

The Catch

COCORAHS -- AN INTERESTING DAY

FORT COLLINS, CO — Wednesday, February 15, 2012

Dear curious CoCoRaHSters, *(name suggested from one of you)*

I've been watching the CoCoRaHS precipitation maps and reports today – and this is a very interesting day. Actually, it's quite amazing but in a particularly odd way. Either this is a very wet dry day or a very dry wet day. I'm not quite sure how to describe it. You'll see what I mean shortly.

Just look at the national map and you'll start getting the idea. Go to the main website: www.cocorahs.org and you'll see the national precipitation map. Click on it to get a larger image. If you read this letter someday other than today (Feb 15th) then make sure you use the date picker to select the national map for Feb 15, 2012.

What does it show? Well, first of all there are blotchy patches of precipitation all over the country. In fact, every state has at least a few stations with precipitation. Alaska, Iowa and Maine appear to be the driest with only a handful of "Trace" reports. So far as of 6 PM MST about 7000 volunteers have reported in. 3000 reported measurable precipitation and another 1000 reported a trace and about 550 reported measurable snowfall.

Even though precipitation fell across most of the country, almost all of it was very light (nationwide average for today was 0.04"). There was not a single report of 1.00" of rain (or water content from snow). That, in itself, is quite unusual since there is almost always an inch or more of rain falling somewhere from AK and HI to ME or FL. Furthermore, of those 3000+ reports of measurable precipitation, 90% of those were less than 0.23". In fact, 180 of us reported exactly 0.05" today, 225 reported 0.04", 305 reported 0.03", 490 reported 0.02" and (as of 6:25 PM MDT) exactly 500 of us reported a measly 0.01". This is a lot of not very much.

Here in Fort Collins we did our part with a snow shower yesterday

afternoon -- that amounted to (you guessed it) a trace.

Is this trivial? Probably so. But is it interesting? It definitely is to me.

The Farm?

And as for life on our little farm, the little bits and pieces of additional precipitation to go with our two-week-old layer of muddy ice means that the dogs are a mess, the horse corral is a mess and the chicken coup is -- well -- a mess. This is early for mud season -- but for now, it's here.

A couple other things

Facebook isn't for everyone, but many people like staying in touch with CoCoRaHS that way. You can just view or you can sign on as a friend.

Here is the link: <http://www.facebook.com/CoCoRaHS>

More CoCoRaHS on YouTube

Likewise, YouTube isn't for everyone -- especially if you have a slow internet connection. But CoCoRaHS is there too with our own YouTube channel. <http://www.youtube.com/cocorahs/>

We continue to add new animations, archived webinars, etc. For example, the very excellent presentation we had last week on the progress of satellite meteorology can be viewed at your leisure as well as our snow measurement training materials. Also, if you're trying to explain CoCoRaHS to friends, family or neighbors, you can just show them one of the short animations. They say a lot with few words and are good for a few laughs, too.

Future webinars on all sorts of interesting topics

We have a bunch of special speakers lined up to lead classes on a variety of topics -- flash floods, severe weather, hurricanes, lightning and just plain clouds. Because of the high interest we're seeing for these webinars we are going to enlarge our account so that up to 500 people can participate at the same time. Here is the link to see what's coming up and links to view previous presentations.

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

Conclusion

Please keep measuring if you can. Your daily reports are wonderful. And if you haven't started yet, this would be a great time. If you are one of our many CoCoRaHS retirees who are very interested in precipitation but have closed down the rain gauge for now -- just sit back and watch the data from all the other weather watchers across the country -- and maybe recruit your grandson or daughter in another state :-) Thanks, everyone.

Sincerely and appreciatively,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University