

The Catch

COCORAHS -- NOVEMBER UPDATE, CONSIDERING SANDY

On the road in Pueblo, CO — Friday, November 2, 2012

To the CoCoRaHS Rain Gauge team,

Hard to believe with all the weather across the country this week that drought is still our big issue here in Colorado and adjacent states. Our issues I most seem trivial to those that many of you are experiencing in the mid-Atlantic region.

The CoCoRaHS maps go blank -- again

We've seen this several times now over the past few years -- when areas of our CoCoRaHS maps go blank after bad storms. We saw it in Alabama and southwest Missouri last year after the tornadoes and along the Gulf Coast after hurricanes. We saw it in the Ohio River Valley a few years ago following ice storms. This time it was New York and New Jersey. We have an incredible team of volunteers in New Jersey -- with over 230 regular reporters in a state that is only 7,000 square miles. But four days after the storm, still about half of the New Jersey map is void of data. This is mostly due to ongoing power outages, but there are also areas where the homes and communities where our rain gauge volunteers live and work have been badly damaged. We don't have many CoCoRaHS volunteers in and near New York City, but it was good to see that one of our two Staten Island volunteers is reporting again as well as one of our volunteers in Queens.

For all of you who's lives have been changed in some way by this storm, our thoughts and prayers go out to you.

Adding up storm totals

Using the CoCoRaHS "Total Precipitation Summary Report" option, we're

able to now add up storm rainfall totals from this week's rain. The greatest totals were found in extreme SE New Jersey (Cape May County) where four volunteers reported over 11.40" of rain. The greatest number of reporting stations exceeding 8" of rain were found in Maryland, eastern VA and in DE. We also had many, many areas farther inland dealing with deep and wind-driven snow. Thanks so much to all of you for dealing with these harsh conditions in order to send in your measurements. This storm will be studied for years to come, and your data will be a part of these studies.

Significant Weather Reports

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

This recent storm pointed out once again the value and importance of supplemental reports during times of "major weather". I can't over-emphasize the value of these reports. Thanks to everyone who made use of our "Significant Weather Report" option to send in supplemental rainfall (and snow, wind and surf, too) reports during the storm. In all, we received over 250 significant weather reports during the storm. I think that was an all time record for CoCoRaHS. And there would have been more if the power had not gone out. These reports are used by media, emergency management and NWS weather forecasters to help keep track changing conditions, heavy rain, flooding, snow, etc. You can send in as many "Significant Weather Reports" each day as your local conditions may warrant.

Please remember to use this feature when you can. It's in the dropdown list of report options when you click "My Data" (when you are logged in). We'll still need your regular daily report sent in at your normal time of observation covering the standard 24-hour period.

CoCoRaHS Blog -- <http://cocorahs.blogspot.com/> -- An incredible resource

Too few of us are taking advantage of this resource -- as there are so many places to go these days for weather and climate information. But I highly, highly recommend that you visit our CoCoRaHS blog. Steve Hilberg, our Illinois CoCoRaHS state coordinator, is our primary blogger. His 40+ years of meteorological and communications experience really shows, and you will get perspectives here that you won't get anywhere else. Enjoy it and share this with others.

CoCoRaHS Facebook and Twitter, too

If you have the time and inclination, these are additional timely ways to keep up with what we are seeing, doing, learning or anticipating here in the land of precipitation measurement.

<https://www.facebook.com/CoCoRaHS>
<http://twitter.com/cocorahs/>

We have over 3000 Facebook friends and 900 Twitter members, but we'd love to see more.

Halos, glories, rainbows and more!

This coming week we are thrilled to have Grant Goodge as our featured guest on our CoCoRaHS WxTalk Webinar. He will be showing incredible photographs he has taken over the past 40 years of a wide assortment of beautiful optical phenomenon in our amazing atmosphere. Each phenomenon will be explained so we all know more about how and why they occur. We'll be better equipped for sky watching after this.

The webinar will be on Thursday, November 8 at 1 PM eastern time, noon Central, 11 AM Mountain time and 10 AM Pacific.

To register click here

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/468212590>

We realize this may not be a convenient time for many of us, so all of our webinars are recorded and can be viewed later. Here is a link to all of our past and future WxTalk Webinars

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

You can also find them along with all of our ever-growing assortment of CoCoRaHS rain gauge training resources on YouTube

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

Preparing for winter snow and ice

I'll be sending out my annual "How to Measure Snow" missive soon. And we are really close now to having a new set of snow measurement training materials. Here are some things to keep in mind. We want to

measure both the accumulation of snow and its water content. You'll need to remove the funnel and inner tube of your gauge in order to do a better job of capturing snow (and to make sure that water in the inner cylinder doesn't freeze and crack it). Wind driven snow tends not to accumulate in the gauge effectively, so you will also benefit from taking core sample of snow on the ground to get more accurate water content measurements

There is no need for any of us to risk life or limb for measuring snow and ice. This is totally a volunteer activity and not something you have to do. For those of us who aren't as young or as agile as we once were, when the snow season begins it may be a good time to bring your gauge aside and enjoy the weather from the warmth and comfort of your home. Let the younger CoCoRaisins carry on with winter measurements.

