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National Weather Service Seeks New Volunteer Precipitation Observers to Better Predict Flooding

DULUTH, MN — The National Weather Service is recruiting additional volunteer precipitation observers throughout the Rainy River Basin. From the headwaters of the Kawishiwi River to those on and near Basswood Lake, Lake Vermilion, Kabetogama Lake, Namakan Lake, Rainy Lake, to the Forks rivers and the Rainy River itself downstream of International Falls/Fort Frances - we want to find volunteers to report precipitation, snowfall, and snow depth/snowpack liquid water equivalent. Ideally we would like to find those who can submit daily reports of rain, snow, and snow pack depth, but even those who can volunteer to just send occasional reports of the snow pack depth are welcome to sign up!

Why are we looking for volunteer precipitation observers? We want more observations so we can better predict flooding. We need good “ground truth” observations of the precipitation and snow pack to make better forecasts of lake and river levels - particularly during the spring snowmelt season. While there are already some volunteer observers in this area, more observations are needed, especially in rural areas where we don’t currently have any observers - see the attached flyer and graphic for a map. Without ground truth observations, flooding forecasts and outlooks are based solely on simulated snow cover, interpolated from observations far away, which may not accurately represent regional conditions, and rarely capture local maximums.

Those who are interested in becoming a volunteer observer should do so through the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network, or CoCoRaHS. Getting started with CoCoRaHS is easy!

For USA:

Sign Up: <https://cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=application>

Obtain the official CoCoRaHS rain gauge: <https://cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=store/>

Questions? Email ketzel.levens@noaa.gov

For Canada:

Sign Up: <https://cocorahs.org/Canada-Application.aspx>

Obtain the official CoCoRaHS rain gauge: <http://www.shopcocorahs.ca/>

Questions? Email canada@cocorahs.org

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