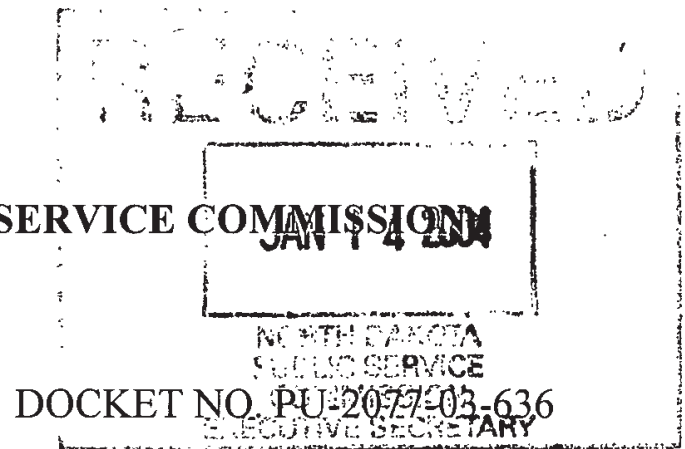


BEFORE THE NORTH DAKOTA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Application of )  
WWC Holding Co., Inc. d/b/a )  
CellularOne© for Designation )  
as an Eligible Telecommunications )  
Carrier )



**AFFIDAVIT OF JAMES H. BLUNDELL IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION AS AN ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIER**

I, James H. Blundell, being first duly sworn on oath, state:

1. I am over eighteen years of age and competent to make this affidavit.
2. I serve as Director – External Affairs for WWC Holding Co., Inc. d/b/a CellularOne© ("Western Wireless" or the "Company").
3. Western Wireless has filed with the North Dakota Public Service Commission (the "Commission") an Application for Designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (the "Application"), pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 214(e) and N.D. Cent. Code § 49-21-01.7(12). Attachment A to the Application identifies the particular rural telephone company study areas for which Western Wireless seeks designation as an eligible telecommunications carrier ("ETC").
4. I have responsibility for the filing and management of applications for ETC designation in several jurisdictions, including North Dakota. In that capacity, I have knowledge of Western Wireless' products and services, as well as its network and business operations. I am also familiar with federal and North Dakota law governing designation of ETCs.
5. This Affidavit is submitted in support of Western Wireless' Application for ETC designation in the above-captioned docket. The statements contained herein are true and correct and within my personal knowledge.
6. Western Wireless currently provides commercial mobile radio service ("CMRS") under the CellularOne© national brand name in 19 states west of the Mississippi River. The Company owns cellular licenses covering about 25 percent of the land and two percent of the population of the continental United States.
7. Western Wireless provides CMRS throughout the State of North Dakota. The services provided by Western Wireless in North Dakota include mobile telephony, data/facsimile, 911, voice mail, and other features and services.
8. 47 U.S.C. § 214(e), the rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC"), specifically 47 C.F.R. § 54.101(a), and N.D. Cent. Code § 49-21-01.8 establish the exclusive criteria for designation of a federal ETC in North Dakota. The Commission has previously designated Western Wireless as an ETC in study areas of certain rural telephone companies throughout North Dakota. *Western Wireless Corp. Designated Eligible Carrier Application*, Case No. PU-1564-98-428, Order on Remand (Oct. 3, 2001) ("*Western Wireless ETC Order*").

9. The Application seeks an order immediately designating Western Wireless as an ETC in the study areas of the rural telephone companies in North Dakota identified on Attachment A to the Application. This Affidavit confirms that Western Wireless continues to satisfy all applicable requirements for federal ETC designation.

10. First, Western Wireless is a CMRS provider and, as such, is a common carrier. *See Western Wireless ETC Order, Conclusions of Law, ¶ 2. See also 47 C.F.R. § 20.9(a)(7).*

11. Second, Western Wireless currently offers and is able to provide the supported services and functionalities identified by the FCC in 47 C.F.R. § 54.101(a)(1)-(9). *See Western Wireless ETC Order, Conclusions of Law, ¶ 8.* Western Wireless currently provides the nine supported services throughout the areas in which it is seeking ETC designation over its existing network infrastructure in North Dakota as follows:

a. Voice-grade access to the public switched telephone network. Voice-grade access means the ability to make and receive phone calls within a voice frequency range of between 300 and 3000 Hertz. 47 C.F.R. § 54.101(a)(1). All customers of Western Wireless are able to make and receive calls on the public switched network within the prescribed frequency range.

b. Local usage. Western Wireless provides its customers with an amount of local usage, free of charge, as required by 47 C.F.R. § 54.101(a)(2). Unlimited local usage is not required of any ETC. Western Wireless will comply with any and all specific local usage requirements adopted by the FCC in the future and required of federal ETCs.

