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The Catch



NOLAN DOESKEN'S MONTHLY COCORAHS E-MAIL MESSAGE

CoCoRaHS -- March Madness Ends and the Fun Begins!

Fort Collins, Colorado -- March 31st, 2016

Welcome CoCoRaHS newcomers and old timers,

March brings variable and stormy weather. That has been the case again this year. March also brings an onslaught of new rain gauge volunteers, many who find out about our project from National Weather Service storm spotter training classes across the country. Welcome to all of you CoCoRaHS newcomers! More than 990 new volunteers have signed up since March 1st to help measure and report precipitation. Yeah!!! If you're new to CoCoRaHS and not quite sure what you signed up for, CoCoRaHS stands for the "Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow network". This is a group of thousands of fellow weather enthusiasts all using the same type of rain gauge to accurately measure, report, map and track precipitation. Because we have so many of us spread out over most of the U.S., Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, much of southern Canada, and now even the Islands of the Bahamas (they just started this month), together we do a good job of depicting the amazing variations in precipitation that we experience each and every day. But we still have many gaps which you are helping to fill.

Thanks for signing up. I hope you get your rain gauge set up soon, if you haven't already. And if you have any questions or need any help getting started, just let us know by contacting your volunteer coordinator or writing to info@cocorahs.org. Make sure you are familiar with the [CoCoRaHS website](#), as it contains most everything you will need, and it shows [lots of examples of how our rain, hail and snow reports are used](#).

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CoCoRaHS March recruiting contest -- great competition



Before midnight tonight we will likely surpass 1,000 new volunteers this month (We are just four volunteers shy). Just within the past 24 hours, we've seen new recruits from more than 20 different states and three countries. Awesome! Arizona has added a remarkable 158 new volunteers -- most in just the last two weeks. I take this to mean there will be an exciting summer monsoon season there. Hats off to the 14 other states that have added at least 20 new volunteers since March 1st. Delaware, with 51 new volunteers and Rhode Island, with 11, are also very impressive considering the small size of those states.

We gave it a good try here in Colorado (35 new sign ups) but will once again fail to capture "[The CoCoRaHS Cup](#)". It looks like Arizona and Delaware will be this year's winners.

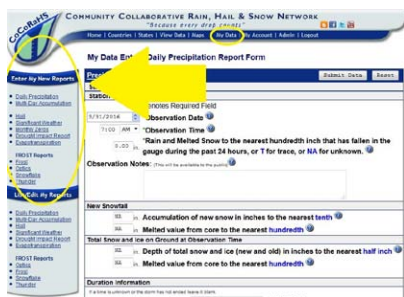
Empty Counties means we don't know

Despite years of trying, we still have quite a few counties without a single CoCoRaHS volunteer. Many states have most counties covered, [but there are still gaps](#). While there are other weather stations out there, and National Weather Service radar is useful at making rough estimates of precipitation, until we have more gauges, we really won't know what fell there. If any of you have family, friends or acquaintances living in counties where we have no observers, please let them know. Let's fill these gaps by 2017!

Huge rains, terrible floods, giant snows, great CoCoRaHS reports

A lot happens in a month. This week Wyoming is getting big snows. Early this week, Reno, NV was the snowiest city in the U.S. Last week Denver was nearly shut down with a blizzard. California got some heavy rains earlier in the month. But the really big story was the huge rains and devastating floods in the lower Mississippi Valley. This included three consecutive days with more than 12" of rain reported by one or more CoCoRaHS volunteers. Our team of rain gaugers in Monroe, Louisiana hung in there with water at their doorstep. We had several storm totals in excess of 20" of rain in three days or less. Wow, and thanks!

Your "special" reports are really valuable



It may seem that I nag about this, but I must continue to

emphasize the importance of sending in special reports during inclement weather. There are several optional reports that are found in the left hand panel of your data entry page. When you use the "[Hail](#)" report or the one for reporting "[Significant Weather](#)" including heavy rain, flooding, deep snow, dense fog, etc., these reports go directly - and immediately - to your local National Weather Service office and can be used to help issue appropriate warnings or special weather statements. Timely information can save lives and trouble.

Most of us do a good job getting our daily precipitation reports in each morning. Only a few take the time to report hail or other significant weather.

I would also like to mention another project out there called "[mPing](#)". If you have a smart phone, check out their App - where you can report the type of precipitation that is falling at your location in real time. This is a great project that is specifically studying the type of precipitation that is falling, rather than the amount of precipitation like we do here at CoCoRaHS. It is fun to participate - especially if you are not at your gauge but would still like to help scientists know what is landing on the ground at your exact location when you submit the report.