Water Year Summary Reports -- last call for updates

We will be updating and finalizing the Water Year Summary Reports for all CoCoRaHS stations in just a few days. Please take a look at your data by clicking on "My Account" (you need to be logged in to your account) and then select HTML, Excel, or Charts to see your data summarized in a variety of very informative and graphical ways.

If you want to fill in any more missing data (or zeros) from the 2012 water year (October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012) this is your chance. In the next few days Julian will then rerun all the computations and we'll post the "final" numbers. There are over 15,000 station reports for this year of which several thousand have complete monthly and annual totals. This is an incredible data resource, and we thank you for your efforts to add to this collection.

To view data from any CoCoRaHS station in the country, here is the link

<http://www.cocorahs.org/WaterYearSummary/>

When we run the new summaries, we'll be adding one more line of data that should prove very interesting. Working with the PRISM Climate Group at Oregon State University we will provide a "best estimate" of the "normal" (30-year average) precipitation for your location based on their model that uses topography and available historic data (primarily National Weather Service long-term data from the Cooperative network). We'll be presenting more information about this very soon.

Forgot your login, or it doesn't work any more?

If you have not been active in CoCoRaHS for several months, we may have automatically deactivated your station. Just send a quick e-mail to info@cocorahs.org and we'll get your station reactivated.

If you've forgotten your username or password, then click on "find my login" and our computer will e-mail you a reminder.

If you're e-mail address has changed and you didn't tell us, then this may not work either, so just send us your new e-mail at info@cocorahs.org and we'll get it taken care of.

Passed 5,000 -- not paying attention

Most of us have been participating in CoCoRaHS for a few months or years and may have submitted a few dozen or a few hundred reports. But here in Colorado some of us started back in 1998 or 1999. I just noticed today that I've now submitted 5,024 daily precipitation reports. There are a few others nearby that have also just hit the 5,000 mark. Wowzers. That's enough data to conduct a number of significant climate studies with.

If you want to quickly find out how many reports you have submitted, here's how.

Before or after you enter your daily report, you'll see the option "List/Edit My Reports" on the menu on the left side of the "My Data Entry" page. Click "Daily Precipitation" under that sub-section and in a few seconds you'll get the complete list of every daily report you've ever submitted and the total number of reports listed at the top. You can even do some neat climate analyses by sorting your reports by clicking on the "Total Precip" or "New Snow" headers at the top of those columns. In the 14 1/2 years that I've been doing CoCoRaHS I see that my max daily precipitation amount was 2.82" and my max daily snowfall amount was 24". I've had 41 days with at least 1.00" of precipitation. We sure could use some of that now.

Doing these summaries puts a load on our database, so it might be best to wait for evening hours to do this if you want to spend some time studying your rainfall frequencies.

Yes, there is an Android app for CoCoRaHS data entry

We haven't promoted this much, but there is an app for CoCoRaHS data entry-- developed by one of our volunteers. So far, 120 of you have found this on your own. Just search for "CoCoRaHS Android app" and you'll be able to track it down. Don't worry, we'll have options for other smart phones soon.

Coming Soon -- The CoCoRaHS Survey

Three years ago we did a nationwide survey of all of our observers to find out what you like and dislike about CoCoRaHS and what you are learning or wish you were learning from participation. Based on your responses, we've made some changes and we still have many more changes you've asked for (like smart phone apps :-)

When we announce this survey in a few weeks, please help us out by responding.

A fox in the Hen House

Things have been surprisingly calm at our little old farm here NW of Fort Collins. It has been a while since we've had any "incidents" with our livestock. But early this week an hour or so before sunset, we heard a commotion outside. The geese were quiet, but the chickens were making a raucous squawks. Looking outside, there was a bold fox in the fenced enclosure around the chicken coop. Somehow, all of our feathered ladies survived and the fox failed to get anything more than a mouthful of feathers. We all got lucky this time, but we'll be more cautious from now on as we know the fox's food supply is likely dwindling.

Again, thanks to all of you for being past, present or future participants in this endeavor. For those of you who are new or just getting started, please let us or your local CoCoRaHS coordinator know if you have any questions that haven't been answered from the resources on our website. We continue to add new volunteers every day, so feel free to ask.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University