By Jennifer Pickard  
*South Dakota Water Resources Institute*

The 15th Annual Big Sioux Water Festival was held May 15th on the Brookings campus of South Dakota State University.

The Festival is the largest, one-day festival in the state of South Dakota. Participating in this year’s event were over 1,000 4th grade students and more than 400 adult presenters, guides, teachers, trouble-shooters, and chaperones.

The annual event consists of 40 presentations, hands-on activities, games, and quiz bowls. The Festival was organized to promote enthusiasm for conserving and preserving water resources.

The South Dakota Water Resources Institute (SDWRI) booth gave kids a look at the aquatic food chain, beginning with different species of algae, continuing to zooplankton, and ending with scavengers (like crayfish) and turtles. The "Under the Microscope" booth provided the opportunity to view several microscopic organisms. SDWRI Research Associate David German, who has participated in the Festival for 15 years said reactions from the kids don't change much from year to year. “‘Cool!’ ‘Gross!’ and ‘Wow!’ were common reactions,” he said. “This is a fun day for the kids.”

But the Festival is not only designed for kids. While the kids are exploring activities in the Exhibit Hall, their teachers have the opportunity to visit the Teacher’s Resource Room. Here, teachers can check out activities and demonstrations to help them teach their classes about water. Issues presented in the kits deal with everything from wetlands and rivers to ethical decision-making.

Since 1992, water festivals in South Dakota have delivered a strong water conservation message. In the past 15 years, 84,000 fourth graders have been armed with the knowledge necessary to preserve and protect our state's water supply.
Sheraton Hotel & Sioux Falls Convention Center  
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Field trip Oct. 29 to  
USGS-EROS Data Center and  
US Army Corps of Engineers Gavins Point Dam Powerhouse  
and Fish Hatchery

Oral and Poster Presentations  
October 30-31

For more information or to register for the Conference, please visit the following link:  
http://wri.sdstate.edu/esdwc.

Sheraton Hotel reservations can be made by Visiting:  
On June 1 this year South Dakota joined 18 other states as part of the CoCoRaHS network. This network is an all-volunteer network to monitor daily precipitation across the state. Being part of the network requires only a short training session and the appropriate rain gauge. To date over 300 people have signed up to monitor precipitation across the state. This data is becoming invaluable in determining precipitation amounts and its spatial variability across the state. The South Dakota State Climate Office and all National Weather Service offices use the data daily to determine precipitation amounts to assess drought as well as flood events.

We are always looking for new volunteers. More information about the network is included below. To sign up go to the web site www.cocorahs.org or contact the state coordinator, state climatologist, Dennis Todey at dennis.todey@sdstate.edu.

What is CoCoRaHS??

CoCoRaHS is an acronym for the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network. CoCoRaHS is a unique, non-profit, community-based network of volunteers of all ages and backgrounds working together to measure and map precipitation (rain, hail and snow). By using low-cost measurement tools, stressing training and education, and utilizing an interactive Web-site, our aim is to provide the highest quality data for natural resource, education and research applications. We currently operate in many states across the country. If we are not in your state please drop us a line and let us know that you have an interest in participating. This helps us know where a desire exists for the network and where to focus our future expansion efforts.

Where did the CoCoRaHS Network originate??

The network originated with the Colorado Climate Center at Colorado State University in 1998 thanks in part to the Fort Collins flood a year prior. In the years since, CoCoRaHS has expanded rapidly with over 3,500 observers in eighteen states. Folks in many parts of the country have shown interest in having their state join the CoCoRaHS Network in the not too distant future. (For further information on the origins of CoCoRaHS, check out http://radarmet.atmos.colostate.edu/~rob/hail/origins.html).

Who can participate??

This is a community project. Everyone can help, young, old, and in-between. The only requirements are an enthusiasm for watching and reporting weather conditions and a desire to learn more about how weather can effect and impact our lives.

What will our volunteer observers be doing??

Each time a rain, hail or snow storm crosses your area, volunteers take measurements of precipitation from as many locations as possible (see equipment). These precipitation reports are then recorded on our Web site www.cocorahs.org. The data are then displayed and organized for many of our end users to analyze and apply to daily situations ranging from water resource analysis and severe storm warnings to neighbors comparing how much rain fell in their backyards.

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CoCoRaHS

Who uses CoCoRaHS??

CoCoRaHS is used by a wide variety of organizations and individuals. The National Weather Service, other meteorologists, hydrologists, emergency managers, city utilities (water supply, water conservation, storm water), insurance adjusters, USDA, engineers, mosquito control, ranchers and farmers, outdoor & recreation interests, teachers, students, and neighbors in the community are just some examples of those who visit our Web site and use our data.

What do we hope to accomplish??

CoCoRaHS has several goals provide accurate high-quality precipitation data for our many end users on a timely basis; 2) increasing the density of precipitation data available throughout the country by encouraging volunteer weather observing; 3) encouraging citizens to have fun participating in meteorological science and heightening their awareness about weather; 4) providing enrichment activities in water and weather resources for teachers, educators and the community at large to name a few.

Who is sponsoring this network??

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is a major sponsor of CoCoRaHS. Other organizations have contributed either financially, and/or with supplies and equipment. Our list of sponsors (http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=sponsors) continues to grow. Click here to visit our sponsor’s page. Many other organizations and individuals have pitched in time and resources to help keep the network up and running. We are grateful to all of you, as CoCoRaHS would not be possible without your help.

What benefits are there in volunteering??

One of the neat things about participating in this network is coming away with the feeling that you have made an important contribution that helps others. By providing your daily observation, you help to fill in a piece of the weather puzzle that affects many across your area in one way or another. You also will have the chance to make some new friends as you do something important and learn some new things along the way. In some areas, activities are organized for network participants including training sessions, field trips, special speakers, picnics, pot-luck dinners, and photography contests just to name a few.

How can I sign up??

Just follow this link http://www.cocorahs.org/Application.aspx here to sign up as a CoCoRaHS Volunteer Observer or download a .pdf version (http://www.cocorahs.org/Media/docs/CoCoRaHSVolunteerApplication.pdf) of our application and return it as soon as possible.

Dakotafest

SDWRI is looking forward to the 12th Annual Dakotafest August 21st-23rd in Mitchell, SD.

This premier agricultural event provides SDWRI with many opportunities to fulfill our mission of research, education, and service.

The booth will be located in the Agripreneurship Pavillion in the northwest corner of the show grounds. Please feel free to bring any water samples that you’d like tested. We’ll be able to do limited testing at Dakotafest but can bring samples back to the lab for those requiring further analysis.
"When the well is dry, we learn the worth of water." —Benjamin Franklin