

The Catch

COCORAHS -- IMPORTANT REQUEST AT A CRITICAL TIME OF YEAR

Fort Collins, CO — Wednesday, July 5, 2012

Dear CoCoRaHS rain gauge team

A belated 4th of July greeting. It was odd here to have no fireworks show last night (I know the same was true in many other areas of the country). But it simply was not appropriate given the severity of heat, drought and wildfire potential. There were scarcely any backyard firecrackers, either – a clear sign of public recognition of the situation. Nevertheless, we were able to celebrate with friends and family some of what makes this such a great country. I, for one, gave thanks that we live in a country where so many people love to volunteer their time and resources to accomplish important things together. Our mutual rain gauge program (CoCoRaHS) is one small example of that.

We need more rainfall data

We are currently experiencing extreme heat, extreme drought, extreme storms, and local floods in various parts of the country. In all my years in this field, there have only been a few others where there was this much public, media and commercial interest and concern over precipitation (or lack thereof) in so many parts of the country.

Does it really matter?

Yes indeed! Our CoCoRaHS rainfall reports are a huge and valued resource to weather and water forecasters, agribusinesses, researchers, teachers, resource managers and many more. We already have great volunteers all over the country, but rainfall varies so much that we still aren't tracking it well in many places. We need more gauges in more places.

Look at today's (July 5) maps: <http://www.cocorahs.org/Maps/>. In Wake County, NC precipitation ranged from 0 to over 3" in just a few miles. Likewise, check out Pima County, AZ (0.05" - 4.32"), Real County, TX (0.19" - 3.74"), Pasco County, FL (0 - 2.95") and Oakland County, MI (0.13" - 2.03"). We were able to pinpoint these remarkable local variations because we were fortunate to have many volunteers in each of those counties.

For much of the country we only have one or two reports per county. Despite good progress this year, we still have a few hundred counties nationally with no active reporters.

And now is when it matters most. This is the time when rainfall is most locally variable -- and this is the time when drought is having the most acute impacts over the largest areas. It is also the time when the most intense rains tend to fall -- from localized summer thunderstorms. As I write, I am recalling 15 years ago (can't believe that much time has passed already) when we had 14" of rain right here in Fort Collins -- but other parts of town had less than 2". If we had volunteers then reporting their rainfall and sending in "Significant Weather Reports" during the heaviest rains, there is some chance we might have helped saved lives that night. This same situation repeats itself every year but in different places. Our rainfall reports really can make a difference.

You can help

Here are some ideas and suggestions:

1) Many of us are already helping. Thank you so much for checking your gauge and sending in your reports. Please know, your efforts are appreciated. Also know that the earlier in the day you submit your report (ideally by 9 AM), then the more weather and water forecasters will be able to use your data -- both when it rains and when it doesn't. We're working on smart phone data entry that will make this easier for some of you.

2) Some of us signed up but have never gotten started. If this sounds like you, PLEASE begin now. This alone could add several thousand new observers to the network and that would be AWESOME. It's really easy (at least in summer). If you have questions or need help getting started, just send a quick e-mail to info@cocorahs.org or contact the local CoCoRaHS volunteer leader (coordinator) for your area listed here: <http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=coord>. If you were very interested in reporting rainfall but could not join CoCoRaHS because of

the ~\$30 cost of the rain gauge, please let me know. We have some generous sponsors who are helping in these situations.

3) A whole lot of us signed up, got started, but didn't stick with it for a whole variety of good reasons. If this sounds like you == then please consider trying again. It really only takes a couple of minutes a day -- and we're very flexible (report when you are able, and don't worry about it when you're away or too busy).

4) Help recruit new volunteers!

-- Tell your friends and family, especially those who live in areas where we have few volunteers. Ask with some urgency and say things like "CoCoRaHS really needs your help"

-- If you have contacts at local newspapers, magazines or TV stations, see if they would put out a story about CoCoRaHS and how local citizens can help.

-- If belong to organizations such as Rotary or Lions clubs, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Conservation Districts, Watershed Stewards, Amateur Radio, and any of a large number of similar organizations, tell them about CoCoRaHS and invite others to join. Spread the word however you can.

-- Make use of the CoCoRaHS short animation to quickly describe who we are and what we do

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5-sXXg9M30&list=PLBD28578BA99D402A&index=2&feature=plpp_video

-- If you want to give more history about how CoCoRaHS started, then view this slightly longer video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHmz5IyjV80&feature=autoplay&list=PLBD28578BA99D402A&playnext=1>

5) Many of us have had to retire from CoCoRaHS. Thanks, and we hope you elect to continue to be a part of our family even if you can't take measurements any longer.

Other CoCoRaHS News

The Blog is back <http://cocorahs.blogspot.com/>

The CoCoRaHS water cycle animation is a hit. Here's the link.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzY5-NZSzVw&list=PLBD28578BA99D402A&index=1&feature=plpp_video

Have you tried CoCoRaHS Facebook?

<http://www.facebook.com/CoCoRaHS>

Farm News -- Good and sad

Despite the heat and drought, we're getting a decent crop of apples from our early tree. The apples (and it's always been this way) like to fall off the tree about a week before they are ready to pick or eat. But if we get them before they're too bruised, they make a fine applesauce. The last couple of weeks the tree has been full of Flickers -- a flock of them. I never knew that flickers flocked, but we've been told they were driven out by the fire in the foothills and have been congregating at local water holes (like our tree). I don't know if this is true, but it sounds good.

Our goslings are growing up so fast -- fun to watch at this stage of life. Despite the heat, the chickens are still laying quite well -- plenty of fresh eggs.

Several of you have asked about Angel (our beautiful female Great Pyrenees who added many stories to our lives these past few years). There's been so much going on and I just haven't felt like talking about it. She left this world a few weeks ago -- hopefully for greener pastures. My plan to show a picture of us together and recount a few good memories in the CoCoRaHS Blog soon.

In closing

Nice little thunderstorm this evening -- not enough to make a flood or end a drought, but for now the air is fresh and cool -- a great relief after many days of heat. Thanks for your interest in CoCoRaHS. It's a pleasure working with all of you.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University