

# CoCoRaHS “March Madness” 2015

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**Ronald Havran, CoCoRaHS Houston/Galveston Regional Coordinator**

**713-316-4831 / [Ronald.Havran@hcfcd.org](mailto:Ronald.Havran@hcfcd.org)**

**Volunteer Precipitation Observers needed for Community Collaborative Rain,  
Hail, and Snow Network**

The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) is a national grassroots, non-profit, community-based high density precipitation network made up of volunteers who take measurements of precipitation right in their own backyards. The Houston/Galveston region is part of a nationwide campaign to recruit volunteers of all ages and backgrounds to act as backyard rainfall observers. Recruiting will last the entire month of March and is also called “March Madness”. The state which recruits the most new observers in March will receive the “CoCoRaHS Cup” as a first place trophy.

The Houston-Galveston region of CoCoRaHS is recruiting volunteer precipitation observers for its 15 member counties around the Houston and Galveston areas. The main focus of CoCoRaHS is to provide quality precipitation data and educational opportunities to help the public better understand weather and climate. CoCoRaHS is in every state in the United States and recently has expanded internationally with Canada and Puerto Rico joining in the last year.

Volunteers for CoCoRaHS do not need a meteorology degree – just an interest in weather conditions and a desire to learn more about how weather impacts our region. Volunteers are asked to obtain an official CoCoRaHS rain gage and place it in a strategic location. They take precipitation measurements each day at approximately the same time – usually 7am – and record those measurements on the CoCoRaHS website, ([www.cocorahs.org](http://www.cocorahs.org)). Daily reporting of data is preferred as days without precipitation are just as important to know as days with rainfall.

Many agencies rely on precipitation data collected by CoCoRaHS during and after rainfall and flood events to determine where the most rain has fallen and where the potential for flooding is greatest. CoCoRaHS’s volunteer precipitation reports help to fill in the gaps between official rainfall data collection sites in our region, such as the Harris County Flood Control District’s Flood Warning System ([www.harriscountyfws.org](http://www.harriscountyfws.org)), the National Weather Service’s climate sites, and the Lower Colorado River Authority’s Hydromet system (<http://hydromet.lcra.org/full.aspx>).

The data reported by volunteers is organized and displayed on the website for use by scientists, researchers, and emergency managers – as well as the general public. The Harris County Flood Control District, National Weather Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture utilize CoCoRaHS data in their work, along with engineers, meteorologists, hydrologists, climatologists, insurance adjusters, mosquito control technicians, ranchers and farmers, teachers and students, and public works managers concerned with water supply, water conservation and stormwater quality. These agencies and experts use the information for everything from severe storm analysis to comparisons of how much rain fell in neighboring backyards.

The Houston/Galveston region of the CoCoRaHS Network currently has approximately 411 volunteers in 15 counties: Austin (14), Brazoria (20), Chambers (2), Colorado (5), Fort Bend (22), Galveston (56), Harris (175), Jackson (4), Liberty (8), Matagorda (1), Montgomery (48), Polk (31), San Jacinto (10), Waller (5), and Wharton (10) counties. The network needs many more volunteers to better measure precipitation across the region. Weather hobbyist and those citizens who keep daily rainfall totals such as gardeners are strongly encouraged to join CoCoRaHS. Amateur radio operators and Skywarn spotters are also encouraged to join CoCoRaHS.

To join, go to the CoCoRaHS website ([www.cocorahs.org](http://www.cocorahs.org)) and click on the “Join CoCoRaHS” emblem in the upper right corner of the homepage. The website also offers information on the organization’s background, training and educational tools, where to purchase the required CoCoRaHS rain gage, how and where to set up the gage on your property, and much more. County and regional coordinators are available to host training presentations across the region.

### **How the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network begin and its importance**

In July 1997, a devastating flash flood dumped more than 12 inches of rain on sections of Fort Collins, Colo., resulting in \$200 million in damages. In 1998, CoCoRaHS launched at the Colorado Climate Center at Colorado State University with the goal of making improvements in the mapping and reporting of intense storms.

As more volunteers joined in, rain, hail and snow maps were produced for storms with the resulting data patterns catching the interest of scientists and the general public. By 2010, CoCoRaHS was a nationwide volunteer network. CoCoRaHS is supported nationally by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Partners in Texas include the Office of the State Climatologist (Dr. John Nielsen-Gammon) at Texas A&M University, the Lower Colorado River Authority, the Department of Geography and the Environment at the University of Texas at Austin, the Harris County Flood Control District, and many other agencies.

Rainfall can vary greatly over a small area in this part of the country. Rainfall reports are vital in obtaining an accurate picture of rainfall patterns and discovering just how localized heavy thunderstorms can be. With these rainfall reports from dedicated observers a clear picture of ground truth measurements results that helps meteorologists determine the accuracy of radar data and locate the exact location of the heaviest rainfall. Being a volunteer in CoCoRaHS provides observers with an educational opportunity to learn more about the world they live in and provides an opportunity to report valuable data to forecasters and researchers who use that data for the benefit of all citizens.



***“Because every drop counts”***