

..An Embattled Iridium Needs the Chairman's Support

"[Chairman] Sikes doesn't want to give up on Iridium," said one source familiar with the Big LEO issue. "Staffers at the FCC are really trying to move things along."

Pioneer's Preference status provides for a spectrum allocation preference to applicants proposing novel services. All of the Big LEOs have filed for the coveted designation.

Still another source was even more critical of Sike's actions, stating: "Chairman Sikes is trying to get two additional votes for Pioneer's Preference [status] for Iridium over the objections of [FCC Chief Engineer] Dr. Tom Stanley and the FCC's Office of Engineering and Technology Assessment."

Indeed, the commission has a number of options open to it in managing the Big LEOs including:

- awarding no Pioneer's Preferences to any Big LEO proponent;
- giving everyone the classification;
- granting the status to selected systems;
- delaying the entire proceeding until late September; or
- putting off any decisions until after the presidential election.

The war of words has continued recently over a filing made by Motorola Satellite Communications Inc. on behalf of its embattled Iridium system, suggesting two different spectrum approaches that it said will permit all LEO proponents to begin operations.

Motorola's first option proposes an additional allocation of 10.5 MHz of spectrum in the 1675-1710 MHz band for LEO mobile satellite services (MSS) uplinks. Such uplinks would be used by the four code division multiple access (CDMA)/spread spectrum applicants in tandem with the 1610-1616 MHz and 2483.5-2500 MHz bands.

"With this additional spectrum, these four applicants could share the same amount of spectrum (33 MHz) as they have earlier proposed in these proceedings," Motorola said. Under this approach, Motorola will be licensed to operate bidirectionally over the remaining 10.5 MHz in the 1616-1626.5 MHz band.

The second option calls for the addition of 10.5 MHz of contiguous uplink spectrum just below the current radiodetermination satellite service (RDSS) uplink band between 1599.5 and 1610 MHz. Once again, this approach will allocate 33 MHz of spectrum to the CDMA/spread spectrum applicants and allow Motorola to operate in the remaining 10.5 MHz of the RDSS uplink band.

In an FCC filing opposing Motorola's controversial plan, Loral Qualcomm Satellite Services Inc. (GlobalStar) slammed the proposal as a "self-serving" resolution of the pending proceeding.

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