



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240



September 18, 2008

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

*Re: Joint Application of American Samoa Hawaii Cable, LLC, Pac-Rim
Redeployment, LLC, and AST Telecom, LLC, for a Cable Landing License for the
American Samoa-Hawaii Cable, FCC File No. SCL-LIC-20080814-00016*

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The U.S. Department of the Interior (“DOI”) supports expeditious grant of the above-referenced application (filed on August 13, 2008) for the first-ever undersea telecommunications cable to serve American Samoa. Accordingly, the DOI urges the FCC to grant the application pursuant to its streamlined processing procedures thereby allow the applicants to proceed with installation of the American Samoa-Hawaii Cable (“ASHC”) System in early 2009.

The Secretary of the Interior administers American Samoa as an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States and has responsibility for coordinating federal policy in American Samoa.¹ DOI’s Office of Insular Affairs executes these responsibilities on behalf of the Secretary. As such, DOI has a strong interest in promoting the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure to support the American Samoa economy and to lower communications costs. American Samoa’s geographic remoteness has limited opportunities for economic growth and exposed American Samoa to boom-and-bust cycles depending on the state of local fisheries, as American Samoa’s undiversified economy depends heavily on two tuna canneries. Moreover, American Samoa’s dependence on satellite circuits for connectivity has made telephone and Internet connectivity beyond American Samoa very expensive.

Given these realities, DOI has long supported the development of an undersea fiber-optic system to serve American Samoa and has allocated funding in the OIA budget to that end. A fiber-optic connection will improve connectivity beyond American Samoa while enhancing Internet usage and penetration. It will also foster the development of offshore service industries—such as call centers—that are a natural fit with American Samoa’s bilingual, English-speaking population and encourage the use of telemedicine and distance learning, thereby contributing significantly to the quality of life of American Samoans.

¹ See Executive Order 10264 (June 29, 1951), 16 Fed. Reg. 6417 (1951).

For these reasons, DOI urges the FCC to license the ASHC System as quickly as possible to ensure the delivery of high-speed, lower-cost communications to the people of American Samoa. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact me by telephone at (202) 208-4736.

Respectfully submitted,



FB Nikolao I. Pula
Director
Office of Insular Affairs

cc: James Ball (FCC/IB)
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