



Georgia CoCoRaHS Newsletter Volume 2 Number 1 Wednesday, May 13th, 2009



Happy Birthday!

Georgia CoCoRaHS is officially one year old now. As for when that happened, take your pick...

First stations established: February 20, 2008

Georgia CoCoRaHS *official* start date: May 1, 2008

As you “early adopters” may recall, after the initial publicity, the response from Georgians was so enthusiastic that CoCoRaHS Headquarters went ahead and opened us up for business several months early. Talk about hitting the ground running...

And what a year it’s been. Much of Georgia is experiencing relief from the severe drought that gripped the state last year. Many of us saw accumulating snow this past March, and quite a few observers documented significant hail events. Here’s a picture of a hailstone I took this past February:



Giant ice spiders, anyone? This was in Sharpsburg, Georgia, a few miles northeast of my house. Several of my National Weather Service co-workers had to get their roofs repaired after that storm.

Nationally, CoCoRaHS has had a great year, too. Last year at this time, 31 states were participating in CoCoRaHS. Since then, 12 more states have joined, with several more planning to join in 2009. As of now, the only states that aren't involved at all are Minnesota and Arizona. So, if you know anyone there, spread the word!

Assistant State Climatologist Thanks You

Pam Knox, whom many of you know as our coordinator for Regions 1 and 3, is also the Assistant State Climatologist for Georgia. Here, she shares some thoughts on Year 1 and beyond:

Dear faithful Georgia CoCoRaHS observers,

It is hard for me to believe that just over a year has passed since we started the CoCoRaHS network here in Georgia. We had over 150 observers join in just the first month, and most of those observers are still with us making daily observations from around the state. Now, we have 529 active observers and regular daily reports of up to 200 stations on dry mornings and over 300 on wet days. I would like to see those numbers go even higher!

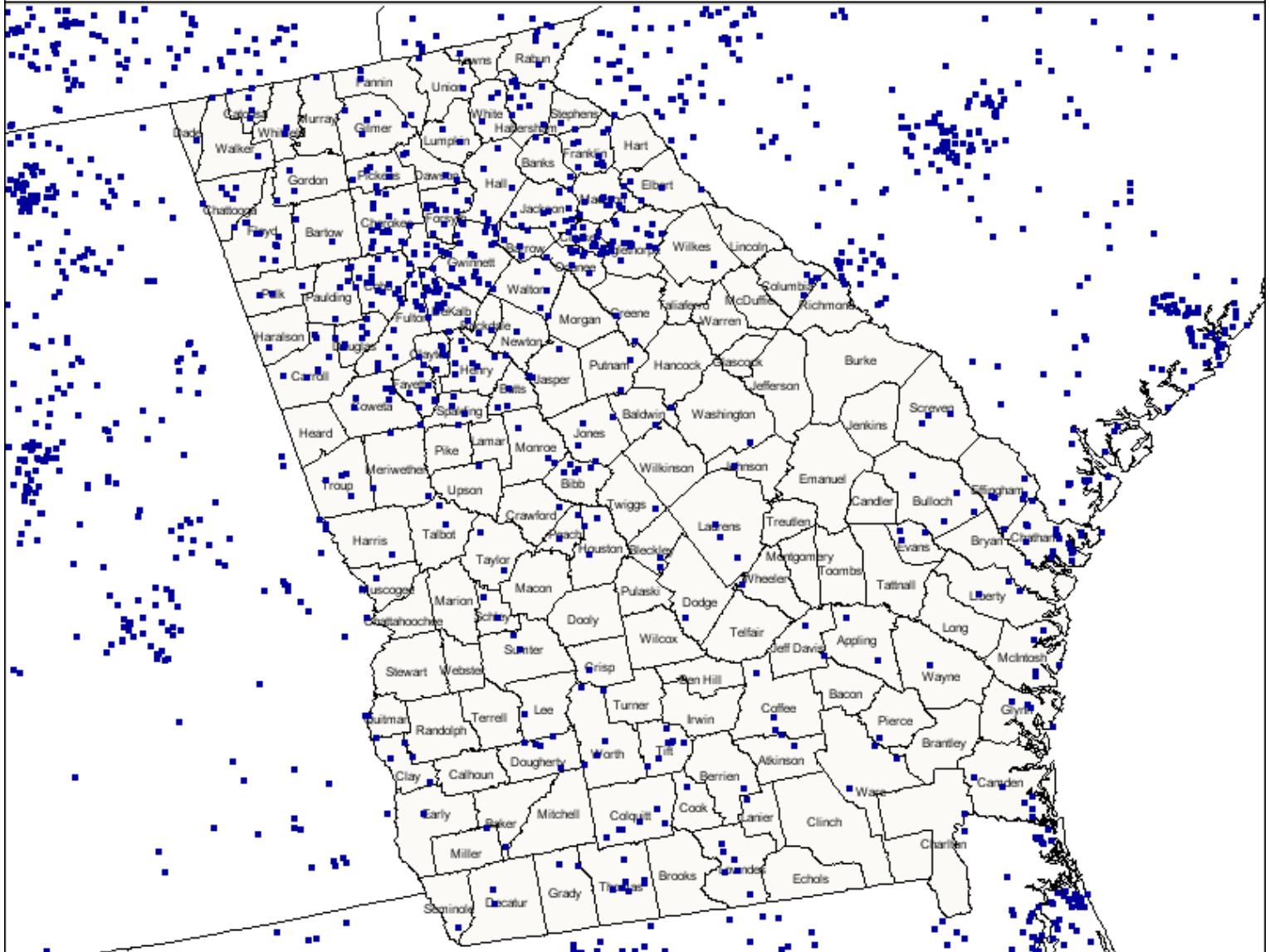
Since the network started, over 75,000 daily rainfall reports have been entered on the CoCoRaHS website for Georgia. Of those, 53 have been for daily amounts over 5.00 inches, including some large amounts during Tropical Storm Fay in August of 2008 and in the recent wet spell at the beginning of April 2009. The highest rainfall amount reported on a single day occurred in Thomasville down in southwest Georgia on August 24, 2008, a total of 10.96 inches. This year we may have an even better chance of getting a gauge-buster of over 11 inches, with drought easing across all of the state and another active tropical season expected.

