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Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D. C. *20554*

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In the matter of	)	
Amendment of Section *73.202* (b),	)	Media Docket No *03-30*
Table of Allotments	)	
FM Broadcast Stations	)	RM-I0644
(Trona, California)	)	

Supporting Comments of Petitioner

To the Chief, Allocations Branch:

Dana J. Puopolo ("Petitioner") respectfully submits his comments supporting the above captioned proceeding. The Commission has proposed to allot FM channel 255A to Trona, California as its first local service. Petitioner supports the Commission's proposal and hereby restates his intentions to apply for a construction permit to activate FM channel 255A if it is assigned as proposed. If his application is granted he, or a company he is affiliated with will promptly construct and operate the proposed station

The Commission requested Petitioner to: "submit sufficient information to establish Trona qualifies as community for FM allotment purposes". In his petition for rulemaking, petitioner stated that Trona was an incorporated town. That is not true. Petitioner had telephoned the San Bernardino County offices to inquire as to whether Trona was in fact incorporated. The county employee told him it was when in fact it is not. That aside, Trona has many attributes that show it to **be** a community deserving of an FM allotment. In his Petition for Rulemaking, petitioner stated the obvious attributes of a community such as churches, airport, businesses, post office and zip code. Other Trona organizations include the Trona Lion's Club, Trona **Elks** Lodge and Trona Chamber of Commerce. Also, the Searles Valley Historical Society is located in Trona.

Digging deeper shows what a true American community Trona is. The town has its own site on the web (www.trona-ca.com) that has many pages of Trona town information and history (including many photographs), much more then could ever be shown here. Trona has been a community for almost 100 years. Its population according to the *2000* census was 1885 persons.

Trona's primary employer is IMC Chemicals. Trona is self-governed by The Trona Municipal Advisory Council, a 98 member board that runs such things as a mini-bus and senior center, a Community Chest and thrift shop for the needy, a volunteer ambulance service, and a mental health clinic. Trona has its own elementary and high schools. Its Schools were established in 1916. The Trona Unified School District, established in 1927, has its own web site, which may be found at (http://www,trona.kl2.ca,us). High school football is big in Trona. The Trona Tornadoes have the distinction of possibly being only one of two schools in the country to play on a dirt field. Trona has many active citizens. Because there is no media outlet in Trona (such as an FM station), they rely on a web site called Trona Care to disseminate information. **It's** location is: (www.pcpages.com/tronacare) It is one year old. **It's** quoted purpose is:

"Our purpose is to improve Trona and bring the town back to one that has pride. Where everyone can feel safe and be proud of where they live. Working to clean up and beautify the town of Trona, improve property and bring our property values up to what they were assessed for, by the county tax assessor.

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The web site will be a place for local news and to keep residents updated about our current projects. Also, a directory of the local business' and web sites."

To quote from some of the recent news at the Trona Care web site (pictures of the activities are posted there):

"Aster Street project started on Jan 11th at 7:00am it was a cold morning, we all had to work very fast to keep warm. We had 27 of the finest Trona Volunteers show up to help with this project. We cleaned till noon! Boyston Construction, sent his big dumptruck, Caraway Construction sent his backhoe. We also had Todd Owens' big dumptruck. So many people brought their pickups to haul in. What a bunch of good folks! We didn't finish this project of cleaning Aster Street. The Project was continued. We had another clean up on January 18th. 30 Volunteers showed up ready for work at 7:00 am and we worked until almost 1:00pm. It took a total of 57 Volunteers and load after load hauled to the dump. If you drive down Aster Street you will see a real difference. Wouldn't if be nice to have every street in Trona to be this clean? The ROP class has Boarded (9) Nine Homes on Aster Street to complete this project. Our Thanks go out to all that helped and worked so hard."

"The 7th annual Trona Spring Fling is March 22nd. Trona Frontage Rd. Street Fair is 9:00 A M to 1:00PM, Parade starts at 9:00 AM. Lots of activities, fun for all ages, come and support your town of Trona! Bring your family and join your friends and neighbors and have a fun day! See you there!"

Petitioner has attached three newspaper Articles about Trona. They are from The Long Beach Press-Telegram, The Los Angeles Times and the New York Times. All illustrate Trona for the true community it is, a community that deserves its own FM allotment.

Finally, there is a strong public safety reason that Trona should be allowed an FM radio station. As stated above, its primary employer is IMC Chemicals. If a chemical spill, train derailment, tank truck crash or plant accident were to happen, there is presently no way to quickly disseminate emergency information. An FM radio station in Trona might save lives should such situations ever occur.

