

Citizen Science Program needs volunteer weather observers

February 6, 2020



The Citizen Science Program needs the public's help in observing the weather.

Do you ever wonder how much rainfall you received from a recent thunderstorm? How about snowfall during a winter storm? If so, an important volunteer weather observing program needs your help.

The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow network (CCRHS) is looking for new volunteers across northwest California. The grassroots effort is part of a growing national network of home-based and amateur rain spotters with a goal of providing a high-density precipitation network that will supplement existing observations.

CCRHS came about as a result of a devastating flash flood that hit Fort Collins, Colo., in July 1997. A local severe thunderstorm dumped over a foot of rain in several hours while other portions of the city had only modest rainfall. The ensuing flood caught many by surprise and caused \$200 million in damages.

CCRHS was born in 1998 with the intent of doing a better job of mapping and reporting intense storms. As more volunteers participated, rain, hail and snow maps were produced for every storm showing fascinating local patterns that were of great interest to scientists and the public.

Recently, drought reporting has also become an important observation within the CCRHS program across the nation. Drought observations from CCRHS are now being included in the National Integrated Drought Information System.

Volunteers may obtain an official rain gauge through the CCRHS website www.cocorahs.org for about \$35 plus shipping. Besides the need for an official 4-inch plastic rain gauge, volunteers are required to take a simple training module online and use the CCRHS website to submit their reports. Observations are immediately available on maps and reports for the public to view. The process takes only five minutes a day, but the impact on the community is tenfold: By providing high quality, accurate measurements, the observers can supplement existing networks and provide useful results to scientists, resource managers, decision-makers and other users.

New observers are needed across the entire state. A storm like the one that came through Jan. 15 and 16 highlights the importance of having numerous rain and snow observations in a variety of areas. This helps with the study of the storm and can improve forecasts for the next one.

To join go to the CCRHS website and click on the “Join CCRHS” emblem on the upper right side of the main website. After registering, take the online training, order the 4-inch rain gauge and start reporting. To learn more, contact Matthew Kidwell at the NWS in Eureka at matthew.kidwell@noaa.gov or call Kidwell or Kathleen Zontos at 707-443-6484.