

4. If you estimate potential burden or costs, explain how you arrived at the estimate that you provide.

5. Provide specific examples to illustrate your concerns.

6. Offer alternative ways to improve the rule or collection activity.

7. Make sure to submit your comments by the deadline in this notice.

8. To ensure proper receipt by EPA, be sure to identify the docket control number assigned to this action in the subject line on the first page of your response. You may also provide the name, date, and **FEDERAL REGISTER** citation.

II. What Action is the Agency Taking?

On November 16, 1998, EPA released its draft Agency-wide Multimedia Strategy for Priority Persistent, Bioaccumulative, and Toxic (PBT) Pollutants (PBT Strategy). The goal of the PBT Strategy is to identify and reduce risks to human health and the environment from current and future exposures to priority PBT pollutants. This document serves as the Draft National Action Plan for Hexachlorobenzene (HCB), one of the 12 Level 1 priority PBT pollutants identified for the initial focus of action in the PBT Strategy.

Hexachlorobenzene (CAS number 118-74-1) is a white, crystalline solid. It has been synthesized and used from the 1940s to the late 1970s as a fungicide on grain seeds such as wheat. HCB was also used in the past as a solvent and as an intermediate and/or additive in various manufacturing processes, including the production of PVC, pyrotechnics and ammunition, dyes, and pentachlorophenol. Although HCB is no longer used directly as a pesticide, it is currently formed as an inadvertent by-product at trace levels in the production of chemical solvents, chlorine-containing compounds, and several currently used pesticides.

HCB is a highly persistent environmental toxin that degrades slowly in air and remains in the atmosphere through long range transport. It bioaccumulates in the fatty tissues and its presence in fish, plants, and wild game species can be a source of ingestion exposure for humans. HCB is considered a probable human carcinogen and is toxic by all routes of exposure. Short-term high exposures can lead to kidney and liver damage, central nervous system excitation and seizures, circulatory collapse, and respiratory depression. Based on studies conducted on animals, long-term low exposures may damage a developing fetus, cause cancer, lead to kidney and

liver damage, and cause fatigue and skin irritation.

The general population appears to be exposed to very low concentrations of HCB. Ingestion of HCB-contaminated fish and other wildlife is potentially the most significant source of exposure. Additional, although significantly less, exposure may occur through inhalation or dermal contact. However, certain subpopulations may be exposed to higher levels of HCB than the general population. These include: workers occupationally exposed to HCB; individuals living near facilities where HCB is produced as a by-product; individuals living near current or former hazardous waste sites where HCB is present; recreational and subsistence fishermen who consume higher amounts of locally caught fish and bivalves (mussels, oysters, clams) from contaminated waters, and native populations (including Native American populations such as the Inuits of Alaska) who consume caribou and other game species. Finally, nursing infants in these areas may also be particularly susceptible to effects due to the singular nature of their diet.

The goal of the Action Plan is to identify and further reduce risks to human health and the environment from existing and future exposure to HCB. However, there are information gaps related to the magnitude of known and suspected sources of HCB, the extent of pollution resulting from long-range transport, and the content of HCB in sinks such as sediments and sewage sludge that may contribute to environmental cycling within United States boundaries. Therefore, the strategic approach of the Agency will involve voluntary initiatives to reduce releases and minimize media transfers, collect information to verify sources and sinks, and increase involvement with and assistance to international groups and other countries to reduce atmospheric deposition in the United States.

EPA considers stakeholder involvement essential to reaching the goals of the PBT Strategy. Therefore, the Agency is seeking stakeholder input and invites comment on this draft National Action Plan on the following three areas related to HCB.

1. The identification and implementation of voluntary initiatives and outreach opportunities to reduce releases of and exposure to HCB, while minimizing controlled and uncontrolled (e.g., volatilization from water to air, deposition onto soil or plants) multi-media transfers.

2. Continued information collection and integration of data across media

regarding sources, sinks, releases, environmental trends, and human food and tissue levels for HCB. Data collection will occur through Binational Toxics Strategy (BNS) efforts, Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT) standard development, various EPA permitting and reporting processes, and industry involvement.

3. Collaborate (or partner) with international organizations and foreign governments to assess the significance of long-range transport from other countries and to foster the proliferation of pollution prevention or control technology measures that will reduce inputs of HCB to the environment.

List of Subjects

Environmental protection, PBT, National Action Plan, and HCB.

Dated: November 27, 2000.

Susan H. Wayland,

Assistant Administrator for Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances.

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

[CC Docket No. 96-45; DA 00-2661]

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Petitions For Agreement To Redefine The Service Area Of Frontier Communications of Minnesota, Inc.

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In this document, the Common Carrier Bureau provides notice that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission has filed a petition requesting the Commission's consent to its proposed alternative "service area" definition for Frontier Communications of Minnesota, Inc.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard D. Smith, Attorney, Accounting Policy Division, Common Carrier Bureau, (202) 418-7400.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This is a summary of a Commission's Public Notice in CC Docket No. 96-45 released on November 29, 2000. The full text of this document is available for public inspection during regular business hours in the FCC Reference Center, Room CY-A257, 445 Twelfth Street, SW., Washington, DC, 20554.

