

The Catch

COCORAHS -- A MID-SUMMER UPDATE

Fort Collins, CO —Tuesday, July 23, 2013

Dear CoCoRahsters

First, a welcome to all who are newcomers to CoCoRaHS. We're still getting a few dozen new volunteers signing up each week. We appreciate each and every one of you. Just look at the CoCoRaHS maps each day and click on your favorite locations and enjoy watching the amazing variations and localized patterns of daily precipitation.

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

There have been dozens of examples just this week alone of huge local variations. Giant differences are commonplace in Florida, but check out Ocean County, New Jersey today -- rainfall varying from 0 to over 6" even in New Jersey. This is why we do CoCoRaHS!!!!

Vacation travels

You've probably noticed that I haven't written for several weeks. We took our vacation early and enjoyed a mid-June driving trip from Colorado to eastern Upper Michigan. We had seasonal temperatures and dry weather the whole way until we caught some rain and fog as we crossed the beautiful Mackinac Bridge. I always travel with one or two rain gauges in hope of recruiting someone along the way. We scored a new recruit in Mackinac County, MI. But we sure could use more volunteers in the U.P. (hint, hint).

On our long drive home in early July, my wife dropped me off in Des Moines and I caught a ride with Harry Hillaker and his family (Harry is the Iowa State Climatologist and the new CoCoRaHS co-coordinator for Iowa) down to St. Louis for the annual meeting of the American Association of State Climatologists. In all my years growing up in the Midwest, I'd never

done the drive between Des Moines and St. Louis, so that was fun. If ever there was a group of men and women who truly know and love the climate of their states, and appreciate the value of volunteer weather observations, it's this group. We had a great time sweltering together in some Mississippi Valley summer heat and humidity, freezing in the air-conditioned hotel conference room overlooking the Gateway Arch and also enjoying some thunder from some nearby thunderstorms and a Cardinals game on a perfect night out in the outfield stands.

12,000??? Not quite yet

In my last message I asked for your help in celebrating the 15th anniversary of CoCoRaHS (the week of June 17th) by rallying to get as many daily reports as we could to try to reach the 12,000 reports per day mark.

Did we make it?? We fell short by a few hundred. A full month later, reports for June 17 and 18 are still slowly coming in, so there's still a chance. By combining both the daily reports and the multiday reports ending on those dates, here are the current numbers.

June 17, 2013

11,228 daily reports + 537 multiday reports = 11,765 total
(235 to go)

June 18, 2013

11,367 daily reports + 320 multiday reports = 11,687
(313 to go)

So keep reporting. We'll hit 12,000 soon.

Interestingly, while we don't all report on the same day, looking back over the past 3 months over 16,500 of us have sent in at least one daily report and if we go back 12 months that number is close to 19,000. Just imagine the CoCoRaHS maps if we all reported on the same day.

1,000

In case you can't tell by now, I like numbers and statistics. This week the 1,000th CoCoRaHS volunteer from Larimer County, Colorado signed up. This is our local county here in north central Colorado and encompasses Fort Collins, Loveland, Estes Park and surrounding areas. This is the first county in the country to reach 1000 sign ups.

By comparison, most counties nationally have less than 20 volunteers and some still have zero. But we do have other big ones. Jefferson County, CO is up to 400 (western Denver suburbs). Maricopa County (Phoenix), AZ has 374 CoCoRaHS recruits. Pima County, AZ (Tucson) is up to 234. Dona Ana County in southern New Mexico (Las Cruces) has signed up 273 CoCoRaHS volunteers since the project began while Bernalillo County, NM (Albuquerque) has 165. Texas has some big ones. Bexar County (San Antonio) is up to 268 and Travis County (Austin) stands at 199 stations. Several other counties there are also over 100. In Illinois, Cook County (Chicago) has 218. King County, Washington (home of Seattle) has 189. Wake County, NC (home of Raleigh) has 163. In New York state, Erie County (Buffalo) recently reached 103. Even in the very low population state of Wyoming, Laramie County (Cheyenne) has 156.

Yes, we have an advantage here since this is where CoCoRaHS began and we've been recruiting local volunteers since the spring of 1998. Also we have a county-wide population of 300,000. So that means lots of good candidates.

