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For Immediate Release

FCC EXTENDS 2.5 GHZ RURAL TRIBAL PRIORITY WINDOW

***First-Ever Pre-Auction Spectrum Opportunity for Rural Tribes
Is Extended for 30 Days Due to COVID-19 Pandemic***

WASHINGTON, July 31, 2020—The FCC’s Wireless Telecommunications Bureau today extended the Rural Tribal Priority Window for 2.5 GHz spectrum applications by 30 days in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This window opened on February 3, 2020, and to date, over 200 Tribal entities have submitted applications. As a result of today’s action, other eligible Tribal entities can continue to apply for licenses for currently unassigned 2.5 GHz spectrum over their rural Tribal lands until 6:00 pm EDT on September 2, 2020. This 30-day extension strikes an appropriate balance between providing more time for additional Tribal entities to apply and not unduly delaying the grant of licenses to those that have already applied so that they can quickly put this spectrum to use for rural Americans on Tribal lands who are too often on the wrong side of the digital divide.

“Under my leadership, the Commission for the first time ever is giving Tribes priority access to spectrum. I’m pleased to see that we’ve already received a large number of applications during the Rural Tribal Priority Window. And due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I believe that it is appropriate to extend the application deadline by 30 days,” said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. “By contrast, a much longer extension would substantially delay our award of licenses to Tribal entities and thus delay their ability to use this spectrum to connect those consumers living on Tribal lands. Moreover, in light of the simplified application process as well as the extensive outreach done by Commission staff, a lengthy extension of the deadline is unnecessary, as evidenced by the large number of applications we’ve already received.

“In particular, I would like to thank the staff of our Wireless Telecommunications Bureau and Office of Native Affairs and Policy for their hard work over many months to ensure eligible Tribes can seize this opportunity to bridge the digital divide. I’m tremendously proud of our team’s efforts on this important project, including contacting every federally recognized Tribe and Alaskan Native Village in America directly before the window opened, participating in over 30 outreach events, fielding over 780 inquiries to date, and taking numerous other steps to raise awareness and actively support applicants.”

After the Rural Tribal Priority Window closes, FCC staff will review and process the applications and prepare for a commercial auction of any remaining unassigned 2.5 GHz spectrum to facilitate the rapid deployment of wireless networks across rural America.

More information about the Rural Tribal Priority Window can be found at www.fcc.gov/RuralTribalWindow. Potential applicants can also send inquiries regarding the application process to RuralTribalWindow@fcc.gov.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).