

You can do something about the Weather

If you have always wanted to do something about the weather but you did not know how, this is your chance to do so.

Adnan Akyüz, state climatologist and assistant professor of climatology in North Dakota State University's Soil Science Department is looking for volunteers for a new statewide rain and snowfall reporting network, CoCoRaHS.

CoCoRaHS is an acronym for Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow, which is the fastest growing national network of home-based and amateur rain and snow observers and sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Akyüz wants to get as many rain gauges as possible in backyards all around the state to help forecasters and climatologists map North Dakota's rain and snow patterns.

Akyüz said that anyone with an interest in weather and access to the Internet can sign up. The only equipment needed is a cylindrical rain gauge available from the network for \$22 plus shipping and a yard stick to measure the snow depth. Simple training is available at <http://www.cocorahs.org>.

Each volunteer is asked to read the rain gauge each day at the same time and upload the measurement to the Web site. That's about it.

The result is more precise information about where rain, snow and hail falls and in what amount.

That will allow climatologists to draw better precipitation maps and gain a better understanding of North Dakota weather.

It can also help people who use precipitation information in their work and those that just want to know how much is falling outside their houses.

"We know that there are many, many decisions made every day that have to do with weather and climate such as accurate assessment of drought intensity, and the flood potential in your area" Akyüz said.

"In the growing season it might help irrigation, or the effect of drought; it might be water supply or streamflow forecasts or even floods. And by getting more high-resolution information we can really improve the database and therefore improve the quality of decisions that are made."

"My goal to have approximately 1000 volunteer observers by 2010 in North Dakota. The CoCoRaHS network can supplement the precipitation (rainfall and snowfall together) measurements currently made by the North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network (NDAWN)." said Akyüz, also the director of the NDAWN Center.

“The NDAWN network is not designed to measure the winter precipitation. Therefore, the amount of snowfall at a given date is guesswork” said Akyüz. Furthermore, he continued, “we have just started a new application with the NDAWN, called “Irrigation Scheduler”. It calculates soil water deficit based on available water. In most cases, especially in summertime, precipitation is highly variable. We want the irrigation scheduler to output the most accurate water deficit based on how much rain fell where you need to irrigate rather than based on the nearest weather station”.

“The best part of this initiative is that it will give weather enthusiasts an opportunity to contribute to a national map. “You will be able to start from the national map and see your data among nearly 12,000 such volunteer observers across the country and zoom into your county and compare your data with your neighbors” said Akyüz.

“This is a statewide plea” said Akyüz, “I would like everyone, including, teachers, students, farmers, doctors and just anyone to be a part of this network”

North Dakota is the latest state in the network and will begin participating on November 1, 2008. The web site to sign up is <http://www.cocorahs.org>. Click on “Join Cocorahs” under the “Main Menu”. Training slides are available under the “Resources” menu.

For more information on CoCoRaHS:

Web site: <http://www.cocorahs.org>.

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