

The Catch

COCORAHS – PROGRESS

FORT COLLINS, CO — Tuesday, April 21, 2009

Dear Rain gauge team,

First, let me welcome all the new volunteers who have joined CoCoRaHS over the past month. We are happy to have you and if you need help getting started, just let us know.

Here is an update on the status of our CoCoRaHS database. You have the "all clear" for data entry. Based on the number of reports coming in, most everyone has already figured that by trial and error. I just wanted to make sure you knew. The system worked better yesterday but it still got jammed up a few times. We are working to optimize our database export for the many users of the CoCoRaHS data. This should reduce the load on our system during the morning "Prime Time". A few of us may still experience an occasional error message or delay, but you should be able to try again a few seconds later and get through OK. If you do experience repeated error messages and are unable to enter your data, please let me know and let me know at what time you experienced this.

Remember, you can go back at any time and type in data from past days to fill in your missing reports. Just type in the date on the data entry form or use the up/down arrows to select the correct date. Then type in your precip amount for that day.

We are working to increase our database and server capacity over the coming months. We will also be looking for ways to find sponsors to help support these upgrades.

Welcome West Virginia

The official launch for CoCoRaHS in West Virginia is May 1st. But volunteers can begin signing up now. WV is the 43rd state to join the

CoCoRaHS effort and will now provide us with nearly continuous coverage from the Pacific to the Atlantic (. . . amazing . . .) With the complex ranges of old mountains in WV, we'll be seeing some very interesting rain and snow patterns there I'm sure. West Virginia has a long and notorious tradition of flash floods. CoCoRaHS reports can be very important in filling the gaps in the official observation networks and providing "ground truth" to let others know how much rain is actually reaching the ground. Good luck, and I hope hundreds of volunteers sign up.

Thanks for your measurements

At last the snow season is nearly over. Today there were only about 20 fresh snow reports -- all from Wisconsin and Michigan. Winter is not over yet, but almost. The snowmelt season in the Rocky Mountains is about to begin. We can now concentrate on measuring rain. Make sure that bushes and trees haven't grown up over your gauge, and put the funnel and inner tube back in (unless you expect more snow).

Our California observers are headed into their dry season. Some places see almost no rain from May through September in an average year and don't have the pleasure of hearing thunder. Meanwhile areas on the Great Plains are headed for their wettest months of the year with thunderstorms crashing and banging regularly. We're still several weeks away from the hurricane season but that will be here sooner than we think.

Some of you have already battled with some crazy heavy rains. Several of our Galveston-area, TX CoCoRaHS observers found their rain gauges nearly full to the top last week -- with much of that rain falling in just 2 hours. A couple of weeks ago, some stations near Mobile Bay north of the Gulf of Mexico had daily rainfall totals from 8 to 12". I know you may think I'm crazy, but do plan ahead for what you will do if your station receives more rain than your gauge can hold (11.30" is the max before it spills over, as best we can tell). Your first priority, of course, is your family and neighborhood safety. But if there is a break in the storm, go out and check and empty the gauge before it fills up and be ready for more. Submit an "Intense Precipitation Report" anytime you think your rainfall data would be useful to weather forecasters, flood forecasters, media and emergency managers. Then also remember to report your 24-hour total the next morning.

Hail Season

No matter if it's tiny or huge, please use the "Hail Report form" to let us know when you have hail. Just click on the work "Hail" on your data entry page under the heading "Enter My New Reports". Then fill out as much information as you can. Report the exact date and time the hail began and how long it lasted. If you're not sure, ask a neighbor or leave the field blank. You can enter your hail report as soon as the storm is over to alert people downwind.

CoCoRaHS has the potential for being the very best source of local hail information in the country. Hail pads make it much easier to determine the number, size and density of stones. ALL COLORADO OBSERVERS please make sure you have your hail pads out and ready. County coordinators in Colorado and Wyoming should all be supplied with extra hail pads. If hail pads are not available in your area, you can make your own. Instructions are on our website at <http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=MakingHailPads> They are also available from WeatherYourWay.com

And then comes the fun part -- the hail maps. Yesterday (April 20, 2009) there were many reports of small hail in Illinois and Indiana. If you submit a hail report it will appear on these maps and is a great resource for tracking storms.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Maps/ViewMap.aspx?state=usa>

Remember, to view the entire country on one map, click on "Select State" on the top of the state list and it will display the whole country.

I know hail is infrequent at most locations, but if you have hail please submit a hail report.

News from the farm

After a few days of deep, squishy mud, the barnyard is drying out this morning. After our 3" rain/wet snow last week, everything is green and the bushes and trees that were thinking about blossoming after that warm spell in March can now get down to business. With this great moisture, we will no longer be shown in "Moderate Drought" on the U.S. Drought Monitor when the new map comes out later this week <http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>

The garden will be begging for attention now. It's tempting to stay home and work outside, but this is also the busiest time of year at the Colorado Climate Center (my office) -- so, oh well.

And as for Angel (the Great Pyrenees), the judge let us plea bargain and the big, white sweetie got off with lesser charges -- "*Dog at Large*" instead of "*Chicken Killer*". What happened later that day when we got home will have to wait until another story.

Conclusion

Thanks for being patient with us and our database. We'll get this figured out. Recruit a new volunteer or two this spring and hopefully we'll be up to 8,000 reports per day very soon!

Best wishes,

Nolan
Colorado State University