

The Catch

COCORAHS -- JUNE IS JUICY

Fort Collins, CO —Tuesday, June 11, 2013

Dear CoCoRaHS Rain gaugers

Much has happened these past weeks since I last wrote. We've had terrible tornadoes (some very close calls for a few of our volunteers in Oklahoma), tropical storms (a lot of water in our rain gauges from Florida to Maine), Dust Bowl reminiscent dust storms in SE Colorado, and even some late May snow in New England. While there may be some dull moments at times in some parts of the country (no rain in a month for Las Vegas and less than 1.00" so far in 2013), every day brings interesting weather somewhere in the country. If you can spare a minute or two each day, just click on the CoCoRaHS national map www.cocorahs.org and go explore for yourself the latest storm and its unique rainfall pattern.

Some announcements and reminders

Two webinars this week!

Thanks to a new partnership with NASA, we are hosting a webinar today (Tuesday) at 7 PM Eastern, 6 PM Central, 5 PM Mountain and 4 PM Pacific to hear from NASA scientists (who are current or former CoCoRaHS volunteers) who are spearheading a study right now in Iowa investigating how to better estimate heavy rains and flood potential from space. Please join us if you can by clicking here: REGISTER-NASA
<<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/465984054>>

Then, on Thursday at 1 PM Eastern, noon Central, 11 AM Mountain and 10 AM Pacific it's time for our June WxTalk Webinar. Our guest will be Derek Arndt. "Deke" is an incredible science communicator from the National Climatic Data Center of NOAA in Ashville, NC. He will be showing and describing how they track and monitor the earth's climate.

Believe it or not, our data from CoCoRaHS are now being archived at the National Climatic Data Center and used in global climate monitoring. Deke will show some of the latest trends in observed climate and will be available to take our questions. I really hope you can join us live for this webinar. Click here to register: *EARTH'S CLIMATE
<<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/298995430>>*

Remember last year?

On this date last year (June 10th) the greatest rainfall in the history of CoCoRaHS (more about that in a minute) was observed at a station in the Florida panhandle. Due to diligent observation, the observer was able to measure and report a remarkable 21.70" of rain in 24 hours?

Are you ready for this kind of rain? Few of us are. But rains in excess of 10" in a day have occurred in most states. Our CoCoRaHS gauge only holds a total of 11.30" full to the top (inner cylinder 1.00" plus a full outer cylinder). If this happens to you, will you be ready? Don't risk a flood disaster, but if you do get an incredible rain try to take measurements during lulls in the storm to keep your gauge from overflowing. We've already had 3 days this year with over 10" of rainfall somewhere in the country, so with most of the hurricane and summer thunderstorm season yet ahead, there will probably be more.

CoCoRaHS anniversary -- We're 15

It was the Fort Collins flash flood of 1997 that was the motivation behind starting CoCoRaHS. This video captures the scene of that evening better than any words I can write.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YprNb9g8C-k>

It took about a year, but on June 17, 1998 -- 15 years ago next week -- the original CoCoRaHS website was launched. Built and promoted by local high school students, this laid the foundation for the amazing nationwide volunteer network we have today. You may never (hopefully) experience a flood like that, but all of us will experience weather that changes our perspective -- for a day, a year or a lifetime. What we do in CoCoRaHS may just seem like fun -- or monotony -- but the day will come (or already has) when our rain gauge reports mean more than we would ever have imagined. Thanks for being a part of this project, and please encourage others to join.

Jun 17th Send in your report. 12,000 -- Please

Please celebrate the 15th anniversary by remembering to check your gauge and sending in your report on June 17th. I'd love to see 15,000 daily reports that day (that's about how many of us report at least once a month). But realistically, let's shoot for a new record 12,000 reports that day.

Be a hero. Report your Zero!

I know, there is no glory or fun in measuring and reporting no rain. But your reports of zero really matter and help give us a more accurate map of rainfall patterns. Thousands of us are diligently reporting zeros. Thanks so much! It helps.

You don't need to have a CoCoRaHS hail pad to report hail

So far this year we've received over 1300 reports of hail
<http://www.cocorahs.org/ViewData/ListHailReports.aspx>
That sounds like a lot, but it's many fewer reports than in any of the past several years? Are we getting less hail this year or just fewer reports?

A number of people have said "I don't have a hail pad, so I can't report hail." A hail pad (foil-wrapped square of Styrofoam) is a great and simple instrument for determining the number, size and hardness of hailstones. But it is not required. If you experience hail of any size, please help us out and send in a quick "Hail report". You'll find it in the menu under "Enter My New Reports". Fill out what you know and don't worry about the other columns. Help us measure and map North American hailstorms.

Summer reporting errors to avoid

Since so many organizations now are using CoCoRaHS data every day, we are putting a lot of effort into checking and correcting reporting errors. The two most common errors this time of year are 1) false zeros and/or wrong day reports and 2) Multiday rainfall totals reported as a daily total.

Here are some hints on how we can avoid these errors. Most of the "false

zeros and wrong day" errors occur when people don't enter their data on the day they check their gauge and come back days, weeks or even months later to catch up with their reports. It is fine to report data later, but make sure you keep careful records and get the dates right. Remember, most of us report at around 7 AM, so if it rains on a Thursday afternoon, that amount should be entered for Friday morning's date.

Multi-day reporting errors occur when we are gone for a few days or forget to take a reading. Then when we do check the gauge we find water in it but are not sure when it fell. Rather than guessing or filling out a regular daily precipitation report, it's usually best to fill out a "Multiday Accumulation Report". That way we get a reasonable measure of how much fell over a period of days when you were gone. Yes, there can be some losses to evaporation, but that amount is fairly small in cool or humid parts of the country unless you've been gone for more than 1-2 weeks.

Flew the coop?

Our little farm has been very busy as you'd expect this time of year. The garden is taking shape. There won't be many apples or plums thanks to the late freeze but the grapes are looking great. Thanks to all the spring snow, the horse pasture is green and lush, and now we're getting a full surge of irrigation water. Before I go to bed tonight I need to get out and redirect it. Having irrigation water is like heaven to a seven year old (playing in, damming, channeling, ponding, etc.) but is a little bit of a pain when it comes at night when I'd rather be sleeping. This is probably the last week of "free water" while the Poudre River is still near its peak from snowmelt runoff. Later this summer as the river returns to base flow, we'll cherish every drop.

We've had relative peace in the valley in terms of our menagerie of farm animals. The geese hatched only one gosling this year and we had a delighted buyer for that bird (I like it when geese leave -- they seem to have it in for me). But somehow or other this afternoon one of the half grown chickens managed to escape the chicken yard (flew the coop??) and quickly found its way into Lily's (our 4-year old Australian shepherd) mouth. That didn't end so well.

Many thanks

Whether you are checking your rain gauge daily, occasionally or if the time has come to retire your gauge, I surely appreciate working and

learning with you. For those of you who have signed up for CoCoRaHS but never quite gotten around to setting up your gauge, this is a great time to start. Summer rains are incredibly variable and locally intense. It can be flooding on one side of town and dry on the other. So we need every single rain report we can get.

Have a great summer, and stay in touch.

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University