

Extension Notes

Personal Column for March 2, 2010

By Gary Hall, Iowa State University Regional Extension Education Director

National Precipitation Monitoring Network Urgently Needs Iowa Volunteers to Measure Precipitation in Their Own Backyards!

Ever wonder how much rain fell out of the storm that just passed overhead? Will the Farmer's Almanac be correct in the prediction of 30 inches of snow in late March? Why is the airport so much drier than my house? Wonder no longer.

You can become a volunteer who measures precipitation in your own backyard as part of the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network - CoCoRaHS –which has grown to over 15,000 volunteer observers covering every state of the country. More volunteers are urgently needed! It's fun, easy and only takes five minutes a day. My neighbor asked me what I was doing out there in my backyard with that yardstick. I explained that I monitor moisture and told him how much snow was left on the ground.

The CoCoRaHS network engages volunteers to document the size, intensity, duration and patterns of precipitation by taking simple measurements in their own backyards. Volunteers only need a cylindrical rain gauge, some training and an interest in weather to participate in the program. The specific rain gauges that CoCoRaHS uses are available from several distributors on the network's website (www.cocorahs.org) for \$25 plus shipping. The site also offers on-line training.

Data from CoCoRaHS volunteers are now being routinely viewed and used by the National Weather Service, meteorologists, hydrologists, emergency managers, city utilities, insurance adjusters, agribusinesses, engineers, science teachers and many more. Data are used for many applications such as water resource planning, severe storm warnings, teaching earth science, predicting crop yields and for assessing hail damage. Only a few counties in north Iowa have a volunteer so please sign up.

For more information or to volunteer for the CoCoRaHS network, go to <http://www.cocorahs.org/>. You'll be glad you became part of this important project that is benefiting many across the nation plus now you will know to the 0.01 of an inch how much rain just fell in your backyard.

###

Contact: Gary Hall, 2023 S Federal Ave, Mason City, IA 50401, 641-425-3116,
garyhall@iastate.edu