

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298**



**To: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Property Owners
& Interested Parties**

**From: Ms. Connie Chen, California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)
Mr. Chad Brussard, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)**

**Subject: NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT AN INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE
DECLARATION(IS/MND)/NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT (EA)
Klamath River Rural Broadband Initiative Project**

Date: June 24, 2022

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) along with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) have prepared a joint Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration/ Environmental Assessment (Draft IS/MND/EA) meeting the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. The Karuk Tribe has initiated the Klamath River Rural Broadband Project (Project) to provide broadband high-speed internet access to the rural, unserved, and underserved communities in northern Humboldt County. Implementation of the Project is expected to improve education, emergency response, health care, and business opportunities within the region. As the Project would be constructed on tribal trust lands the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) would need to provide federal approval for the Project and is serving as the federal lead agency for the purposes of NEPA. The BIA may choose to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) based on the findings documented in the IS/MND/EA. BIA's determination would be documented under separate cover.

Description of the Project

The Project would extend approximately 104 miles through rural Humboldt County crossing portions of McKinleyville and the small towns of Orleans, Weitchpec, Wautec, and Orick. The Project area includes lands under the jurisdiction of various federal, state, and private entities, as well as tribal lands. A portion of the Project area is in Redwood National Park, which is managed by the National Parks Service (NPS). It also includes National Forest Land within the Six Rivers National Forest that is under management of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and two areas of land under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as well as a large area of private land owned and operated as active timber land by the Green Diamond Resource (GDR) Company. The Project would comprise installation of a "middle-mile" fiber optic network as well as "last-mile" wireless broadband networks to provide high-speed internet access to first responder agencies, anchor institutions, households and businesses in the towns of Orick, Orleans, Wautec, Weitchpec that are currently unserved or underserved with internet access. The proposed Project consists of above-ground and underground installation of fiber optic cables, a wireless tower in the town of Orick, a signal connection in Orleans, and placement of "last-mile" fiber cable and associated structures.

The Project would be distributed into five segments as follows:

Segment 1: Orleans to Weitchpec (15.2 miles) follows Highway 96 and includes 0.5-mile spur to serve the offices of CalTrans and the Karuk offices; also includes spur extensions to the existing Orleans broadband tower and the existing Frontier landline central office in Orleans.

Segment 2: Weitchpec to Wautec (24.2 miles) entirely within the Yurok Indian Reservation, this segment includes spurs to serve the Weitchpec Elementary School and the Yurok Tribal Community Center in Weitchpec, the Yurok Tribe's Tulley Creek facilities, and the Jack Norton School near Wautec.

Segment 3: Weitchpec to Elk Camp: (21.9 miles) proposed route extends underground from the west side of

Martin’s Ferry Bridge along Bald Hills Road to Elk Camp and includes a short spur to the existing Yurok Wiregrass broadband tower and 0.1mile spur to the Elk Camp Fire Station.

Segment 4: Elk Camp to Orick: (11.8 miles) proposed route follows Bald Hills Road underground from Elk Camp to Highway 101 just north of Orick, then through the town of Orick overhead to the proposed tower location. Spurs would also connect to the existing State Parks office (shared with the National Parks Service), the proposed visitors center (at the intersection of Bald Hills Road and Highway 101), and to the existing Frontier office in Orick.

Segment 5: Orick to McKinleyville:(31 miles) proposed route follows Highway 101 overhead from the Orick tower, through the town of Orick to the intersection of Highway 101 and Hiltons Road, through private and commercial forested lands along the existing PG&E Orick to Essex overhead 60 kV transmission line from Big Lagoon to Fieldbrook, where the segment leaves the transmission line following Murray Road overhead and underground west and south ending in a short underground portion to the AT&T Central Office in McKinleyville. The segment has a two short spurs, each less than 0.1 mile, to serve the Tsunami wireless tower just south of Orick and to serve the Stone Lagoon State Park visitor’s center.

Public Comment on the Draft IS/MND/EA.

The Draft IS/MNDEA is available for a 30-day public comment period: **June 24, 2022 through July 25, 2022.** The public may submit written comments and concerns regarding the proposed Project and the adequacy of the Draft IS/MNDEA. Comments on the Draft IS/MNDEA must be postmarked or received by e-mail no later than July 25, 2022 at 5:00 pm. Please include your name, address, and telephone number in your correspondence.

Written comments on the Draft IS/MND/EA should be sent via mail or email to:

**CPUC c/o ESA, Attn. Maria Hensel/Klamath
1425 N. McDowell Blvd., Suite 200
Petaluma, CA 94954
KlamathBroadbandCEQA@esassoc.com**

Availability of Draft IS/MND/EA.

The Draft IS/MND/EA is available for public review on the Project website:

<https://ia.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/esa/klamath/index.html>

This website will be used to post all public documents during the environmental review process. Printed copies of the Draft IS/MND/EA are available for public review at the following library in the Project area.

McKinleyville Library 1606 Pickett Road McKinleyville, CA 95519 Phone: (707) 839-4459
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REMINDER: Draft IS/MNDEA comments will be accepted by e-mail, or mail postmarked through 7/25/2022. Please include your name, address, and telephone number. Note that written comments become public record.