**Stevens County and Spokane Tribe**

**Broadband Action Team Meeting Notes**

WSU Stevens County Extension Office

986 S. Main, Colville, WA

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

**Participants:**

Monica Babine, WSU Mark Curtis, Stevens County Malcom Friedman, McMorris-Rodgers

Debra Hansen, WSU Narda Jones, Cantwell\* Dave Klimas, FPD #12

Bert Klimas, TCFDN Dorothy Knauss, Chewelah Melinda Lee, TEDD

Brian Raines, Cantwell\* Amanda Six, Libraries of SC Sheila Stalp, McMorris-Rodgers

Nathan Strege, Cantwell\* Jessica Varang, Libraries of SC Shelley Westall, WA OneNet (WON)\*

\* Via phone

Debra welcomed everyone to the meeting, participants introduced themselves and provided updates about local activity. Mark noted no new infrastructure buildout since NoaNet, 4G and seven towers from a fire grant. The towers are currently used for public safety but can leverage them for use by other public anchor institutions. The Spokane Tribe is also working on broadband. Debra reported that the WSU and County fire recovery efforts are continuing and will focus on coordination and communications. She announced a series of nine fire meetings that will be held in Stevens County next year. Also, a Digital Day Camp, hosted by WSU and TEDD, with six free classes on social media for business will be held during January and February – register at [www.putnewaonthemap.com](http://www.putnewaonthemap.com). Most libraries could use more internet in most locations. Narda is still working to get a status of the CAF II buildouts. Brian reported Cantwell’s office is following up with Joe Bradley, GFR, USDA, regarding issues related to three previous Community Connect grants and ARRA funded projects in the County. There is concern that previous broadband investments by USDA may impact future requests from the region even though the earlier grants are not providing the services they were built to offer. As the BAT moves forward it will be important to combine and coordinate efforts and look ahead at where we want to be in the future.

Monica said Murray’s office is still working on a statewide broadband meeting this coming spring. She also is tracking federal legislation including a new bill introduced; HR 4160 – Rural Broadband Infrastructure Investment Act, which if passed would double USDA telecom funding.

Since public safety communications is such a critical issue in the County, FirstNet is an important focus for the SC BAT. There was a brief review of the FirstNet/WA OneNet (WON) meeting held in Colville on 12/15. Several examples were provided about challenges during the fires last summer – insufficient communications access at fire locations and base camps, agency coordination, lack of power contributed to lack of telecommunications access. The group discussed ways to leverage the FirstNet buildout such as development of infrastructure to anchor institutions (much like the ARRA BTOP build) which is especially needed in areas where there currently is no infrastructure. Other ideas included acquiring access to current fiber optics and other telecom infrastructure to establish fire base camps in areas where there is a history of the need (Fruitland, the lakes, etc.) and possibly having a fee on cell phone bills in Washington, maybe even across the nation, to support FirstNet. This might fund the system and/or devices for responders (many of whom are volunteers and may not have resources to purchase the technology and monthly service). Shelley mentioned that during FirstNet/WON meetings in Omak responders talked about how towers and fiber optics burned – leading to a short discussion about the possible need for deployables such as Cell on Wheels (COWs), drones, etc. The discussion also included the need for responders, while in base camps, to be able to communicate with their families and employers as well as provide emergency updates to residents. The latter included notification procedures such as calls made to landlines and cell phones regarding evacuation, use of Facebook, library and Extension support of communications, etc. Expanding and formalizing information sharing with the public would free up responders from this and allow them to focus more time on fighting fires. A reoccurring theme was that urban areas may lack capacity but rural areas lack connectivity. It was also noted that grants and one-time buildouts don’t sustain the level of activity and ever changing technology needs so will need to make sure that is included in FirstNet/WON planning. Leasing excess capacity may be one way to help maintain the system and also offer needed broadband access for other important community and economic development uses. Monica and Shelley will send out the FirstNet/WON survey request to the team, welcome ongoing input and will keep the SC BAT members informed about FirstNet/WON efforts.

The first project for SC BAT will be a mapping of the current wireline and wireless infrastructure in Stevens County. Margie Hall, Lincoln County EDC, provided a copy of a map of the major infrastructure map developed for their county (see attached). Mark will bring a map to the next meeting to review and begin adding to. Amanda offered the library as a resource to help develop and distribute a survey to help gather input for the map. Other resources are the [National Broadband Map](http://www.broadbandmap.gov/), [CAF II map](https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/maps/connect-america-phase-ii-final-eligible-areas-map), [WA OneNet coverage map](http://wageoservices.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c0a437f5d385488b90dcf18b4687485c.), telecom provider and tower company input, HAM radio operators, etc.

BAT will meet on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, 10 am – noon. **The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 6, 10 am – noon, at the Stevens County \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**