There are individuals and groups inside, and outside, North Yuba Water District (District) repeatedly publishing false, and often derogatory, statements regarding our District staff and the District’s effort to improve its ability to deliver irrigation water while eliminating the significant water loss incurred by the present system. Some of these same individuals engage in meritless litigation, and routinely inundate the District with Public Records Act requests in an effort to damage the District’s finances.

Most recently, the District, following expert guidance, proposed building a plastic pipeline along the Forbestown Ditch; an open, earthen canal (originally constructed by miners in the 1850’s to deliver water to their mining camps) that experiences significant water conveyance losses due to seepage. This effort, however, is vehemently opposed by the individuals and groups disseminating false information regarding the District and its staff. Ironically, many of these individuals and groups are comprised of seasonal agricultural customers along the irrigation ditches who stand to benefit most from the piping proposal.

The following are the facts regarding the state of the District’s irrigation facilities.

**Fact:** The District’s ability to deliver irrigation water is limited due to contractual obligations and the condition of the earthen canals that transport that water.

- The District is entitled, by law, to 24 cubic feet per second (CFS) of water delivered at the beginning of the Forbestown Ditch. However, the District’s ability to deliver irrigation water to its customers is substantially reduced by the state of the Forbestown Ditch, which loses about 35% of the water it carries, and the Oregon House Dobbins Canal, which has a documented seepage loss of over 60%.

**Fact: This water loss isn’t new.**

- The condition of the Forbestown Ditch and Oregon House Dobbins Canal has not changed significantly in three decades. The District routinely performs essential maintenance of both canals to ensure they remain

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Originally called the Miner’s Ditch, the Forbestown Ditch is a 10-mile, open, unlined, dirt ditch. Photo courtesy of the Yuba Feather Museum.
BROADBAND UPDATE
Access to High Speed Internet is Vital for Our District

In April 2021, the Yuba County Board of Supervisors and the Yuba Water Agency commissioned a Strategic Broadband Master Plan. Ian Scott was hired as Yuba County’s Broadband Project Manager. In October, the plan was approved. The plan outlined where internet issues are in the County, and identified best practices from other cities and counties that can help us here.

The next phase, happening now, is to determine the feasibility and costs involved with increasing broadband access to the entire county. Once complete, the County will begin identifying and applying for state and federal grants to complete the projects.

Broadband is a vital piece of the County’s infrastructure. Good internet access is vital for those that work from home, access tele-health, have students in distance learning, and vital for emergency communication during fires and evacuations.

The largest problem occurring with broadband in Yuba County is happening in North Yuba Water District’s geographic area.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently defined broadband as a minimum of **25 mbps download speed and 3 mbps upload speed**. Our area is severely underserved, with only 20-40% of households north of HWY 20 having access to internet that is at least **6 mbps download speed and 1 mbps upload speed**.

To learn more about the County’s broadband efforts, and view the Yuba County Broadband Master Plan, visit [https://bit.ly/yubabroadband](https://bit.ly/yubabroadband).

**What is “broadband”***?

Broadband is the transmission of data, it is a high-speed internet connection that is always on. Connections include Wi-Fi, DSLs, fiber and satellite.

Yuba County’s Strategic Master Broadband Plan includes this coverage map showing different broadband speed standards throughout Yuba County.

**What can local residents do to help the process?**

Yuba County is actively asking for your feedback. They are encouraging our residents to visit [www.calspeed.org](http://www.calspeed.org) to test your internet speed, this data will be submitted to the County; and they really want to know if your internet is not stable enough to even complete the test. Please email Ian Scott at [iscott@co.yuba.ca.us](mailto:iscott@co.yuba.ca.us) with any feedback.

**What if I can’t afford home internet service?**

The state of California has launched several programs to provide free, or low-cost, access to internet and computers. Visit [www.internetforallnow.org](http://www.internetforallnow.org) for details. Computers with internet access are available at the Yuba County Library, 303 Second St., Marysville.
Fact: The District seeks to minimize impacts to ratepayers from these projects.

- Five years ago, the District secured the entirety of a pipeline project funding through grants. However, due to a barrage of complaints and objections from the same individuals and groups publishing false information about the District, the grant was lost. Now, the project cost estimate has increased from $10 million to potentially $15 million or more. However, the District is committed to exploring all available means to secure sufficient grant funding.

The Bottom Line: The District remains committed to solving the annual irrigation supply challenges.

- The District continues to act in the best interests of its customers, as it has since the District’s formation in 1952. We are ready to work toward a lasting solution that truly meets the needs of the customers we proudly serve. Please help us help you by sharing the facts and contacting our office if you have any questions or concerns.

Fact: Precipitation, or lack thereof, plays an important role in the District’s ability to have an irrigation season.

- In a typical wet year, necessary water is available from Dry Creek, and combining with the Forbestown Ditch allows the District to serve irrigation customers along the Oregon House Dobbins Canal. However, in dry years like 2021, Dry Creek is – like its name – dry, and provides no additional water. In drought conditions like those frequently experienced since 2012, there is not enough water to serve both domestic and irrigation customers. This is especially true when the District’s water rights are curtailed by the State Water Resources Control Board as they were in 2021, and water was only available for health and safety purposes.

Fact: Piping the Forbestown Ditch is the solution to improve water supply & quantity.

- For more than a decade, the District has evaluated this issue extensively in collaboration with engineering and geotechnical experts. The answer is clear. Piping the Forbestown Ditch with a 42-inch high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe will enable the District to eliminate the current water loss. The pipeline will also provide additional capacity for the District to receive its full contractual water right of 23,700 acre-feet per year, which is not currently possible due to a lack of capacity in the current delivery system.

After piping the Forbestown Ditch, the District is also prepared to explore piping the Oregon House Dobbins Canal, an action that will provide further benefits for water efficiency, reliability, and supply.

Fact: HDPE pipe is the most appropriate, cost-effective material.

- Geologic studies confirm the Forbestown Ditch will support 24 CFS in an open ditch with plastic pipe. Metal pipe is prohibitively heavy and expensive; will reduce the amount of water that can be conveyed due to the additional water weight; and is far more difficult to repair. On the other hand, HDPE pipe is the least expensive option, easier to install in remote timbered areas where heavy equipment cannot go, and the easiest and quickest to repair or replace when damaged.
The Yuba Fire Safe Council has launched a new Defensible Space Cost Share Program, providing up to 50% reimbursement cost (maximum reimbursement is $2000.00) of eligible defensible space improvements within the first 100 feet around residences, including pruning of trees, removal of ladder fuel vegetation, maintaining grass, and relocation of other flammables.

This program is focused on helping residents address priority activities that provide the most risk reduction. Defensible space minimizes the pathways for wildfire to burn directly to the home; reduces radiant heat exposures to the home and structures; reduces the potential for embers to ignite vegetation adjacent to the home; and provides a safe place for fire personnel to defend the home and allow for safe routes for evacuation.

Awards will be distributed first come, first served – until funds run out. Work must be performed in 2022 and applications must be submitted by November 30, 2022.

Yuba County Foothill Fire Districts Eligible for this Program include the Camptonville Community Service District, Foothill Fire Protection District, Dobbins Oregon House Fire Protection District, Loma Rica Browns Valley Community Service District, and the Smartsville Fire Protection District.

To participate, first you must schedule a Free Wildfire Mitigation Review (WMR) from a Yuba Watershed Protection & Fire Safe Council trained volunteer to become eligible for the cost share program.

Visit [www.yubafiresafecouncil.org](http://www.yubafiresafecouncil.org) for program details and to complete the Mitigation Review Application.