Petitioner believes that the information above clearly shows that Trona is a community deserving of an FM allotment, and he urges the Commission to allot FM channel 255A to Trona, CA.

Petitioner hereby states and affirms that Petitioner hereby verifies and affirms that the statements given in these comments are his, and are accurate to the best of his knowledge.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana J. Puopolo

Dana J. Puopolo
March 7, 2003

belonged to workers the company laid off. Kerr-McGee also owns mineral rights to a goodly chunk of the lake. The federal government owns the rest, which it leases to Kerr-McGee. The Trona school system, which has **760** students, receives **$2.5** million in royalties every year from minerals mined in the part of the lake the government owns. As a result, teachers are paid more than any other public school teachers in California; none earns less than **$20,000** and some earn more than **$40,000.**

Kerr-McGee employs **1,050** workers, about **20** percent of Trona's population, and pays between **$13.52** and **$14.20** an hour. The company's annual tax bill comes to **$5** million; because land values are low. Trona's other residents pay low property taxes, **$414** for a **$68,000** three-bedroom house.

You rarely run across anyone who came here intending to stay long, but many did. Jerry Williams, the local Pacific Gas and Electric Co. representitive, came with his wife for a year and stayed **16** years. Mrs. Bray came to check on an investment and stayed **28** years. Joe Palacios came for a two-week visit 43 years ago and went to work at one of the plants. Still there.

Those with cabin fever, though, might make an appointment with Al Walker. He's a San Bemardino psychiatrist flown in once a month by the county, in accordance with a state law that requires each county with more than **100,000** people to provide mental health services. Walker says Trona's isolation probably contributes to a slightly higher than normal rate of family violence and drinking. He also thinks people watch a lot of TV. "On the hottest days, when it's **120** degress and your feet are burning through the pavement, you cringe a little," he says. "When you come over the hills and you smell that smell, you wonder. How do people live here?" The answer, for most: Happily. They like it here. The psychiatrist sees Trona as a study in self-sufficiency. "People tend to solve their own problems," Walker says. "There's very little bowing and facing Mecca. and looking to Washington to shell out the bucks."

Trona's problems get solved quickly and dramatically by the Community Council. Legally, the council's **98** members can't raise taxes, change speed limits or issue parade permits. Legally, they can't really do anything. Yet they manage to run a mini-bus and senior center for old people, a Community Chest and thrift shop for the needy, and a volunteer ambulance service for the sick. And eight years before the state enacted the law making counseling available in every county, Trona had already opened its own mental health clinic.

cooperation from the union leadership in meeting the objectives of our plant operation." Not everybody in Trona understands this strike, least of all the old-timers and the workers at Kerr-McGee's other plants. Since the strike started, there have been firebombings, shootings and a number of convincing death threats. "This place is like an armed camp," said Eric Poole, the 29-year-old president of Local 398. "It's a powder keg, and nobody knows what might happen if this strike goes on much longer." From the start, the strike has been tinged with emotion, a vindictive spirit that transcends the byplay of most labor disputes. When negotiations broke down Feb.28, the union wanted to strike, but spies equipped with binoculars reported the arrival of an armada of campers, presumably to be used by supervisory personnel, and a large outside security force. The union's nine-member executive board decided at a secret meeting to go ahead with the strike, but each person who attended the meeting was sworn to tell his wife that they had decided to continue working for two more weeks without a contract. Poole said that within hours, the campers left the Westend plant like a desert caravan, and the guard force was sent back to Los Angeles. At 3 a.m. on March 2, the union placed a picket line around the Westend plant, suprising, in the words of a company official, "not only management, but most of the union membership." "Kerr-McGee was absolutely mortified," Poole Said."They got completely outfoxed. In the long run it may cost us, because they are so mad about it that their pride is hurt something terrible. Coincidentally, the railroad traffic in Searles Valley had been stopped for more than a week by a fire in a Southern Pacific tunnel. Virtually all of Westend's production had to move by truck. Nearly all the drivers in this region are non-union, and like most other people here, they carry guns. It wasn't long before violence erupted. A number of pickets complained that they had been struck by the massive, 18-wheel vehicles that haul chemicals from the plant. Drivers complained of spiked tires, a blast of pellets through the windshield, and, in one case, a rock in the face. Two pickets were arrested. A week after the strike began, a driver from Lancaster drew a gun while leaving the plant and fired into the air, scattering pickets in the drifts of alkali dust that resemble fresh snow. The driver was arrested. Molotov cocktails were hurled into a work yard owned by Ron Matheny, a private contractor who supplies laborers to the Westend plant and refused to honor the picket line. The next night, rifle fire came through the wall over Matheny's head. Now he keeps a loaded pistol beside him. As a trailer truck drove past the struck plant, a half-ton case of ball bearings shattered on the ground, scattering lethal, three-quarter inch missles. "it was like pennies from heaven," said a striker. "We fell on our knees in thanks."

