

The Catch

COCORAHS -- WHAT A SUMMER

Fort Collins, CO — Sunday, August 19, 2012

Dear CoCoRaHS rain-gaugers,

Summer is speeding by. Some are sorry. Some are delighted. The sun is setting noticeably earlier and rising later. The blistering heat has eased for many of us. We've finally had a couple nights this week where we didn't need a fan to be able to sleep comfortably. And I just checked the weather maps and it's only in the 60s in Oklahoma City this afternoon. Rain has found its way to some of the drought stricken areas of our land -- in time to provide a little help to some very stressed crops as well as stressed farmers and gardeners.

I haven't had much time to stay in touch this summer. Heat and drought have been a demanding combination for climatologists all across the country. Meanwhile, weather forecasters have had a relative calm summer in terms of severe weather with few tornadoes and less hail and severe storms than most years, but that has been compensated by the huge public and media interest in drought.

10,000 plus!!

Since I last wrote in early July something close to 500 new CoCoRaHS volunteers have signed up. This is a record for midsummer, and thanks to those of you who have helped recruit friends and family.

If you are one of the many who are new to CoCoRaHS -- we all welcome you!! Remember, if you have any questions on how to get started reporting, just send a quick e-mail to info@cocorahs.org. It may take a day or two, but we'll get back to you shortly.

Arkansas continues to lead the charge with several new recruits every day. Thanks again to the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts

for spearheading this effort. Colorado is also doing well recruiting new volunteers as we strive to get rain gauges to as many schools as possible for our "Water 2012" educational celebration.

The heat and drought this year seem to have made people even more aware of rainfall than usual. The number of daily precipitation reports keeps growing. We regularly receive 7,000 reports on weekdays by mid morning, another 1000 by late afternoon -- and then when the late reports trickle in over the following weeks (as people go back and fill in their zeroes for dry days) most days are now up to 10,000 reports. Yippee! Our record day is July 10 when 10,986 of us sent in a report.

Will there be hurricanes?

I'm no expert on hurricanes but I do know that late August to early October is prime time. Chances are we will be contending with some storms before this season is over. If you live in hurricane country, please be prepared. Here is a link to the NOAA/FEMA/Red Cross Tropical cyclone preparedness guide if you haven't seen it already.

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/hurricane/resources/TropicalCyclones11.pdf>

Tropical cyclones can dump incredible amounts of rain even very far inland as we saw in New England last year from Hurricane Irene. This year we achieved an all-time high for CoCoRaHS one-day rainfall when an early June storm soaked the Pensacola, FL area. FL-ES-2 (West Pensacola 10.9 SW) successfully measured a remarkable 21.70" of rain in 24-hours. The observer managed to go out and measure and empty their gauge several times during the day to make sure it didn't spill over. That storm was not considered a tropical cyclone but it sure did have plenty of tropical moisture.

Some thoughts and reminders

1) Have you checked out the CoCoRaHS Blog recently? Really great stuff there. I highly recommend it.

<http://cocorahs.blogspot.com/>

2) We have some important webinars coming up soon that you are welcome to participate in live, or view later. Other webinars will follow including a basic training guide for new volunteers. I forget what day

that's scheduled.

On Thursday August 23, 2012 at 11 AM Mountain Time (that's 1 PM eastern, noon Central, 10 AM Pacific) Bill Kappel with Applied Weather Associates (and a long-time CoCoRaHS volunteer) will present a fascinating talk on Extreme Rainfall -- How we analyze it and how the data are used. Here is the link to register for this webinar. I hope you can join us.

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/120670622>

3) Did you know that we now have nearly 100 CoCoRaHS volunteers who measure and report evapotranspiration? It is fascinating watching the water balance in action -- rain accumulating, evapotranspiration departing. Julian, our web developer, recently completed a water balance graphing system to help us visualize the data we are collecting.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/ViewData/StationWaterBalanceChart.aspx>

With the heat and drought this year over so much of the country, most of our stations show a water balance deficit for the summer. Please feel free to "play" with the graphs. Select stations from different parts of the country to see how they differ. Choose different begin and end dates. Just give it a try.

We still have a few states where we have a complimentary ETgage available for a qualified station. Please contact Zach at info@cocorahs.org if you have an ideal location for an ET gauge and have the time and interest to help out.

4) Drought Impact reports:

Thanks to many of you from the drought-stricken portions of the country who have filled out "Drought Impact Reports". We even appreciate reports describing improvements. Here is the link to view reports. To submit, reports click on "My Data" when you are logged in and you'll see the report option.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/ViewData/ListDroughtImpactReports.aspx>

5) Heads up -- CoCoRaHS Survey coming soon:

Three years ago in September we posted a survey for all volunteers -- and over 7000 of you responded. That was a huge help to us and it even helped us raise support for the project. We are planning to do another survey this fall -- probably November. So just wanted to give you some advanced warning.

An important anniversary -- a little late

July 28, 2012 was the 15th anniversary of the "Fort Collins, Colorado Flash Flood", a day that I shall never forget. I can still recall in much detail where I was that day and the day after -- what I did and what I didn't do. That was the storm (14.5" here in parts of Fort Collins and a subsequent flood that claimed 5 lives) where my rain gauge had a leak, and for a variety of reasons no local weather spotters called in a report to the National Weather Service. That was the storm (helped along by fast-spreading internet access) that was the impetus behind launching CoCoRaHS in 1998.

That was the storm that made it so clear to me that my rain gauge measurement and report -- had I made one -- could have saved lives in my own community.

Yes, CoCoRaHS is "just a bunch of folks reading their back-yard rain gauges" and sharing and comparing our measurements. But there is so much more to what we are doing. There will come a time when your measurement might be the most important one of your lifetime.

We are passionate about CoCoRaHS because we know our precipitation measurements matter -- and every now and then our measurements and timely "Significant Weather Reports" can even save lives. So thanks SO MUCH for being a part of this.

Summer on our farm

It's been a hot, dusty, and sometimes smoky summer here. We did get some great rains the weekend after the 4th of July that finished off our local forest fires and gave the grass, trees and gardens a shot in the arm. But now we've reverted right back to where we were -- dry and dusty. The chickens are happy now that the temperatures aren't going over 90 much. And our apple trees are having a good year. Irrigation water is holding out longer than we expected so we are still growing some grass for our horses. They appreciate it and so do I since the cost of hay is out of sight right now.

There haven't been many "farm stories" to share lately. It's just not the same without our old Great Pyrenees, Angel, who passed away back in June. It was only 4 years ago that she was still up to her rambunctious chicken chasing. But we did have one fright a couple weeks ago. I

missed out since I was at work. A friend came over about noon to visit Kathy (my wife). When she left, she apparently left the gate to the street ajar. About an hour later Kathy got a call from a woman with a Portuguese accent. She asked if we were missing any dogs. Sure enough, the gate was open and our two Australian shepherds and another dog that is staying with us were all gone. Remarkably they were all secured safely by a wonderful woman originally from Brazil who works in Fort Collins at the Veterinarian Teaching Hospital here at Colorado State University. She had spotted the dogs and figured they weren't where they should have been. Indeed, they were about 2 miles away (not bad for less than an hour of freedom). They were down at the City Park Nine golf course trying to catch and retrieve golf balls (yikes!!!) Not surprisingly, the dogs continue to check the gates each day -- just in case. I think they had a wonderful day.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, and thanks very much for your past and/or present and/or future participation in CoCoRaHS.

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