

Lake County **RECORD-BEE**

Letters to the editor - July 27

Thursday, July 27, 2017

Support the broadband effort

Living in rural Lake County has many advantages: clean air, pleasant scenery, low traffic density, brilliantly starry night skies, and ready access to many recreational activities. I have enjoyed living here for nearly 40 years. However, in some ways we are treated as 2nd class citizens. I refer to the urban vs. rural digital divide.

It must have been a grand day in 1929 when, according to a document I found in my 100+ year old Witter Springs house, it was connected to the electrical grid. Electric lighting became available with the flip of a switch and water no longer had to be pumped by hand from the well. Bathrooms with tubs and toilets must have been considered wonders of the age. There was even the possibility of getting an electric washing machine. One thing I know the residents did was to install a set of now long disused electric wall heaters in many rooms.

I don't know when television first became available in Lake County, but my house had a 20 ft tall roof antenna when I bought this place in 1987. As a teacher at Upper Lake High School I do recall the excitement in the 1990s as cable TV was extended west along the north shore. However, it stopped at Upper Lake, never reaching further west, so now reception at Witter Springs is pretty much restricted to satellite.

Internet access became available in the late 1990s, but only by dial up through phone lines, not nearly fast enough for streaming video. The alternative is satellite access and therein lies the problem.

According to studies made in recent years, the average household consumption of bandwidth is in the neighborhood of 190 G (Gigabytes) and growing rapidly. People with unrestricted access enjoy streaming video, streaming music and radio, exchanging photos, and spending time shopping without concern over bandwidth used. My satellite system, however, even though it has recently increased in speed, sets an upper limit of 10.3 G per month. This substantially inhibits my freedom to use what must now be considered a public utility, including access to the substitute teaching job postings on which I rely for income. I also have no cell phone access at home, a liability as one local district seems to rely chiefly on text messaging to recruit substitutes.

To make matters much worse is the advent of Microsoft's new Windows 10 Creators edition, which leaves my computer vulnerable to updating from Microsoft whenever it is connected to the Internet. When I first installed Windows 10 it had this same feature and I clocked 2 G bandwidth consumption in the first 2 days on updates from Microsoft alone. Then I switched to Windows 10 version 1511, which allowed me to choose my time of monthly updates, as I have unrestricted access from midnight to 5 AM. This has worked OK, as long as I got up at midnight once a month to do the updating. However, this version is being retired in September and all updates will include installation of Creators.

My hope is that Lake County Broadband Solutions, as outlined in the July 8, 2017 RB article, will be up and running in my area soon with unmetered Internet access. Pending that I urge all residents of Lake County to support the Internet For All Act (AB 1665), which provides resources for addressing the digital divide problem. The map at the website shows those areas of California that are underserved and it includes much of Lake County. The Lake County's 4th Assembly District is shown as being 11 % behind California's stated goal of 98 percent of households being connected to broadband Internet. Check out the website and urge the legislature to act.

<http://www.internetforallnow.org/>

Tell California Legislators We Need Internet for All Now! The California Legislature must pass the Internet for All Now Act, to support deployment of broadband into ...

Steve Harness, Witter Springs