We also have a [special report for drought](#). If your area is drying out, let us know. We'll be adding another report form soon called a "Condition Monitoring Report" so you don't have to wait for severe drought to let us know how your overall soil, plant and water conditions are varying. You'll hear more about that in my next letter.

White House rain gauge -- doing well



It was just a year ago when a CoCoRaHS rain gauge

was first installed in an ideal location in the First Lady's kitchen garden on the South Lawn. The National Park Service is doing a great job tending the gauge. A total of 46.70" of precipitation (including one whopping snowstorm in February) has been reported so far. If you happen to get the chance to take a White House garden tour,

please look for it. Click on the photo to view their data.

Be a hero -- Report your zero

There isn't much excitement in checking a dry gauge and typing in 0.00" for your report, but it really does help. As localized as rainfall can be, we're never sure you were dry unless you send in the report. We make it easy by making that the default value, so all you have to do is push "Submit". Thanks so much for your rainfall reports -- and your zero reports!

CoCoRaHS Blog -- good stuff

<http://cocorahs.blogspot.com/> -- that's all I need to say. It's worth reading.

What's next for WxTalk Webinars

By the way, Wx is an old abbreviation for "weather". If anyone knows where that abbreviation came from, let me know.

Our webinar last week, "A Day in the Life of a TV Meteorologist" was fantastic. If you missed it, [here's the link to watch at your leisure](#).

Next up is a series on the weather and climate of our country -- region by region. Each will be lead by the incredibly knowledgeable staff of the "Regional Climate Centers". Every region is special, but the first up will be my favorite -- "The Midwest" presented by Mike Timlin - Midwest Regional Climate Center at the University of Illinois. It's my favorite because that was the weather and climate that caught my attention since I was born not far from there.

[Please join us at 1 PM Eastern time on April 21.](#)

Farm Story



I'm happy to report we have no more and no less animals than we had all winter. The critters are all a bit older, maybe wiser, but still hungry. And we haven't seen a predator around here for months. The adventure chickens (the three or four that fly over the 8 foot chicken yard fence each sunny morning) all seem fearless these days and roam far. Eventually these good times will end as the pendulum(s) of nature swings and the fox, raccoons and/or coyotes return. We survived a remarkable weather change last week. On Monday and Tuesday (March 21-22) the sun shone gloriously and the temperature soared into the 70's. Then, just a

few hours later a snow storm struck with a quick 13" of wind-driven snow (more than that in other areas) in less than seven hours. This confused our animals, and gave me a great deal of shoveling exercise. It also quickly slowed the bulbs, bushes and fruit trees that had been unwisely thinking of flowering before Easter especially when the morning low on Sunday was a nippy 16 F. Today it's trying to snow again, but much less vigorously. And there is nothing better than a wet spring snow to moisten the soil and slow us down a bit in our dreams for an early garden.

Our horse that was dealing with lameness is doing much better after some treatments and therapy. Thanks to those of you who asked about her.

One of the most interesting things here in the last month was the great "ditch bank cleanup". We have an irrigation canal that dates back to the late 1800's that flows through our property. In the summer, it's like an idyllic stream with willows and cottonwoods and wild plum trees draping and shading it. There are even a few fish in it at times. I always dreamed of having a gurgling stream, and for five months of the year, we do -- sort of. But it's not ours and neither is the water -- except what soaks into the ground to water our many trees.

Early in March, while the weather was still dry, the ditch company came over with three pieces of heavy equipment. In just a few hours, the ditch bank was bare. The willows, plums, Russian olives and the younger cottonwoods were all gone -- uprooted, shredded and trucked away. Also gone were piles of old rotting fence rails that I had stacked there but never found time to deal with.

It was a bit disconcerting to see all that lush vegetation disappear so quickly, but it is the ditch company's job to make sure that the water flows to its rightful owners. Too much ditch bank vegetation can interfere. So we sighed and went on, knowing the vegetation would grow back eventually. But what was interesting is what we observed the next week. A few days later we had a spring wind storm with gusts that might have been close to 60 mph. We've had bigger wind storms before that never caused any trouble so we thought we were prepared. But this time we had a variety of damage. The tarp blew off the stacked hay. The cover on the trailer ripped. Various other stuff was strewn about. What was different? Apparently we had forgotten how well the ditch bank vegetation had also been slowing the winds. Alas, our wind break was gone.

In conclusion

I'm glad you're all a part of this CoCoRaHS "rain gauge adventure". I appreciate your help. Have a great spring.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken and the CoCoRaHS team
NOAA's Weather Ready Nation Ambassador Program
Colorado State University

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