

# The Catch

## COCORAHS -- THE QUEST FOR 10,000 PRECIPITATION REPORTS

FORT COLLINS, CO — Wednesday, June 8, 2011

Greetings,

### **Update**

Here is an update on our quest to reach 10,000 daily rainfall (rain or no rain) reports. The weather hasn't cooperated. June precipitation has been relatively light and spread over some of the less populated portions of the U.S. where we don't have large numbers of volunteers. If we hope to reach 10,000 we will need many more "no rain" reports from our volunteers in AZ, NM, TX, LA, FL and other drought stricken states as well as the western, eastern, northern and central areas of the country where people are relieved to finally be having a break in the stormy weather that pounded so many areas in April and May.

Here is where we stand. So far, we have 8,300 reports in for Monday, June 6. We only need another 1,700 late reports to reach the goal. From past experience we'll see 800 more reports trickle in between now and the end of the month, but I hope we can do better than that. For yesterday, we're not quite up to 7,500 yet -- so we have a long way to go yet. Today we're doing well with more than 5900 reports so far -- considering that almost 5,000 of those reports are the big ZERO.

By the way, some of you suggested that we add a counter where everyone can see the number of reports for the day without having to run one of the summary reports. That's a great idea and we'll be adding the counter to the main CoCoRaHS homepage in a few days. It won't count every one as they arrive, but will probably update every 2 or 3 minutes.

## **Reporting zeros -- why it helps so much**

You're probably sick of hearing me talk about the importance of reporting 0.00" when you've had no precipitation. We totally understand that the motivation may be very low to take the time to go online and submit a report first thing in the morning when there has been no precipitation in the past 24 hours. But as we talk to the many organizations that use CoCoRaHS data every day, we quickly see just how important those zeros are.

Two weeks ago we met with representatives of several agencies that routinely use CoCoRaHS data in combination with National Weather Service Cooperative weather reports. One after another told about the importance of knowing that no precipitation had occurred. In particular, the NWS River Forecast Centers produce daily estimates of "Mean aerial precipitation" (the average rainfall over each river basin). These estimates change a lot depending on if weather observers report their 0.00" amounts or not -- so this affects the accuracy of river level and flow forecasts. Likewise, drought assessments and disaster declarations are very dependent on having complete data verifying the lack of precipitation.

## **What can we do to help?**

Many of you have suggested that we offer a smart phone application as well as text messaging options for submitting reports. The smart-phone application is essential and we'll be working to make that happen. Thanks for all the encouragement and suggestions.

## **What can you do to help?**

Simple -- just check your gauge and send in your report. You are probably already doing it, so we thank you SO MUCH for your enthusiastic volunteer help. Your small daily effort combined with thousands of others from across the country marvelously paints a daily picture of rainfall, snowfall and hail patterns across the country each day. We can all watch it unfold each day on the national map on the CoCoRaHS website: <http://www.cocorahs.org>

Every data point helps. For those of us who are in the CoCoRaHS habit, it's quick, easy and rewarding.

But for many of us it's not so easy getting into the rain gauge habit, especially during dry weather in the summer and cold weather during the winter. Furthermore, this is a volunteer program. We want you to enjoy the experience and learn from it without feeling burdened.

With that in mind, let me just say that we hope you give it a try. You can even start participating before you have a rain gauge set up. You can report your 0.00 (Zero) on dry days when there has been no precipitation and see how easy it is.

### **Need help?**

If you need some help getting started, we have volunteer leaders all across the country that you can contact to ask questions. Follow this link to find the volunteer coordinator for your area.

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

Or just send a message to us at: [info@cocorahs.org](mailto:info@cocorahs.org) We'll do our best to help you get started.

### **The rest of the summer**

Please enjoy the summer of 2011. It's off to a miserably hot start for some parts of the country. It won't be long until tropical storms begin to brew. So far we have had very few individual rain gauge reports in excess of 6" in 24 hours. The chances are very high that before many more weeks pass, we'll see some intense storms drop 10" or more. It could be your neighborhood. Please be ready and send in "Significant weather" as well as "hail" reports when appropriate in addition to your regular daily rainfall report.

We'll be in touch. Thanks for all of you who sent kind words of sympathy and encouragement after the loss of our family dog Argy last week. That was really nice of you.

Nolan Doesken  
Colorado State University