

The Catch

COCORAHS – Quiet weather after many storms

FORT COLLINS, CO — Friday, September 19, 2008

Greetings from Colorado,

Thanks for your continued interest in CoCoRaHS. It has been an amazing summer and early fall -- good times, hard times, wet times, dry times. Funerals, weddings -- the whole nine yards. We're holding on and doing the best we can. Life is like that. Thanks to all of you who sent messages of support, condolences and contributions when we lost our long-time co-worker last month. Odie is greatly missed, but we so appreciate your support. There were at least 20 CoCoRaHS volunteers at her funeral -- which really amazed me.

Hurricane Rains

With 4 hurricanes/tropical storms in a row hitting the U.S. in the past few weeks it has been a challenging time for many of you. The efforts that many of you made to measure and report the rains from these storms is commendable! Now that we have volunteers in practically all hurricane-prone coastal areas (this is the first year for that), it has been really interesting to watch the CoCoRaHS rainfall maps go blank in certain areas of the country as storms hit -- only to fill in later as people return to their homes and their neighborhoods regain power. We've even had quite a few people add comments to their reports that they are powering their computer with their own generators.

We now know that power outages are a problem for CoCoRaHS, but as long as you read your gauge each day and send in the reports later when you're power is restored -- we're OK with that. If you do have phone service, we have a phone line you could use to call in your reports (it is not toll free). Better yet, call your local NWS (National Weather Service) office if you are a trained spotter, since they need the data quickly.

If I am counting correctly, at least half the states in our country have received tropical storm rains since the hurricane season began. Some of these rains have been absolutely huge. Michigan, as far from the tropics as it is, has been hit twice. I'm already forgetting the name of the storm that hit Brownsville, TX, in July, moved up the Rio Grande valley to El Paso, TX and Las Cruces, NM,

flooded parts of southern New Mexico and then ended up dropping inches of rain on Kansas City a few days later when I was there for a meeting. Fay was an amazing rainmaker as it meandered back and forth across Florida and then rained out over the Southeast. We had many daily reports in excess of 10" with that storm, and a CoCoRaHS record 24-hour total of 14.55" on August 20 and storm totals way over 20" and closer to 30" in parts of Florida. This past weekend, Ike pounded the Midwest with 6-10" rains. Winds approaching hurricane force blew in unlikely areas such as Ohio. These rains over the past two months have been both bad and good -- causing nasty flooding in some areas while taking a good bite out of U.S. drought conditions everywhere from Texas and Oklahoma to North Carolina. Now, we need to get some rain to California.

California here we come!

Speaking of California, we are less than 2 weeks away from launching CoCoRaHS there! I sent my sister in Sunnyvale a gauge so she can be one of the first to sign up. I'm guessing that 90% of us know someone in CA. If we each contacted our friends/family there and if 10% of the people we talk to agree to help, we should be able to recruit at least 1,000 volunteers by Thanksgiving -- just in time for the California rainy season to get started. Do what you can, and let's all help launch this great (and climatically diverse) state.

Not quite 7,000

During the stormy weather of late July, August and September, the number of CoCoRaHS reports have continued rising. On peak days, close to 6,800 of us have sent in reports. Great job!! With just a little effort, we could reach 7,000. Once California joins the team, our goal for 8,000 reports per day by the end of 2008 could still be reached.

Please report Zero

Many of you continue to ask "Do I need to report if it doesn't rain?" My answer to that is "Unless you report, no one will know." I realize that it is not exciting to report 0.00". It took me months to get in the habit, but now it's automatic. If you want your records to be complete and your dot on the CoCoRaHS maps, then please report zeros and traces as well as your measurable amounts.

Remember the "Monthly Zeros" report. This makes it easy for you to go back during or at the end of the month to fill in the zeros for the days you didn't report.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Admin/MyDataEntry/MonthlyZerosReport.aspx>

Angel on Duty

Some of you know that we have a large, white dog (Great Pyrenees) that lives next door with my son. Her name is Angel. She was not welcome here when we discovered that she, sweet as she is (and she is sweet), simply couldn't resist killing our chickens. But Angel has now regained our respect and is helping out on the farm. We've been enjoying wonderful sweet corn from the garden for the last couple of weeks and we still have quite a bit left. We knew the raccoons were very interested in the corn, but until this weekend they had dined modestly and left most of the corn for us. Well, that changed on Tuesday when the raccoons went on a sweet corn rampage. Now, Angel has been called to give up her plush indoor sleeping accommodations and spend the night by the garden. The raccoons are gone and the corn has been spared. And as "vicious" as Angel can be, our son has two new kittens. The dog is terrified by the playful youngsters. Go figure.

Preparing for winter

I know this seems distant, but winter is getting close. Even Kentucky could have their first snow in two months. A handful of CoCoRaisins in the Colorado mountains have already measured and reported their first snow.

As you think about the seasons, keep in mind that water left in the inner cylinder of our gauge will freeze and crack the gauge if left outside in prolonged subfreezing weather. For those of you in cold, snowy areas, the time will come in the next few weeks to bring the funnel and inner tube inside and catch the winter precipitation in the large outer cylinder.

Please review the instructions for measuring snow and ice, and be ready when winter arrives. Here in Colorado, we will be scheduling some refresher classes on how to measure winter precipitation. Please check your CoCoRaHS state webpage (just click on your state on the top map -- www.cocorahs.org -- to see if any training sessions are scheduled in your area.

Time for a break

We missed out on our summer vacation this year. On Saturday my wife and I are heading to Michigan to get away for a few days and visit the cabin near Sault Ste.

Marie where my parents and my grandparents vacationed for many decades. I think it may be too late for the warmth of summer and too early for the colors of fall, but it will be nice to get away. I see CoCoRaHS is really catching on in Michigan (hurray!!) so maybe I'll look up a couple of new observers from the eastern UP (Upper Peninsula) while we're in the neighborhood.

Best wishes and have a great fall.

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University

P.S. If you signed up for CoCoRaHS but have never gotten started reporting, please do it now. There are many storms yet ahead that need to be measured :-). Setting up and reading a rain gauge is easy and it only takes a few minutes a day. We need you.