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Seeking Weather Observers Community Collaborate Rain, Hail and Snow Network now in Ontario

April 29, 2014 (Guelph) - Are you a weather enthusiast? Do you keep regular rainfall records? There is a new weather network for you.

Farm & Food Care Foundation is pleased to announce their Canada-wide involvement with the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (**CoCoRaHS**) and the official Ontario launch of the program. The Ontario program is supported by the Ontario ministries of Natural Resources, Agriculture and Food, Rural Affairs and Environment in the amount of \$65,000 over two years. CoCoRaHS consists of a network of volunteer observers who upload daily precipitation information to the program website, www.cocorahs.org/canada.aspx

CoCoRaHS began in Colorado in the late 1990s and now includes over 16,000 volunteer observers in the United States. It became operational in Manitoba in 2011, Saskatchewan in 2013 and a pilot is now underway in the Atlantic Provinces. The program is set to formally launch in Ontario and is looking for additional observers. Weather INnovations Consulting LP is providing logistical support for the program.

Along with training, CoCoRaHS observers use a monitoring kit which includes an official CoCoRaHS rain gauge and snow measuring equipment. Each day, when volunteers input their observations online, the data is immediately available publicly through an interactive web map.

"Citizen science initiatives like this one are a great way to get Ontarians across the province engaged in watershed management. This project will allow us to learn more about regional and local weather events and how they impact our water supply, which will benefit consumers, farmers, businesses and government alike," said David Oraziotti, Minister of Natural Resources.

"Data from CoCoRaHS is used by flood and drought forecasters, meteorologists, farmers, schools, gardeners, engineers, and many more," said CoCoRaHS Canada's Ontario Volunteer Coordinator, Karla Jackson. "Often CoCoRaHS fills in many of the gaps that exist between automated stations, providing a better indication of localized precipitation events for Ontario communities."

"The Farm & Food Care Foundation is pleased to support CoCoRaHS" says Bruce Christie, Farm & Food Care Foundation chair. "Weather data is an important factor in farm practices today. Additional localized weather monitoring is seen as a benefit to Canadian farmers and environmental sustainability."

Canadian participants now include Environment Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Farm & Food Care Foundation, Manitoba Infrastructure & Technology, Saskatchewan Water Security Agency, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and many local watershed management agencies.

Anyone interested in signing up or learning more can send an email to <mailto:ontario@cocorahs.org> or apply directly through the website at www.cocorahs.org/canada.aspx.

The Farm & Food Care Foundation was established as a national charitable organization in 2011. The Foundation develops and supports programs to communicate with Canadians helping to build confidence and trust in Canadian food and farming. The Foundation relies on donations from individuals and businesses that are committed to ensuring a healthy and sustainable agri-food sector in the future. www.farmcarefoundation.ca

For further information on the program contact: Bruce Kelly, Environmental Program Lead, Farm & Food Care Ontario, 519-837-1326, ext. 292 | bruce@farmfoodcare.org