

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)
)
Amendment of Parts 73 and 74 of the)
Commission’s Rules to Establish Rules for) MB Docket No. 03-185
Digital Low Power Television, Television)
Translator, and Television Booster Stations and)
to Amend Rules for Digital Class A Television)
Stations)

**REPLY COMMENTS OF IDAHO PUBLIC TELEVISION STATIONS IN
SUPPORT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC TELEVISION STATIONS
FILED COMMENTS**

Idaho Public Television supports the Commission’s recent adoption of a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that seeks comment on how to upgrade the translator, low power and Class A service to digital operations¹ and looks forward to working with the Commission to resolve issues of critical importance to Public Television and rural Americans. Keeping this in mind, it is important that the Commission act swiftly to provide for the licensing of digital translator and on-channel repeaters, when possible, so rural America is not left behind in the digital revolution transforming this country’s media landscape. The Commission’s Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is an important step in the right direction.

- I. Idaho has a uniquely rural nature, and that equates to a high dependence on translator- delivered services to many communities. Idaho Public Television’s concern lies in the notion of a “hot switch” to digital services. Currently, more than 10%, or 118,294 Idahoans have free access to the non-commercial broadcast services of Idaho Public Television through our statewide system of 34 rural translators. The proposal to simply terminate analog services and initiate digital broadcasts will leave most of these citizens in these rural and underserved areas without free access to locally originated non-commercial educational programming of any kind. This would have significant impact on our ability to provide universally distributed non-commercial service via translators to the citizens of our state. These communities include: Bonners

¹ Amendment of Parts 73 and 73 of the Commission’s Rules to Establish Rules for Digital Low Power Television, Television Translator, and Television Booster Stations and to Amend Rules for Digital Class A Television Stations, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 03-198, MB Docket No, 03-185 (rel Aug. 29, 2003) (“NPRM”).

Ferry, Burley/Rupert, Cambridge/Midvale, Cascade, Challis, Cottonwood/Grangeville, Council, Driggs, Fairfield, Freedom Wyoming, Garden Valley Crouch, Georgetown, Grimes Pass, Hagerman, Julietta, Kamiah, Kellogg, Kooskia, Lava Hot Springs, Leadore, Lewiston, Mackay, Malad, Malta/Albion, McCall, Montpelier, Preston, Priest Lake, Rockland, Salmon, Sandpoint, Soda Springs, St. Maries, Swan Valley/Irwin, and West Yellowstone MT. In addition, the following tribal reservations or properties would lose service: Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Shoshone Tribe, Kootnai Tribe, and Duck Valley Indian Reservation.

Many of these areas have small cable companies that get their NCE signals from the aforementioned translators; they too would instantly lose the ability to provide NCE programming to their subscribers in those areas. We believe this would be completely unacceptable for the rural communities we serve and would leave many households without universal and fair distribution of NCE services.

II. To ensure the universal and fair distribution of digital services, the Commission should act swiftly to allow for the licensing of digital translators and, where appropriate, on-channel repeaters in addition to the existing analog translators. Idaho Public Television supports the proposal to allow for rolling “translator only” application windows based on region and state. Idaho Public Television has not been successful in applying for needed translator channels because of wide-spread speculation by “out of state” entities. In this regard, Idaho Public Television supports the policy suggestion by APTS that the Commission should (a) impose some reasonable geographic restrictions on the application process for second channels, and (b) limit the number of *multi-state* applications for LPTV and TV translator stations by a single entity.

III. Idaho Public Television supports the proposal that channels 52 through 59 remain available for translator use in frequency-congested areas. Our experience in the rural Idaho communities of Bonners Ferry, Georgetown, Grangeville, Hagerman, Kellogg, Lava Hot Springs, Lewiston, Montpelier, Priest Lake, Salmon, and St. Maries demonstrates the definitive need to retain those channels for translators.

Conclusion

Idaho Public Television urges the Commission to authorize the licensing and operation of digital translators and on-channel repeaters in rural areas and to protect the integrity of the existing analog translator service while maintaining its secondary status.

Respectfully submitted,
Peter W. Morrill
General Manager

Cc: America's Public Television Stations
Members of the Idaho Congressional Delegation