

# The Catch

## COCORAHS -- HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

FORT COLLINS, CO — Friday, June 17, 2011

Dear CoCoRaHS Rain Gaugers,

### **Happy Anniversary CoCoRaHS**

Thirteen years ago today, three local high school students in Fort Collins, Colorado celebrated an impressive accomplishment. Luke, Tom and Daphne pulled off a small miracle. After just 4 months of planning and preparation, on June 17, 1998 the CoCoRaHS website was launched. At that time, CoCoRaHS stood for "Colorado Collaborative Rain and Hail Study". We never dreamed we would expand beyond Colorado, and we didn't initially plan to include the measurement of snow because we knew that would be a harder challenge for volunteers.

Of the three students, each from a different local high school, Luke developed the initial website. Tom figured out how to write computer programs that could draw maps, and Daphne headed up the recruiting, training and social activities for the first volunteers. I still remember her quote "We need to have food" -- when I think back to our early meetings and training programs. She was right, of course.

On that first day, 6/17/1998, several dozen new volunteers submitted rainfall reports. The first "Larimer County, Colorado" precipitation map appeared -- conveniently on a day with precipitation to report. From the very beginning, we saw amazing local variations in precipitation. That's the main reason we started CoCoRaHS and why we continue today. Many aspects of technology and communications have changed since then, but the need for localized data for tracking precipitation variability continues.

I missed that celebration 13 years ago. Our family had left on vacation to Upper Michigan with our young children -- 10 and 12 years old at the time (my, how time flies). But the young CoCoRaHS team tracked me

down by phone and shared their good news. It was two weeks until I got to see it myself and send in my first rain gauge observation.

Those were very exciting times indeed. Thanks go out to the Colorado Office of Emergency Management and the City of Fort Collins stormwater utility that provided the initial funds and encouragement back in 1998.

Of the original group of several dozen rain gauge readers, more than 20 continue to observe and report today. Some have hardly missed a day in 13 years (incredible, I'd say). Back then, access to the internet was limited and many of those first volunteers called in their reports by phone. 13 years later, a few of those same observers still are calling in. Now that's commitment.

I hear from Daphne from time to time. We heard that Tom was working on a PhD somewhere near DC. Luke was already well on his way to a successful web development career already in high school, so hopefully he's still doing well. Wherever the three of you may be today, thanks for what you did back then.

Let's all celebrate this 13th anniversary -- on a Friday, I might add -- by sending in our daily observation and admiring all the data coming in from volunteers across the country. Good job!

### **Did we reach our goal -- 10,000 reports?**

The short answer is "No" :-(. We made a strong effort during the June 6-9 campaign, but we fell short. I held off telling you, hoping that late reports would put us over the top. A combination of having hundreds of volunteers on vacation and a nationwide dry spell worked against us.

As of today the count stands at 9082 for June 6th. If you add in the multiday reports, we're up to 9338. That's really good, but just not quite enough. Reports are still trickling in, and by the end of the month we'll probably have 200-400 additional reports -- but that's still not enough.

Here is another interesting fact. On June 8th, we had 8844 reports. What's amazing about that is the fact that 7655 of those were zeros. That's fantastic.

But here's the good news. While we didn't hit 10,000 on any individual day, over the 4-day challenge period more than 10,250 volunteers submitted at least one report. That number is still climbing. If we include Friday, June 10, that number climbs to over 10,600. Interestingly,

from April 22 through June 2, we have exceeded 9000 daily reports on 16 separate days. 13 of those 16 occurrences took place on days where nearly half of the country was experiencing measurable precipitation. That compares to only about 10-15% of the country each day this past week. Our maximum number of reports on a single day now stands at 9619 on May 12, 2011 -- darn impressive.

Many of you have written asking for an update and how to see how many reports have come in each day. I use the "Rain Days Report" to get that number. Thanks to your urging, we will begin displaying the number of reports each day just above the national precipitation map on the CoCoRaHS homepage: <http://www.cocorahs.org>. We are also going to start showing monthly reporting statistics so we can all keep track together. Thanks very much to all of you who wrote with suggestions about this.

## **Two in Eight**

It was another great evening for cloud watching here. For the second time in eight days we had a lightning show and some hail. Severe weather warnings were posted, but we ended up with just a few small stones tonight, not enough to do damage. But there are still parts of town where gardens and trees are still beat up from last week's storm. It is hail season here in Colorado.

Please remember, each time you see hail at your station take the extra minute or two to login and submit a hail report. That helps us a lot.

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

With the storm tonight, we're now close to 2" of rain for this month on top of the 4" plus last month. The grass will stay green for another week without having to water if temperatures continue below average. That's what I like. I know a bunch of our neighbors to the south would pay good money about now for some green grass and cool breezes.

## **What is "The Catch"?**

Those of you who sent in precipitation data this past week may have noticed the "Message of the Day" asking if you are getting "The Catch". In case you're wondering what in the world that is, each time I send out an

e-mail message to you like this, we keep a copy and make an archive that anyone can access later.

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

Each of my letters sent out to CoCoRaHS volunteers is called "The Catch". This turns out to be a semi-technical term for "how much water was caught in your rain gauge." So if you are getting these occasional e-mail messages from me, then indeed you are receiving "The Catch."

Time to call it a day. Please enjoy the summer months ahead. There is sure to be some interesting weather ahead as hurricane season takes shape.

Best regards, and "Happy CoCoRaHS Anniversary",

Nolan Doesken  
Colorado State University