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Jackie Brown: Volunteers help map precipitation with community network

By Jackie Brown Friday, May 13, 2011

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With the variety of weather Routt County has been seeing lately, I thought this would be a good opportunity to introduce the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network. The network is a unique, nonprofit, community-based collection of volunteers of all ages and backgrounds working together to measure and map precipitation.

By using low-cost measurement tools, stressing training and education and using an interactive website, the aim is to provide the highest quality data for natural resource, education and research applications. The network is now in all 50 states.

The Routt County Conservation District is sponsoring the participation of at least seven Routt County schools, public and private, to the network as part of their science curriculum. Teachers have access to about a dozen lesson plans varying from cloud types and formation to tornados and lightning. Of course, the first lesson the students will learn in the 2011-12 school year is how to properly use their rain gauge and snow board to take accurate precipitation measurements. The participation of these schools from across Routt County's diverse weather patterns on our compass points will be wonderful information to all residents of Routt County and is available to all on www.cocorahs.org.

Are you jealous that you aren't in school to be part of this great project? Don't fret. This is a project for the entire community. Everyone can help, young, old and in between. The only requirements are an enthusiasm for watching and reporting weather conditions and a desire to learn more about how weather can affect our lives.

Each time a rain, hail or snow storm crosses your area, volunteers take measurements of precipitation, which are then recorded on the website. The data are then displayed and organized for many of our users to analyze and apply to daily situations ranging from water resource analysis and severe storm warnings to neighbors comparing how much rain fell in their backyards. For those weather lovers on time constraints, we also have gauges available for purchase.

The network is used by a wide variety of organizations and people. The National Weather Service, other meteorologists, hydrologists, emergency managers, city utilities, insurance adjusters, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, engineers, mosquito control, ranchers and farmers, outdoor and recreation interests, teachers, students and neighbors in the community are just some examples of those who visit the website and use this data.

Please take a few minutes to browse www.cocorahs.org and see all the neat information and statistics they have to offer. If you love weather, this will become one of your favorite sites. There is also information about signing up and receiving training to become one of the thousands of volunteers in this nationwide program. Contact the Routt County Conservation District for more information about owning one of these awesome gauges or becoming a volunteer at 970-879-3225, ext. 101.

Jackie Brown is district manager for the Routt County Conservation District.

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Good, clean data.



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