

The Catch

COCORAHS - A COLD WINTER MORNING

FORT COLLINS, CO — Friday, January 8, 2010

Good morning.

First, a big welcome to all of you who have joined CoCoRaHS in the past few weeks to help measure and report rain, sleet, hail and snow. Things are a little slow this time of year, and not too many people are signing up, but we are still seeing about 10 new CoCoRaHS applications each day from across the country. We're sure glad to have you. Welcome to the team. If you have questions about getting started, please ask.

Deep Winter

Looking at our thermometer this morning here in northern Colorado, it's a nippy -14F (-25 C) and still dropping. It's both beautiful and dreadful when it gets this cold. Our horses, chickens and geese are still doing well but it must wear on them. Our heated stock tank has been leaking so we have a small glacier out in the corral. Sanding the corral to keep the horses upright seems a bit odd. Each of our horses has a beard of white frost. We're lucky to get one fresh egg a day and we need to collect the eggs quickly before they freeze. But I'm toasty. I got a lovely new pair of insulated coveralls for Christmas. If they wear as well as my old ones, I should be good now for another 25 years.

We're not the only ones that are cold. The Dakotas are crazy cold. It's been subfreezing in the Ohio Valley for many straight days. Those of you down by the Gulf Coast are probably the coldest of all since you're not used to 18 degree F weather. This is the time of year for this, though. The weeks just following the winter solstice are often the coldest of the year, so we're on schedule. We can also be assured that brighter warmer days are soon ahead -- and then come the storms of spring. Hang on! The cycle continues.

Snow on snow

I almost feel sorry for all of you in the Midwest, the northern plains, the Great Lakes and New England. I know it's a normal part of life -- cold, snow and wind -- and it's a fine combination that makes you strong, healthy and full of good stories to tell. But still The snow just hasn't had any chance to melt, and new snows have been accumulating on the old. Then the wind comes and rearranges it all. This is the weather observer's nightmare. But still hundreds of you go out each morning -- in the dark -- to try to measure the stuff. Hats off to you!!! (Actually, you better keep your hat on). The snow is more than a foot deep now in many places. Most of South Dakota and Iowa have deep snow with over 20" in several parts of Iowa. There is still some snow left from the Oklahoma blizzard, and western North Carolina still has snow left from the big mid December storm. Ours here in Fort Collins is only about 6" deep on the level, but with 1.00" of water content (Snow Water Equivalent) it won't be melting any time soon.

Do remember to report your average depth of total snow on the ground each day, even if there has not been new snowfall. Tracking national snowcover patterns is very helpful for weather forecasting and climate monitoring and prediction. When the snow is very uneven, an estimated average may be the best you can do.

Fund Raising Update -- Five for CoCoRaHS!

I am pleased -- no, I think "thrilled" would be a better word" -- to report that since our "Five for CoCoRaHS" campaign was launched December 18, over 1,000 CoCoRaHS volunteers have sent in donations. Some of your employers have even sent in matching gifts. Over \$20,000 has been collected to help maintain and grow CoCoRaHS in 2010. This is a huge help to the project as we start a new year, and should help us leverage support from other larger organizations that use, appreciate and rely on the fantastic weather data you are helping gather each day. Nearly 10% of our active CoCoRaHS participants have helped out financially in the past 3 weeks. Considering that most of the donations were \$5, this is indeed an impressive showing of support and demonstrates again how a team effort can have a huge impact.

There are still three weeks left in the campaign. If you were thinking about sending in a donation to support CoCoRaHS, there is still time and it's very easy. Just go to

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=donate5> and click the appropriate button at the bottom of the page. If you would like to give a little more and get a CoCoRaHS t-shirt or sweatshirt, you'll see those options are also available. If you would prefer to mail in a check, the information you need is at the bottom of the donation form.

And if you don't or can't help in this way, that's fine. You are already sharing some of your own personal time to help measure and report precipitation across the country. Your gift of time is the greatest gift of all.

I'll let you know if we reach \$30,000.

9,000 reports

Speaking of reaching goals, remember when we were shooting for 9,000 daily reports back in September? I was recently looking back at the "Rainy Days" report and discovered that when all the late reports came in this fall, we eventually did reach 9,000. On September 22 we received 9,012 daily precipitation reports and on September 23rd we had 9,003. We did it -- a new CoCoRaHS record! Thanks!

We'll wait for winter to pass, but some time this spring or early summer, let's try for 10,000. That will be a real milestone.

National Western Stock Show

Our presentation on the weather and climate of Colorado is scheduled for Tuesday, January 12th at 3 PM at the Beef Palace Auction Arena located on the lower level of the Hall of Education, near the NW Club entrance in Denver, Colorado. Perhaps I'll see a few of you there.

WeatherFest -- Atlanta

The American Meteorological Society's Annual Meeting brings together thousands of weather professionals from across the country and around the world. This year, the AMS 90th annual meeting is in Atlanta, GA starting in just over a week. The conference kicks off on Sunday, January 17th at the Georgia World Congress Center with WeatherFest 2010 -- an educational event for anyone (kids and adults) interested in weather stuff. Here is the link to the specific details. It runs from noon to 4 PM..

<http://www.ametsoc.org/MEET/ANNUAL/weatherfest.html>

CoCoRaHS will be there!! Thanks to a generous donation from HDR (a nationwide engineering and consulting firm (<http://hdrinc.com/>) we will have a "squeeze the water out of the cloud" display and competition to see who can collect the most rain in a CoCoRaHS rain gauge. It should be a lot of fun. If you or people you know will be in or near Atlanta on Sunday, January 17th, please come by and see us!

Another Goodbye

Last week I got the word that one of our dedicated observers from the Texas panhandle died suddenly from a heart attack a few days after Christmas. Dang it, I'm so sorry. He wrote us letters of encouragement as often as he could the last several years and provided great comments on severe weather, Texas drought, and on animal and human behavior. We're a little poorer today with his passing.

This has become a natural part of CoCoRaHS that we somehow never planned or prepared for when we started the project. -- losing good friends and fellow weather enthusiasts. But with our community of over 10,000 volunteers, many of whom are 65 or older, the actuarial charts tell us this will happen. While it stings, I still appreciate hearing back, so if you know of fellow volunteers who are ailing or have passed on, do let me know.

Sunrise

It's now 6:40 AM and it's still dark. But looking at the sunrise - sunset calendar it looks like starting tomorrow the morning light will be coming earlier. Hurray!

Talk to you soon again, and thanks for being a part of CoCoRaHS. Remember, if your e-mail address has or will be changing, please let us know so we can update our database. If you don't want to receive these messages, let me know and we'll make sure we remove you from the list.

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