

The Catch

COCORAHS -- HAPPY GROUNDHOG DAY

Fort Collins, CO —Friday, February 1, 2013

Dear CoCoRahsters,

It is indeed a pleasure to wish you a happy and healthy Groundhog Day. While its origin in Europe goes back hundreds of years, Feb. 2 has come to be a climatological celebration of the reality that winter isn't over yet but will be soon enough. Meteorologists tend to celebrate this day in small, odd ways -- telling weather jokes or watching a certain movie of the same name (which just isn't as funny as it once seemed to be). I hope you celebrate in some appropriate way.

Focus on Snow

It is still winter, as evidenced by the frigid air this week in the northern plains, Great Lakes and Midwest, and the abundant snows (finally) in our Colorado mountains and along the eastern and southern shores of the Great Lakes. So if you're willing and able, please do your best to keep sending in measurements of snowfall, total depth and water content.

We have a new animation just completed today that will provide instructions on how to measure the water content of snow by weighing it on a kitchen scale. We will post this under "Snow Training Shorts" next week. Please check it out. If you do have a scale that reads accurately to the nearest gram, you will love this way of measuring.<http://www.youtube.com/cocorahs/>

Measuring snow depth and SWE (Snow Water Equivalent)

Many of you report snowfall when new snow falls, but many leave the "Depth of total snow and ice (new and old)" as "NA" the default. I admit, without training this can be a challenging observation requiring some averaging, but please give it a try. The depth of snow influences soil temperatures, lake and river ice, winter recreation potential, snow

removal costs, water supplies and much more. The new snow amounts are interesting, but the total depth tells a powerful story of what your winter conditions are like.

Now that we are in late winter, it's also time to begin "SWE Mondays" If you are so inclined (it's optional but so very helpful) take and measure a core sample to get the water content of your old snow on the ground each Monday morning. National Weather Service snow hydrologists appreciate this so much as they attempt to estimate the water that will be available when the snow melts.

For a quick primer on measuring total snow depth and liquid water equivalent (SWE -- Snow Water Equivalent) take a look at this video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zbDygoJ2D4&list=PLS0EU9SKRY0_liw4Z60q_zodgCz-etYB5&index=5

or view our other snow training resources.

Thanks for all the "Significant Weather Reports"

With that big storm sweeping the country this week and dropping heavy rains, mountains and "lake effect" snows, and shooting out high winds, we greatly thank all of you who used the "Significant Weather Report" form to send in your storm updates including a report of 0.46" of rain in 20 minutes near Yuma, AZ -- yes it does rain in the desert!

We've received nearly 300 reports in the last week. Good job, and keep it up. Remember, you still need to file a regular daily report, too. But these special reports are a huge help to weather forecasters. Thanks also for all the reports of freezing rain and "ice accretion" when that ice storm crossed the southeast last week.

You can access these "Significant Weather Reports" for any county, state, or the entire nation under "View Data"

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

Chickens are laying, Puppies have grown, Hay is expensive

As the days grow longer, our chickens are getting livelier and eggier (that's not a word). Just after Christmas we ran out of eggs for the first time in a year and I broke down and bought a dozen at the store. Soon

after, the eggs started popping out again. Now our fridge is full of fresh eggs and we can't keep up.

The little hand-size Christmas Eve puppies are now each the size of an Australian football and are at the super cute stage. In just a few weeks they will all be finding their new homes and ours will be quiet again. I will miss them -- sort of.

Widespread drought has hurt ranchers a ton (thanks for all the "Drought Impact Reports" last year. Understandably, they don't have that much sympathy for the two-horse families like ours, but we're all in the same game hoping like crazy that the drought of 2012 does not linger much longer. We've got more hay to put up in the barn now, but we've got less \$. That's the way it goes.

Again, Happy Groundhog day and thanks so much for being a part of CoCoRaHS. Remember, March is coming soon and once again we will see which states can recruit the most new volunteers.

Oh yes, and a special "Welcome" to the 75 new volunteers from New York City who have just signed up for CoCoRaHS. I know most of you don't have good places to mount a rain gauge, but your "Significant Weather Reports" will be a great help.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University