

Pitkin County

Translator Department

FCC FRN: 0005049762

351 Southside Drive

Basalt, CO 81621

Request for Silent Authority STA

Pitkin County has historically maintained two mountaintop telecommunications sites on Red Mountain above the city of Aspen, CO. The site lower in elevation, “Lower Red”, was connected to grid power with a generator backup and hosted the following 6 LPTV translators:

K04HH K06HU K08HN K12QO K19FH K21HF

The Lower Red property is leased from the USFS, and the existing infrastructure is jointly owned between Pitkin County and American Tower, Inc. American Tower owns the equipment shelter, and Pitkin County owns a tower, ASR: 1242242.

“Upper Red” is a solar-powered site with a generator backup, also on USFS leased property, wherein Pitkin County maintains a number of LPFM translators and public safety radio repeaters on tower ASR: 1029228. Upper Red has limited solar generation and battery capacities.

The USFS has long desired that these two sites be consolidated into one. Due to the lack of grid power at Upper Red, it was previously believed that Lower Red would be a more sustainable site for future telecommunications needs and growth in the Aspen area. However, Lower Red experienced a critical power failure in 2019. Further investigation revealed that local wildlife had ripped out several junction boxes and dug up and damaged the buried power line in a few locations. Replacement would require an extensive USFS review process and was quoted and found extremely cost prohibitive. Pitkin County was able to power the site temporarily on generator power, but this too was becoming cost prohibitive. Discussions with the USFS and American Tower Inc. led to the decision in 2020 that Lower Red was unsustainable, and ultimately should be decommissioned.

American Tower intends to demolish and remove the site, however this work has not yet occurred and is still under review by the USFS. The timeline is still speculative, but Pitkin County staff believe that given the recession of the pandemic, the site may be demolished by the end of 2022. Pitkin County intends on keeping equipment and the generator from the site, and has performed twice-annual generator and site powering operations to ensure equipment functionality until demolition. The site was last power cycled and operational over the air on June 16th 2021.

Pitkin County requests for temporary relief of minimum operating schedules as per 47 CFR § 73.1740. Pitkin County has at power cycled the equipment to intermittently resume broadcasts

such that the translators have not been completely silent for any consecutive 12-month period since the critical outage occurred. However, limited budget, seasonal mountaintop access and construction windows, lengthy governmental approval processes, and force majeure instances such as the COVID-19 pandemic have hindered the restoration of the affected translators.

Pitkin County has been working on upgrading the Upper Red site to be able to support the relocation of the Lower Red TV translators to Upper Red to restore complete coverage of OTA TV services in the Aspen core area. This includes replacement of the generator and supplementation of solar panels in 2020, a complete interior remodeling of the equipment shelter and battery replacement in 2021, and coming in summer 2022, a replacement of the solar array and additional battery supplementation. Pitkin County predicts that completion of this year's work will create sufficient power capacity to support the colocation of the Lower Red TV transmitters, which could be fully back on the air as soon as October 2022.

This grant is in the public's best interest. Pitkin County is in a mountainous terrain with extremely challenging and limited TV broadcast coverage. Many drainages in the local Roaring Fork Valley are only serviced by the TV and FM broadcast relays that the Pitkin County Translator Department maintains. Since the outages, portions of the public have been without any available over the air TV coverage, and a grant of this temporary silent authority, as well as the subsequent renewal of these TV translator licenses, will keep open the only opportunity for these public citizens to be served once more. Furthermore, the possible future advent of ATSC 3.0 and its complementary services will be of high potential value to the public.

Thank you for your considerations, and please feel free to reach out with any questions.

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(970) 920-5395

translator@pitkincounty.com