

The Catch

COCORAHS -- OUR 15TH ANNIVERSARY - SEND IN YOUR RAINFALL REPORT

Fort Collins, CO —Monday, June 17, 2013

Greetings fellow rain gauge trackers,

15 years ago today on June 17, 1998, the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow network (CoCoRaHS) website was launched. Thanks so much for taking an interest in precipitation and being a part of our CoCoRaHS rain gauge team. Our collective efforts are appreciated more than you may realize.

CoCoRaHS was a direct response to a devastating local flash flood here in our community (Fort Collins, Colorado) the previous summer (July 28, 1997). With the help of sponsors here in northern Colorado and three enthusiastic local high school students (Daphne, Luke and Tom) volunteers were recruited, trained and equipped throughout the spring of 1998. The last step was getting the interactive website to work to receive, map and display data. Luke worked tirelessly on the website, Tom worked on the mapping application, and Daphne continued to recruit volunteers including students from nearly 40 schools. On June 17, 1998, we "pushed the button" and CoCoRaHS was launched.

15 years ago the internet was still new to many people. A good percentage of our early volunteers did not have internet access so they called in their reports by phone. A few of those original volunteers are still calling in precipitation today.

Celebrate with us -- Let's reach 12,000

Please join in celebrating our 15th anniversary this week, by sending in daily precipitation measurements. We'd love to surpass 12,000 reports per day this week. We can if we all pitch in.

For about 10,000 of us, rain gauge reporting has become a habit (thanks so very much!). As a result each and every day a beautiful map of precipitation patterns emerge as our reports trickle in from across the country.

There are thousands more who have registered to be a part of CoCoRaHS recently or in the past but who aren't in the habit of reporting. If that sounds like you, then I encourage you to get involved this week.

Forgot your station number, user name and password?

If so, you'll have trouble reporting :-)) But we can help. Just go to the CoCoRaHS website -- www.cocorahs.org -- and click on "login" at the top of the page. When it asks you for your username and password, you'll see a "Find my login information" check box below. Check that box and hit "submit". It will ask for your station ID or your e-mail address. Fill that in and away you go. Shortly, you'll get an e-mail with your login information and you'll be set to go.

What if your e-mail has changed and we don't know it anymore? Then you won't get the e-mail message we send with your login. If that's the case, or if your account has been closed due to inactivity, please notify info@cocorahs.org and we can get your account updated and turned back on so you can again be a part of the CoCoRaHS rain monitoring program.

Sadness accompanies our celebration

We weren't thinking about this when we started CoCoRaHS 15 years ago. It's inevitable, but it still doesn't feel that great. The fact is we all get older and we don't live forever. We have lost many, many of our wonderful volunteers along the way. I never dreamed when we started this project that part of the deal would be sharing condolences with families of volunteers who have passed on.

And then are the days when the CoCoRaHS maps go blank in parts of the country. This was pointed out a few weeks ago with the tornadoes in Oklahoma and then again this past week when wildfire swept through a populated area NE of Colorado Springs. We have so many volunteers now in so many places that practically every natural disaster (flood, tornado, hurricane, wildfire and eventually earthquakes and more) hits our CoCoRaHS community directly.

This past week an area NE of Colorado Springs in central Colorado went blank on our CoCoRaHS maps. The devastating "Black Forest fire" forced tens of thousands of residents to evacuate. We now know that hundreds lost their homes. Some of these were members of our "CoCoRaHS family". This happened before with the Joplin, MO and Alabama tornadoes in 2011, with hurricane Ivan and Sandy, with the Missouri and Red River floods, with the huge 2012 "derecho" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_2012_North_American_derecho and with previous wildfires in TX, CO, CA and other states. It will happen again.

It is wonderful that we have so many volunteers in so many places -- but that also means we will sometimes be in harms way. We don't have an effective way to help support our volunteers who have lost everything. The best thing to do is continue to support the mission of the American Red Cross and similar relief organizations in your own community. We have received donations of rain gauges to resupply volunteers who have lost theirs to disaster. It seems trivial, but it's a small way to help.

What comes next?

That is always the weather and climate question of the day. One thing we know ... we hit the summer solstice later this week. That means the hottest days of summer are likely to follow in the next few weeks. Then gradually the day length (sunrise to sunset) will once again begin to shorten. It's still early in the tropical storm season, but there will be hurricanes to track in the months ahead. Thunderstorms, some locally intense, will pop up over many parts of the country. The California dry season will be dry again :-). For those in the Southwest (AZ, NM, NV, UT and southern CO) the annual "North American monsoon" will be getting underway soon -- giving the residents of desert and mountains of the southwestern states some much needed water and some great meteorological entertainment.

In closing, thanks once again for being a part of this project. Help us celebrate our 15th anniversary, and have the best summer you can.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University