

# The Catch

## **FIVE FOR COCORAHS - GRAND FINALE**

FORT COLLINS, CO — Monday, January 25, 2010

Good evening CoCoRaHS rain gaugers,

Welcome to all of you who have recently joined the CoCoRaHS team (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow network). Each new volunteer with your backyard rain gauge represents a new and valued data point on the U.S. maps.

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

Thanks for helping out as we work together to measure and track precipitation from coast to coast.

### **CoCoRaHS fund raising update**

There are just 6 days left in our "Five for CoCoRaHS" campaign. Our goal to raise \$30,000 had seemed like a wild stretch and I thought we'd never get there. But it now looks like we might actually make it. Nearly 1,400 of us have already sent in donations totally over \$27,000. There is still time to help.

In this last week of the campaign, we need 400 more \$5.00 donations. That will bring us very close to \$30,000. I realize that you already donate your time, and that's what matters most. But if you could spare just a few dollars for a good cause, we would appreciate it greatly.

Here is the link to donate online.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=donate5>

You will also find instructions there on how to send in donations by mail. The funds are received by the Colorado State University Foundation and 100% of the proceeds (not counting the cost of the t-shirts and

sweatshirts that some of you will receive) are given to CoCoRaHS. These funds are going to pay for the costs of maintaining our computer, server and database expenses while also providing some salary support for our staff. Thanks so much for helping!!

### **A Splash in Atlanta**

We had an absolute blast at the Atlanta Convention Center for the American Meteorological Society's annual WeatherFest on January 17th. Several hundred children and a few dozen adults competed in the first ever CoCoRaHS "Squeeze the rain out of the cloud" contest vying to see who could get the most water out of their sponges and into a CoCoRaHS rain gauge in 10 seconds. We were assisted by CoCoRaHS volunteer leaders from FL, GA, IL, TX, AZ, CO, NJ, KY and probably somewhere else that I'm forgetting -- all there attending the 90th annual meeting of the American Meteorological Society. The winners managed to squeeze more than 4" of rain into the gauge. In the process, we got a little wet and we also got to meet several of our loyal Georgia volunteers from the Atlanta area. We also signed up some new weather enthusiasts who found out about CoCoRaHS for the first time. Again, let me thank HDR <http://www.hdrinc.com/> for sponsoring CoCoRaHS at the 2010 AMS Weatherfest.

CoCoRaHS was also mentioned in several of the scientific presentations given last week at the convention. While we may be "low tech" the fact is that good, reliable precipitation measurements are in high demand. For those of you who have asked "Does anyone ever look at our data?" Please know that the answer is a resounding YES! CoCoRaHS precipitation data are being used every day of the year in a variety of research and weather forecasting and hydrologic applications. The longer we keep collecting data, the more research and climatological applications are emerging. I'll elaborate on this when we have more time and give specific examples. You may be surprised at just how important our rain and snow measurements really are.

### **Hurray for CA, NV and AZ**

After months of little or nothing to report, our CA, AZ and southern NV CoCoRaHS volunteers were put to a test this past week and passed with flying colors. Nearly 400 Californians and over 300 Arizonians measured and reported the heavy rains. Totals for the past 9 days in Arizona exceeded 8" of water content (and a lot of wet snow up around Flagstaff) in some areas. Even Phoenix managed 2-3" rainfall totals. In California

there were many CoCoRaHS precipitation totals over 12". Good job. Your patience paid off. Thanks, also, for those who made the extra effort to send in "Significant Weather Reports" to report the heavy rains and mountains snows as they fell. Those reports can be submitted at any time day or night and help notify NWS forecast offices of significant weather in progress. Feel free to submit "Significant Weather Reports" at any time you are receiving heavy rain, heavy snow or are observing other phenomenon of interest.

### **Glaciers retreating**

I'm referring to the ice in our horse corrals. We haven't had any new snow now for over two weeks here in Fort Collins, CO. The ground is still mostly white, and the ice patches on the side of the roads are thick and slippery. But gradually more bare ground is showing. The ice in the corral and around the barn is downright nasty, and I won't comment about my efforts to clean up after the horses. A pickaxe would be needed, I'm afraid. But it's getting better. As of today, the official Colorado State University weather station has had continuous snow cover for 50 days. It's now only 2" deep on average -- mostly solid ice. That snow/ice will need to last two more weeks to have a chance of tying the record for longest continuous snow cover. That seems unlikely now that the sun is higher in the sky each day.

There is good news to report from our little farm. Our little barn cat, Mittens, showed up this evening. She had been missing for a couple of days and feared lost -- possibly at the hands (talons) of the Great Horned Owl that lives nearby. But alas, my fears were unwarranted. She was just out hunting, I guess. The longer day length has brought new enthusiasm to our hens, and egg production has picked up noticeable. After nearly a two month lull, they are now laying more eggs than we can eat.

### **Reporting Depth of Snow on Ground**

We've had a lot of questions about reporting total depth of snow on the ground -- especially on days when no new snow has fallen. Yes, if you can make a reasonable estimate of the average depth of the old snow remaining on the ground each day when you take your daily measurements, that data is appreciated. The depth of snow is used by weather forecasters to help improve local temperature forecasts. Areas with snow lingering on the ground are typically a lot colder than areas where the snow never accumulated or already melted. Likewise, remnant snow cover also affects soil temperatures, soil moisture and the water

available for runoff and potential flooding when that snow melts. So if you can get a measurement, even if it's approximate, please send it in. Likewise, if you can get a measurement of the water equivalent of that old snow on the ground, that's valuable too. Right now, while we only have about 2" of snow left on the ground here, it's very icy and contains nearly 1.00" of water. The default value on our computer system is NA, so just type your reading into the box and replace the NA. If you don't have snow on the ground, please type in 0.0"

### **Zero is better than nothing**

Please remember that it is very, very helpful to report even when no precipitation has fallen. The more complete your data records, the more useful the data are to us and the many others who are looking at CoCoRaHS data. Don't forget that we have the "Monthly Zeros" report to make it easy to go back and fill in the days when it didn't rain or snow.

### **CoCoRaHS on Youtube**

We got an e-mail this morning from North Dakota with a link to a youtube video. It was posted by a Fargo, ND TV meteorologist. Here's the link. It's very good.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKlpFuaLw0I>

I don't have much time or inclination to explore Youtube, but while I was watching the ND video, I noticed that several other CoCoRaHS videos have been posted including a series of training videos posted by New Mexico State University. Take a look.

### **Signing off**

Thanks again for helping with CoCoRaHS. This is a team effort. If you happen to be in Colorado this week and have plans to visit the Colorado Farm Show in Greeley, we'll be there this Wednesday. Stop by the National Weather Service booth.

Sincerely,

*Nolan Doesken*  
Colorado State University