Just think, if we could sign up one out of every 300 people nationally, that would be close to 1 million rain gauge volunteers. That would be something. But I think we've done even better. In Kiowa County, Colorado our enthusiastic county coordinator has signed up 40 volunteers. With a population of just 1,433, that means that one out of every 36 people have signed up for CoCoRaHS. Now that is amazing. (Thanks Bruce!)

Always some Interesting weather

One thing I've learned from CoCoRaHS is that there is always something interesting and/or extreme going on in the weather somewhere in this wonderful land of ours. What has really caught my attention recently is the nearly endless rains that have been falling in parts of North Carolina and adjacent states. We have over 650 active volunteers in North Carolina and hundreds more in adjacent states. Their rain gauge reports have been invaluable in documenting this onslaught of summer rains. This is such a contrast to the widespread drought this time last year. I just ran our "Total Precipitation Summary Report" for North Carolina and about a third of the stations have received over 10" of rain this month. A few dozen stations, mostly in western NC, have totaled over 15". The very soggy "winner" if you can call it that is near Linville in Avery County with measurable rainfall every day this month and a total of 25.39" in 23 days since July 1. That same station has totaled over 71" since January 1.

That's crazy.

A few announcements and reminders:

1) This is **CoCoRaHS Webinar** week. On Thursday at 11 AM Mountain time (1 pm Eastern, Noon Central and 10 AM Pacific) we'll host our monthly WxTalk webinar and this time the subject is rain water harvesting. This is proving to be one of the most popular talks yet, but we still have room for a few dozen more. Here is the link to register. I really hope you can join us.
<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/224499518>

If the schedule doesn't work out, remember we archive all of our webinars and make them available via the CoCoRaHS YouTube channel. Here's the menu of previous WxTalk Webinars
<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDDC91E3A979406CE>

Next month -- it's hurricane time. August 15th we'll be hearing from the team at Colorado State University who have been forecasting Atlantic hurricane activity for quite a few years. Don't miss it.

2) Please take advantage of the **CoCoRaHS Blog**.

<http://cocorahs.blogspot.com/>

It's updated frequently and loaded with fascinating weather and climate information. Thanks, Steve, for your incredible contribution of observations, knowledge and experience that you are so generously sharing with all of us.

3) Please **add comments** to your daily precipitation reports when you can. This really, really helps. It's amazing how many reports of huge rainfalls (over 3") we get without a single word. If it were me, I'd be writing a short story :-)

4) I will keep harping on this forever, but here I go again. Please, please, please send in **special reports** whenever you are experiencing significant weather. We have report forms (you'll see the menu under "Enter My New Reports" when you're on your data entry page) for reporting hail, heavy precipitation or any other type of troublesome weather. Remember, the hail and significant weather reports go instantly to your local National Weather Service office and show up as special alert messages there.

5) If you're gone for a few days during the summer, remember it's OK to enter a **multiday report** when you return.

Gone too long (a short farm story)

Speaking of being gone, it's amazing what can happen when you leave the farm for a few days. When I got back home from Missouri, I heard a commotion out behind the barn. Dogs were barking and our two horses were whinnying and kicking up their heels. A young deer was running back and forth in the trees behind the corral. But then I realized that was only one small part of the commotion. It turns out there was another 4-legged animal in the barn -- a young grey horse not yet full grown. Somehow my wife had forgotten to tell me. Also, we had 4 new chickens that the neighbors brought us. They were "flying chickens" doomed to a quick end in their neighborhood so they gave them to us. So the Doesken family now has even more animals and more chores. I think I better stay home from now on :-)

Wrap up

Summer will be over before you know it, so enjoy the heat (as best you can), the long evenings (which are already shortening) and the huge thunderheads that many parts of the country experience now.

Thanks to all of you for helping with CoCoRaHS -- even if you're not a rain gauge reader any more. Keep telling your friends, family and neighbors. Gradually we'll get dots all over our maps. If you're new and need help getting started, remember to contact your local coordinator <http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=coord> or just send us an e-mail at: info@cocorahs.org

Best wishes,

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