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UNH Teams Up With National Weather Service To Launch Statewide Precipitation Measuring Network

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UNH Teams Up With National Weather Service To Launch Statewide Precipitation Measuring Network

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National Weather Service Gray, Maine

June 22, 2009

DURHAM, N.H. - For all those weather watchers in the Granite State, the University of New Hampshire and National Weather Service want you. The state has joined 44 other states using a network of community volunteers to measure precipitation. The project, the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS), is a joint effort of UNH and the National Weather Service, and launches July 1, 2009.

"New Hampshire residents have experienced extreme weather events, whether it be last December's ice storm or the Mother's Day floods. The CoCoRaHS program is an excellent way for community members to help us all improve our understanding of these weather hazards through observation," said Mary Stampone, New Hampshire State Climatologist and assistant professor of geography at UNH.

"This is a great opportunity for people to be part of a team that collects valuable weather and climate data," said Dave Glenn, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Gray, Maine.

CoCoRaHS is a nonprofit, community-based network of volunteers working together to measure and map precipitation, including rain, hail and snow. Currently, more than 13,500 volunteer CoCoRaHS observers in 44 states submit daily precipitation totals on the Web. New Hampshire observers will measure the 40 and 60 inches of precipitation that falls annually on the Granite State, and the periods such as Mother's Day weekend in 2006 when nearly 20 inches of rain fell from a single storm.

The National Weather Service will use the real-time data to issue weather warnings. In addition, the weather data will be available to the public and researchers. CoCoRaHS began at Colorado State University in 1998, after a devastating flash flood submerged part of Fort Collins, Colorado. The details of the storm were not reported by the existing network of weather stations so the population was not given adequate warning.

"There is a shortage of reliable rainfall data in New Hampshire. Summer thunderstorms can dump more than three inches of rain in some areas, while areas just a few miles away receive little or no rainfall. If we want to learn more about rain storms, we need dozens of gauges in each county. New Hampshire also can have snowstorms that vary from location to location as well due to elevation, proximity to the coast or the development of heavy snow bands," Stampone said.

The basic requirements for being a CoCoRaHS weather observer are:

- Internet access and the ability to browse the CoCoRaHS Web site to enter daily precipitation data.
- Official-type CoCoRaHS rain gauge, available on the CoCoRaHS Web site.
- Site on property with good exposure that is free of trees and obstructions where the rain gauge can be placed about five feet off the ground.
- Take a training course offered by your local National Weather Service Office or take the online CoCoRaHS observer training course.
- Willingness to enter precipitation data daily between 6 and 9 a.m. on the CoCoRaHS Web site.

"By participating in the CoCoRaHS network, you will make an important contribution that helps others, especially during times of extreme rainfall or drought. Your weather observations will assist in filling in a piece of the climate puzzle that affects all citizens in New Hampshire. CoCoRaHS also is a great way to learn more about weather while collecting valuable rainfall data," Stampone said.

To become a CoCoRaHS observer, visit www.cocorahs.org and click on the "Join CoCoRaHS" emblem on the upper right side of the main Web site. After registering, all CoCoRaHS observers take a short, online training course and may begin to report. Rainfall observations become part of the volunteer, nationwide record and will be plotted on maps of New Hampshire counties and the state. For a real-time view of rainfall data, click on <http://www.cocorahs.org/Maps/ViewMap.aspx?state=usa> to show the daily precipitation across the country.

The nonprofit network is sponsored in part by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service, as well as individual contributors and organizations. The long-term goal of CoCoRaHS is to recruit 20,000 volunteer observers by 2010, and eventually have one volunteer observer per square mile in urban areas, and one volunteer observer per 36 square miles in rural areas, for all 50 states. See <http://www.cocorahs.org> for more detailed information.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

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