

The Catch



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

CoCoRaHS -- "I'll Take Weather Networks for \$1000, Alex"

Fort Collins, Colorado -- August 7, 2014

To our team of CoCoRaisins (one of the terms used to define us rain gaugers),

Summer flies by. I hope you're having a good one. For most of the country it's been a comfortable summer and relatively green -- the notable exception being the hot and dry West Coast states. Hang in there, and enjoy the last weeks of summer. For all of you who have just recently joined CoCoRaHS, welcome aboard and we hope you are getting off to a good start.

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Weather Station Party!

Yes -- a party for a Weather Station!

We had a fabulous party (and several dozen of you



attended) here on the campus of Colorado State University last week. We celebrated 125 years of uninterrupted weather observations (and 142 years total) from our campus weather station and we ceremoniously unveiled a beautiful plaque honoring the station and its' history. This event ([click here to see more photos](#)) took place on July 28th, 2014 --

which happened to be the 17th anniversary of our extreme localized flash flood which claimed five lives, ravaged campus, but eventually lead to the creation of CoCoRaHS. That storm so poignantly demonstrated the need and the opportunity for volunteers to help measure, report and map rainfall patterns. While the National Weather Service carries the flag for long-term weather stations across the country, CoCoRaHS strives to fill the many large gaps between official stations. What we're doing matters, and it's too easy to forget that.

More History



Elwood Mead

On Monday evening, August 11, at 7 PM we'll continue our weather station celebration with a lecture here on campus: "The History of the Fort Collins Weather Station -- 1872 - present". We'll highlight the community (Fort Collins turns 150 years old later this month), the University (144 years old) the weather station (142) and the very interesting people who have championed weather observations for all these years. One of our earliest weather observers was Professor Elwood Mead who went on to become the Wyoming State Engineer and then the head of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (and later had a reservoir named after him -- Lake Mead). But alas, Professor Mead didn't have the patience for meticulous thrice-daily

observations, and after just three months on the job requested permission from the Colorado State Board of Agriculture to get assistance from the janitorial staff. There are plenty more interesting stories, so if you want to learn more (and happen to be in the area) [please plan to attend](#).

CoCoRaHS on Jeopardy!, Really?

Yes -- Unlikely, but true. It came as quite a shock last week when we suddenly got a barrage of e-mails followed by a surge of several new volunteers signing up all over the country saying "we heard about CoCoRaHS on the game show "Jeopardy". Now I don't watch much TV, but that's a game I know well. In fact, one of our Atmospheric Science professors (Professor Russ Schumacher) had been a contestant earlier this year.



Jeopardy! was holding a 'Teen Tournament', and it turns out that during the short interview between rounds with Alex Trebek, a young contestant from New

Jersey mentioned that he loves to collect precipitation data for a network called CoCoRaHS. Alex was so confused by our acronym that he had to ask the young contestant to repeat it again!

After giving the on-air promotion to CoCoRaHS, he not only won the semi-finals that night, but he went on to win the entire Teen Tournament! Wow!

So, if you're ever on Jeopardy, make sure to mention CoCoRaHS! :-)

Rains on the Southern Plains



After years of drought (we were in the 4th consecutive year for parts of the southern plains states) the skies have opened up over many parts of New Mexico, West Texas, Oklahoma, western Kansas and Eastern Colorado. While the CA drought rolls on, the weeds and even some grass are greening up on the southern

plains. Ranchers, who've been living gloom and blowing dust, have a quicker and more optimistic step these days. Areas near Lubbock, TX, for example have seen upwards of 10" of rain since May -- fully ten times more than they got in that same period back in 2011. In far western Kansas and southeast Colorado, the grasses are at last turning green and showing signs of life. But the weeds are growing too -- and much faster than the grass. If last year was a big year for tumbling tumbleweeds, then I can't imagine what's going to happen this winter when the winds kick up again.

Reporting Fatigue?



Based on the number of reports (coming in a little less than this time last year) some of us are getting tired of reporting -- or just plain tired. The best cure, of course, is rain. This time last year we had about 1000 more volunteers regularly reporting their zeroes than this year. I agree, there's no great joy or satisfaction

reporting NO precipitation, but the data are still important. So, please keep those measurements coming! Again, what we are doing is important.

