NAB Radio TechCheck

The Weekly NAB Newsletter for Radio Broadcast Engineers

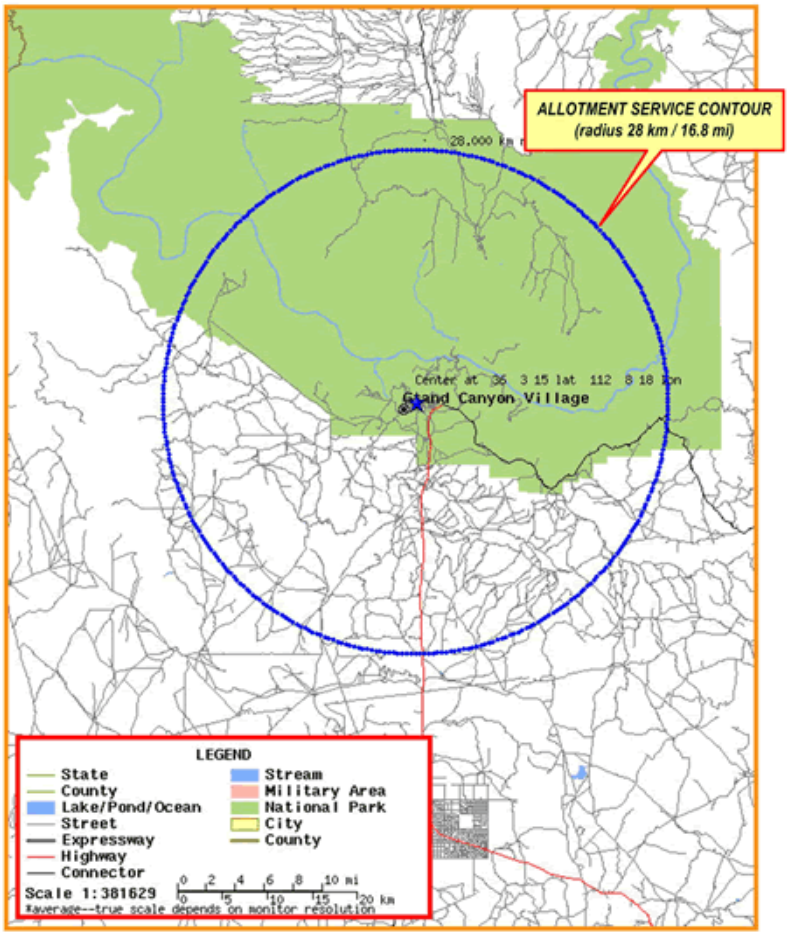
May 12, 2008

FCC Develops Class A FM Allotment Channel Finder Tool

The first step in obtaining a license for a new FM station (i.e. one for which no allotment currently exists) for operation in the commercial band (92-108 MHz) is to petition the FCC to add a new allotment to the FM Table of Allotments, 47 CFR § 73.202(b). Late last month, the FCC announced the availability of a new Internet-based tool at www.fcc.gov/mb/audio/allotmentfinder.html designed to help identify, by community, those Class A FM channels which are potentially available for new allotments. Class A FM stations may have a maximum effective radiated power (ERP) of 6 kW at an antenna height above average terrain (HAAT) of 100m (328 ft), with a service contour of radius 28 km (16.8 mi).

According to the FCC, this tool is restricted to searches for Class A channels because, as the smallest commercial station class, a search for a Class A allotment will have the highest likelihood of success. As explained in more detail on the Channel Finder tool Web page, a successful search does not guarantee the availability of a channel at a specific location. Radio spectrum rights are established on a "first-come, first-served" basis. Thus, an application could be filed at any time to preclude a new allotment proposal. The tool also does not take into account many other factors that can limit radio station transmitter site location options, for example, environmental restrictions, land use regulations, and Federal Aviation Administration air hazard issues.

