

# The Catch

## **COCORAHS – NEW NATIONAL PRECIPITATION MAP**

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, April 10, 2008

Dear CoCoRaHS folks,

Yesterday was wild. It hailed like crazy in parts of our town while a cold drizzle fell elsewhere. That was OK because everyone who came out to help with the Hail Pad Marathon yesterday at our office on the Foothills Campus of Colorado State University got home OK. More than 30 people showed up this week to help, and we got over 1,000 new hail pads made for this hail season. Thanks so much!! Our hail pad crisis has been averted!! Some of you even threatened to fly in from a thousand miles away to help -- but I think you were joking.

Today we woke up to cranky chickens, muddy wet horses, dirty dogs but absolutely gorgeously decorated tree branches and fences as yet another late season snow struck. The mud and slush is a small price to pay for some good moisture. I'll take it, and tomorrow the grass will be doubly green. Even some of the driest parts of West Texas got some decent rains. Unfortunately, it's mostly gone today as the winds blew so hard (upwards of 45-60 mph for hours at a time today) that the moisture was soon gone -- along with a whole lot of topsoil.

### **The New Map**

This is a proud day for us here at CoCoRaHS headquarters. Between changing diapers, missing sleep, and having hilarious times playing with his new 5-month old son, Julian (our Web Developer) has still been making progress on our website. Today he unveiled our first-ever nationwide CoCoRaHS precipitation map.

If you haven't already, please take a look at <http://www.cocorahs.org>. If you don't see it, scroll down a few inches and there it will be. Click on it and you'll get a larger version. There are drop-down menus at the top to select precipitation types or dates. Select "New Snow", "Total Snow Depth" or "Hail". Actually, select map type "Hail" and choose April 9, 2008 and you will see the fascinating outbreak of hail we had yesterday just east of the Rockies.

(This was a wake up call for all of us who had not yet installed our hail pads. It's time!!)

This map is something you should be proud of -- because you made it. Seeing rainfall reports from coast to coast and border to border is only possible BECAUSE OF YOU. Your dot on that map may seem small, but together with many others it tells the story today and will continue the story tomorrow and the next day about each new storm system crossing our huge country.

Yes, there are gaps to fill -- big gaps. I don't think we'll ever dot central and eastern Nevada with rain gauges. But for much of the country there are people living nearby and some of them might help us. Eventually we might be able to map this entire country of ours each and every day. Select "Stations" from the Map Type Menu. That's when I really get excited because if all of us who have already signed up for CoCoRaHS found time to log on and report our rain, we would already have many of those gaps filled.

Oh, by the way -- if you accidentally make a mistake reading your gauge or typing in your report, guess what?? Your report of 63" of rain when you meant to type 0.63" will be right there for everyone to see. :-) So please be careful and continue to do your best. Also, take advantage of this opportunity to learn a little more geography and think about storm tracks and air masses. Watch how storms explode over the Central Plains and Midwest when they tap the rich moisture supply of the warm Gulf of Mexico. Also, watch how the heavy rains along the West Coast evaporate after the clouds move up and over the Cascades and Sierra Nevada. Watch how the high mountains continue to get snow late into the spring while low elevations get only rain. Watch how the widespread sweeping storms of winter and spring change into speckled patterns of summer thundershowers as summer approaches. Watch how drought emerges as storms somehow miss parts of the country time after time -- or pass over dropping less moisture than usual. Watch and be amazed.

Also, keep an eye on the blank spots on our maps. If you know people who live in our data voids, call them and tell them they have an important niche to fill :-) As we add several more states this summer and fall, the big voids will begin to fill.

### **Aftermath of "The Big Rain"**

The message I sent out a few days ago about measuring really big rains stirred up a lot of responses. Many of you sent me your own suggestions on how to read rainfall accurately. Some sent recent results on how tipping bucket gauges compare to the CoCoRaHS gauge during heavy rains, and how similar our gauges compare to the old Standard Rain Gauge used by the National Weather

Service -- most of the time. There were many bits of wisdom well worth passing on. But right now it's time to call it a day. It's been a good one.

Best wishes, and a big welcome to all of you who are starting out for the first time. We sure are glad to have you.

*Nolan Doesken*