(text box: 1)BEFORE THE IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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| IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION FROM ELMORE COUNTY RESIDENTS REQUESTING EXTENDED AREA SERVICE BETWEEN MOUNTAIN HOME AND BOISE AND BETWEEN GLENNS FERRY, HAMMETT, KING HILL AND BOISE. | )  )  )  )  )  ) | CASE NOS. USW-T-97-6                        USW-T-96-6 |
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| IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION FROM WEISER, PAYETTE AND NEW PLYMOUTH  RESIDENTS REQUESTING EXTENDED AREA SERVICE BETWEEN WEISER, PAYETTE, NEW PLYMOUTH AND BOISE. | )  )  )  )  )  ) | NOTICE OF HEARINGS  NOTICE OF PETITIONS  ORDER NO. 27680 |

In these cases, customers have petitioned the Commission for toll-free, extended area service (EAS) from their exchanges to other nearby exchanges in Idaho.  In Case No. USW-T-97-6, residents of Elmore County petitioned for toll-free calling between Mountain Home and Boise and between Glenns Ferry, Hammett, King Hill and Boise.  In Case No. USW-T-96-6, customers living in Weiser, New Plymouth and Payette petitioned for toll-free calling between Weiser, New Plymouth, Payette and Boise.  U S WEST Communications, Inc. provides local exchange service to customers in Mountain Home, Boise, Glenns Ferry, Hammett, King Hill and to customers living in Weiser, New Plymouth and Payette.

In each case, the Petitioners allege that there is a strong community-of-interest between their exchanges and the exchanges or areas they wish to call toll free.  The Petitions state that many customers call the requested areas for work, medical, government, school, and community needs.  In this Order, the Commission is scheduling these cases for hearing.

NOTICE OF HEARING

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that given the proximity of the exchanges involved in these cases and the similarity of the requested EAS or areas of service, the Commission on its own motion finds that it is appropriate and reasonable to consolidate these cases.  The Commission finds that the issues presented in these cases are related and the rights of the parties will not be prejudiced by consolidation.  IDAPA 31.01.01.247.

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that U S WEST Communications, Inc. is designated as a party to this proceeding.  The Commission understands that U S WEST, as well as the Staff, has already begun its investigations to determine the community-of-interest, costs, and feasibility of the requests.

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that in Order No. 26870, issued April 3, 1997, the Commission granted intervention in Case No. USW-T-97-6 to Rural Telephone Company.

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that persons desiring to intervene in this matter for the purpose of presenting evidence or cross-examining witnesses at hearing must file a Petition to Intervene with the Commission pursuant to this Commission’s Rules of Procedure 72 and 73, IDAPA 31.01.01.072 and -.073.  Persons intending to participate at the hearing must file a Petition to Intervene on or before September 7, 1998.  Persons desiring to present their views without parties’ rights of participation and cross-examination are not required to intervene and may present their comments without prior notification to the Commission or the parties.

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that the Commission will convene the technical hearing in these combined cases on THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1998 AT 9:30 A.M. AT THE OFFICES OF THE IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION, 472 WEST WASHINGTON STREET, BOISE, IDAHO.  The purpose of this hearing will be to take the technical evidence of U S WEST, intervenors and the Staff concerning the costs (including any projected rate increase to fund the requests), the community-of-interest, and feasibility of the requests.

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that the Commission will convene public hearings for the purpose of taking testimony from members of the public.  The public hearings are yet to be scheduled.  The purpose of the public hearings will be to receive evidence regarding the community-of-interest between the petitioning exchange customers and the requested calling areas.

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that the Commission has adopted the following discovery and testimony schedule in this case:

Deadline for prefiled direct testimony of

U S WEST, Intervenors and StaffSeptember 14, 1998

Deadline for prefiled rebuttal testimony

(if any) — to be received by all partiesSeptember 22, 1998

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that there will be no discovery deadlines imposed in these consolidated proceedings.  The parties are directed to act in good faith in submitting and responding to discovery requests in accordance with the Commission’s Rules of Procedure, IDAPA 31.01.01.000 et seq.

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that all hearings and prehearing conferences in this matter will be held in facilities meeting the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.  Persons needing the help of a sign language interpreter or other assistance of the kind that the Commission is obligated to provide under the Americans with Disabilities Act in order to participate in or to understand the testimony and argument at a public hearing may ask the Commission to provide a sign language interpreter or other assistance at the hearing.  The request for assistance must be received at least five (5) working days before the hearing by contacting the Commission Secretary at:

IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

PO BOX 83720

BOISE, IDAHO  83720-0074

(208) 334-0338  (TELEPHONE)

(208) 334-3151  (TEXT TELEPHONE)

(208) 334-3762  (FAX)

 YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that the Petitions in these cases are available for public inspection during regular business hours at the Commission offices.  The prepared testimony and exhibits must conform to the requirements of Rules 230-231 of the Commission’s Rules of Procedure, IDAPA 31.01.01.230-231.

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED that all proceedings in this matter will be conducted pursuant to the Commission's Rules of Procedure, IDAPA 31.01.01.000 et seq.

YOU ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED  that the Commission has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to Title 61 of the Idaho Code.

O R D E R

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the prepared testimony and exhibits of all parties be served upon all other parties of record in accordance with the schedule set out above.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Case Nos. USW-T-96-6 and USW-T-97-6 be consolidated for hearing.

DONE by Order of the Idaho Public Utilities Commission at Boise, Idaho this                  day of August 1998.

                                                                                                                                      DENNIS S. HANSEN, PRESIDENT

                                                                                           RALPH NELSON, COMMISSIONER

MARSHA H. SMITH, COMMISSIONER

ATTEST:

Myrna J. Walters

Commission Secretary

**COMMENTS AND ANNOTATIONS**

Text Box 1:

**TEXT BOXES**

Office of the Secretary

Service Date

August 26, 1998