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Navajo Nation and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority Announce Venture to Deliver Wireless Phone and Broadband Services to Navajo Nation

(WINDOW ROCK, ARIZ. - April 4, 2011) -- The Navajo Nation and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) proudly announced today an agreement to acquire majority interest in Commnet Newco, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Commnet Wireless, LLC, which will allow NTUA to more fully participate in providing the first 3G wireless cell phone service and 4G broadband services, last-mile services, to residents of the Navajo Nation.

The new company, NTUA Wireless, LLC, will deliver a substantial upgrade of telecommunications services currently available to residents of the Navajo Nation. The effort will provide new, affordable mobile phone service and access to high-speed data services and the development activities are being partially funded by the \$32.1 million broadband grant NTUA received from the National Telecommunications & Information Association (NTIA) as part of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed a letter of support on behalf of NTUA Wireless and endorsing NTUA Wireless' designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

"NTUA Wireless is a very important milestone for broadband development and will benefit the Navajo Nation in two important ways," President Shelly said. "First, it delivers advanced telecommunications services to Navajo consumers that are vital for ensuring economic opportunity and viability, which is a core goal of the Shelly-Jim Administration. Secondly, because it is majority Navajo-owned and its success will bring the best of broadband to the Navajo Nation. Thank you NTUA and Commnet for

working toward a long term information and communication technology solution that is leading edge and sustainable.”

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Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council Johnny Naize applauded today’s announcement, saying that the region welcomes new business to improve services.

“The Council and I want to congratulate NTUA on this new venture that will provide better communication services for the Navajo people,” said Navajo Nation Council Speaker Naize. “We all know the tremendous impact of having reliable telecommunication has on improving economic development, education, and health services for our communities.”

The cell phone service will include unlimited plan options starting at low monthly rates and Pay-As-You-Go plan options offering low per-minute rates on local and long distance calls and the flexibility to pay for, and use, as much or as little as a customer wants. Data, texting, picture messaging and local and long distance calling will be available on all cell phone rate plans. NTUA Wireless expects to launch cell phone services beginning mid-year and broadband monthly plans will offering high-speed Internet access will be available beginning in certain areas this year and throughout most of the Nation by the end of 2013.

Navajo Nation Council Resources and Infrastructure Subcommittee Chairperson Katherine Benally also elated to hear the news added, “The Subcommittee is ready to assist so that the youth of our Nation can sit anywhere and communicate with the rest of the world. This is a very exciting time and I certainly appreciate NTUA for taking on this initiative for the benefit of the Navajo people.”

NTUA Wireless also intends to offer Lifeline, a discounted and affordable cell phone service, to qualifying individuals upon being designated as an ETC by the FCC. NTUA Wireless will be under the jurisdiction of the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NNTRC) and the NNTRC will work with the FCC in a government-to-government relationship to review NTUA Wireless' petition to be designated an ETC and become eligible for federal support from the Universal Service Fund

“This project will allow us to dramatically improve existing services, while at the same time, delivering the latest technology to our customers,” said NTUA General Manager Walter Haase. “As part of the effort, we will develop the communications infrastructure needed to bring the Navajo people many advanced telecommunication services already enjoyed by the majority of the U.S. population.”

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