Death Threats

About the same time, the mustachioed Poole began to receive death threats. He likes to compare himself to Karen Silkwood, a Kerr-McGee employee who died in a car crash in 1974 while on her way to a meeting with her union to complain about nuclear contamination at her Oklahoma plant. Her death was ruled an accident. Poole wears a Karen Silkwood T-shirt to the contract negotiations. Officially, both the company and the union have condemned the violence. But Poole says there is "no way we can babysit 250 union members, and Kerr-McGee says it cannot force truck drivers to stop

carrying guns. The mood of the strikers, which had been jovial to start, began to turn angry when Kerr-McGee obtained a temporary restralning order limiting union activity near company property. Being more or less a company town, the order also means that the strikers cannot legally attend the company-owned movie theater, visit Kerr-McGee's water company, or use the town's recreation center or swimming pool. "This is an awfully ticklish situation," said Tom Garrison, president of the Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, which represents workers at Kerr-McGee's Trona mill. "We've all got brothers, aunts and uncles down at the Westend plant, and this strike is turning us against each other."

Different Phiosophy

He said his union would do what it could to help the strikers, but noted ruefully, "We have a different phiosophy from the Chemical Workers. That's why we're not the ones on strike." It's a sentiment not lost on some of the men walking the picket line. "Most of us don't want to be here and we're hoping it's not a long strike," said Ed Ballinger, a filter operator at Westend. "Right or wrong, we went on strike and you can't turn back. We're willing to fight for what we believe in." Frank Schmidt, whose face is as lined as aged mahogany after 15 years at the plant, adds: "We're on strike because the company thinks you ain't nothing but scum. They think you're trash, and you can't find out a damn thing from them." Sgt. Vernon Smith, who runs the sheriffs substation in Trona, notes the town is now "not what you'd call an ideal place to live in." Smith is hopeful that the intimacy of the town - he says he knows most people by their first names - will help contain the violence. "It's our home and these people are going to try to take care of it," Smith said. "This strike is going to be over someday, and we're all still going to be here. What will they do if they have hurt their neighborsl"

Roots in Muckraking

The roots of the strike probably date back a year or more, when Poole started publishing a muckraking broadsheet known as the "Westend Barb." Fired off on a copy machine, "whenever I get inspired," he says, the Barb has repeatedly tweaked the giant Kerr-McGee's hierarchy, publishing not only what Poole sees as the shortcomings of company policy, but exposes of management personal peccadilos. "Once again I feel duty-bound to inform you that something is drastically wrong with the current management team in the production department and in industrial relations," Poole began in a recent issue, and went on to give an individual critique. In another, Poole savaged Robert Bouse, the plant's manager, for taking supervisory staff to a dinner to celebrate increased productivity. "You, the employees who made it all possible," Poole wrote, "didn't even get a simple posting stuck on a board somewhere saying 'Thanks.'" Poole signs each copy of the newsletter, inviting the company to sue him for libel or fire him. "They won't do it because they know it will go to court," he says. "After Karen Silkwood they just hate publicity." Poole's broadsides have clearly not pleased Kerr-McGee - they say his reporting is inaccurate - nor has his refusal to cooperate over such things as plant safety, which Poole considers a farce. "Kerr-McGee can make you

or break you in this valley," said a worker at one of the two plants not involved in the strike. "The company is a little god, and if you live here, you had better not forget it." The old contract between the company and Local 398 contained a clause pledging union members to Co-operate to prevent absenteeism, waste and accidents, as well as strengthening "good will between the company and its employees." The new contract, presented at the start of the negotiations with the union in January, added a two-sentence amendment. "If the union or its members violates any part of this provision, the company shall present its complaint to the union which shall be adjudicated by an arbitrator," the proposal said. 'The arbitrator shall have jurisdiction to assess monetary penalty against the union for violation of this section."

