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## NOAA bestows 'Environmental Hero' award on CSU researcher and state climatologist Nolan Doesken

April 25, 2007

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration recently honored Nolan Doesken, state climatologist at Colorado State University, as one of 10 "**Environmental Heroes**" for creating an amateur precipitation monitoring network that has 4,000 volunteers nationally - and which continues to grow.

### CoCoRaHS started in 1997

Doesken, a senior research associate in the Colorado Climate Center in the university's Department of Atmospheric Science, started the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) as a small local project in Fort Collins soon after an extreme localized storm in 1997. The storm, which was not well detected by traditional weather observing networks, killed five people and caused devastating flooding.

Since then, CoCoRaHS has grown with several new states coming on board every year. The network now has about 4,000 active volunteers in 18 states or regions: Alaska, Colorado, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming. South Dakota will be joining the team shortly.

In December 2006, NOAA's Office of Education awarded CoCoRaHS an Environmental Literacy grant - the first ever awarded to a citizen science program - to make its first formal push to expand nationally.

Doesken received his Environmental Hero award last week in a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

"With Nolan's engaging personality at the forefront, the CoCoRaHS network also serves to increase weather literacy among the people it contacts," said John McLaughlin, education specialist with the NOAA Office of Education, in his nomination. "Nolan's passion and dedication for learning about weather is contagious and has fueled the growth of an outstanding partnership between NOAA and dedicated citizen scientists across the country."

### Thousands of volunteers across the country

Through CoCoRaHS, thousands of volunteers, young and old, document the size, intensity, duration and patterns of rain, hail and snow by taking simple measurements in their own backyards.

The process takes only five minutes a day, but the impact to the community is tenfold: Data gathered by volunteers provides important daily and long-term decision-making information on drought and water supply for agricultural, recreation, utility providers, resource managers, teachers, scientists and homeowners.

The list of participants will grow over the next three years with NOAA's recent funding, said Henry Reges, national coordinator for CoCoRaHS. The NOAA grant provides the program with resources to



Nolan Doesken, a senior research associate in the Colorado Climate Center in the university's Department of Atmospheric Science.

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expand and develop local leadership teams in several new states each year for the next three years.

#### **More about Doesken**

Doesken oversees climate data collection, analysis, research and education at the Colorado Climate Center to address climate sensitive applications in agriculture, recreation, hydrology, natural resources, transportation and commerce.

Doesken has 34 years of experience in weather research, climate monitoring, data analysis, drought, weather instruments, historical climate data, descriptive climatology, precipitation and seasonal weather patterns.

The state climatologist's post is an official state position, but the university names the researcher who assembles data on the state's climate and heads the Colorado Climate Center at Colorado State.

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The Colorado Climate Center Web site can be accessed at <http://ccc.atmos.colostate.edu>. For information on CoCoRaHS, go to <http://www.cocorahs.org>.

Visit NOAA's announcement of the 2007 "Environmental Heroes" at <http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2007/s2842.htm>.

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