

The Catch

COCORAHS -- EXCITING NEWS

FORT COLLINS, CO — Friday, December 30, 2011

CoCoRaHS rain (and snow) gaugers -- plus friends and family.

Happy New Year

As 2011 comes to an end, I want to wish everyone a productive and satisfying "Happy New Year".

We realize that these are good times for many of us, but not for all. Just this week one of our loyal CoCoRaHS volunteer leaders and a long-time personal friend from the Denver area died from complications from cancer that had only been diagnosed a few months ago. Scott was only in his 50s, had recently retired from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and had so many exciting plans for the future. Some things just don't seem right or fair. We will miss him dearly. And nearly every week I hear from other CoCoRaHS volunteers across the country dealing with sudden family losses, illnesses and failing health. Life is just hard sometimes. It makes me both sad but also proud. This is an interesting part of CoCoRaHS much different than just science -- dealing both with our dynamic weather and our fragile humanity. In the big picture, each day that we have the time, the mobility and the curiosity to go out and check our rain gauge is probably a very good day and a cause for small celebration.

Less snow this winter

Last year this time, the Northeast was still digging out from a furious after-Christmas blizzard. By comparison this has been an easy winter for most of the country -- at least so far. Based on CoCoRaHS data, we've had less than half as much snow as "usual" for much of the country -- with some notable exceptions (e.g. New Mexico). Chances are things will

change soon, though, as we plow into the two months best known for "deep winter". So hang on to your hats and keep a good watch on the skies.

Canada and CoCoRaHS

Did you notice? Early yesterday morning we turned on "the switch" and Canadians can now begin to participate in CoCoRaHS. <http://www.cocorahs.org/Canada.aspx>. At first, only residents of Manitoba can join. Manitoba experienced extreme flooding this spring and summer and are still reeling from the damages. Just as in the U.S., having more rain gauges and better data may improve flood forecasts and warnings. Over the course of the next few months other provinces will be joining the effort. By late 2013 hopefully all of Canada will be included. When it comes to weather and hydrology, political borders mean nothing, so it is great to begin this gradual expansion.

Canada Maps

For years, some of you have been wishing that CoCoRaHS provided better mapping capabilities. The Canada expansion has given us the opportunity to test and deploy mapping with "pan and zoom" functions and the ability to click on data points on the maps. Canada and the northern U.S. border (and also Hawaii) will now have these capabilities. We will be learning along the way and sometime in 2012 we will be adding these options to the U.S. and making additional improvements.

CoCoRaHS Generosity Greatly Appreciated

All I can say is "Thanks so much" for the outpouring of generosity during the past 3 weeks during our "Five for CoCoRAHS" fundraiser. As of today, over \$23,000 in gifts have been received to help support the CoCoRaHS network in 2012. This is fantastic and will ensure that progress continues towards better mapping, training, recruiting, etc.

The "Five for CoCoRaHS" campaign continues through January 10th. If you would still like to make a tax-deductible donation before the end of 2011 or to start off the new year, just click here:

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=2011yearend>

or see the link to "Donate" on the CoCoRaHS website www.cocorahs.org

Donations by mail?

Yes, you do not need to use the on-line donation system provided by our Colorado State University Foundation. You may send checks by mail. There are instructions to "print and mail" near the bottom of the on-line forms. Or you can simply make a check out to "Colorado State University Foundation" with a note in the memo section saying "in support of CoCoRaHS" and mail this to

Colorado State University Foundation
P.O. Box 1870
Fort Collins, CO 80522-1870

I'll get back to you in a couple of weeks and let you know if we reached our goal of \$38,000. Thanks again.

A minor milestone reached

Last year we aimed to reach 10,000 daily precipitation reports. We never quite got there, although we had several days between May and September with more than 9,700 daily reports. We peaked out at 9869 on June 22.

So while we missed the big goal, we quietly reached a minor milestone earlier this month (December 2011) when for the first time in CoCoRaHS history we surpassed 9000 daily reports in December. Why is this significant? The number of CoCoRaHS daily reports typically drops off during the winter as people strategically avoid the hazard of measuring snow and ice or head south for the winter. The fact that we are getting over 9000 daily reports during winter months nearly guarantees that we will easily exceed 10,000 when May and June arrive -- and we won't even have to have a competition. So this is very exciting news that I wanted to pass along.

