



Cordova Telephone Cooperative Cellular Site Proposal

Issue

On February 5, 2010, Cordova Telephone Cooperative, Inc. submitted a proposal to construct and maintain a cellular telecommunication facility within the Naked Island Communications Site in Prince William Sound about 50 miles east of Whittier, Alaska. The location is within the Prince William Sound Islands Inventoried Roadless Area in the congressionally-designated Nel-lie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area on the Chugach National Forest. This area is recommended wilderness under the 2002 revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chugach National Forest.

Background

Cordova Wireless Communication, owned by Cordova Telephone Cooperative, holds the FCC license to provide cellular (GSM) service in the northern section of Prince William Sound. The Naked Island site is currently occupied by four lease holders and one permit holder under an approved communication site plan. Opportunities to collocate with existing site users were explored but were not found acceptable.

The proposed facility would consist of a tower, equipment shelter, solar panel array, and propane tanks immediately adjacent to the existing facilities (right side of photo). There are no roads or trails on the island due to topography and elevation. Construction and maintenance access would be by helicopter.



Current Situation

The Forest Service accepted the proposal July 27, 2010 as a formal application and outlined the rest of the application process, including timelines, cost recovery, 3rd party NEPA, etc. Application processing continued through the remainder of 2010 and early 2011. Weather challenges in 2010 and difficulty getting helicopter support caused delays in field work. Increased regional and national interest occurred as the FCC license expiration date approached. In March 2011, the Minimum Requirements Decision Guide for wilderness study area activities was approved by the Regional Forester. The NEPA signing authority was delegated to the Forest Supervisor and re-delegated to the District Ranger. The 20-year communication site use lease was fully executed on March 30, 2011 and implementation is proceeding.

More Information

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