NORTHERN ALASKA COOPERATIVE OBSERVER

Fall 2009


Another busy summer has come to an end:

DOT sites and Chena Hot Springs back in business:

In late May we traveled the Steese and Elliott Highways, Chena Hot Springs Road, and the Haul road all the way up to the Sag River DOT station to get our C network sites back on line. These sites are utilizing the Davis automated weather stations, which when originally installed transmitted data to us every 15 minutes giving us near real time weather, as well as data for climate purposes. Unfortunately some communication glitches associated with the computer systems caused this network to fail. After some research we found another way to have the data sent to us directly by means of a new data logger plugged directly into each sites router systems. With the cooperation of DOT, Chena Hot Springs Resort, an investment in the new data loggers, and a lot of cable building and pulling we are happy once again to be receiving data from the DOT camps located on these road systems as well as Chena Hot Springs Resort.

New Sites added to the COOP family:

Circle – Russell and Patsy Sperry (not pictured)

Healy 2NW – The Juhl family – Erin, Joe, Olivia, Logan, and Liam

Ruby 14NE – Sam and Tamara Clark

Porcupine River at the mouth of the Colleen River – Joe and Ellen Matesi

Tok Forestry – Mike Kendall and Sandy

College 5NW - ……Tim and Katie Long have taken over for Dennis Trabant who served us for over 10 years at this location. Thanks Dennis for all your work, we will miss you.

Clear Sky – Sid and Mary Beth Michaels





Temperature sensor and hourly precipitation upgrades:

Many upgrades were done this year to the COOP sites here in northern Alaska. To begin, the hourly precipitation recording Fischer-Porter gauges at Wiseman, Central, Mile 42 Steese, and Eagle were all disassembled, and then rebuilt. The new system referred to as the Fischer-Porter Rebuild, type D (FPR-D) replaced the previous punch tape device that served us very reliably for many years, with and electronic load cell and SD card reader for data storage and retrieval. This winter will be the real test for this system as the solar re-charge system losses its power source….the sun, and the 12 volt batteries are put to the test. Back-up batteries are already planned to be ordered in the event one won't do the job. We are all keeping our fingers crossed that the batteries will hold as this system does provide many advantages to the old punch type gauge.

The COOP team was also busy installing electronic temperature sensors as the primary data source to many sites. These sites include Kobe Hill, Chicken, Ester 5NE, Keystone Ridge, Wiseman, and Delta 6N. The older MMTS data displays at Eagle and Fairbanks Midtown were replaced as well. With these changes loss of temperature data while you are away is a thing of the past as the newly installed units provide a memory feature that can store up to 35 days of data.

AWARDS:

40 year – John Borg in Eagle and George Jacobs in Tok


10 Year – Trevor Black at Kobe Hill, Joel and Rachel Holbrook at Delta 6N, Scott Allen in Ester and Ted Kegler at 4.3 Chena Ridge.

Congratulations and thank you for your dedication to serving your community and nation!



Web site updates: Don't forget to check out *YOUR* web page at – http://pafg.arh.nov.gov/coop/coop.php

For those of you interested in checking out the River Forecast Center newsletter it can be viewed at the following URL -

http://aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/pubs/newsltr/fall09/fall09.pdf

Over the next few months the COOP teams plan is to include a photo gallery and update our site location map/information. For those of you who have digital photos you would like to share, please send them our way! You can email them directly to me at brad.sipperley@noaa.gov. Photos can be of anything you like….just don't get me fired! Extreme weather photos are always nice to share, as well as the scenic ones from your area. If any of you have suggestions on other items you would like to see just let us know and we will see what we can do.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Regional Temperature and Precipitation (RTP) bulletin that includes data from our sites that are entered electronically each day you can look it up on line at - http://www.nws.noaa.gov/climate/index.php?wfo=pafg

Quality Control Corner:

Not much to say here as you all have been doing an outstanding job! Some reminders though, for those using Weather Coder it is always a good idea to write the observation down as well as enter it on the computer. I have found that on some rare occasion some observations do not make it to the final form. This could be for a number of reasons including not selecting "confirm" before exiting the program. I have the small B82 forms that you could use to jot down the data so on those rare occasions I do find a missing observation I could contact you and have the data re-entered. Please let me know if you would like a package of these forms and I will send them ASAP. You can even submit your request on the web page by using the "Supplies Request" option.

As we head into winter let's remember the typical winter snow measuring issues including reporting the water equivalent in hundredths of an inch (0.00), snowfall in tenths (0.0), and snow depth in whole inches only rounding up from .5 to the next whole inch. Example 1.5 observed is reported as 2. Another VERY important issue during the winter is not leaving data blocks blank. For example, if it does not snow and the snowfall and snow on ground blocks are left blank, it is assumed that this data was missing for some reason. When the daily data is looked at on line it also shows up as missing so the actual snow depth becomes unknown at that point. Please take the time to put in the zeros during the winter months to eliminate this problem.

As a reminder to those using Weather Coder you all know that it does a fairly good job at catching errors, but they can still happen. One big one is the water equivalent, which can be

entered in error without any flag this has happened. For example, 0.05 inches of water fell, however it was entered as 0.5. You will not get a flag letting you know this error has occurred as the program assumes that 0.50 inches fell. There is a big difference between a half inch and 5 hundredths so please be careful here. Also, if measurable snow falls, but melts and you know the amount that fell before it melted please ensure you enter that in the snowfall block. The snow depth column and remarks section will tell us that the snow that fell did indeed melt.

For those of you who are still sending us paper copies the usual reminders apply. Please send them to us as soon as possible so the data makes the publishing time. I need to get them in the mail to NCDC by the 15th of the following month to make this happen. Also, neatness counts when reading the data correctly at our end. We would hate to submit data which we interpreted incorrectly because we misread it. As always, thank you for your attention to detail and the effort you all put in to make the Northern Alaska COOP data sets the best they can be.

Email Us: (fairbanks.weather@noaa.gov)

Parting note:

The COOP team would like to thank you all for the hospitality and friendship you share with us during our visits. For every cup of coffee, plate of cookies, great home cooked meal, and even a place for us to sleep when we needed it you all have been great and we really appreciate each and every one of you. I have been told by some that I have the best job in the Weather Service, and I will not argue that point. The reason it's the best job is because I get to spend my time with people like you. People who selflessly provide a valuable service each and every day to their community and nation. For this we here at the Fairbanks WFO thank you.

Be careful out there, the snow is getting deep!