Help CoCoRaHS recruit

We have many wonderful rain gauge reporters all over the country. But as you look at the CoCoRaHS maps: (<http://www.cocorahs.org/Maps/ViewMap.aspx>) you will find that there are still major gaps in nearly every state (New Jersey may be the one exception -- good job, NJ CoCoRaHS team).

Hundreds of counties across the country still are without a single observer.

2012 will be a big year for recruiting, and you can help. If you know of anyone who shares our interests (or could learn to appreciate why observing rainfall matters) please encourage them to join. We notice that several people have been signing up this week who "found a new rain gauge under their Christmas Tree". Now wasn't that a great recruiting idea :-)

Here is the link to register to join CoCoRaHS:

(<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=application>)

ET -- What?

I also wanted to give you a "heads up" about a new measurement we will be adding in 2012 -- the measurement of "reference evapotranspiration". I'll spare you the details now, but anyone who studies hydrology, soil moisture, agriculture and the water balance knows that evaporation is just as important as precipitation -- it's just not so obvious. So stand by for news about "ET" in the coming months.

Days getting longer already

Yes, we're now less than 12 weeks away from spring :-). Day length changes very slowly at first -- but most of us can tell that the sun is already setting just a bit later each evening. It will be a few weeks yet before we notice much change in the morning. But watch the progression -- which is not quite symmetrical (morning versus evening. It is fascinating.

If you need to know sunrise, sunset, moonrise, or moonset information, here is an interesting link provided by the U.S. Naval Observatory

(http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneDay.php)

YouTube helps CoCoRaHS

YouTube is familiar territory for some of us (especially the younger generations) but it may be scary new territory for others. It turns out it's a fantastic tool to aid our CoCoRaHS Training and Education efforts.

We have our own YouTube CoCoRaHS Channel and I strongly encourage you to take a look. You'll find the link on our CoCoRaHS banner at the top of each webpage off to the right (along with links to our other social networking features -- Facebook, Twitter, Blog, etc.).

(<http://www.youtube.com/cocorahs/>)

Snow Training, CoCoRaHS for Schools, and More

Our comprehensive "Snow Measurement Training" course is now one of the featured YouTube videos that you can view any time (for those with fast enough internet connections) at your leisure or anytime you need to review all or parts of how to measure snow. I also want to bring to your attention the first in what will be a series of once-a-month "Weather Talk" webinars. (<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=wxtalk>)

Last week we teamed up with the New Jersey State Climatologist to do a special one-hour presentation about the characteristics and trends in snowfall and snow cover. That presentation is now posted on YouTube. We're doing a presentation on satellite meteorology in January. Our schedule for the rest of 2012 will be posted as it develops.

Finally, we have a new "CoCoRaHS Animation" that we prepared specifically to help encourage teachers to get their students involved in CoCoRaHS. If you can spare 2 minutes and 39 seconds, take a look.

(<http://www.youtube.com/cocorahs/#p/u/4/dDjw8-6jtCE>) Share it with your favorite teachers in your community.

We plan to utilize some of the funds donated to CoCoRaHS this month to create similar animations describing how to measure and report rain, hail and snow. This should be a whole lot of fun!

A Christmas egg

Things are fairly peaceful here on our little farm on the north edge of Fort Collins. After a several week lull, our hens chose Christmas day as the day to start laying eggs again -- very thoughtful. They now look great with a new coat of feathers. We watched a fox try to sneak past the dogs into the chicken coop at dusk the other evening. He would have loved a chicken dinner, but it didn't work out for him this time. The horse corral has been quite a mess the last two days as our first "Chinook winds" of the winter quickly melted the month-old snow and ice leaving a slick and slimy mess to contend with. That will start drying off today. It hasn't

been too cold, so the hay supply should hold out into May.

2012

Well wishes to all for a great new year -- hopefully with adequate precipitation. We'll be in touch again sometime in January.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University