

## TECH BEAT article published in Eureka Times Standard, October 1, 2009

### Community Broadband Award goes to Digital Redwoods

Access Humboldt was represented in New Orleans, Louisiana on Wednesday [September 30<sup>th</sup>] to receive the “Community Broadband Wireless Network of the Year” Award for the *Digital Redwoods* initiative and to promote “A Public Interest Internet Agenda.”

The National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) annually presents Community Broadband Awards to exceptional leaders and innovative programs that champion community interests and broadband deployment in local communities nationwide.

"NATOA's Community Broadband Awards proudly recognize the people, communities, and organizations that lead the nation in promoting community interests through broadband projects," said Mary Beth Henry, president of the NATOA Board of Directors.

*Digital Redwoods* (<http://digitalredwoods.net>) is a regional initiative of Access Humboldt that includes local broadband network projects such as Digital Rio Dell, Access Humboldt Libraries and Eureka Muni-Hub. *Digital Redwoods* is developing these sustainable municipal and community projects to deliver broadband and digital media services to remote and rural communities on the North Coast of California.

*Digital Redwoods* also includes a Broadband Policy Project, funded in part by ZeroDivide ([zerodivide.org](http://zerodivide.org)), which helps to support Access Humboldt's participation in national, state and local policy efforts such as “A Public Interest Internet Agenda,” which was released nationally on One Web Day (September 22, 2009) in Washington, DC.

In developing this policy agenda, Access Humboldt joined with communities across the United States to explore ways to bring high quality, affordable broadband to the entire country. The Media and Democracy Coalition convened a series of forums in diverse communities across the nation, producing ideas that became bold policy solutions that will allow communities to harness the power of the Internet to reach for the American Dream in the Digital Age. We call it: “A Public Interest Internet Agenda.”

“A Public Interest Internet Agenda” is a great example of the power of collaboration and consensus building. Urban, rural and Native populations, as well as Washington, DC public interest media and telecommunications policy experts came together to tackle these issues and agreed that broadband policy solutions are essential to the prosperity of the United States. Connecting our entire nation to the Internet at broadband speed is the key to economic development, improved healthcare and education, energy efficiency, and a robust democracy and open government.

“A Public Interest Internet Agenda” contains more than thirty specific policy recommendations that bridge common concerns among these diverse constituencies, and this common ground is what policymakers must build upon to formulate a National Broadband Plan for the future. The proposed policies adhere to these core principles:

1. Broadband Communication is a fundamental right. To ensure this fundamental right, there must be universal and open, non-discriminatory access to high-speed and high-quality broadband. Mobility, abundance, and privacy should be top priorities.
2. Good policy must be well informed. Federal policymakers must have access to reliable data on where broadband presently exists, at what speeds, of what quality, by what provider, how it is used by consumers, why certain consumers do not use it, and how other consumers integrate it into their lives.
3. Policy should promote competition, innovation, localism, and opportunity. Locally owned and operated networks support these core goals of Federal broadband policy, and therefore should receive priority in terms of Federal support. Structural separation of ownership of broadband infrastructure from the delivery of service over that infrastructure will further promote these goals.
4. Government should use public resources wisely. Policymakers should seek to leverage the use of resources and assets such as publicly-owned spectrum, fiber and rights-of-way to achieve the goal of universal broadband access to the Internet
5. Federal policy must stress digital inclusion and the service of traditionally disenfranchised communities. Stimulating broadband supply is necessary but not sufficient to achieve the goal of universal broadband. Policymakers must also promote digital inclusion to stimulate broadband demand and ensure that all U.S. residents have access to the digital skills and tools necessary to take advantage of the Internet's enormous potential benefits in creativity, economic development and civic engagement.

Local, state, tribal and national public policy leaders should consider “A Public Interest Internet Agenda” and support this bold vision. Please review the Agenda at <http://www.media-democracy.net/node/510> and then submit your public comments with the FCC here [http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/Upload?hot\\_docket=1012001350|09-51|National+Broadband+Plan+Notice+of+Inquiry&Send=Continue](http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/Upload?hot_docket=1012001350|09-51|National+Broadband+Plan+Notice+of+Inquiry&Send=Continue) to express your support for public interest policies.

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Key links:

Access Humboldt: <http://accesshumboldt.net>

Digital Redwoods: <http://digitalredwoods.net>

FCC Comments Page:

[http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/Upload?hot\\_docket=1012001350|09-51|National+Broadband+Plan+Notice+of+Inquiry&Send=Continue](http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/Upload?hot_docket=1012001350|09-51|National+Broadband+Plan+Notice+of+Inquiry&Send=Continue)

*A Public Interest Internet Agenda* online:

<http://www.media-democracy.net/node/510>