

Subscribe

Share ▼

Past Issues

Translate ▼

RSS 

The Catch



NOLAN DOESKEN'S BI-MONTHLY COCORAHHS E-MAIL MESSAGE

CoCoRaHS -- The "Survey" is Ready -- Plus Other Important Information

FORT COLLINS, CO -- May __, 2014

Greetings fellow rain gaugers, weather watchers, friends and family:

It's been many weeks since I last had a chance to write you. Since then, hundreds more have signed up to help measure rain (Thanks!) and there have been big rains, little rains, hail storms, late-spring snows and some very bad tornadoes. Meanwhile lack of rain has also been a problem. The California drought continues as does the 2014 version of the "Dustbowl" in the southern Great Plains (The current weather pattern is finally bringing some much needed rains and cool weather to this parched area). Where I live here in northern Colorado we've had our long-awaited first thunder, our first hail, our first hot days in the upper 80s, our first lilac and apple blossoms, and then a major Mothers' Day snowstorm just to keep things interesting. The snow melted quickly from our yard, garden and pastures, but we enjoyed the shrinking snowman for several days that I made with our 3-year-old grandson. The joys of spring! Thanks for being a part of CoCoRaHS and for helping track and map this amazing variety.

[Please take the CoCoRaHS Spring Survey](#)

[How to be a Great Weather Observer - Online Training Session - May 29th!](#)

[Photo Field Weekend](#)

[Amazing Rain](#)

[Speaking of Amazing](#)

[Now is the Time](#)

[Rural Measurements](#)

[Hail, Significant Wx, Drought Impacts -- Really Important Special Reports](#)

[CoCoRaHS App -- Working Well](#)

[New Animation - Weather Vs. Climate](#)

[Farm Story - So Peaceful](#)

Please Take the CoCoRaHS Spring Survey

Here it is. It's been nearly 5 years since our last survey. We've addressed some of the suggestions made then, but certainly not all. Please take a few minutes to fill out this entire survey. This is your chance to give us feedback and suggestions. The questions get quicker and easier to answer as you go along, so don't give up. It will probably take at least 20 minutes to complete, but your input (which will be anonymous) means a great deal to us and the CoCoRaHS network. It will help us make changes and improvements for the future. We would like you to take this survey even if you've never been very active or maybe didn't ever get started taking measurements.

Thank you very much. The Survey will be open for 14 days. We'll report back later with some of the summarized results. [Click here to take the survey.](#)

How to be a Great Weather Observer - Sign up for May 29 Training Session!

Measuring rain, hail and snow is not "rocket science". But there are some details and hints to help measure more accurately.

On Thursday May 29 beginning at 6:00 PM Eastern, 5:00 Central, 4:00 Mountain and 3:00 Pacific, we are conducting an online training session for anyone anywhere in the country who is new to CoCoRaHS, anyone who has questions, or anyone that just needs a refresher.

[Please click here to sign up if you're interested.](#) If registration is very high, we can schedule another session in June.

What will the training cover?

We will try to answer the most common questions -- Where is the best place to mount my gauge? How high above the ground should the gauge be and how far from buildings and trees? What if I'm in a windy location? How does the rain gauge work and how do I read it accurately? Do I need to report every day or just when it rains? What do I do when I'm on vacation? How do I log in and enter my data? May I use my mobile device to enter my CoCoRaHS reports? How do I correct an erroneous report? How about hail and snow? Who uses our data and for what purposes?

We'll go at a swift pace and cover everything in about 45 - 50 minutes. Then we'll take questions. The whole training session will be archived and posted to YouTube (insert link here). So if you can't make it on the 29th or if you need to go back and review materials, you can watch later at your convenience.

Field Photo Weekend

What does your landscape look like in late spring? Have you participated in the CoCoRaHS Field Photos Weekends before? If not, here's your chance to join hundreds of other CoCoRaHS users to see what our landscapes looks like. If you have participated before, this is a great chance to go back to your favorite spots and see what has changed. During May 24-26th, you can help by participating in our sixth "Field Photo Weekend".

All you have to do is take your camera or smartphone ([Use the new IOS or Android](#)

[Apps here](#)), find a landscape in your community (streams, lakes, rivers, reservoirs, a forest, a crop field, a pasture, etc.) and take a single photo or a panorama in four different directions (N, E, S, W) from where you are standing. After that you can either email your photos with your location to: fieldphotos@southernclimate.org or use the Apps mentioned above. [Click here for more details](#).

Amazing Rain

A few weeks ago we had our first spring thunderstorm just before dark and right as we were trying to eat dinner. The lightning wasn't too close. The thunder wasn't too loud, and the rain wasn't too hard. It was thrilling for me to sit at the dinner table watching the storm with the windows partly open to hear the sounds and to smell the smells of spring moisture...But what was most exciting was watching our bright-eyed 3-year old grandson totally engrossed – watching intently for each new flash and listening for each rumble. Then came a burst of hail and we (the grownups) all sprang to action, throwing on raincoats and rushing outside to move or cover all the young starts and seedlings that were almost ready to get planted in the garden.

I wondered to myself – was that what I was like when I was three? As an adult I've wondered what my parents thought about my early and total fascination with weather? And I wondered how they encouraged or redirected my curiosity? They've been gone for many years. I can only imagine now what went through their minds watching me – but seeing our little grandson and the sparkle in his eye (and then his amazement with the big snow just a few days later) gave me a pretty good hint.