Other Disputes

Although there were a number of language disputes over such things as the provisions of a new training program, both the union and the company admit those differences could have been settled quickly before the strike. "The only hang-up was that line," Poole said. "It will keep us out forever. We can't ever go to work with this proposal. No matter how mad we get, or how lean and mean, we're not going to work with that contract." In retrospect, Poole acknowledges that he may have become the primary issue in the strike. "If I were to pack up, quit my job and leave the valley," he said, "you can bet 21-1 would be off the table in a minute. I've thought about it, but I'm not going to do it."

New York Times, November 17,2002

A Shrinking Team, but a Home Field Advantage

TRONA, CA Nov. 15 - In the Mojave Desert's 25,000 square miles of sun-blasted earth there is a patch of sand 100 yards long that is looked after as dotingly as any garden, though nothing can ever grow there. Residents of this mining town proudly call it the Pit, and for 60 years it has subjected the football teams that come to play Trona High to a kind of primal hazing. Tonight the Trona Tornadoes played a game in the Pit that made sad history. As Trona's fortunes have fallen, the school's enrollment has declined to 105 from 350 - not enough to put 11 players on the field consistently. Next season it will play in an eight-player league, but not before one final shot tonight against its archrival, the Boron Bobcats. Called the Borax Bowl. the game is a matchup of two mining towns that are world leaders in producing borax, a mineral used in glass, insulation and other products. Trona versus Boron. Towns that sound like planets in a place that seems fittingly unearthly. Apart from the football field at Juneau High in Alaska, which is made of glacial silt, Trona may have the only all-dirt field left in the United States. Other teams do not like to play on it. Its hard-packed sand has less give than grass, and the players' skin can be scraped raw. Then there is the heat. In Trona, site of the last-chance gas station before Death Valley on Highway 178. the temperature can hit 120 degrees. So teams play at night, and the air, as always, is tinged with sulfur from the mines. "No athlete should be subjected to conditions found nowhere else in the country but Trona," Stu Downes, a sportswriter for The Mammoth Times, wrote last year about Mammoth High's troubles with Trona. "This is 2001, not ancient Rome. If they can't grow grass, there's always artificial turf." Trona's coaches have heard complaints about home-field advantage from all quarters. The fact that Mammoth High is among the loudest especially galls them since Trona has to play in the snow and cold on Mammoth's field at 8,000 feet in the Sierra Nevada. Then there is the sour-grapes factor. 'We knocked Mammoth High out of the championship last year, and they were very upset," said John Davis, superintendent of the Trona Unified School District. Grass will not grow on the field because it is wet down daily with brackish water, trucked in because of a water shortage. It is sprayed and leveled every day, and the dirt is compacted and chalked on game day. Trona has never really considered artificial turf. It was seen as too expensive - and just not right, somehow. 'We don't want it; we like the sand," said John Parks, the team's coach. There's something about the mystique of the Pit." Even the principal at Boron High, Paul Kostopoulos, finds something inexplicable about the Pit. When he was the team's football coach, he beat Trona only once on Trona's home field, and that was
Boron's first victory in the Pit in 12 years. "When we won, I scooped up some of the sand and put it in a Coke bottle," Mr. Kostopoulos said. "I still have it on my desk." If mining is the nervous system of Trona, population 2,000, football is its heart. There is no youth basketball, baseball or soccer here; only football. Some of the passion for the game was imported in the 1960's and 70's when the Oklahoma-based Kerr-McGee Corporation owned the mining operations

and brought scores of football-loving Oakies to the desert. "We've lived in Oklahoma, Texas, Bakersfield, towns large and small," said Patty Jeffers, whose two sons played for Trona in the early 90's. "And you won't find people that care more about kids than this town. When my boys played, I drove 4,500 miles in one season." In a blow to its ego, Trona had to forfeit four games this year because it could not field enough players. The school's declining enrollment reflects cuts at the town's mining plants, now owned by IMC Chemicals. About 700 people work at them, down from 1,700 in the early 1980's. The Boron team has also forfeited some games this year for the same reason as Trona, but it has more underclassman and so far faces no threat of falling out of 11-player competition. The teams' differing futures may have added steam to tonight's final game, but the rivalry did not seem to need help. "This town stinks," Kalen Hanson, 17, of Boron, said before the game, referring to the sulfureous odor created by Trona's saline method of mining. Boron's mines use a dry-digging method, which is odorless. "It reeks here." Trona players had their own point to prove. "Trona has a different breed of kids," said Cody Corrion, 17. "We're tougher. This field makes us tougher." Who knows if it was the Pit advantage yet again, but in the last four minutes of a bruising battle, Trona scored a touchdown and won 6-0. 'There's nothing that feels better," Mr. Davis said, "than beating Boron."