

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information, contact:

Dave Fisher - 406-444-6168

Martin Jacobson - 406-444-6178

## WEST YELLOWSTONE & GARDINER TO JOIN

### BOZEMAN'S LOCAL PHONE CALLING AREA

West Yellowstone and Gardiner telephone customers will join the Bozeman/Livingston expanded local calling area by September 1 as a result of action taken by the state Public Service Commission Tuesday. In addition, the Extended Area Service surcharge paid by all US West Communications customers in expanded local calling areas who subscribe to flat-rate service will decrease from \$2.55 per month to \$2.44.

Last year the PSC approved US West's proposal for eight expanded local calling regions in Montana, including one for the Bozeman/Livingston area and a separate one for the Yellowstone Park area that included Gardiner and West Yellowstone. However, many dissatisfied Gardiner and West Yellowstone customers contacted the PSC asking to be included in the Bozeman/Livingston local calling region rather than the Yellowstone region. Prompted by these requests, the PSC began a formal review last November to determine whether the Yellowstone calling region should be combined with the Bozeman/Livingston region, be returned to its previous local calling arrangement, or be kept as it is now.

The PSC's decision to combine the Yellowstone calling region with the Bozeman/Livingston region results in an increase of 13 cents to the monthly EAS surcharge, but the increase will be offset by a 24-cent reduction in the surcharge as a result of a review of actual costs incurred by US West to implement the expanded local calling regions last year. In addition to the surcharge reduction, EAS customers who subscribe to flat-rate service will receive one-time bill credits no later than September 1 to reimburse them for overpayment of the surcharge due to the initial surcharge amount being set too high. Because the eight expanded local calling regions were implemented at different dates from May to November of 1997, each region's customers will get different one-time credits on their phone bills, which are estimated to be the following amounts:

- o Great Falls region (Great Falls, Cascade and Dutton) - \$3.79;
- o Butte region (Butte, Anaconda, Warm Springs, DeerLodge and Whitehall) - \$2.80;
- o Helena region (Helena, Boulder, Townsend and Wolf Creek) - \$2.80;
- o Billings region (Billings, Bridger, Columbus, Fromberg, Hardin, Joliet, Laurel, Park City and Red Lodge) - \$2.74;
- o West Glacier - \$2.70;
- o Bozeman region (Bozeman, Livingston, Clyde Park and Wilsall) - \$2.57;
- o Yellowstone region (Gardiner, West Yellowstone, Lake and Old Faithful) - \$2.57;
- o Missoula region (Missoula, Darby, Hamilton, Stevensville and Victor) - \$2.40.

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