The Common Carrier Bureau provides notice that the Minnesota Public

Utilities Commission (Minnesota PUC) has filed a petition, pursuant to § 54.207 of the Commission's rules, requesting the Commission's consent to its proposed alternative "service area" definition for Frontier Communications of Minnesota, Inc. (Frontier). The Minnesota PUC proposes to adopt a definition of service area that differs from Frontier's "study area" for the purpose of determining universal service obligations and support mechanisms. Specifically, the Minnesota PUC proposes to classify each of the 45 individual exchanges served by Frontier as separate service areas. The Minnesota PUC contends that, without a redefinition of Frontier's service area, the Minnesota PUC will be unable to designate another carrier as an eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) to serve any portion of Frontier's study area, even if such designation is in the public interest. The Minnesota PUC contends that it has taken into account the recommendations of the Federal-State Joint Board, as required by the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (the Act), and Commission rules.

Commission Rules

For areas served by a rural telephone company, section 214(e)(5) of the Act provides that the company's service area will be its study area "unless and until the Commission and the States, after taking into account the recommendations of a Federal-State Joint Board instituted under section 410(c) of the Act, establish a different definition of service area for such company." Section 54.207 of the Commission's rules and the *Universal Service Order*, 62 FR 32862, June 17, 1997, set forth the procedures for consideration of petitions filed by state commissions seeking to designate service areas for rural telephone companies that are different from such companies' study areas. Specifically, § 54.207(c)(1) provides that such a petition shall contain: (i) the definition proposed by the state commission; and (ii) the state commission's ruling or other official statement presenting the state commission's reason for adopting its proposed definition, including an analysis that takes into account the recommendations of any Federal-State Joint Board convened to provide recommendations with respect to the definition of a service area served by a rural telephone company.

The Petition

On October 27, 1999, the Minnesota PUC issued an order granting preliminary approval to Minnesota

Cellular Corporation, now known as Western Wireless Corporation (Western Wireless), for designation as an ETC under section 214(e) of the Act. In this order, the Minnesota PUC found that it was in the public interest to designate Western Wireless as an ETC in service areas served by rural telephone companies. At that time, the Minnesota PUC rejected the claim of Frontier that it was a rural telephone company.

On February 10, 2000, the Minnesota PUC issued an order on reconsideration finding, among other things, that Frontier was a rural telephone company under the Act. As a rural telephone company, section 214(e)(5) of the Act defines Frontier's service area as its study area, until and unless the Commission and the state establish a different definition. Accordingly, Frontier's study area would include all of Frontier's 45 existing exchanges in Minnesota. Pursuant to section 214(e)(1) of the Commission's rules, a carrier designated as an ETC must offer and advertise the services supported by the federal universal service mechanism throughout the entire service area. Because Western Wireless is licensed to serve only 29 of the 45 exchanges comprising Frontier's Minnesota study area, the Minnesota PUC rescinded its preliminary designation of Western Wireless as an ETC in areas served by Frontier.

On September 1, 2000, the Minnesota PUC issued an order concluding that Frontier's service area should be "disaggregated on an exchange by exchange basis as this would allow CLECs [competitive local exchange carriers] which are designated a federal ETC to receive future federal high-cost funds, if any, for those exchanges in which they serve." The Minnesota PUC noted that Frontier's study area is comprised of 45 non-contiguous exchanges located throughout Minnesota and concluded that Frontier's service area should be redefined into 45 separate service areas based on those individual exchanges. The Minnesota PUC reasoned that this redefinition would promote competition by allowing CLECs that are designated ETCs to receive federal high-cost funds to provide service in part or all of Frontier's current service area. The Minnesota PUC therefore authorized a petition to be filed with the Commission requesting consent to its proposed alternative service area definition for Frontier's Minnesota service territory.

Status

Section 54.207(c)(3) of the Commission's rules provides that the Commission may initiate a proceeding

to consider a petition to redefine the service area of a rural telephone company within ninety days of the release date of a Public Notice. If the Commission initiates a proceeding to consider the petition, the proposed definition shall not take effect until both the state commission and the Commission agree upon the definition of a rural service area, in accordance with section 214(e)(5) of the Act. If the Commission does not act on the petition within 90 days of the release date of the Public Notice, the definition proposed by the state commission will be deemed approved by the Commission and shall take effect in accordance with state procedures. Under § 54.207(e) of the Commission's rules, the Commission delegates its authority under § 54.207(c) to the Chief of the Common Carrier Bureau.

Federal Communications Commission.

Katherine L. Schroder,

Chief, Accounting Policy Division.

[FR Doc. 00-31351 Filed 12-7-00; 8:45 am]

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FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM

Formations of, Acquisitions by, and Mergers of Bank Holding Companies

The companies listed in this notice have applied to the Board for approval, pursuant to the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956 (12 U.S.C. 1841 et seq.) (BHC Act), Regulation Y (12 CFR Part 225), and all other applicable statutes and regulations to become a bank holding company and/or to acquire the assets or the ownership of, control of, or the power to vote shares of a bank or bank holding company and all of the banks and nonbanking companies owned by the bank holding company, including the companies listed below.

The applications listed below, as well as other related filings required by the Board, are available for immediate inspection at the Federal Reserve Bank indicated. The application also will be available for inspection at the offices of the Board of Governors. Interested persons may express their views in writing on the standards enumerated in the BHC Act (12 U.S.C. 1842(c)). If the proposal also involves the acquisition of a nonbanking company, the review also includes whether the acquisition of the nonbanking company complies with the standards in section 4 of the BHC Act (12 U.S.C. 1843). Unless otherwise noted, nonbanking activities will be conducted throughout the United States. Additional information on all bank holding companies may be obtained