

Environmental Assessment  
Illinois Broadband Opportunity Partnership – Southern  
EGIN 4250

Prepared for: Clearwave Communications



February 12, 2011

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**Clearwave Communications**  
**Environmental Assessment Report**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Delta Communications, L.L.C., dba Clearwave Communications, of Harrisburg, Illinois, was awarded a grant by the NTIA to provide broadband infrastructure to communities throughout southern Illinois in an area roughly bounded by the state's borders with Missouri to the west, Kentucky to the south and Indiana to the east and U.S. Route 50 to the north. These areas are lacking in options for broadband service and therefore cannot compete for the retention and development businesses, cannot provide competitive educational opportunities to local students and cannot take full advantage of opportunities for remote medical technologies. The purpose of this project is to provide the capital investment in broadband infrastructure that the private sector is not willing to make, but which is necessary to allow for the development of broadband services in this predominately rural area. Under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the NTIA must conduct an Environmental Assessment of the proposed action and evaluate environmental consequences of the proposed action against alternative actions that meet the purpose and need of the project.

The proposed project consists of construction of approximately 740 miles of fiber optic cable along various existing right-of-ways and utility easements throughout the 23 counties of the project area and the development of a new data center located in Marion, Illinois. The fiber will be installed using vibratory plowing, directional drilling, and

trenching technologies. Directional drilling will be used in locations where surface disturbances must be minimized; such as central business districts within communities and under sensitive environmental locations such as wetland or stream crossings. Vibratory plowing will be the preferred installation method for all other locations, with open trenching being utilized where bedrock depths or conflicts with existing utilities prevent utilization of other options. The data center will repurpose an existing building which was previously used for retail sales.

This Environmental Assessment evaluates the impacts of the Preferred Route, Alternate Routes and a No Action alternative to various aspects of the environment. Areas considered include: Noise, Air Quality, Geology and Soils, Water Resources, Biological Resources, Historic and Cultural Resources, Aesthetic and Visual Resources, Land Use, Infrastructure, Socioeconomic Resources and Health and Human Safety.

The analysis of the project, constructed using the methods described, showed no significant adverse impacts to environmental resources during construction or operation for the Preferred Route. While a significant number of water resources, biological resources and infrastructure exist within the project area, the flexibility of the various installation methods allow for avoidance of any significant impacts. As there are no significant impacts along the Preferred Route, it is recommended that this alternate be selected for construction.