

Internet: Communications Center will be open to tribal members

(Continued from page 1)

Current funding only pays for broadband access for potential subscribers who can see the radio tower on Eagle Butte.

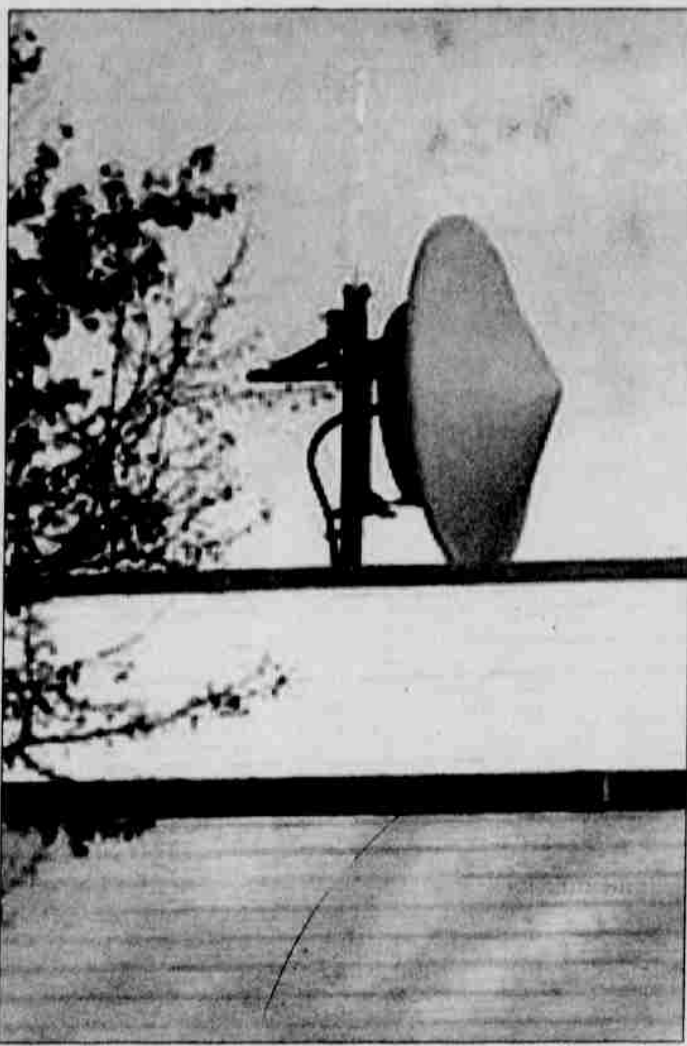
"We hope to extend (the coverage area) as funds are available, either through revenue we generate, or, more than likely, we could go back to Tribal Council and say, 'Gee, would you like to fund this,'" Phillips said. "We haven't gone to them with a funding request yet. We figured we would get Phase I working, and we weren't going to ask for more money (yet)."

With that additional funding, similar antennas would be placed on Eagle Butte to provide access to the Warm Springs Industrial park, Dry Creek, Wolf Point, and Kah-Nee-Ta, as well as some homes on the way to Madras.

While there is no indication of the number of residents planning to have their homes hooked up to high-speed Internet yet, the number of homes that actually subscribe will be watched.

"We don't know out of this area how many can afford the service," Phillips said. "That will help dictate how far we can spread (the coverage) using that percentage. Whoever does, whatever rate it comes in, basically will pay the cost of running things, but if you don't reach a certain minimal level, obviously it's going to be tough."

This plan appears to offer the most reliable form of Internet access available to the reservation, Phillips said. Currently, residents subscribe to dial-up access, using a modem, which he says is "very low quality," or they can use DSL Internet that Qwest Communications offers. Qwest's signal is generated from a building on U.S. 26 in Warm Springs, but its signal can only be received within a mile of the building and weakens as close as a half-mile away. Or, there is satellite Internet access that is expensive, at \$80 to \$90 per month, and is



Six-foot microwave receiver atop the Tribal Administration Building.

ineffective because of the lag time from the satellite.

"This will be the first widespread full high-speed access Warm Springs will have," Phillips said.

Warm Springs residents who can't spend the money for broadband access for their own home or business will still be able to use it free of charge at the proposed community communications center, which Phillips said he expects to open "sometime around June."

Phillips said the center would act like a cross between an Internet café and copy-online center, a "mini-Kinko's," if you will.

"The grant calls for 24 computers, probably 20, roughly, accessible to the community, where people can come in, sit down, where they can get a fairly decent computer, high-speed

Internet access at no charge," he said.

Additionally, the telecom center could provide introductory classes on how to use the Internet or how a parent can monitor what their children view online, or print photos they might take with a digital camera.

Another advantage, Phillips said, is that Eagle-Tech can make computers for the center that can out-perform yet still be about 20 percent less expensive than commercially bought computers.

Besides the low cost, the benefit of having "homemade" computers, Phillips said, is that they can easily be repaired in Warm Springs, instead of in Madras or Bend. And that helps create an atmosphere that is less library and more user-friendly than even the norm.

