

1. PROJECT SUMMARY

“Deliver Broadband to the Pacific Crest to Cross the Digital Divide” is the title of this California Advanced Services Fund grant application.

The applicant is Ducor Telephone Company.

The contact person is Eric G. Wolfe, Executive Vice President, telephone number 661-834-7700.

The Ducor Telephone Company (DTC) seeks \$2,339,400 in grant funds from the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) to which it will match 40%, or \$1,559,600, for constructing a “middle mile” broadband route to the community of Kennedy Meadows in the southern Sierra Nevada Mountains.

The proposed project area is The Kennedy Meadows Road corridor from the Bureau of Land Management’s Chimney Peak fire facility southeast, down Nine Mile Canyon to the Indian Wells Valley floor, to connect to the existing Digital 395 fiber optic network. Currently, network facilities serving the region cannot deliver acceptable levels of broadband service. The existing facilities consist of a, small capacity, triple hop, microwave radio system. This aging microwave equipment has been manufacturer-discontinued, which means spare parts are becoming increasingly difficult to procure. Third party vendors are becoming increasingly unreliable. Additionally, replacing the MW equipment is no longer an option as sufficient FCC-issued spectrum is not available. Having exhaustively researched all options for reliable access to a broadband backbone network, a fiber optic cable from the mountaintop down to the valley floor is the only viable technical solution to provide both the sufficient bandwidth and a long-term reliable network.

Kennedy Meadows is one of the most remote and isolated locations in the entire country. The area is surrounded by three designated wilderness areas to the East, South and West, to the North is National Forest land. The community is located near the southern end of the great Sierra Nevada mountain range in central southeastern California. Mt. Whitney, the highest mountain in the “lower 48” of the United States, is located just 70 miles north of Kennedy Meadows. Truly a beautiful meadow, and relatively flat, it sits at a 6,427 foot elevation, and thus is more appropriately known as “high country” and is famous for hiking,

backpacking and fishing. It is the entry point into the South Sierra Wilderness and more particularly the stopping and resupply point for northbound hikers on the famous Pacific Crest Trail.

Kennedy Meadows is underserved according to stated definitions. All current service levels are well below the minimum 6 Mbs/1.5 Mbs CASF grant parameters.

As recently as June 16, 2015, the California Emerging Technology Fund, in conjunction with the Field Poll, has issued a summary report on the status of broadband connectivity among California households. The report's purpose is to continue to address the lingering effects of the Digital Divide, which often leaves out rural and remote households from the benefits of the Information Age and the Age of Technology. The convergence of these two ages has unleashed huge innovations for the country. But, unfortunately, those left behind end up more isolated than ever before.

Kennedy Meadows is one such place, nearly left behind. The purpose of project **"Deliver Broadband to the Pacific Crest to Cross the Digital Divide"** is to ensure Kennedy Meadows enters the modern information era with adequate access to broadband services, thus solving its "Digital Divide" shortcoming. There has never been any commercial electrical power available to local residents. Years after cellular telephone service became widely available, there was merely one rock near at the side of the road where marginal cellular coverage even existed in the mountain community. The local residents dubbed this unique point the cellular phone booth. At the turn of the 21st century, Ducor Telephone Company introduced wireline telecom services in Kennedy Meadows, and very limited DSL Internet in 2005.

The Tulare County community of Kennedy Meadows is extremely remote and isolated. Physical access by road to the locale is primarily a very windy 10-12 mile road down the mountain to the east and the valley floor, where the north-south U.S. Route 395 runs from Carson City, Nevada to the Los Angeles, CA area. There are few nearby cities of any consequence. 20 Miles to the southeast, is Inyokern. Ridgecrest, population 25,000, lies 12 miles further east and south in Kern County. Mojave, population 4,000, is south, 50 miles distant. To the Southwest, in Kern County, Bakersfield, pop. 250,000, lies another 57 miles away. Visalia, pop.

92,000, the Tulare County seat, is 90 miles to the Northwest. The highway ingress/egress to the east is listed as “secondary” with somewhat reasonable year round reliability. However, all other access routes are designated as “other paved roads” which are subject to seasonal closure.

The single census block group is 061070027005 for southeastern Tulare County, which incorporates all of the Kennedy Meadows area.

The single project zip code is 93527.