Speaking of Amazing

The water cycle is amazing in its' own right – [constantly moving water from place to place around the globe](#). But it's the condensation of water vapor into clouds and the gathering and coalescence of cloud droplets and ice crystals into raindrops, snowflakes, and occasionally hailstones – the process of watering the earth -- that is ceaselessly incredible. Whether we live in a dry place or a wet one, and whether we measure a trace (T), one hundredth (0.01"), a tenth (0.10") or if our inner tube fills to the top (1.00") or fills the entire outer cylinder (a full CoCoRaHS gauge holds just over 11.25"), it's fascinating and so very important.

Since I last wrote in late March, 16,033 of us have reported rainfall at least once (with over a half million daily precipitation reports in total for that period!). Until this week, many in W. Texas, southern New Mexico, parts of AZ and southern Nevada had received no precipitation at all during that time. However, some whopper rains have fallen here and there. The "Whopper of the year" (at least so far) fell on the Florida panhandle and the Mobile Bay area of southern Alabama. Five CoCoRaHS observers reported in excess of 18" of rain in 24 hours. Dozens more had between 10" and 18". That took some heroics to measure and report that much rain, and we all appreciate those efforts very much.

Now is the Time

It is thunderstorm season – the time of year when rainfall intensity (expressed as “inches per hour” or “millimeters per hour”) is typically the greatest and when variations in rainfall from one location to another are largest. (Yes, California and the West Coast is an

exception since we're now headed into their dry season). For example, the storm that motivated us to start CoCoRaHS back in 1997 dropped over 14" of rain in parts of our city (Fort Collins) and less than 2" in others – and Fort Collins isn't that big. That's a huge difference over a very short distance. To document these variations, we need a lot of gauges. That's the reason for this encouragement.

What this means is that we really need you and anyone else we can encourage to [join CoCoRaHS!](#) Get your rain gauge installed if it isn't already. Please make sure you have your username and password so you can report your data. If you've moved and haven't told us, we can help register your new location. If you have any questions, just ask. [Attend the training webinar on May 29th if you can.](#) This is the time.

Rural Measurements

Some of you live in places where there are few or [no other volunteers for miles around](#). In order to accurately track precipitation, we need more rural participants from data sparse areas. You may ask why we need rain gauges with all the fancy NOAA and NASA satellite data and the National Weather Service weather radar data and all the electronic weather stations out there? Electronic rain gauges sometimes work great and sometimes they don't. Precipitation estimates from remote sensing are useful but rely heavily on rain gauge data for "ground truth" calibration. In other words, they need us.

Hail, Significant Wx, Drought Impacts -- Really Important Special Reports

These are "additional" reports that you can submit to CoCoRaHS at any time! If you experience hail, other significant weather (heavy rains, high winds, dense fog, etc) or if your area is seeing some impacts from developing or persisting drought, please take a minute to fill out and submit these special reports. They are located on the left hand panel of your [Data Entry page](#). Your nearest National Weather Service forecast office will automatically receive these reports and may use them in issuing severe weather or flash flood warnings. Your drought impact reports go directly to the [National Drought Mitigation Center](#) to help assess drought conditions nationwide. Thanks for helping.

CoCoRaHS App -- Working Well

Hundreds of you are already using the iPhone and android apps to submit your daily precipitation reports. If you're using the iPhone app, please remember to click "more details" to take you to page two where you can enter your comments, snow measurements etc. More improvements will be made, but for now it does make data entry easier for those of us who are on the move or don't have a PC. Here are the links to download the App, either [Android](#) or [iPhone](#).

New Animation -- "Weather Vs. Climate"

Since I'm trained as a meteorologist but I've been working as a climatologist for nearly 40 years, I often get the question "what's the difference between weather and climate. To me, it doesn't really matter. Weather is the conditions in the atmosphere right now, but climate is the whole continuum – much more than just the "average weather". We put the CoCoRaHS animator to work on coming up with a cartoon to try to show weather versus climate. It took many, many iterations, but this is what we came up with. [Click](#)

[here to give it a try!](#)

Farm Story - So Peaceful

And why is it so peaceful? We found new homes for our geese as breeding stock on a nearby organic poultry farm. No longer am I awakened at 5 AM by the loud honks and squawks. No longer do I have to constantly look back over my shoulder to spot the gander with its outstretched neck – often just inches from my behind. Now our grandson is able to feel comfortable out in the pasture no longer fearing for his life. Things just won't be the same without them, and my farm stories may be more bland, but life is simpler now. But more excitement is likely. We've heard that a neighbor has found a fox den with 12 kits – yikes! And we'll be having some chicks soon. We may find out that our watch geese had been more valuable than we thought.

While drought is not far away over southern Colorado, last week's thunderstorm and the Mothers' Day snow has added nearly 3" of moisture to my gauge and our soil. It is green, the soil is moist and life here is good. We're busy, but grateful.

Enjoy the rest of May. And remember to please take our Survey.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University

[follow on Twitter](#) | [friend on Facebook](#) | [forward to a friend](#)

Copyright © 2014 CoCoRaHS, All rights reserved.

[unsubscribe from this list](#) | [update subscription preferences](#)