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NEWS RELEASE

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PRC's Public Comment Hearing on Sacred Wind's Request for Rates Commences Friday at Churchrock Chapter House *Commission seeks input from company's area customers*

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (Commission) is preparing for its public comment hearing on Sacred Wind Communications, Inc., recent rate filings. The hearing commences at 9 a.m. Friday, April 29 at the Churchrock Chapter House, Kinlitsoh Sinili, "Group of Yellow Houses," on the Navajo Nation, approximately 15 miles east of Gallup, NM.

The hearing will be presided over by NMPRC Commissioner Theresa Becenti-Aguilar (District 4). District 4 includes the service area of Sacred Wind.

Three parties to the case – Sacred Wind Communications, Inc., the Attorney General's Office and the Commission's Utility Division staff – recently filed a proposed settlement agreement, which is opposed by the other two parties, Smith Bagley and Verizon. The public comment hearing provides the public an opportunity to weigh in on the proposed agreement. The proposed agreement is subject to Commission approval.

In addition to seeking approval of initial rates, Sacred Wind also seeks support from the New Mexico Rural Universal Service Fund (RUSF). Terms of the proposed settlement call for the company to draw \$1 million from the RUSF in 2011, \$2 million in 2012 and 2013 and \$2 million in 2014 (prorated monthly until the Commission determines a further amount in 2014).

Commissioner Becenti-Aguilar said she looks forward to hearing from constituents during Friday's hearing.

"Sacred Wind's customers have a voice in this process and, by holding this particular hearing on the Navajo Nation, my constituents will get the opportunity to participate," Commissioner Becenti-Aguilar said. "Public comment hearings are vital and this process illustrates the type of meetings I will be handling under my leadership on the Navajo Nation."

Commissioner Becenti-Aguilar said that a representative of the agency's Consumer Relations Division will be available after the hearing to assist members of the public with any utility-related issues they might have.

Friday's hearing will commence with short presentations from Sacred Wind and interveners, including Smith Bagley and Verizon. Once those presentations are done, the floor will be opened to members of the public who wish to speak. The hearing will continue until everyone who wishes to comment has the opportunity to do so. A Navajo language translator has been contracted for the benefit of those attending the hearing.

For additional information, contact Commissioner Becenti-Aguilar's office at 505-827-8019.