

Nez Perce Tribe
Broadband Network Enhancement
USDC-NTIA-Broadband Telecommunication Opportunities Program
Grant Award NT10BIX5570123

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



Prepared by:
Nez Perce Tribe
Information Systems
PO Box 365
Lapwai, ID 83540
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Executive Summary

The Nez Perce Tribe has been awarded a Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program (BTOP) grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to deploy a fully duplexed 100 Megabit wireless backbone connecting the Reservation communities of Lapwai, Culdesac, Peck, Ahsahka, Orofino, Kamiah, Kooskia, and the territories therein in partnership with First Step Internet and Washington RSA No 8 Limited Partnership dba Inland Cellular. Service resulting from this project will include: internet, data and cellular communications middle and last mile; and, a disaster recovery center for public and private users across the Nez Perce Tribe Reservation.

Following award the development team went out on the ground to verify tower locations, access and development specifics. The issues with the sites in the Due Diligence phase of project award included: lack of developable power, lost access to property to co-location towers, and duplicative service coverage. Solutions proposed will offer the same capacity across the Reservation by utilizing seven existing towers: five towers of Washington RSA #8 Limited Partnership dba Inland Cellular; two towers of the Nez Perce Tribe; two towers of First Step Internet; and, construct seven new towers. Last mile service area and community anchor institution service will not differ from awarded project scope. The location and construction activities in the Proposed Action are the activities analyzed by regulatory entities (Federal Communications Commission, Federal Aviation Administration, Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, and US Fish & Wildlife Service).

This Proposed Action addresses current connectivity gaps by developing middle mile infrastructure of wireless telecommunication that will reduce identified coverage gaps thus benefiting critical community organization connectivity and enhance public safety. This project will expand the infrastructure capacity and therefore the opportunity for EMS (8 Rural Fire Depts., 4 County Sheriff Depts., ID State Police, and Tribal Police), four (4) libraries, and one (1) community college connectivity to broadband telecommunications Reservation wide.

The No Action Alternative offers no short or long range improvements to telecommunications capacity across the Nez Perce Reservation. The Socioeconomic conditions of higher rates of poverty (26% in Native community; and 18.4% for the entire population) are more likely to persist in communities without access to high speed broadband connectivity.

The Proposed Action will place wireless network equipment on seven existing towers and construct seven new telecommunications towers for network equipment across the Reservation. Development will be limited to placement of network equipment with no additional ground disturbance on the seven existing towers. Construction will take place during the spring/summer/fall of 2011. The new tower construction sites activities are unique to each site presented herein

Site Name	Access Roadwork	Power Development	Tower	Tower Foundation (side x side x depth)
Culdesac	NA - site has existing access	50 ft aerial line with 1 pole	100' self support non guyed	10' x 10'x 5'
TU 17	NA - site has existing access	2940 ft of buried line; Line trench will go along agriculture field, beneath county road to tower site	250' self support non guyed	29.6'x29.6'x10'
TU 99-101	0.6 m New Temporary Access Roadway constructed through the existing wheat field	3170 ft of buried line; Line trench will be through existing wheat field	165' self support non guyed	22.6'x22.6'x10'
Peck	0.34 m Upgrade	Line upgrade on existing aerial power pole, no ground disturbance	100' self support non guyed	10' x 10'x 5'
TU 60	0.1 m New	450' buried line; Line trench will be through existing grass/rangeland	180' self support non guyed	22.6'x22.6'x10'
Beard	0.2 m New	1630 ft ; aerial line with 6 new poles	180' self support non guyed	30.6'x30.6'x10'
TU 71	0.7 m Upgrade	5,000 aerial line with 12 new poles	160' self support non guyed	25'x25'x10'

The resulting impacts of the Proposed Action are likely short term construction related air quality emission increases across the Reservation; visual impacts where new towers are constructed in places where limited non natural developments exist may cause concern in a minority of the population, but for the most part the enhanced telecommunication connectivity developed (voice & data coverage) and the added public safety feature of being connected will off-set concerns; no negative impacts to Sensitive, Threatened, Endangered species or migratory birds are anticipated; and positive improvements to the socio-economic standing of the Reservation communities are expected as a result of the Proposed Action.

To insure the adherence with National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 guidelines a Programmatic Agreement with the National Telecommunications & Information Administration, Nez Perce THPO and Tribal Executive Committee outlining the procedure and timeline for completing the FCC Section 106 review, and establishing mechanisms to ensure avoidance or mitigation of adverse effects to levels below the threshold of significance in the event that historic properties are identified.

No long term negative effects to environmental resources will result from implementation of the Proposed Action.