c. Dual-tone, multi-frequency ("DTMF") signaling, or its functional equivalent. DTMF is a method of signaling that facilitates the transportation of call set-up and call detail information. 47 C.F.R. § 54.101(a)(3). As required, Western Wireless uses out-of-band digital signaling and in-band multi-frequency signaling that is functionally equivalent to DTMF signaling.

d. Single-party service or its functional equivalent. A CMRS provider meets the requirement of offering single party service when it offers a dedicated message path for the length of a user's particular transmission. 47 C.F.R. § 54.101(a)(4). Western Wireless does in fact provide a dedicated message path for the length of all customer calls.

e. Access to emergency services. Western Wireless provides access to the 911 system for its customers, and has implemented and will continue to implement Enhanced 911 ("E911") services consistent with the FCC's rules and orders and local public safety answering point requests.

f. Access to operator services. Access to operator services means any automatic or live assistance provided to a consumer to arrange for the billing or completion, or both, of a telephone call. 47 C.F.R. § 54.101(a)(6). Western Wireless provides all of its customers with access to operator services provided by either the Company or other entities.

g. Access to interexchange service. Access to interexchange service means allowing customers to make and receive toll or interexchange calls. Equal access to interexchange service is not a required service or functionality. Western Wireless provides its customers with the ability to make and receive interexchange or toll calls through direct interconnection arrangements it has with several interexchange carriers (IXCs). Customers are also able to reach their IXC of choice by dialing the appropriate access code.

h. Access to directory assistance. Western Wireless provides all of its customers with access to directory assistance by dialing "411" or "555-1212."

i. Toll limitation for qualifying low-income consumers. An ETC must offer either "toll control" or "toll blocking" to qualifying low-income customers as a means of limiting the completion of outgoing toll calls. 47 C.F.R. § 54.101(a)(9). An ETC is not required to provide both services if the carrier is incapable of providing both. Western Wireless cannot provide toll control, but does provide toll blocking for international calls and customer selected toll calls, as well as for Lifeline customers in States in which it has been designated as an ETC, including North Dakota. The Company will continue to offer toll blocking to Lifeline customers at no additional charge when designated in these additional areas.

12. Third, the Company currently offers and advertises the federally supported services throughout its requested designated service area, through several different media, including newspaper, television, radio, and billboard advertising. *See* 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(1)(B). Western Wireless also maintains various retail store locations throughout its authorized service areas, which provide an additional source of advertising. Once designated, Western Wireless will advertise the availability of and charges for its universal service offerings through media of general distribution, in accordance with 47 C.F.R. § 54.201(d)(2). Additionally, Western Wireless will comply with all applicable provisions of N.D. Admin. Code § 69-09-05-12.

13. Fourth, Western Wireless complies with all service area obligations. For areas served by a rural telephone company, 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(5) provides that the ETC's designated service area must be equivalent to the rural telephone company's study area. A rural telephone company's "study area" is generally defined as all of the company's existing certificated exchange areas in a given state. Western Wireless is licensed by the FCC to provide and currently provides CMRS throughout North Dakota. Western Wireless seeks designation as an ETC in the study areas of the rural telephone companies identified on Attachment A. Western Wireless will offer and advertise its universal service offerings throughout these designated study areas.

14. Finally, the designation of Western Wireless in the study areas identified on Attachment A to the Application serves the public interest. The Commission has already determined that it is in the public interest to designate Western Wireless as an additional ETC in certain study areas of rural telephone companies in North Dakota. *See Western Wireless ETC Order, Conclusions of Law, ¶ 10.*

15. The Commission has determined that the public interest analysis under 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(2) should balance increased benefits of competition against any proven detrimental

impacts on the preservation and advancement of universal service. *Western Wireless ETC Order*, ¶¶ 11-38. The public interest determination required under 47 U.S.C. § 214(e) depends on whether the proposed universal service offering will promote competition, and if so whether consumers will ultimately realize benefits related to competition and the new services provided.

16. Competition in the telecommunications industry is, as a general matter, in the public interest, and the hallmark of a competitive marketplace is the maximization of consumer choice. It is also clear that the public interest is served where there is a reasonable expectation that competition may have beneficial impacts for consumers.

17. The public interest factor must be applied in a way that advances universal service as contemplated by federal law. Congress gave the FCC responsibility to create rules and policies "for the preservation and advancement of universal service." 47 U.S.C. § 254(b). The Commission must keep these policies in mind as it makes the public interest determination.

18. Granting ETC status to Western Wireless as requested in the Application will recognize the importance of allowing rural consumers a choice of providers for their telecommunications needs. Consumers should be able to choose services based on their own needs, and not just the service of the incumbent LEC. When the Commission designates a competing carrier as an additional ETC, rural consumers choose their service provider on the basis of the most advantageous pricing, services, service quality, customer service, and service availability.

