

GCI announces plans for telecommunications in Rural Alaska

GCI has formed a new Rural Services Department that will lead the company's expansion into rural areas of Alaska. GCI's rural expansion plans involve building satellite earth stations in six regional centers including Barrow, Bethel, Dillingham, King Salmon, Nome and Kotzebue, as well as the installation of remote earth stations in 50 villages. Until last month's approval from the Alaska Public Utilities Commission (APUC), GCI had not been permitted by regulation to serve these villages. Greg Jones, former president and CEO of

Alaska Diversified Properties, has been hired as director of GCI's Rural Services Department. Joining him as senior advisor to the group is Margie Brown, who was a senior vice president at Cook Inlet Region, Inc.

"We realize that GCI's past experience leans toward the more urban markets of Alaska," said Wilson Hughes, GCI general manager. "By forming a Rural Services group and by drawing on people with expertise in this area, we are giving the necessary focus to the expansion program to quickly make the new areas we

serve an integral part of GCI's core business."

In June 1995, GCI requested approval from the APUC for a demonstration project, in which it would construct new satellite communications facilities in 50 villages in rural Alaska. These facilities would utilize satellite-on-demand technology called Demand Assigned Multiple Access (DAMA), which allows the user to access satellite transponder time on an "as needed" basis. This cost-saving technology, combined with the digital

system employed by the new earth stations, will significantly improve telecommunications capability and quality throughout Alaska. APUC approval of the GCI demonstration project was granted on November 9, 1995.

GCI, an Alaska-based and operated long-distance telephone carrier, is headquartered in Anchorage. The company provides a full range of domestic and international communication services to more than 90,000 customers throughout Alaska.