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IDAHO PUBLIC
UTILITIES COMMISSION

May 6, 2004

Idaho Public Utilities Commission
Attention: Mr. Doug Cooley
P. O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0074

GND-T-04-02

Re: Telephone Service to the Soldiers Meadow Area in North Central Idaho

Dear Mr. Cooley:

We are in receipt of a copy of Qwest Corporation's Answer to Complaint and can certainly advise you that it is quite a shock to receive legal correspondence as if we are involved in a lawsuit. Is this usual and customary treatment of the public? We are not citizens wishing to engage in a legal battle with a large corporation since we know we would likely lose. We are citizens of Idaho requesting phone service and asking for reconsideration and re-evaluation of a decision which involves a lengthy and complicated issue and was ongoing for quite some time.

In the "Discussion" of the response, Soldiers Meadow is referred to as a vacation area. The area is not incorporated but contains two large subdivisions and the reservoir. More and more residents are moving to the area, either full time or for cabins.

Soldiers Meadow is not "extremely remote" since it is located only 5 miles from Forest on a county maintained road. The roads are maintained during the winter months. The Evergreen Road Department in Winchester, Idaho, would vehemently dispute Qwest's assertion that they do not maintain the roads. The Evergreen Road Department (Lewis County) provides maintenance in this part of Nez Perce County through a cooperative exchange agreement between the counties.

Qwest's understanding that, during winter months, visitors can sometimes reach Soldiers Meadow only via snowmobiles is totally inaccurate. We have resided at this location for 5 years and use our snowmobile for recreational use only. We do concede that we are subject to winter driving conditions in the winter months, as are many areas and many states, which necessitates using good common sense. However, our access is not via only snowmobile.

Qwest's identification of the 12 residents and an uncertainty if it is their primary residence is inconsequential. They want phone service whether it is their home or cabin and Qwest is arbitrarily assuming a negative slant about the residents. Perhaps a trip to the area would be advisable for all interested parties. And how many people were extended service to Forest just last year? The numbers are not large and the only given reason (stated by Qwest field supervisors) for extending service was that the PUC was making them do it. We just happened to unfortunately live outside the county boundary which is the service boundary.

May 6, 2004
Mr. Doug Cooley
Page 2

In section B of the legal response, Qwest states that the boundaries have been in place since prior to 1913. We all realize that is over 90 years ago. Things have changed, especially in rural northern Idaho. Qwest was not even a company then. Towns and cities grow and change. Areas gain population and some others decline in numbers. We are an area where people, residents of Idaho, are moving to live.

But to state that you are using boundaries established prior to 1913 and cannot advance into the present day and redefine your service area seems unbelievable. We are not requesting Qwest "to unexpectedly extend into an area outside the exchange boundaries." Our discussion of service has been ongoing for over 4 years.

Qwest states that the cable serving Forest is "nearly at capacity." This service was just installed last year so how is it at capacity? We were requesting service at the same time as the installation at Forest and we expected to receive service. You and I have had several conversations on the "all or none" approach regarding the extension. We clearly became the "none" group and Forest was the "all" - all of 12 to 15.

In total, Mr. Cooley, we are surely at the mercy of the mighty corporation and the almighty dollar. We suggested looking at extending service from Waha in Nez Perce County which is about 7 miles away. But again, probably the service area ended at Waha.

We would like to request a meeting as you and I talked about a couple of years ago. We are not in a position to retain legal counsel to fight our battle with Qwest. Qwest is using their Boise placed attorney who is detached from "North" Idaho. Perhaps the PUC could enlighten Qwest where their service area is. Perhaps the PUC should allow only those companies who would serve all of the citizens of Idaho - "No citizen left behind."

It is in the public interest for all of the citizens of Idaho to be served by a company authorized by the PUC. This is 2004. We thought, perhaps wrongly, that the "Public Utilities Commission" was representative of the PUBLIC as well as dealing with the corporations. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Vlado Maras and Vivian Kastner-Maras
P. O. Box 280
Winchester, ID 83555