
NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

FROM THE OFFICE OF DISTRICT 4 COMMISSIONER LYNDA LOVEJOY

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NEWS RELEASE

Sacred Wind Communications Granted State Rural Universal Service Fund

SANTA FE – Sacred Wind Communications Inc., is an incumbent rural telecommunications carrier that serves fewer than 50,000 access lines within the state and has been previously designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) by the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (Commission). At that time, the Commission did not establish a support rate for Sacred Wind, and the company has never received any support from the State Rural Universal Service Fund (SRUSF).

Sacred Wind's service territory occupies all or portions of 29 Chapters of the Navajo Nation, with customers located in 22 of those Chapters. That territory consists of 3,200 square miles with fewer than 7,000 occupied homes. This territory includes portions of five mountain ranges, which impede signal transmission and challenge line-of-sight planning.

Sacred Wind's five-year plan for capital expenditures describes 50 projects that will result in the expansion of service to as many as 800 new customers, and the improvement of service quality to at least 2,000 customers.

On March 13, 2015, Sacred Wind filed its Petition for Support from the SRUSF and Request for Expedited Consideration by the Commission (Petition). Sacred Wind requested support in the amount of \$1.4 million per year for five years from the SRUSF to preserve and advance universal service, and to promote the widespread availability of residential local exchange service throughout its service territory.

On April 1, 2015, the Commission issued its initial order requiring an expedited proceeding "...so that a final order disposing of the Petition may be issued by the Commission before October 1, 2015."

On Wednesday, September 22, 2015, the Commission heard from NMPRC staff during the Commission's case management meeting that Sacred Wind has met its burden both in regard to the New Mexico Rural Telecommunications Act as well as Commission rules as an ETC eligible for participation in the SRUSF. In addition, no party to this case opposed the company's eligibility for the SRUSF, or the amount requested for projects by Sacred Wind.

Sacred Wind has established financial need pursuant to the statute and rules, therefore, staff recommended to the Commission that the company be granted support from the SRUSF in the amount of \$1.4 million per year commencing in January 2016 for a five year period continuing through December 2020.

The Commission on Wednesday unanimously supported Sacred Wind receiving SRUSF.

"Today I supported Sacred Wind Communications' petition to be a recipient of the New Mexico State Universal Fund," Commissioner Lynda Lovejoy stated. "This is the second time Sacred Wind has submitted a request to receive the funds, and they are the only rural company that is not receiving the state funds. By approving this case, it has significant benefits to the northwest region of New Mexico through investment in improved network facilities and more advanced technology. I have faith that SWC will utilize the state's surcharge fund to expand the reach of communication services to many unserved homes as well as businesses in their service territory."

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