Channel	Frequency (MHz)
232	94.3
235	94.9
238	95.5
249	97.7
253	98.5
283	104.5
284	104.7
287	105.3
288	105.5
290	105.9
295	106.9
296	107.1



A search conducted using the Channel Finder tool will provide information on two key technical issues that determine the acceptability of an allotment petition:

- whether a channel is available at the proposed transmitter site; and
- whether a Class A station could place a premium strength (city-grade) 70 dBµ signal over the community of license from the proposed transmitter site.

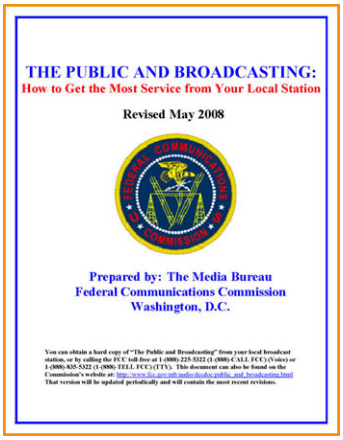
The first step is to establish the latitude and longitude coordinates of the community for which the allotment is sought. This can be done using the FCC's "Atlas" program (www.fcc.gov/mb/audio/bickel/atlas2.html). Using

Grand Canyon, AZ as an example, the coordinates for this community according to the Atlas program are latitude 36° 3' 5", longitude W 112° 8' 18."

Next, these coordinates are entered into the Channel Finder tool (note: *do not* enter a minus sign on the longitude coordinates, as is typically done for west longitude coordinates) which then performs a channel search based on data derived from the FCC Media Bureau's Consolidated Database System (CDBS). Again, using Grand Canyon, AZ as an example, twelve available channels are identified (listed in the table), and a map can be drawn (from the Channel Finder tool Web page), shown here, indicating the channel center coordinates and allotment service contour.

The FCC strongly recommends that an allotment proponent confirm with a broadcast consulting engineer the availability of an "available" channel prior to filing an allotment petition. For additional information, contact Dale Bickel of the FCC Media Bureau's Audio Division at (202) 418-2700.

FCC Updates "The Public and Broadcasting"


THE PUBLIC AND BROADCASTING:
How to Get the Most Service from Your Local Station
Revised May 2008
Prepared by: The Media Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C.

The FCC's Media Bureau has released an updated version of a document titled "The Public and Broadcasting." This publication, which every broadcaster is required to have a copy of in their public inspection file, provides an overview of the FCC's regulation of broadcast radio and television licensees, describes how broadcast stations are authorized, and explains the various rules and policies relating to broadcast programming and operations with which stations must comply, including the obligation to serve their local communities. It also explains how members of the public can become involved in assessing whether local broadcast stations are complying with these requirements. The publication is also intended to make the public aware of FCC procedures and the tools at their disposal, in the event that they conclude that any of their local stations do not meet these responsibilities.

In addition to having this document in the public inspection file, broadcasters must provide a copy of this publication to any member of the public who requests one. The current version is available on the FCC's Web page at www.fcc.gov/mb/audio/decdoc/public_and_broadcasting.html.

Also, effective with the release of this latest version, two Broadcast Information Specialists, one in the Media Bureau's Audio Division and one in its Video Division, will now serve as contact points for the public, accessible via toll-free phone numbers, facsimile, or e-mail. These individuals will be available to provide information to persons interested in becoming involved in the Commission's processes, and will answer questions about how to do so, including inquiries about the FCC's complaint or petitioning procedures or the filing and status of the license renewal, modification or assignment or transfer application for a particular station. The Broadcast Information Specialists can be contacted as follows:

If the inquiry relates to a radio station:
Phone: (866) 267-7202 (Voice) or (877) 479-1433 (TTY)
Fax: (202) 418-1411
E-Mail: radioinfo@fcc.gov

If the inquiry relates to a television station:
Phone: (866) 918-5777 (Voice) or (866) 787-6222 (TTY)
Fax: (202) 418-2827
E-Mail: tvinfo@fcc.gov

If the inquiry relates to both a radio and a television station, or is general in nature, the FCC indicates that either specialist may be contacted.