

The Catch

NOLAN DOESKEN'S BI-MONTHLY COCORAHS E-MAIL MESSAGE

COCORAHS - SUMMER FUNDRAISER AND RAIN BRINGER

FORT COLLINS, CO — Wednesday, July 21, 2010

Dear CoCoRaHS volunteers, friends, foes and family,

Yes, indeed, it's July 21-- the dog days of summer. For many parts of the country this is the hottest, humidest (is that a word?), stillest (least windy) time of year. As a child, it was my favorite time even though my upstairs bedroom was painfully hot. It was the time to hang out with all the neighborhood boys in tiny Royal, IL -- playing baseball, listening to the Cubs on the radio, and trying to sell lemonade on main street where only a few cars came even on busy days. At a nickel a glass and sharing the profits five ways, we didn't get rich.

Then, of course, was the daily ritual of cloud gazing and listening for the first rumbles of thunder. I loved doing that already by the time I was seven. Then we would watch for distant lightning after sunset with the hopes of the cool refreshment of a summer storm. I find myself longing now for those simple pleasures. Fall seemed so far away then, and summer seemed wonderfully endless. It is odd how perspectives change with age and responsibility. Now it seems like summer will soon be over and the new school year will begin way too soon -- and then come the high winter utility bills.

A reminder about why CoCoRaHS is important

Here in our part of the country (Colorado) the next three weeks hold more potential (based on historic rainfall data) for local intense rains than any other time of year. This is thanks to subtropical moisture carried northward by the North American monsoon, a very warm atmosphere capable of "holding" copious amounts of moisture, and a weak jet stream -- which means the storms that develop will move slowly. Even today, the air is ripe with moisture, and the potential for local heavy rains is clearly stated in the National Weather Service forecast.

This resembles the weather that first motivated CoCoRaHS several years ago. On July 28, 1997, one of those localized moisture-laden thunderheads parked itself over west Fort Collins (where I live and work) and dropped over a foot of rain while other areas just a few miles away were dry or enjoying a pleasant summer shower. In those few hours, as the rain poured down 2-3" per hour for over four hours straight in what is normally a semi-arid region, our world briefly but chaotically turned upside down. Houses flooded, cars floated away, our university was partially wrecked, there were hundreds of emergency rescues, a train wreck, gas explosions -- and unfortunately five fatalities. It all happened so fast. 12 years earlier, on August 1, 1985 (the day after our first child was born), Cheyenne, Wyoming was in the bulls eye of a similar local storm -- and again, many fatalities and millions of dollars in damage. And then, of course, the nightmarish Big Thompson Canyon flash flood of July 31, 1976 -- over 140 souls lost in what was supposed to be the grand celebration of Colorado's statehood centennial the next day.

That is some of the motivation behind CoCoRaHS and why we care so much. With a small effort from many weather enthusiasts, we can gather critical rainfall data, avoid panic storm surprises, and let people know just how bad a storm is so that warnings can be posted and evacuations can take place sooner. We can even help engineers and planners do a better job planning and designing drainage, gutters, culverts and storm sewers. We can encourage more people to avoid driving into floodwaters. And gradually, working together, we all gain a better understanding of storms and their behavior. This is the ideal and it's worth the effort.

As more and more people join CoCoRaHS across the country, we are making a difference. Check out the recent "Significant Weather Reports", the "Drought Impact Reports" and the hail reports under View Data <http://www.cocorahs.org/ViewData/>

Yesterday, several stations in southern Iowa and northeast Missouri were dumped on by over 6" of rain. The peak was of 9.13" near Kirksville, MO.

Today, another area will see heavy rains and tomorrow yet another area. Each time our rain gauge reports will be helpful and perhaps essential. Meanwhile, abnormally dry conditions continue to expand in other parts of the country missed by the July storms. Our rainfall reports, wet or dry, really do make a difference. Thanks so much for participating and helping out.

"Five for CoCoRaHS " Mid-Summer Fund Raising Request

Our winter fundraiser gave CoCoRaHS and our staff a huge boost and helped cover several of our operating expenses for the past 5 months. To help keep CoCoRaHS going and growing, we're going to try a very short summer fundraiser. Please consider helping in the "Five For CoCoRaHS Ten Mid-Summer Days" fund raising campaign. Our goal is to raise \$20,000 over the next ten days (July 22-31st) with the help of many small \$5 donations.

If just a quarter of our volunteers gave \$5.00 each during this 10-day fundraiser in July, we can reach our goal of \$20,000. Let's give it a try! We'll post the results each day on our "Message of the Day" which you see each time you submit a data report. That way we can all keep track.

Please consider making a donation of just \$5.00 anytime between July 22 - July 31st. That's it, just five. Your gift will help sustain the CoCoRaHS network throughout the summer. If your employer offers to match your donation, be sure to indicate that on the donation form.

Contributions to CoCoRaHS are deductible as charitable contributions within the limits of the Internal Revenue Code. Please consult with your tax professional.

For those of you who wish to contribute a larger amount of \$50.00 or greater, we will send you an "Official CoCoRaHS Baseball Cap" as our way of saying thanks. "Weatheryourway.com <<http://Weatheryourway.com>>" is helping this effort by providing complimentary shipping for all the "thank you" gifts. Thanks a bunch.

Any and every contribution will help us keep CoCoRaHS going. To make a donation to CoCoRaHS please click on the Five for CoCoRaHS Mid-Summer logo at the top of the CoCoRaHS web page <<http://www.cocorahs.org>> and make your donation today. Or click right here: <http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=donatefivejuly>

Any animal stories?

Sure, at our little farm there is always something going on. I found a little bundle of young raccoons last night pretending to be invisible hiding under the eave of the chicken coop roof and hoping for a chance to slip in past the barn cats and watch geese to snatch some cat food. But they didn't get a chance and after hanging there for a good hour, they finally left -- exhausted and hungry.

Today's storms seem to have missed us. We'll see what tomorrow brings.

Sincerely and with appreciation,

Nolan Doesken

Colorado State University

CoCoRaHS National Director