



FLORIDA COCORAHHS MARCH 2009 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to Spring!

Since the last newsletter, a lot has been happening. Punxsutawney Phil predicted six more weeks of winter, and here in Florida we felt Jack Frost's icy sting on more than one occasion. However, on March 20th, winter will come to an end and spring will officially begin. Though some of us have been having spring-like conditions for about a week now, and warmer weather should be around the corner for all of us, we did have freezing temperatures in the South during Easter Weekend (April 8) of 2007.

Hopefully the time change this weekend didn't catch anyone off guard, but I'm still trying to adjust. As for your CoCoRaHS observations, your report will continue to stay on local time. If your normal observation time was at 7 AM EST, it becomes 7 AM EDT after the time change. This should help avoid confusion... for the most part.

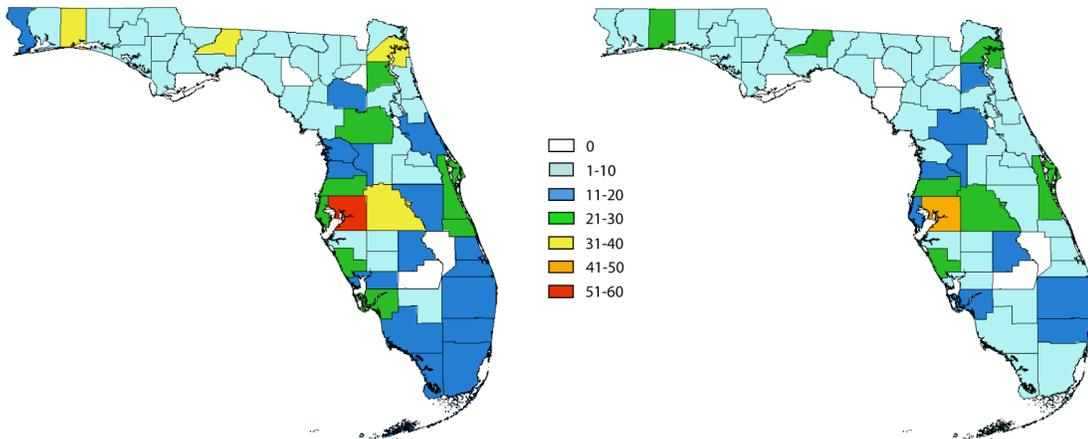
A Quick Status Update

Idaho, Ohio and Massachusetts are the newest members to join CoCoRaHS. That brings the total number of states active in the program to 40. April will see both Vermont and Arkansas joining, while West Virginia will be coming on board in May and Hawaii in June. If you know anyone in these states that might be interested in becoming a volunteer observer, let them know that CoCoRaHS is on its way.

In Florida, we have over 840 observers as of March 8th. Here's a little graphic that shows where all of our observers are, and how many were active in 2008.

Number of Observers per County

Number of Active Observers in 2008



March Madness!

You've seen it mentioned when you've made your daily report, but in case you haven't heard, we are running a little competition at CoCoRaHS called 'March Madness.' This isn't to be confused with the NCAA Basketball Tournament. We are trying to see which state can recruit the most observers in the month of March. As of the 8th, Florida has only recruited 2 new observers. So, if you know of someone (relative or friend) who might be interested in the program, feel free to invite them to join!

Drought Conditions Worsen

February continued the trend of a drier than normal winter across all of Florida. Rainfall deficits for the month generally ran 1 to 2 inches. This deficit does not sound like much, but considering that the peninsula of Florida is generally quite dry during the winter (only averaging 2-3 inches per month), these deficits are significant and represent a high percentage of normal rainfall. South Florida has been hit the hardest, where some weather stations recorded the driest winter (Dec. through Feb.) on record. Both Miami International Airport and Fort Lauderdale International Airport set new records, for the winter, with only 0.74 inches and 0.39 inches, respectively. Palm Beach International Airport and Naples Regional Airport both ranked second, with 2.01 and 1.07 inches, respectively.

Station	Average Rainfall	Departure from Normal
Pensacola	4.41	-0.93
Tallahassee	2.50	-2.13
Jacksonville	0.98	-2.17
Orlando	0.62	-1.81
Tampa	0.71	-1.96
Miami	0.12	-1.76
Key West	0.65	-0.86

Table 2: February precipitation totals and departures from normal for selected cities (inches).

Current State Of The Drought

Back in December 2008, the National Drought Monitor had 76% of the state listed as having no drought. There were some areas of concern around Tampa, Sarasota and the Nature Coast. With last week's release of the drought monitor, nearly all of Florida is listed as being in some sort of drought.

