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### PSC TO HOLD HEARINGS JUNE 13 ON EXPANDED LOCAL CALLING FOR MUSSELHELL EXCHANGE

The Public Service Commission will hold two public hearings on Friday, June 13, to obtain comments on Mid-Rivers Telephone Cooperative's proposal for extended area telephone service between the Musselshell telephone exchange and the Billings local calling region. Extended area service expands local calling areas so that customers' phone calls within an EAS region are local, not long-distance. However, local phone rates in an EAS region must increase to recover EAS costs.

The first June 13 hearing will be held at 1 p.m., in Musselshell at the Musselshell School, Main Hall, Main Street. The second hearing will be held in Shepherd at 6 p.m. in the Shepherd School Administration Building Board Room, 5420 Highland Avenue.

If expansion of the Billings local calling region to include the Musselshell exchange is approved by the PSC, calls from Mid-Rivers customers in that exchange into the Billings local calling region will be local instead of long-distance calls. Musselshell exchange customers will have a choice of two rate plans:

- The flat-rate option of unlimited local calling, including calls into the Billings region, at the current monthly rate, plus an additional \$12 monthly EAS surcharge; or,
- An alternative EAS option that could save money for customers who do not make lots of local calls, under which a Musselshell exchange customer would pay, in addition to the current monthly rate, a monthly EAS surcharge of \$5 and 5 cents per minute on calls to the Billings EAS region. Local calls within the Musselshell exchange will not incur the 5-cents-per-minute billing.

The current rate for Mid-Rivers' residential customers, not including taxes and fees, is \$12.40 per month. Mid-Rivers' business customers currently pay \$19.55 per month.

If the Mid-Rivers EAS proposal is approved, Qwest will increase the existing monthly surcharge paid by its EAS customers statewide by 3 cents for 28 months by delaying a scheduled November 2003 rate reduction. Project Telephone Co. and Triangle Telephone Cooperative, which also have customers in the Billings EAS region, will not change their existing EAS rates.

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