

The Catch

COCORAHS – THANKFUL

FORT COLLINS, CO — Tuesday, December 2, 2008

Dear CoCoRaHS weather watchers

It was warm here in northern Colorado today -- upper 60s F, unseasonable warm for December. That won't last long as a Canadian cold front rolls down across Wyoming this evening. Tomorrow, we may wake to snow.

I hope you had a good Thanksgiving. For the first time ever, we enjoyed Thanksgiving dinner at our daughter's house. She and her roommates prepared a wonderful feast for over 20 people, most of whom we never met before. In the process, she borrowed about half of our kitchen (she lives less than 3 miles away) and some of our favorite recipes. The next adventure comes in just two weeks when she graduates from college. I never thought I would be this old, or this proud.

The rest of the weekend was spent trying to put our little farm to rest for the winter. We drained the pump and hoses, covered the compost pile with extra leaves, put the pumpkins and squash in the basement, cleaned the corral, loaded some hay, got water tanks ready, brought in some firewood, and cleared off the rest of the garden refuse. Doesn't that sound like fun :-). It actually felt pretty good.

Big Swirl

Did you notice the size of the storm system that swept across the country this past week? What started out as beneficial moderate to heavy rain for southern California the middle of last week ended up as a huge swirl of clouds and wind that stretched on Sunday from Montana to Maine and from Michigan to Mississippi. Nearly 2/3 of all of us who reported our CoCoRaHS precipitation yesterday morning (Monday, Dec. 1) had measurable amounts in our gauges, and over 1000 of us reported

snowfall. All I can say is, it must be winter. Storms just don't behave that way in summer or fall.

Drought and You

While beneficial moisture has fallen in many areas, some of us are still way too dry. Our gauge on the campus of Colorado State University totaled a meager 0.01" for the entire month of November -- 5th driest in 120 years of data collection. Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina just picked up the best rain in weeks, but some areas are still way below average. The new water year hasn't done much yet in the West, and parts of Texas have been suffering with drought for months.

You can track changing drought conditions in your area or across the nation at any time by typing in <http://www.drought.gov>

When you look at those national drought maps, keep in mind that there's a good chance that if you report your regularly to CoCoRaHS, your data are likely being used to help make those maps.

Intense Precipitation Report -- use them for snow, too

Winter rains can last for hours or even days -- much different than the abrupt and intense storms of spring and summer. Winter rains also tend to be more gentle. But that doesn't mean you should forget about the CoCoRaHS "Intense Precipitation Report" until next summer.

The "Intense Precipitation Report" form should be used to report any form of heavy precipitation such as heavy snow of at least 0.5" per hour in progress -- or rainfall totals that are adding up to large amounts. Remember that you can report "Intense Precipitation" as many times a day as you feel necessary to let others know what is happening in your area. Those reports go immediately to your local National Weather Service Office and alarm forecasters on duty.

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

Also remember, even if you do send in intense precipitation reports you will still need to submit your regular daily report, too.

Fund raising letter forthcoming

I want to give you a "heads up" that I will be sending out a year-end CoCoRaHS fund raising e-letter soon. I would much prefer to write about weather patterns and rain gauge characteristics. However, what we are doing here with CoCoRaHS is pretty neat and worth (I think and hope) continuing and improving. That means raising support. The time has come to become largely self sufficient from donations and sponsorships, so I'll give it my best try and hope some of you can help out.

Keep rolling

Hang in there in these darker, colder days of winter. We're less than 3 weeks away from the shortest day of the year, and then we're on our way back to spring. We can do it!

Nolan

P.S. – For all you who choose or happen to live in southern climes that are largely free of snow, cold and days of dark clouds, it's OK if you laugh at our winter sufferings. We don't mind. After all, the cold keeps us sharp and makes us strong -- or so we like to think :-)