



PRESS RELEASE

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE COLVILLE RESERVATION

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Colville Tribes Urges Priority of Native Nations For New FCC Licenses

(Nespelem, WA)— The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, in its official comments, has urged the Federal Communications Commission to give top priority for Native Nations for unused “2.5Ghz spectrum” licenses.

“The Colville Tribes is either un-served or underserved by telecommunications services on our reservation,” Rodney Cawston, Chairman of the Colville Tribes, said today. “Our residents lack basic communications technology that people in more populated areas take for granted. We hope our comments to the FCC will result in a number of new spectrum licenses that the Colville Tribes can use for public safety, education, and improved cellular phone service to all residents of our reservation.”

The FCC has recently sought comments on its proposed rules changes for issuing a large number of unused Educational Broadcast System (EBS) spectrum licenses, particularly in the rural West. This spectrum had been reserved for public broadcasting systems, universities and other educational entities, but the FCC has proposed expanding the number of eligible applicants for these licenses, including a preference for Tribal governments.

“Our comments propose not only the Native Nations have first priority for licenses, but that Tribes in isolated, sparsely populated regions are given priority as well,” Cawston said. “We are the most in need of improved telecommunications services.”

Cawston said the Tribes also oppose selling these valuable spectrum licenses at an FCC auction. “We have made it very clear in our comments that these licenses should not be sold to the highest bidders, which would very likely be big telecommunications companies,” he said. “To license by auction would put Tribes without the financial resources of a Verizon or AT&T at a great disadvantage.”

If the Colville Tribes were to acquire one or more of the licenses for this spectrum, it would be able to provide much more efficient communications services for firefighters, police, and other law enforcement officers in times of emergency.

“The memory of recent devastating wildfires on the Colville Reservation is still fresh in our minds,” Cawston said. “Cell towers burned and our firefighters were using temporary, portable equipment which limited their ability to communicate critical information to each

other. We would use our new spectrum licenses for the protection of the public and our natural resources in the case future wildfires, which we know will happen sooner or later.”

Colville’s comments addressed a wide variety of technical issues related to the FCC’s proposals for determining what entities should receive the EBS spectrum licenses and urged the FCC not to limit the number of licenses that a Tribe might acquire.

“There is a critical need for improved telecommunications on the Colville Reservation for public safety, public education, and basic cell phone services,” Cawston said. “The Colville Tribes needs more than one license to address a wide range of our communications needs.”

In addition to weighing in against simply auctioning off these licenses, the Tribes urged limitations for non-tribal licensees to avoid the immediate transfer by individual license holders for financial gain. “We want to make sure that if the FCC issues licenses, particularly to non-Tribal entities, the new license holder use it, not sell it,” Cawston said. “These licenses are needed and will be used for good purposes by Tribes on isolated reservations. They should serve the public good, not make money for a new, temporary license holder.”

The deadline for receiving comments at the FCC is Wednesday, August 8. The Commission will make a determination on how to assign licenses following its review of all comments.

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About the Colville Tribes:

Today, more than 9,522 descendants of 12 aboriginal tribes of Indians are enrolled in the Confederated Tribes of the Colville. The tribes, commonly known by English and French names, are: the Colville, the Nespelem, the San Poil, the Arrow Lakes, the Palus, the Wenatchi (Wenatchee), the Chelan, the Entiat, the Methow, the southern Okanogan, the Moses Columbia and the Nez Perce of Chief Joseph’s Bands.