19. Having this choice is important to rural consumers because Western Wireless' universal service offerings will provide benefits not otherwise available from the landline LECs. For example, current universal service offerings by incumbent LECs have restricted local calling areas and are bound by the limitations of landline technology. Western Wireless provides an expanded local calling area, which is of great benefit to rural consumers who otherwise have to pay toll charges to reach local government offices, health care providers, businesses or family outside of a restricted landline calling area. Western Wireless' service also provides the benefits of mobility, which has great appeal to many rural consumers.

20. In addition to increased choices, North Dakota's rural consumers can also expect lower rates and better service resulting from competition in the marketplace. Western Wireless provides 24-hour customer service, technical and operational support, which is more responsive than the support currently available from many LECs.

21. Granting ETC status to Western Wireless will improve choices for rural consumers, thereby advancing universal service for North Dakotans. A variety of services, improved quality and lower rates give consumers additional options and also make it more likely that high cost areas of the state will have affordable phone service as implicit subsidies are phased out. In addition, designating Western Wireless as an ETC may allow those consumers not currently receiving telephone service an opportunity to obtain telephone service for the first time. Western Wireless' ETC designation will advance universal service by increasing consumer choices and bringing new telecommunications services to rural areas consistent with the public interest.

22. Designating Western Wireless as an ETC will also lead to the further deployment of Western Wireless' cellular network, which will be available to benefit North Dakota's rural

consumers. Western Wireless is a facilities-based telecommunications provider serving North Dakota consumers with state-of-the-art wireless technology. Western Wireless' network will have the capability of providing advanced services that meet or exceed what can be provided on a landline network. The development of the Western Wireless network will give North Dakota's rural consumers access to these developing technologies to the same degree as urban consumers.

23. Competition also provides an incentive for the incumbent LECs to invest in new technologies and additional infrastructure, which likewise will benefit the consumers. Ultimately, the Commission should apply the public interest factor in a way that will bring providers and new technologies to rural, high cost areas.

24. The designation of Western Wireless as an ETC will not result in any significant adverse impact to any rural telephone company. None of the areas in which Western Wireless is seeking designation is incapable of supporting more than one ETC.

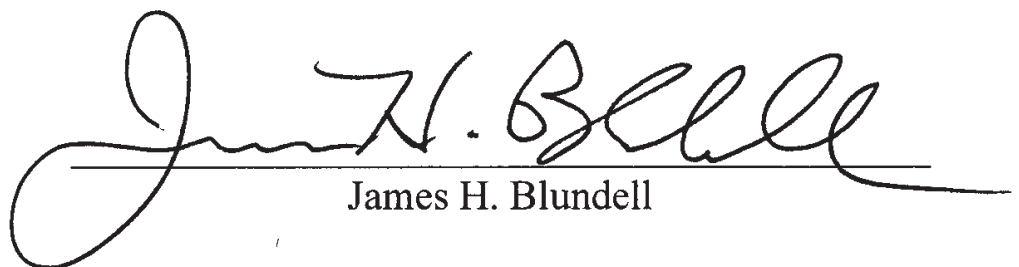
25. Western Wireless provides the supported services, satisfies all applicable requirements, will provide the supported services throughout the entire study areas, and will meet the obligations of an ETC. As was found in the *Western Wireless ETC Order*, the Company's designation will bring new technology, lower rates, and better service, and so is clearly in the public interest.

26. Accordingly, Western Wireless respectfully requests the Commission to follow the directives and principles of the Act and to grant its Application by issuing an order designating Western Wireless as an ETC in the study areas of the rural telephone companies listed on Attachment A pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 214(e) and N.D. Cent. Code § 49-21-01.7(12).

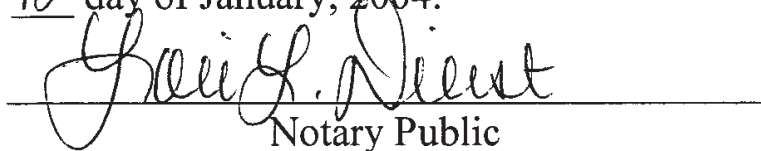
27. I provided a Certification attached to the Application filed with the Commission. This Certification constitutes my attestation as to the truth of the allegations set forth in the Application based on my personal knowledge and understanding.

28. I hereby certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

This concludes my affidavit.

  
James H. Blundell

Subscribed and sworn to before me this  
12 day of January, 2004.

  
Notary Public

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**ATTACHMENT A**

**Rural Telephone Company Study Areas For Which  
Western Wireless Seeks ETC Designation**

- Absaraka Cooperative Telephone Co.
- Citizens Telecom
- Griggs County Telephone Co.
- Inter-Community Telephone Co.
- Inter-Community Telephone Co. II, Inc.
- Midstate Telephone Co.
- Moore & Liberty Telephone Co.
- Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
- Noonan Farmers Telephone Co.
- Polar Telecommunications, Inc.
- Red River Rural Tel. Assn. – ND
- Red River Telecom, Inc.
- Wolverton Telephone Co. – ND
- York Telephone Co.