

The Catch

COCORAHS - 10 MILLION DAILY REPORTS

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, October 21, 2010

Dear CoCoRaHS current, future or past rain gauge volunteers:

Today -- October 21, 2010 -- is a special day for CoCoRaHS. Sometime around noon we received our 10 millionth daily precipitation report since our backyard volunteer rain gauge project first got started. We knew we were getting close, but we didn't think it would be until this weekend -- so we weren't watching and don't know exactly who sent in that 10 millionth report. But it's great and we can all take credit.

When about 50 of us here in northern Colorado first started sending in reports on a simple webpage built by a local high school student back in 1998, we never dreamed this could happen. Our main concern then was that we would never be caught off guard again by a localized flash flood like the one that clobbered Fort Collins in July 1997.

<http://ccc.atmos.colostate.edu/~odie/rain.html>

Interestingly, about a dozen of us from that first group (then called the "Colorado Collaborative Rain and Hail Study") are still going strong. I think there may even be two or three who have not missed a day in over 12 years -- amazing!!

A big "Thank You"

Thanks to all of you who have contributed to reach this milestone. Even if you've only sent in a few reports, you've still helped. And then there are those of you who have sent in thousands of daily reports. All I can say is "Thanks".

Let's try for 10,000 -- next week!!

This may be a good time, before the snow flies, to challenge the CoCoRaHS team to see if we can finally reach the elusive 10,000 mark. What I mean by that is let's try to get 10,000 of us to all send in our rainfall reports on the same day. There may be some rain (and maybe even some snow) in parts of the country next week, so that should make it more interesting.

From Monday (October 25) through Thursday (Oct 28) lets get as many of us reporting as we can. Even if you haven't reported in months, dust off your rain gauge and let's go for it.

It will take a special effort. Right now, on any given day, about 7000 of us are sending in our reports (Thanks!). An additional 1500 of us may take a few days or even a few weeks to send in our reports, but we eventually do. Then there is a huge group -- nearly 6,000 -- who have a CoCoRaHS gauge but who only report occasionally. There is also a large group who signed up for CoCoRaHS but who have never once sent in a report. If just a small percentage of you in either of these last two categories give it a try next week and send in your rainfall reports (including a report of 0.00" if nothing falls), we can finally reach the 10,000 mark. In fact, if everyone who sent in at least one report this past water year reports next week, we could surge past 14,000. Let's try!

I'll send out a reminder on Monday. If you've forgotten your username and/or password, you can have it e-mailed to you just by going to the top of the CoCoRaHS homepage (www.cocorahs.org) and click on "Login" and then select "find my login information", Type in your e-mail address and our computer will send you your login reminder.

Beginning to think about snow

It's that time of year already. A few dozen of us have already had our first snow. Many more will see snow within the next month. We're already into the darkest 1/3 of the year and we're now just 2 months away from winter solstice.

Dealing with snow may be the most challenging part of CoCoRaHS participation. It can be darn confusing to sort out measuring the accumulation of new snow, the depth of both the new and old snow left on the ground, and the water content of that snow. We see a lot more puzzling data reports when winter comes -- and especially those first

few storms of the year. But with a little practice and preparation, it's not so difficult.

So this is a good time to start reviewing the snow measurement instructions. There are several options:

Written instructions

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

Slide shows

http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=training_slideshows

and even a video

<http://www.cocorahs.org/media/video/measuringsnow/default.aspx>

Other than the National Weather Service's excellent "Cooperative Weather Observer Program" and some local snow spotter teams, there just aren't many sources for snow data. Many people and organizations turn to CoCoRaHS to track winter snow patterns. So give it your best shot.

Water Year Summaries

In ten days (on Nov 1), we will reprocess and update all the Water Year Summaries. Then Zach will compile a national report for the 2010 water year (October 1, 2009 – Sept 30, 2010). I can hardly wait to see how precipitation patterns varied across the country last year. If you haven't checked your summary yet, this is a good time. Also, if you need to fill in some daily reports or make any corrections, please try to do it in these next ten days.

To view your station "Water Year Summary" just click on "My Account" when you're on the CoCoRaHS website. If you want to view other stations, then go to: <http://www.cocorahs.org/wateryearsummary/>

Trouble entering older data?

Several of you wrote to say that when you went back to enter data from previous months, it didn't all get saved in our database. That's a real bummer. This shouldn't happen but we figured out a couple ways that it could. If, for example, you typed in a daily report, hit "submit" and then went quickly to try to enter another date without waiting to get the confirmation message, then the report might be lost. Likewise, if you enter a report, hit "submit", and then use the back arrow to go back to

the data entry page instead of hitting "My Data" or "Daily Precipitation" to bring up a new blank form, then the report may not get saved.

If you have any trouble entering data from previous dates, just let us know.

Three more geese

My wife just called me. She's driving our old pickup truck across Weld County this evening. She had been helping a friend today out near Kersey, Colorado on her dairy farm. Somehow she ended up with 3 more geese to add to our flock. I'm not sure I see the wisdom in this. They bite!

Angel (the Great Pyrenees) managed to escape our yard twice this week and tour the area. After giving us a fright (we live on a fairly busy road) she made it safely back home each time. How she got out, I'll never know.

California Rain

A sure sign of the changing seasons has been the recent rains in CA. It was great to see many of you in southern California who were dormant (in terms of sending in rainfall reports) for the past several months during the annual dry season, suddenly spring to action when the rains arrived. Hopefully the winter will bring adequate rains and few floods -- and a bit less snow to the Washington DC area.

La Nina

The latest seasonal forecasts were issued today from the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center. Check them out if you're interested. <http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/>

State Climate Descriptions

Those of you who enter daily precipitation reports each day have been seeing our new series of "State Climate" descriptions. We started with Alaska and will be working our way across the country. Today, Washington State was featured. Here is a direct link to the whole series.

Each week we will add about 3 states until we've covered the entire country.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=50StatesClimates>

Our thanks go to all the State Climatologists from across the U.S. who have provided these concise and informative climate descriptions.

Until next time

Again, thanks to all of you who helped CoCoRaHS reach it's 10,000,000th daily precipitation report. If any of you have any questions, please contact your CoCoRaHS state or local coordinator, or let us know.

Gratefully,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado Climate Center