

The Catch

COCORAHS -- FIRE AND RAIN

Cedarville, MI — Thursday, June 14, 2012

Dear rain gauge team:

First a quick "welcome" to all of you who have signed up in the past few weeks to help measure and report rainfall for the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS). As we see each and every day, the rainfall reports from CoCoRaHS volunteers are incredibly important as we all work together to map and track precipitation patterns each day from the storms that sweep across our country. If you haven't gotten set up with a gauge yet, we hope you can very soon. Let us know if you have any questions or need any help getting started.

I especially want to recognize the efforts of the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts. They are signing up new volunteers every day with hopes of adding 1000 new Arkansas volunteers this year. Great!! Maybe Arkansas will outpace Texas! Wouldn't that be something.

If you are involved in your local conservation district anywhere in the U.S. please tell them about CoCoRaHS and encourage their participation. Soil and Water Conservation Districts have a natural connection to the use and importance of precipitation.

Bad Fire in Colorado -- close to home

Both the presence and the absence of rain has important and sometimes disastrous impacts. That's why our collective measurements are so important. Here in northern Colorado, the problem this year has been the lack of both winter snow and spring rain. An ill-timed lightning bolt last week in an abnormally dry forest in the mountains west of us (Fort Collins, Colorado) was followed a few days later by heat, high winds and painfully low humidity (less than 8% RH). That's all it took and a wild fire

was off and running (similar story to what happened last year in TX and NM and what could easily happen in more areas of the West this summer). That has pretty much dominated our attention for the past several days and will likely keep our attention for several more weeks.

The CoCoRaHS staff are all fine (although the smoke has been choking at times). But unfortunately, quite a few of our volunteers living in the mountains west of town have been evacuated. Dozens of homes may have burned and it is likely that some may be members of our CoCoRaHS family. Our hearts go out to all of you. For those who have written asking how to help, I would simply encourage you to be active in your own local Red Cross organization as the time will come when your own community may experience a disaster. Red Cross does amazing things to help those in need.

Floods too!

Yes indeed -- some eyes were looking west toward the Rocky Mountain wildfires while others were gazing south at some exceptional rains last week along the Gulf Coast from west of Mobile to the Pensacola, FL area. Fortunately, we have many rain gauge volunteers in that area and some of you did some heroics to get good measurements sent in. Hats off to all of you. I particularly want to point out the 24-hour report submitted by FL-ES-2 on the morning of June 10th. They reported a remarkable 21.70" of rain in 24 hours including 11.65" 2 hours and 28 minutes and nearly 21" in just 8 hours. Think about that for just a moment. What would that do in your neighborhood? To add insult, they got another 8" in the days preceding and following bringing their June total to over 30". Several other locations also had excessive rains including some volunteers west of Mobile Bay that picked up over 10" in one day (reported June 9th) and 4-day totals exceeding 20". No matter how you slice it, that's a lot of rain.

Good time to learn about hurricanes

Please consider attending our special webinar later this evening (Thursday, June 14th at 7 PM Eastern time, 6 PM Central, 5 PM Mountain, 4 PM Pacific and earlier if you are in HI or AK). Chris Landsea, a renowned hurricane expert at the National Hurricane Center will be our guest to share insights and experiences about U.S. hurricanes. We've had some cancellations, so we have room for a few dozen more. Check first, to make sure you have the browser and bandwidth capabilities to participate in a live webinar. Then register to reserve a seat by going to

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/376658398>

If you can't join live, we archive each presentation and post them a day or two later for public viewing at your convenience.

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

You will find it in the "Featured Playlist" along with our other excellent WeatherTalk Webinars.

Michigan

As luck would have it, while the fire has been burning within 3 miles of our home in Colorado (and some of the footage on national news tonight was shot near the command center just 1/4 mile from our office on the CSU Foothills Campus), I'm actually on vacation up in the eastern end of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan-- rendezvousing here with many relatives and some long-time friends. The weather here has been great and the air fresh and cool (frost in some locations this AM). Michigan is having a terrible year in terms of their large fruit industry as almost all fruits were clobbered by the one-two punch of excessively warm March temperatures followed by a series of hard freezes later in the spring. But it's still beautiful here surrounded by the Great Lakes.

By sheer coincidence I was able to attend the Michigan CoCoRaHS volunteer coordinators team meeting at Michigan State University last week. What a great and enthusiastic group! Thanks to all of you who are volunteering in so many ways to recruit, train and engage new volunteers both here in MI and across the country in this curious project we call "CoCoRaHS".

Comments, Drought Impact Reports, Significant Weather Reports, etc.

We hear time after time from volunteers who tell us they don't send in comments, drought impact reports or significant weather reports "Because they don't know for sure what to say". Let me simply say -- any comments about the weather conditions from the past day that help us know what conditions you experienced are helpful. If it's really dry, then fill out a drought impact report. If you're having a bad or a sudden storm, fill out a significant weather report. If you're experiencing hail, send in a Hail report. It will all help. So don't worry about it, just tell us about it -- short and simple is great.

Home next week

I'll give you an update later next week or soon thereafter when we get back to Colorado. We hear rumors that as many as 8 goslings hatched this year -- most by a proud but confused chicken, but one by our lady goose. Now they are trying to figure out how to blend this complicated family.

Best wishes to all, and keep your rain gauge reports coming --rain or shine.

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