Drought Conditions (Percent Area): Florida

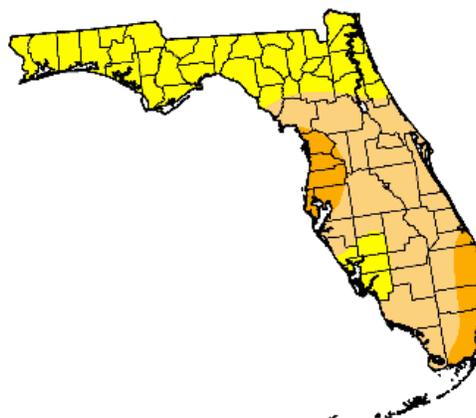
Week	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
03/03/09	0.17	99.83	56.44	11.22	0.00	0.00
02/24/09	10.62	89.38	37.78	5.46	0.00	0.00
02/17/09	10.62	89.38	31.20	0.00	0.00	0.00
02/10/09	15.97	84.04	24.63	0.00	0.00	0.00
02/03/09	34.02	65.99	15.74	0.00	0.00	0.00
01/27/09	30.32	69.68	15.24	0.00	0.00	0.00
01/20/09	43.96	56.04	13.40	0.00	0.00	0.00
01/13/09	43.96	56.04	13.40	0.00	0.00	0.00
01/06/09	43.96	56.04	13.40	0.00	0.00	0.00
12/30/08	74.73	25.27	11.75	0.00	0.00	0.00
12/23/08	74.73	25.27	6.62	0.00	0.00	0.00
12/16/08	74.73	25.27	6.62	0.00	0.00	0.00
12/09/08	76.45	23.55	6.62	0.00	0.00	0.00
12/02/08	76.45	23.55	6.62	0.00	0.00	0.00

U.S. Drought Monitor

Florida

March 3, 2009
Valid 7 a.m. EST

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.2	99.8	56.4	11.2	0.0	0.0
Last Week (02/24/2009 map)	10.6	89.4	37.8	5.5	0.0	0.0
3 Months Ago (12/09/2008 map)	76.4	23.6	6.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Start of Calendar Year (01/06/2009 map)	44.0	56.0	13.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Start of Water Year (10/07/2008 map)	75.8	24.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
One Year Ago (03/04/2008 map)	36.7	63.3	32.3	20.3	3.1	0.0



Intensity:



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions.
Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary
for forecast statements

<http://drought.unl.edu/dm>



Released Thursday, March 5, 2009

Author: J. Lawrimore/L. Love-Brotak, NOAA/NESDIS/NCDC

Spring is usually a dry period for us here in Florida. Combined with the current La Niña, which brings drier than normal conditions to the Southeast, this spring could be harder than last year's. And it's more than likely that we won't see any relief until the summer rains start. So, remember- 0.00" is a valid value and it's just as important to know where/when it hasn't rained as where/when it has. The National Drought Monitor, as well as some of the state's water management districts, use your observations to help track the dry conditions across Florida.

Thanks for all your help with those reports!

You can take a look at the latest NOAA Seasonal Drought Outlook at this link:

http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/seasonal_drought.html

Forgot To Get Started?

We still have some CoCoRaHS applicants who have never gotten around to taking their first observation. If this sounds like you, then why not get started today! :) The data you collect and provide is not just important to us and to weather forecasters, but also to many in Florida and in your community. Furthermore, you might learn something about the weather in your area. The cost of the CoCoRaHS rain gauge is \$30 (with shipping) and you can order them from one of the two vendors provided below. Unfortunately, the rain gauge is not available in retail stores.

You can order them online at:

<http://www.weatheryourway.com/cocorahs/store.html>

<http://www.ambientweather.com/strgloteprra.html>

Or call by phone:

Weather Your Way: 262-670-9697

Ambient Weather: 877-4137-8800

We realize that the price is a little steep for a rain gauge, but these gauges hold up to 11" of rain, are made of durable plastic, are easier to clean than the wedge rain gauges and are comparable to the standard 8" rain gauge/canisters used by the National Weather Service.

Have Questions?

If at any time you have questions about CoCoRaHS, reading your rain gauge, or finding a location to set-up your rain gauge, please feel to contact a CoCoRaHS Coordinator. We are lucky enough to have regional support from the National Weather Service offices across the state- as well as a few members that have offered to help out at the county/local level. You can find all of the contact information for the CoCoRaHS Coordinators at:

http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=coord_FL

Do want to be more active in CoCoRaHS and help us out in your county? Please contact your Regional Coordinator or myself for more information.

Take care,
Melissa

=====
Melissa Griffin
CoCoRaHS Florida State Co-Coordinator
Email: griffin@coaps.fsu.edu
"Because Every Drop Counts!"