Phillips said he met with a man who has opened telecommunications centers like the one in Warm Springs who said, well, it was OK to play.

"I was telling him how it would probably be a library. You'd ask people to be quiet, and, of course, you'd want to avoid the kids with food and stuff gumming up the keyboards and the mice and all that," he said. "He said they opened up one place and had a spaghetti feed. The upshot is, I realized not to turn it into a room of nerds, where nobody wants to go because of all these rules."

"Keyboards can be cleaned. They can be replaced, if you buy cheap ones, and let the kids be kids."

Two possible sites have been selected for the telecommunications center, one, the first choice, is between the post office and the Warm Springs Market that is currently condemned and vacant, and a vacant house across the street from the first location. Along with staffing from Eagle-Tech, the center will use volunteer labor.

Through the Rural Utility Services grant, Warm Springs receives a microwave link, at 5.8 megahertz, from Quantum Communications' point of presence east of Madras, a 35-foot pole with a six-foot microwave dish pointed at the radio tower on Eagle Butte. The signal from Eagle Butte is then bounced off what is called a passive receiver ("It looks like a billboard. It's about eight-to-10 feet tall and 20-feet wide, and it's raised about 30 feet in the air," Phillips said.) located east of the water tank on the hill behind the Tenino apartments.

The passive receiver has no power but only bounces the signal from Eagle Butte to a six-foot microwave receiver atop the Tribal Administration Building.

The signal is then distributed via fiber optic cable to the Administration Building, the Community/Wellness Center, Indian

Health Services, Early Childhood Education and Tribal Court. The fiber optic cable, forming a backbone, has already resulted in a \$2,000-a-month savings in telephone line expenses to the Confederated Tribes.

Through the wireless connection, The Museum at Warm Springs and the Retail Business Center are connected to the system.

One of the provisions of the grant, Phillips said, is that the high-speed Internet project be self-funding in two years. The telecommunications center will be half-public, yet half-commercial, in that it will recover the cost of such items as computer paper and photo-printing paper. Another way has been through the outsourcing of Eagle-Tech, which was formerly simply the information technology department of the Confederated Tribes until the start of this year.

"We do it as a business now," Phillips said. He said that within that two-year period, Eagle-Tech must demonstrate it can provide better service for the tribal entities it serves and lower its own costs with revenue it generates.

The "ultimate goal," Phillips said, is to pursue contract work, particularly in the federal-contracting area.

"We probably won't get that serious about it until well into next year and finish our first two priorities," he said. "We've started a little already. We've probably generated around \$50,000 to \$60,000 in revenue on some small contracts we have."

Eagle-Tech has contracts with Indian Health Services, the National Native American Human Resource Association. This work includes web-hosting and other computer or network tasks.

"It's not extremely profitable," he said. "The opportunities in federal contracting are the ones that are mind-boggling."

No problem for phone, TV reception

As infrastructure for high-speed wireless Internet is installed in spots around Warm Springs, television and radio reception will be unfazed and cellular phone reception won't be compromised.

A microwave signal is being transmitted into the reservation, to the Eagle Butte radio tower, off a passive receiver in the West Hills and to a dish on top of the Administration Building. But that signal is so weak, no one will be harmed, Lloyd Phillips, manager of Eagle-Tech Systems, said, and the signal is on a frequency different from televisions, radios or cellular phones.

"The passive receiver doesn't generate anything," he said. "It is simply bouncing signals that are coming through."

"The microwave, a lot of people are thinking, that's what I cook with. The power of this microwave is not more than a 100-watt light bulb at that distance, so it's very low power."

"One guy in one meeting (asked), 'Is that going to screw up my TV reception because that passive receiver's not too far from my house.' Basically the signal's already there. We've been transferring it for over a month. There's just no passive yet. We finished the passive a few weeks ago to bounce it off."

The microwave signal operates at 5.8 megahertz, which no radio, TV or cell phones use.

"It's a band for a microwave," Phillips said. "It won't be an issue of interference and no one's going to glow in the dark."

Project to make old papers available by computer

WASHINGTON (AP) - The government promises anyone with a computer will have access within a few years to millions of pages from old newspapers, a slice of American history to be viewed now only by visiting local libraries, newspaper offices or the nation's capital.

The first of what's expected to be 30 million digitized pages from papers published from 1836 through 1922 will be available in 2006.

"Anyone who's interested - teachers, students, historians, lawyers, politicians, even newspaper reporters - will be able to

go to their computer at home or at work and at a click of a mouse get immediate, unfiltered access to the greatest source of our history," said Bruce Cole, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. He announced the project in a speech at the National Press Club.

Now, the only way to view the old papers is to pore through many thousands of microfilm reels at the Library of Congress, regional libraries and newspaper offices.

The Library of Congress already has put together a small

sample. It has digitized issues of the U.S. military newspaper "Stars and Stripes" during World War I, February 1918 to June 1919.

Cole said the National Digital Newspaper Program is to further the founding fathers' belief that knowledge of history was a necessity for government by the people.

"American amnesia is dangerous," he said.

"Democracy is not self-sustaining; it needs to be learned and passed down from generation to generation."

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