an early start and continues to hold a substantial lead as we move into the last week of this competition.

If you are new to CoCoRaHS, we extend an enthusiastic welcome. We hope you can get your rain gauge set up in a good, open location as soon as you can and begin sending in precipitation reports. Please attend a training session if one is provided in your area. Otherwise, thoroughly review the on-line training materials showing how to set up and read the CoCoRaHS rain gauge, how to accurately measure rain, hail and snow, and how to report, view (and if necessary, edit) your data on the CoCoRaHS website. If you have questions, we have a network of volunteer leaders -- state, regional and sometimes local county coordinators -- who are ready to help.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=coord>

Wisconsin and extreme northern Illinois -- a crazy winter

After a winter of relentless storms, last weekend brought one more big snow to southern Wisconsin pushing snowfall totals up close to 100" for the season. Milwaukee, where snow has been measured each year for over 120 years, their untouchable record of about 115" set back in the winter of 1885-86 is now being challenged. And while last week's 15" snow is melting quickly, guess what? Yet another storm is headed there way. This time, the ingredients may not all come together, but do keep an eye on the forecast. Remember, an easy way to view current and forecast weather conditions for anywhere in the country is via

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov>

CoCoRaHS interferes with tax preparation

There are so many things to be doing this time of year -- early gardening, spring cleaning . . . taxes. CoCoRaHS has been keeping us so busy that I almost forgot that I can't put off our good friend, the 1040 form, much longer. So if I don't write back for awhile, you'll know what's going on.

Donations have been greatly appreciated

And speaking of taxes, I must express my thanks to those of you who have chosen to donate some \$ to help our CoCoRaHS effort in recent months. We are in the challenging transition now from having Federal grants to support the initial expansion of CoCoRaHS to needing to rely on local funding sources. We are awaiting word on a proposal we submitted last fall to the National Science Foundation. If we are not funded, then we will soon need to focus more on fund raising. I would rather be a climatologist than a fund raiser, but I have come to see the remarkable value that this project is providing. I am willing to do whatever it will take to keep CoCoRaHS going and growing as long as I can.

You are already donating your time and effort to help CoCoRaHS. That is quite enough. But if you would like to help financially, or if you know organizations who would, please help. We are a non-profit public institution, so all donations are tax deductible. Receipts will be sent almost immediately. Gifts as small as \$10 can make a big difference since there are now so many of us. And for those of you who donated \$100 and more, you gave me the hope that we really can sustain this little project with or without support from our Government.

Here is the web link for donations:

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=donate>

How much will it take?

Some of you have asked about how much money is needed. As CoCoRaHS grows rapidly into a national network, it costs about \$1000 per day to keep things going. That might increase as we cover the rest of the country, but hopefully not too much. That sounds like either a lot of money, or very little depending on your perspective. For a nationwide weather and climate observing network it is really little. If you know of foundations, businesses, private donors, etc, who might like to help us, we are continuing to assemble a list and will begin a concerted fund raising effort as soon as we find out about our National Science Foundation proposal.

We are also considering the process of establishing an endowment fund that could sustain CoCoRaHS indefinitely. There are some advantages and disadvantages, but that is a funding mechanism that some organizations are able to use.

Enough of this. Time to get to work. Keep those precipitation reports coming!

And if you are from Colorado, please recruit a few new observers this week. I am embarrassed that my own state is doing very poorly in the March Madness recruiting effort this year :- (Help!! :-)

Have a great week!

Nolan Doesken
Colorado