

The Catch

COCORAHS -- SNOW FOR SOME

Fort Collins, CO — Tuesday, December 18, 2012

Dear CoCoRaHS team,

We've been shaken again by tragedy (this time in Connecticut). With so many young children involved, the pain is especially acute -- and the season of the year makes it even worse. I don't believe we have a CoCoRaHS volunteer in Newtown, but with our many and varied connections of friends and family, I'm sure some of you know some of the victims. We mourn with them and with you.

Storms and snow

Regardless of current events, weather marches ahead. And what that means right now (December 18, 2012) is it's time for winter! After a slow start, one storm after another has been marching across the country lately. Arizona and New Mexico finally got a good soaker (valley rains and mountain snows) over the weekend. There were some storm totals of more than 2" of moisture in parts of AZ. One of our favorite (infamous) mountain passes in Colorado -- Wolf Creek Pass -- picked up four feet of fresh snow and it's still coming down now. Cool rains and snow finally moistened the dry soils across the Plains states. Portland and Seattle both saw a little snow today, and a large storm is moving across the Rockies tonight and will be spreading snow from here to the Great Lakes in the next couple of days.

Our streak of 38 straight days with no measurable precipitation just ended this evening as snow now covers our ground. As this storm moves eastward tomorrow, we will likely have our first day since February 24th with more than 1,000 CoCoRaHS volunteers having snow to measure on the same day. Perhaps that will include you.

Thankful for your generosity

Wow -- hundreds of CoCoRaHS volunteers have made donations in these first few days of our year-end fundraiser. This helps ensure that CoCoRaHS will continue to improve and provide opportunities for more and more people to join in tracking our water resources as they fall from the sky. We've raised nearly \$15,000 as of this evening. Thanks VERYMUCH!

The "Five for CoCoRaHS" campaign continues through January 15th. We know that you already help out by donating time to help measure and report precipitation. That's a huge contribution already. But if you wish, you can also make a tax-deductible donation before the end of 2012 or to start off the new year. Just click here:

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=2012yearend>
<<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=2011yearend>>

Donations by mail?

We get this question a lot. You do not need to use the on-line donation system provided by our Colorado State University Foundation. Instead, you may send checks by mail. There are instructions to "print and mail" near the bottom of the on-line forms. Or you can simply make a check out to "Colorado State University Foundation" with a note in the memo section saying "in support of CoCoRaHS" and mail this to:

Colorado State University Foundation
P.O. Box 1870
Fort Collins, CO 80522-1870

Once again, thanks, double thanks and triple thanks.

Measuring snow -- practice makes perfect

We've had a lot of interesting precipitation reports lately. A few beginner CoCoRaHS observers have made that inevitable error of reporting the new snowfall depth as the precipitation (water content) amount. That lights up our precipitation maps each morning :-). I believe I even saw a report of 55" of "rain and melted snow" last week before it got caught and corrected. This just points out that it's a good time to take a few minutes to review snow measurement and reporting procedures, especially if you are new to this. We have many training aids on our website,

<http://www.cocorahs.org> I recommend our new snow measurement video animations. They are fun and they are short! It will only take a couple of minutes and you'll be on your way to confident and accurate snow reports.

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLS0EU9SKRY0_liw4Z60q_zodgCz-etYB5

And please remember -- for those of us who are less young than we used to be and aren't quite so steady on our feet -- please be careful. When in doubt just stay indoors and let the younger sprier observers do the snow and ice measurements this winter. Stay warm and intact!

Significant weather reports

We may not get thunderstorms and flash floods this time of year (for most areas of the country), but weather is still changeable and dramatic. Please remember to utilize the CoCoRaHS "Significant Weather Report Form" That is the 4th report option under "My Data"/ "Enter My New Reports" If you are having heavy rain, snow, sleet, high winds, freezing rain or any interesting weather conditions that you think we (and weather forecasters all across the country) should know about, then please send in a report any hour of the day or night. Every "Significant Weather Report" will be zipped instantly to your nearest National Weather Service forecast office to assist the forecasters there. You can send in as many reports per day as you feel are significant. But you'll still need to send in your regular daily precipitation report. They are not interchangeable.

New NSSL app for reporting "precipitation type" to aid storm research

Even before the NOAA meteorologist who developed this new app contacted me today, one of you had already noticed, tested and then contacted me. Here is the official announcement that came out today from the National Severe Storms Laboratory in Norman, OK

NSSL Launches iPhone and Android Apps to Collect Precipitation Reports from the Public.

The NOAA National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL), in partnership with the University of Oklahoma, has launched an

app where users can anonymously report precipitation from their iPhone or Android through the "mobile Precipitation Identification Near the Ground "mPING" app. NSSL researchers will compare the reports with what radars detect and use the information to develop new radar and forecasting technologies and techniques to determine whether snow, rain, ice pellets, mixtures or hail is falling. NSSL hopes to build a valuable database of tens of thousands of observations from across the U.S.

The apps are available on iTunes or Google Play for use on both phones and tablets.

*The reports can be viewed here in real-time:
<http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/projects/ping/display/>*

Lab's main PING page: <http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/projects/ping/>

*Link for iTunes app:
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mping/id584383400?mt=8>*

*Link for Android app:
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=edu.ou.cimms.wping&feature=search_result#?t=W251bGwsMSwyLDEsImVkdS5vdS5jaW1tcy53cGluZyJd*

I tried it from my desktop computer -- I could view others' data, but you need to be using a mobile device with an onboard GPS for this to work. (It will know where you are located so that it plots the point in the right spot on their maps -- pretty amazing.

Remember, this is not for reporting the amount of precipitation you get each day -- that's what CoCoRaHS is for. But this allows anyone to report the type of precipitation falling (none, rain, drizzle, snow, sleet, etc) so that scientists can evaluate how weather radar responds to changing "hydrometeors".

First snow of substance on our farm

We had a little spit of snow in October and again in early November, but they each only lasted a few hours. This time I think we're in for the long haul -- the first sustained snowcover since last February. Fresh snow is even in the long range forecast for Christmas Eve. In our part of the

country, if we get a good snow in December it usually sticks around for several weeks. The sun is just so low on the horizon this time of year that it's hard to melt snow without the help of warm, moist air advection or strong winds. This also means much colder temperatures for the next few weeks. Snow cover alone means about 10 degree F colder temperature than if we had bare ground. And the more of the country that is covered with snow, the better chances we'll all have cold weather.

Our geese don't mind the snow and cold, and the horses and dogs seem to like it. But our chickens and barn cats prefer to keep their feet warm and dry, so we won't be seeing much of them for a while. The question is, what about the fox? We've gone a long time without any fox "problems". Let's hope our good fortunes continue.

By the way, snow cover is very important to weather forecasters, hydrologists, winter sports lovers and many more. Please report your "Total Depth of snow on the Ground" each day -- even if you did not receive any new precipitation that day. It's not that hard to measure and the data really help us.

May your preparations for the holiday season go well. We're hoping that our son will make it home after Christmas from his work in North Dakota. We'll see how that goes.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University