



Montana Public Service Commission
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PSC TO HOLD HEARING OCTOBER 31 ON CHINOOK WIRELESS' REQUEST FOR DESIGNATION AS AN ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIER

The state Public Service Commission will hold a hearing in Helena on Wednesday, October 31, concerning the application of Chinook Wireless for designation as an “eligible telecommunications carrier” (ETC) in the telephone service areas of Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative, Inc., 3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative, Inc., and Qwest Corporation.

The hearing will begin at 9 a.m. in the PSC’s Bollinger Room, 1701 Prospect Avenue.

According to Chinook’s PSC filing, Chinook Wireless is based in Great Falls and was created in 2005 by acquiring wireless assets from various Montana independent telephone companies. In order to obtain ETC designation, Chinook Wireless must demonstrate to the PSC that it will offer the universal services supported by the federal Universal Service Fund, which include local calling, access to emergency services, operator services and directory assistance, long-distance calling, and access to programs offered to low-income customers. Chinook must also demonstrate that it will provide coverage for the entire requested service area within a reasonable time period.

The PSC must determine whether Chinook Wireless meets the federal requirements for ETC designation and whether such designation would be in the public interest. If the PSC designates Chinook Wireless as an ETC, then Chinook will be eligible to receive support from the federal Universal Service Fund. One goal of the universal service program created by Congress is to advance the availability of quality telecommunications services to all consumers, including those in low income, rural, and high cost areas at rates that are reasonably comparable to those charged in urban areas.

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