Quick Tips

1. What's a "T"?
How much rain or snow needs to fall before we call it a "T" (for "trace")? Just one! Whether it's a few drops in the bottom of your gauge, or a dry gauge but a few drops on your face or sidewalk -- it's still a trace and should be reported as "T"
2. You don't need a hail pad to report hail.
Just a reminder, if you experience hail at your location, please [file a hail report](#) (found on the left hand menu of your data entry page). There has been a common misconception that you have to have a hail pad to fill out a hail report form and that's just not true. Your timely hail report is valuable to us and really important for the National Weather Service. Please fill it out as best you can, and skip any parts you don't know.
3. "Comments" are greatly appreciated, and they all get read!
Did you know that 13% of CoCoRaHS volunteers type in comments each day? That means about 87% percent don't. Some just type a few words or numbers. Others (like me) write a short "essay". Precipitation reports alone are great. Precipitation reports with some descriptive comments are awesome!
[Click here to view some "comments" \(within our 'view data' section found at the top of the page\)](#). Just use the drop-down menus to select the state and date range, and enjoy! There are some great gems almost every day!
We've been finding that as more people are using phone apps to enter their data, fewer people are typing in comments. But the apps allow comments too, so please give it a try!
4. CoCoRaHS Webinars, live or recorded.
The last [WxTalk webinar on space weather](#) was fantastic! Anyone can go back and view it at anytime if they have a relatively high speed internet connection. In fact, you can view any of our archived webinars, animations or training videos at <https://www.youtube.com/user/cocorahs>.
The next WxTalk webinar is on a topic that not that many people know about -- forensic meteorology. [Sign up here if you want to attend](#).
5. "Drought Impact reports". If you notice that it's getting dry, really dry, or miserably dry, please remember to [submit a "Drought Impact Report"](#). Your eyes and your local experience can really help us if and when drought creeps into your part of the country.

Special Calendar -- Growing Needs -- Great Opportunity

Thanks to the variety of photographs that many of you sent in, we have assembled a 2015 rain gauge calendar that is "stunning" -- if such a word applies to



rain gauges. There will be nothing like it on the market, I'm sure, and it will be arriving from the printers in just a few weeks. It seems too early to even think about 2015, but it will be here before you know it. Thanks to these great looking calendars, we're going to try something we haven't done for several years -- a summer fundraiser. It comes at the right time to keep CoCoRaHS thriving. In a few days,

we're going to announce our quick 3-day fundraiser centered around the calendar. If you find yourself in a position to be able to help us out with a donation -- or if your employer or someone you know who loves water, rain, or rain gauges is -- please look for this next week (Aug 12-14). It will just last three days, be over in a flash and will hopefully give us a timely boost. The donation link is: <http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=2014threeday>

Also, and this is hard for me to ask, it's time to start thinking about the long-term future of CoCoRaHS and how to sustain it. I think the time has come to try starting an endowment fund. We need an initial donation of at least \$5,000 and a total of \$25,000 by next year to get the fund started. We can pursue lots of options then, but for now we need to start. So, if any of you happen to know a potential donor who might want to help us get this started, please contact me by e-mail (just reply) or phone (970 491-3690). It's time to start the conversation.

Farm Story

It has been amazingly calm on our little farm ever since we sent the geese off to camp (poultry farm). It's quieter day and night, and the chores only take half the time (don't have to constantly be covering my back side or walking backwards to keep the geese at bay). It's been a little wetter than usual this year, but the rains have been timed so that I haven't had to irrigate much lately, and the corral hasn't been at all dusty. The down side is I've had to mow a lot more and I've lost a few things in the tall grass. There's also the issue of flies and mosquitoes. But oh well. About the most excitement lately has been the early apples (great for apple sauce) and the large limb that came down from one of the big cottonwood trees yesterday. The windstorm two weeks ago mostly just bothered the scraggly Siberian elm trees. Then yesterday, for no good reason a branch big enough to crush the garage came straight down. No one was there to break the fall (fortunately).

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University
CoCoRaHS station number CO-LR-273

5661 daily precipitation reports so far -- and counting

(P.S. The quickest way I know to count how many reports I've made is to click "My Data" at the top of the CoCoRaHS page and then select "Daily Precipitation" under "List/Edit My reports" on the side menu. It will bring up a table in chronological order of all daily reports you've filed. You can do the same for multiday reports, hail, Significant Weather, Drought Impact and ET (if you're a registered ET station). If you want to see the most rain you've had in a day, just click on the column label, "Total Precip in." and it will sort your reports highest to lowest (or click again for lowest to highest). I see I've had 2.82" as my greatest one day total -- and a total of four days with 2" or greater. Some of you have many more large totals. I've only had four days with 10" or more of new snow! Anyway, just wanted to share that.)

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