

The Catch

COCORAHS -- SPRING (BRING IT ON?)

FORT COLLINS, CO — Saturday, March 10, 2012

Colorado State Greetings CoCoRaHsters (that went over well last time so I'll try it again).

It's March 10th already and winter isn't trying very hard. (although it is snowing today -- again -- in New Mexico). Our 7-day forecast here calls for sun and warmth (70s already) -- toasty for mid March in northern Colorado. It has been a remarkably easy winter for most of the lower 48 and quite a riotous winter for Alaska. If you're still planning a spring ski trip to the Rockies, don't worry. There is plenty of snow -- but much, much less than this time last year for most areas. Climate can be like that.

Day length

We are fast approaching the spring equinox and day length is accelerating at the fastest pace of the year. These changes are most obvious in Alaska where the difference is several minutes each day. At last, we're almost all reading our rain gauges in the daylight now -- much easier than those dark days of early winter.

A big welcome

Since I last wrote a few weeks ago, several hundred new volunteers have signed up with Texas and Tennessee making a particularly strong showing. A big welcome to all of you who are new to CoCoRaHS. If you have any questions or need help getting started, please let us know. For quick response, e-mail Zach at our "Help Desk" at info@cocorahs.org As you'll soon discover, each and every rain gauge report from anywhere in the country really helps paint a better picture of precipitation patterns and impacts across the country (drought, flood, and everything in between).

A Call to Action

With the coming of spring comes some of our most changeable and dramatic weather of the year. The old weather adage goes "As the days grow longer, the storms grow stronger" -- and there is some truth to that. We really, really, really covet your participation to help do our best job ever in documenting U.S. precipitation.

This is the time of year to check your gauge. Make sure there are no cracks or other problems. Make sure you know your login information. And if you've taken a few months off to avoid the cold and ice of winter, this is a great time to get started again. If you find that our computer system has deactivated your station (we do that automatically if you haven't reported for the past year or so) then just drop a note to Zach at "info@cocorahs.org" and ask to be reactivated.

Even if you notice other people in your communities already participating in CoCoRaHS, we need you too. Our goal is to have at least one volunteer per square mile in well-populated areas and one station per 36 square miles in most rural areas. You will be amazed at the detail and variations that we can monitor and map as we approach this ambitious but appropriate goal. And for spring and summer hail, even more volunteer reports are needed as hail varies so, so much.

The next few months promise an amazing display of meteorological variety and extremes. If you haven't gotten started in CoCoRaHS yet -- or if you've dropped off but are thinking of starting up again -- then please do. We could double our number of reports each day just from those of us who have already signed up.

Thanks very much!

And then comes March Madness

Yes, that is our annual friendly interstate competition to see which state can sign up the most new volunteers and (to aid the smaller states) the most volunteers per capita. If just 10% of us succeeded in finding one new family or individual (or school) to sign up between now and the end of March, we could add 2,500 new volunteers. Give it a try. We've had more "word of mouth" recruits this year than ever before and I think we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg.

To track the results of the competition

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

Webinars -- gaining popularity

We had our best attendance yet this week for Tom Schlatter's webinar on clouds. Close to 250 people participated enjoying great cloud photos, explanations, interactive quizzes and, for the first time in CoCoRaHS history live music. Tom made his CoCoRaHS singing debut melodically singing Joni Mitchell's (and made famous by Judy Collins) "Both Sides Now". Awesome!!

Remember, all of our webinars are archived and you can view them at any time. Our general CoCoRaHS videos (introduction, snow training, CoCoRaHS for schools, etc.) can be found on our YouTube channel at:

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

All episodes of our new "WxTalk Webinar" series -- as well as schedules and descriptions of future webinars -- can be viewed at:

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

I am out of time for now, but I also wanted to

- 1) Describe how and why we give CoCoRaHS station names and numbers and what they are based on (we realize that our station names don't always seem ideal).
- 2) Thank you for your excellent participation in SWE Mondays and discuss how that's working.
- 3) A few things about the Feb 29 and March 2 severe weather outbreak -- and to encourage you to look at the March 2 CoCoRaHS national hail map.
- 4) A few things about hail pads.
- 5) Some words on the new mapping options for displaying CoCoRaHS data.
- 6) A couple of recent goings on at the Doesken farm -- transition from

mud to dust and some musings on the relative worth of Geese versus Chickens.

These will wait for a later opportunity.

Thanks so much for being a part of CoCoRaHS. Please forgive any typos today as I ran out of time for proofreading but wanted to get this out anyway.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University