

# Klamath River Rural Broadband Initiative

## Project Update

### May 2019

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#### Overview

In 2013 the Karuk Tribe, a California Competitive Local Exchange Carrier, received an award for \$6.6 million through the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) from the California Public Utilities Commission to deploy the Klamath River Rural Broadband Initiative (KRRBI). KRRBI will provide robust, affordable, high-speed broadband Internet access to over 600 households in rural, isolated Northern California communities that are underserved or unserved with broadband. KRRBI also addresses a geographic gap in middle mile broadband infrastructure that exists between Interstate 5 and the Pacific Coast in far northern California.

To that end, KRRBI is developing middle mile fiber optic cable installation from Orleans to Orick, serving Weitchpec, Wautec, and communities and residences along the way. Last mile service will be provided through direct fiber connections to anchor institutions and high-speed wireless radios through access points, towers, and individual home and business antennas. The project will connect with Siskiyou Telephone near Orleans and to SuddenLink Communications south of Orick near McKinleyville, forming a robust and important link for the region, as well as serving this remote rural area. As of January 2019, KRRBI is serving more than 100 broadband customers in the targeted communities.

To maximize impact and leverage shared resources, the Karuk Tribe is partnering with the nearby Yurok Tribe to deploy the project. The Yurok Tribe has been working on bringing basic utilities to the communities and homes throughout the Yurok Reservation along the Klamath River. Many Yurok households lack access to the Internet, cellular service, landline phone service, and electricity. To support KRRBI, the Yurok Tribe is providing substantial matching funds through their electrification project, completing the arrival of electricity to small villages along the Klamath River. In addition, the Yurok Tribe's current wireless Internet service will support and be improved by KRRBI. KRRBI's service area includes Yurok Tribe households, Karuk Tribe households, and households in neighboring non-tribal communities.

In order for KRRBI to reach its full potential and provide desperately-needed high-speed broadband to the region, the Karuk Tribe requests two changes to their CASF funding:

- Increasing the CASF grant award to \$17,987,040, with a total project budget of \$26,044,552.
- Modifying the reimbursement from the CASF program to \$1,000,000 increments rather than 25% increments.

Since the project first began, the Karuk Tribe has conducted a robust environmental review and has consulted with neighboring tribes, regulatory agencies, land managing agencies, important private landowners, road owners and managers, and large local utility providers. This environmental review and multiple consultations have resulted in a careful project revision, including revising the SuddenLink interconnection point (adding 22 miles of fiber), adding important interconnections to existing regional providers, completing preliminary engineering to determine the best way to avoid sensitive cultural and environmental resources, and modifying project design to comply with agency, land manager, and road manager requirements. This project revision has increased the cost of the project by \$11.38 million.

There are approximately 109 federally recognized tribes in the state of California. When it comes to economic development, deploying broadband is among the highest of priorities for many tribes. In 2019 the FCC estimated that only 46% of Rural Native American households have access to the Internet. Households on native lands still lag far behind urban and rural non-native communities in broadband access and adoption. A recent report from the federal GAO found that residents on tribal lands have lower levels of broadband Internet access relative to the U.S. as a whole, and that providers overstate the access available on tribal lands.

The Karuk and Yurok Tribes, through the KRRBI project, propose to address the needs of their memberships and the residents of northern Humboldt County. This project will enhance education, health care, public safety, economic development, and federal, state, local, and tribal governments. KRRBI is an inter-tribal partnership working with regional agencies to address the issues facing their communities and their people.

Attached to this document is a map that shows the KRRBI service area. The solid blue line on the map represents the primary geographic scope change between the current revised KRRBI project area and the original KRRBI service area approved in 2013. The map shows in green the areas where KRRBI will provide service to anchor institutions and subscribers.