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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0506

May 9, 2011

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Mr. Julius Genachowski, Chair
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

0575

Re: Lower Power FM – KWMR pending permit application
FCC File No. BNPFT-20030314ACM

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to urge the Federal Communications Commission to consider KWMR's permit application for a LPFM translator, pending since 2003.

KWMR is a small, public station serving the rural communities of West Marin County, California, from local ranches to the villages of Muir Beach, Inverness, Inverness Park, Olema, Point Reyes Station, Marshall, Tomales, Stinson Beach, and Bolinas (roughly 10,000 people altogether). This is a remote area whose hilly topography prevents the existing KWMR signal from reaching some communities.

In 2003, the station applied for a translator permit for Mt. Barnabe, which would enable it to rebroadcast to over 4000 people in the remaining West Marin towns of Lagunitas, Forest Knolls, San Geronimo, and Woodacre, as well as additional areas of Inverness Park. The station is a singleton applicant for the 90.5 slot on the FM spectrum.

KWMR provides high-quality local programming with over 100 volunteer programmers, and it is also the only place to turn for local emergency information in both English and Spanish. Cell phone coverage is spotty in West Marin, and the region is beyond the purview of any other Bay Area radio station in emergencies. Without a translator station for KWMR, a broad swath of West Marin is effectively disconnected from critical community and public-safety information.

KWMR's emergency services are of particular importance in an area prone to flooding, earthquakes, fires, and tsunamis, but isolated from the resources of a more densely populated area. Seasonal wildfires and severe rainstorms with resultant flooding are a regular occurrence, and the region is bisected by the active San Andreas Fault.

KWMR has continually updated its emergency response services. For example, its capabilities include:

- A generator that enables it to provide up-to-the-minute information in an area where power outages are frequent.
- An emergency phone in the broadcast studio with a telephone number issued only to local and county emergency personnel. This system has allowed crucial information to be put on the air instantly and has strengthened KWMR's relationship with emergency personnel.
- Equipment to set up a completely redundant station to allow broadcast if the current studio becomes damaged or uninhabitable.
- Leadership in emergency programming. The KWMR Chief Operator and Transmitter Engineer, Richard Dillman, was recently named an American Red Cross hero for his work in developing the emergency radio plan for the West Marin Disaster council. He has also been recognized as an author with the National Federation of Community Broadcasters and the Station Action for Emergency Readiness (SAFER), a joint project of NFCB and NPR.

Several recent emergencies highlight the importance of these capabilities:

- In March 2011, KWMR was the "turn to" location for emergency information during the heavy rainfall and storm conditions which knocked out power, damaged homes and cars, and blocked roadways throughout West Marin.
- On March 11, 2011, after the Sendai Earthquake, KWMR was on the air from 1 am to provide tsunami information when the tsunami alert and tsunami warning were issued. Starting at 6 am, KWMR provided bilingual (Spanish and English) broadcasting until the tsunami alerts were cancelled.
- The station provided essential, up-to-date reports on conditions and evacuation orders during the Vision Fire of 1995.

Mr. Chairman, in the interest of connecting our rural communities and ensuring public safety, I believe it is urgent for KWMR to secure approval for a Mt. Barnabe translator as soon as possible. Funding has been secured for the installation, and a permit from FCC would enable the work to proceed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress

Cc: Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Meredith Baker