

The Catch

COCORAHS—10th ANNIVERSARY

FORT COLLINS, CO — Monday, June 16, 2008

Greetings to all of you weather watchers and family members who have to live with weather watchers :-)

Anniversary Time!!

When we started CoCoRaHS in 1998 it was named the "Colorado Collaborative Rain and Hail Study" and it was only a summer project tracking thunderstorms here in northern Colorado. We started with just a few dozen volunteers in the summer of 1998 and grew gradually to a couple hundred by 2000. I never even imagined the project would still be rolling 10 years later. Alas, ten years later there are thousands of us all over the country reporting precipitation year round. We had to change our name to "Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow" network as we became a year-round project in communities all over the place. Who would have guessed!

I still remember the spring months of 1998 when three high school students worked their tails off to get CoCoRaHS off the ground. Luke created the original CoCoRaHS website. Tom learned to write computer programs to handle data and display data on maps and reports. Daphne lead our community publicity efforts and hosted informational meetings and training sessions and taught me the importance of "make sure there is food!"

We weren't totally sure we knew what we were doing, but on June 17th, 1998 the CoCoRaHS website went "Live" for the first time and nearly 100 local volunteers -- many of whom were still recovering from our awful flash flood here back in July 1997 -- sent in our daily precipitation reports for the very first time. That was an exciting day for all of us -- and a day of proud accomplishment for our high school students.

The Internet was a newer thing then, and it was a big deal to be able to type in a weather report and then see it on our local maps a few minutes later. Lots have changed in those 10 years, but much has stayed the same. In fact, of those first volunteers here in Larimer County, Colorado, about 25% are still reporting

regularly a decade later and we still curiously await what we find in our gauges each morning -- even though it's usually like today -- 0.00"

Join in Celebration -- Everyone report your precip tomorrow!!

I never know how many of you actually read our CoCoRaHS "News e-mails" but I hope you read it today and report your precipitation amounts tomorrow AM. (June 17th). For lack of a better idea, let's declare June 17th as "CoCoRaHS Day!" Right now we have over 7000 volunteers who report regularly or occasionally and we figure we have close to 4,000 more volunteers who are signed up for CoCoRaHS but rarely get around to reporting in -- not sure why, but what the heck.

But in celebration of our 10th anniversary, let's all clean our gauges, remember our passwords, and get our reports in tomorrow AM.

If you have forgotten how to report, remember the website address:

<http://www.cocorahs.org>

and if you have forgotten your username and password, PLEASE DON'T send me an e-mail asking :-) but instead just click the "Login" button at the top of the homepage and then if you don't remember it or have it automatically saved, all you have to do is click the "Find Your Login Information" down below the login box. Assuming we have your correct e-mail address on file (and please let me know if we don't) then our computer will quickly send you an e-mail with your username and password, and you will be back in business.

Let's Shoot for 6,000 -- but 7,000 would be better

If we get our act together tomorrow and get our reports sent in, we should be able to surpass the 6,000 daily precipitation reports and maybe even pass 6,500 REMEMBER, even if your location received ZERO precipitation, that is important information. Even on the wettest days that we've seen (and we've seen some wet ones these past two weeks) still over half the country is usually dry. So if you possibly can, we encourage your reports of 0.00" or T (which is what you should type in when you get just a trace of precipitation. Together, let's set a new record for most CoCoRaHS reports on a day.

A few comments on recent flooding -- and on drought

The recent flooding rains in the Midwest have brought back memories of 1993. I don't think the Mississippi River is rising nearly as high this year as it did in the

summer of 1993 -- but the summer is not over. But smaller rivers and streams in parts of Missouri, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois and Indiana have gone crazy. Thanks for the photos some of you sent, and THANKS so much for sloshing through morning downpours to get your measurements and make your reports. I used our "Total Precipitation Summary" report to generate rainfall totals for your stations and was amazed to find two and four week rainfall totals surpassing 15" in some areas and close to 20" in others.

Yet, while the wet get wetter, the dry have been getting drier. I don't always have time to skim through the remarks you send in, but I have seen the pleas for rain in parts of the southern plains. In Florida, it looks like we've turned the corner into the annual wet season and the afternoon storms have kicked in on schedule. That's good to see as they have also been hurting for rain. Also, in the Pacific Northwest it looks like it has finally cleared off and warmed up after a cool spring that just didn't want to quit.

Welcome, Washington State!

By the way, we are thrilled to have Washington State on the CoCoRaHS team now -- as of June 1. Over 250 new volunteers have signed up, and as of Friday more than 60 new volunteers have their gauges set up and have begun reporting. Thanks so much and Welcome Aboard!!

Utah and Michigan -- Come on down!!

Julian (our CoCoRaHS Web developer), probably with his precious 7-month old son on his lap (actually, probably not) flipped the switch late last night and now new volunteers from Utah and Michigan can begin signing up. They will officially join the CoCoRaHS network on July 1st. If you have friends or family in Utah or Michigan, give them a call and let them know that the CoCoRaHS may need their help.

Angel ate a chicken

And finally, for those of you who follow the saga of life here on an old farmstead on the edge of Fort Collins, we adopted a Great Pyrenees from the shelter a few weeks ago. Her name was Angel. She was shy but sweet, but with all our there animals here she didn't quite fit in. Our college-aged son and his roommates had been looking for a dog. They live in Grandma's house across the pasture. (Grandma passed away two years ago but we are trying to maintain here yard and garden.) So Angel went to live with the boys (young men, to be more accurate). It turns out she prefers men and she is doing just great. We can

sometimes hear her strong, low bark -- nearly shakes the ground. And we can see her marching proudly protecting the perimeter of the property.

Well, last weekend we invited Angel over for a play date with our dogs. That went over - - - well, not so well. She ignored our dogs but within a few minutes when our backs were turned grabbed and killed one of our young batch of hens. Oh well -- back to the boys she goes!

Tornado Tales

Thanks for those of you who have shared stories of your encounters with the tornadoes of 2008. This has been a bad year and the year is only half over (but more than half way through the tornado season, I hope.) Up until recently, our CoCoRaHS volunteers have only had close calls, but with so many volunteers in so many places it was inevitable that our members would eventually take direct hits. This year we have had reports of direct hits on homes and businesses of CoCoRaHS volunteers -- and some injuries. This hits us all very hard. May the community spirit that sometimes fades away in the good times, please come on strong in the hard times to help get us through.

Thanks for the many reports of intense rain

I need to do some animal chores and get the dams set on our irrigation ditch (irrigation water comes this afternoon) and get to work. But first, for all of you who have made the special effort to send in hail and intense rain reports (in addition to your regular daily precipitation report), please know your efforts are appreciated. We have received some "Thank you" e-mails from various National Weather Service offices that have been helped by timely CoCoRaHS reports. Keep it up!!

Have a great week and "Happy Anniversary"

Nolan
Colorado State University