

The Catch

COCORAHS -- A MILESTONE HAS BEEN REACHED

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, May 24, 2012

Dear CoCoRaHS rain gaugers:

Good news -- it is raining here in northern Colorado this evening -- something we haven't seen much of in many, many months. Our yard and pastures are crying for joy as over 0.65" has fallen here since this afternoon. For many of you, that's not much but for this year and this place, we're thrilled. I heard just one rumble of thunder with this storm, but that rumble went on and on – seemed like at least a minute.

Milestone reached:

If this sounds like trivial statistics, please skip this section and jump to ET.

There are over 13,000 of us who regularly read our rain gauge and go on the CoCoRaHS website to enter our reports. www.cocorahs.org Another one or two thousand report now and then -- but sporadically. With travel, vacations, demanding schedules, school activities, emergencies, broken rain gauges, dry spells, general forgetfulness and many other darn good excuses, we don't all measure and report every day. If everyone that has every signed up for CoCoRaHS just happened to all read our rain gauges and report our precipitation (Including zeros) tomorrow AM, we would have a whopping 30,000 dots on the CoCoRaHS maps. But as it goes, on any given day we get between 8,500 and 9,500 daily precipitation reports submitted. About 6000 of those report arrive first thing in the morning. Another 1500 (approx) reports come in later in the day. Another 500 or so report the next day. Then, over the course of the next few weeks, months, and sometimes even a year or more later, more of us go back and enter our data and fill in our reports – and the numbers go up.

When those late reports trickle in, the numbers of reports per day are

impressive. A few days last year we got over 9600, and at least twice we made 9800. This year we've been running ahead of last year. In April 2012 we've gone over 9500 reports per day on 12 different days. But despite our best efforts, we just haven't been able to hit 10,000 -- -- -
- until tonight!

A few minutes ago, and you probably know who you are, one of us went back and entered your rainfall amount for May 8th, 2012. That single report raised our number of daily rainfall reports for that day to exactly 10,000. We did it!!! Finally! Some other days are close behind such as April 16 with 9984 report. It won't be long now, before 10,000 reports per day will be routine, but for now it is worth celebrating. Three cheers for all the CoCoRaHS rain gaugers -- Hip hip Hurray, Hip Hip Hurray, Hip Hip Hurray!

Evapotranspiration -- an update

We recently announced plans to add the measurement of evapotranspiration (ET) as an optional CoCoRaHS measurement -- to help do a better job of tracking this very important but largely invisible component of the water cycle. We expected maybe a few dozen volunteers across the country to take an interest in this measurement -- using the ETgage. <http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=et>

Interest in helping measure and report ET has been greater than expected. Over 200 of you have offered to help, and many have already contacted WeatherYourWay to purchase gauges. We are really impressed and appreciative!! Already today, 16 reports of ET were submitted <http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=et>

Daily reference evapotranspiration amounts today ranged from just a few hundredths of an inch in the northeastern states to a rousing 0.70" of evaporation from our station in south Phoenix, AZ.

Interestingly, we also learned that more than a few of you have fairly sophisticated home/farm weather stations that are programmed to compute estimated reference ET based on continuous measurements of temperature, humidity, solar radiation and wind. This information could prove very useful as well but we're not set up yet to collect it. We will need to do some testing to see how well the two methods compare.

One of the other things that happened is we've heard from some scientists who are ET experts. The suggestion was made that it might make more sense to use a turf grass reference than the alfalfa reference

that we started with. We had chosen the alfalfa reference because that is what many irrigators in the Great Plains states and northern Rockies use in their irrigation management practices. But the more we thought about it, the more appealing the other option became -- turf grass. More of us are probably raising, watering (and mowing) turf than alfalfa. Turf doesn't use as much water as a fully irrigated field of alfalfa (probably 10-20% less under most conditions). So we're doing a quick about face. We've already changed our webpage and our ET training guide. For those of you who already have ET gauges, Zach will be sending out replacement parts to convert from simulating alfalfa water use to turf. If you just ordered an ETgauge this week, you will receive the "grass reference" covers. Within the next few weeks we'll be mostly changed over.

To learn more about measuring ET with an "atmometer" go to <http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=et> . If you are seriously interested in helping measure evapotranspiration and if you have a relatively open location with representative local vegetation contact Zach as info@cocorahs.org The gauges are pricey -- over \$200 -- so this is not for the faint of heart. You are more than welcome to purchase your own but we don't expect you to. We will be looking for sponsors such as water utilities, conservation districts, businesses, etc to help with this challenge. Eventually, it would be great to have a some in every state of the country and a few in Canada, too. If you are or know of potential sponsors who would like to help towards this goal, please contact us.

Chicken -- goose

We're down to just two geese now -- thank heavens. You can't turn your back on them for even a second or that male goose will get you. The mama goose laid a few eggs this spring but wasn't interested in setting. But one of our older hens was bored and feeling motherly. She gathered up a clutch of about 6 huge goose eggs and has been diligently keeping those eggs toasty warm for ever since. Yesterday was the big day. The first of the chicken-warmed goose eggs hatched. And where was that little gosling when I got home from the office last night? You guessed it -- under a heat lamp in our bathtub. I guess that's what I get for not getting home from work on time.

For those of you concerned about sweet Angel, our old Great Pyrenees, we've taken some of your advice and tried some different meds. It has helped, but she's still an old lame and very large dame most likely in pain. We'll see how it goes.

Thanks for being a part of CoCoRaHS. Even if you're not taking measurements, we're still happy to have you on our team. If you've never

gotten set up to take measurements, this is prime time. This is now the time of year when the local variations in precipitation become most extreme. Just ask your friends in Florida (if you have any) about how much the rain can vary from one block to the next. We need you and your rain gauge so we can do a better job tracking precipitation -- our water supplies.

Good evening,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University