In spite of the large number of observations reported over the last year, surprisingly few of them have required correction or deletion. I am proud of all of the Georgia observers for following the training carefully and reporting their daily or multi-day precipitation appropriately on the web site in the correct data entry fields. The biggest confusion has come at the end of traditional vacation periods like Thanksgiving and Christmas, where a few people enter multi-day reports into their daily records, but as familiarity with the multi-day form has grown, these problems have been reduced. If you are not sure about how to report rain or hail, take a refresher visit to the training. In fact, this would be a good idea for all of us to do once a year!

Besides providing the pleasure of following the weather across Georgia for your own enjoyment, the CoCoRaHS data are being used in a number of research and service activities. I include selected CoCoRaHS observations in my monthly climate summaries, which are available at the State Climatologist web site, <http://climate.engr.uga.edu>. CoCoRaHS data are being used in a research study on rainfall from Tropical Storm Fay as it passed through south Georgia. In this study the rainfall estimated from radar is compared to "on the ground" rain gauge observations like the CoCoRaHS network to see how well radar is able to measure high intensity rainfalls. CoCoRaHS data have also been provided to reporters to describe weather conditions around the state as the drought has faded (or in some cases, been washed away) over the past few months. Don't worry, we never provide the names or exact locations of our observers and stations without your explicit permission, so you should not be bothered by reporters or lawyers based on your CoCoRaHS work.

In spite of a great number of observers around Georgia, there is room for many more observations. The map below shows that a lot of our observers are clustered around Atlanta and Athens, with smaller concentrations around Macon, Tifton, Savannah, and Augusta. But there are still a number of rural counties with no observers at all, and we would especially like to see some observers sign up in those data-sparse areas. If you know of someone interested in watching the weather, whether in a big city or a remote rural area, please let them know about CoCoRaHS, so we can continue to grow the network. The more observations, the more valuable the results!

Active Stations Georgia



As we go into Year 2 of CoCoRaHS in Georgia, I would like to encourage each of you to continue making your regular (or even irregular) observations of rainfall. To a climatologist like me, a zero measurement is just as important as a value of 5 inches (although it is certainly not as much fun to observe). I would especially like to see a very high percentage of observations when the next tropical storms pass over Georgia, because these local maps are invaluable for doing post-storm studies of rainfall patterns in tropical systems. So if you hear of a tropical storm or hurricane headed our way, please make sure that your rain gauge is cleaned up and ready to go before the first raindrops hit your roof, and then enter the rainfall values either by daily record or using the multi-day report form on the website. If we get a really high rainfall amount, you may even have to go out and empty your gauge during the middle of the storm. Just do it safely--stay away from lightning or flooded roads!

Thanks to all of you who are working so hard to make the CoCoRaHS network across the United States and Georgia such a valuable resource for all of those interested in the

science and wonder of the atmosphere. If I can do anything to make your experience more enjoyable or solve a problem you are having with CoCoRaHS, please feel free to contact me. I am also available to answer any other weather-related questions you might have. All you have to do is ask!

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Show Your Georgia CoCoRaHS Pride

Shirts, caps, tote bags and other items with the Georgia CoCoRaHS logo are available from Café Press:

<http://www.cafepress.com/GACoCoRaHS>

For the record, no fundraising surcharge is being applied – 100% of the purchase price goes to Café Press.



Talking It Up

The Georgia Water Resources Conference was held April 27-29 at the University of Georgia. I had the opportunity to give a talk summarizing Georgia CoCoRaHS' first year. Here are a few "fast facts" from that presentation:

As of April 25, 2009, Georgia CoCoRaHS observers had entered:

- 73,792 daily observations
- 12,568.14 inches of rain/liquid equivalent
- 93 observations of new snow totaling 233.7 inches
- 210 special reports of intense precipitation
 - maximum 4.25 in/105 minutes, GA-CM-3 (Woodbine 3.0 S), 7/6/2008
- 70 special reports of hail
 - maximum 4.5 in, GA-GW-3 (Snellville 1.1 W), 5/20/2008

TWEET!

Fans of The Weather Channel are familiar with “Abrams and Bettes”, a program airing each weeknight. Stephanie Abrams and Mike Bettes encourage viewers to send reports of significant weather via Twitter. If you record significant precipitation, after you enter your special CoCoRaHS observation, why not Twitter them with your info, and mention you’re a CoCoRaHS observer? Same goes for weather reports you might send to your local TV meteorologist, newspaper, or wherever.

Let’s Get Together

Sometime this summer, I’d like to have a gathering for Georgia CoCoRaHS observers – potentially at the National Weather Service office in Peachtree City (about 30 miles south of Atlanta). In addition to observer training and socializing, there could be tours of the National Weather Service and the Southeast River Forecast Center. If the time and date were convenient, would you be interested in attending? Please email me with your thoughts – christine.mcgehee@noaa.gov .

Many, Many Thanks!

In conclusion, I’d just like to add my thanks to Pam’s. Together, we CoCoRaHS observers are making history. All of our data – from huge hailstones to days and days of zeroes – is useful today, and will become even more valuable in the future. Scientists hundreds of years from now will be consulting our data – pretty cool, huh?

Chris McGehee
State Coordinator, Georgia CoCoRaHS