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## PRESS RELEASE

### Montana Public Service Commission Approves Blackfoot EAS Proposal

**September 28, 2004 Missoula, Mont** – On September 29, 2004, the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) approved the Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative extended area calling proposal. Extended Area Service (EAS) is a service enhancement which expands a customer's local calling area. The Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative EAS proposal adds all Blackfoot exchanges to the existing Missoula EAS except for Avon which will be added to the Helena EAS region.

1. The Blackfoot exchanges of Alberton, Alberton South, Alta, Arlee, Charlo, Clinton, Condon, Dixon, Drummond, Haugan, Noxon, Ovando, Philipsburg, Plains, Potomac, Powell, ID, St. Ignatius, St. Regis, Seeley Lake, Superior and Thompson Falls will be expanded to the exchanges serviced by Qwest of Missoula, including Darby, Frenchtown, Hamilton, Stevensville and Victor.
2. The Blackfoot exchange of Avon will be expanded to the exchanges serviced by Qwest of Helena which also includes Boulder, Townsend and Wolf Creek.

"Over the 10 years I have been on the Board, our customers have consistently been asking for extended area service (EAS) and it feels good to be able to finally provide it. Our world is shrinking where distance is becoming less of a barrier for the world and the communities of rural Montana. EAS is an illustration of how communities of western Montana are becoming closer to each other." Geof Wilson, President, Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative, Inc. Board of Trustees

The Public Service Commission's unanimous ruling is culmination of 3 years of work for Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative and Qwest.

"I am very pleased that customers of Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative will now be included in the large Missoula or Helena EAS areas, providing toll free calls throughout much of 7 Montana counties (Missoula, Lake, Mineral, Sanders, Powell, Granite, Ravalli) in Western Montana served by Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative, Qwest and most recently Ronan." PSC Vice-Chairman, Tom Schneider

Blackfoot customers will see an increase in basic rates while at the same time saving on toll calls made to the new EAS exchanges within their new local calling area. Qwest customers across the state of Montana will also see an increase in the EAS charge they presently pay.

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#### About Blackfoot Telecommunications Group

Named after the Blackfoot River running through much of the territory it serves, the Blackfoot (Blackfoot) Telecommunications Group was originally established in 1954 as Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative. Blackfoot offers state-of-the-art telecommunications, Internet and data solutions to customers in Missoula and throughout Montana and Idaho. Headquartered in Missoula, Montana, Blackfoot employs more than 165 Montanans. Blackfoot can be reached at 406-541-5000 or through its web site at <http://www.blackfoot.com>.

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