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Polk County Taps PAgCASA to Conduct Broadband Quality of Service Tests

Industry-Standard Network Monitoring Devices to be Used to Build Case for FCC's Overreporting of Broadband Availability in Polk County

December 23, 2022 -- Dallas, Oregon – Oregon's Polk County Government has engaged the services of PAgCASA (Precision Ag Connectivity & Accuracy Stakeholder Alliance), a non-profit rural prosperity-focused organization, to conduct a number of broadband network quality of service speed tests over the coming weeks. PAgCASA will be using "industry standard" network monitoring devices -- the same equipment used by the major Internet Service Providers (ISPs) -- in combination with industry standard software-based speed testing to monitor the quality and performance/speed in two relatively sparsely populated areas of Polk County.

The purpose of this work is to compile credible, "challenge-proof" data to refute the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) recently released National Broadband Map data, which the County feels overreports broadband availability in Polk County. If the FCC map incorrectly shows areas within the County as having broadband connectivity, then fewer federal infrastructure dollars will be made available to Polk County to bring much needed broadband to citizens and businesses. The FCC defines broadband as a minimum service of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds.

The FCC only made its new broadband map data available to the public on November 18. Counties and other challengers must report their data by January 13 to improve the accuracy of the FCC's map. Successful challenges to FCC's map will result in additional federal broadband funding for the County.

Two specific rural areas of Polk County have been selected for the initial round of data collection, Falls City and the area west of Salem. In addition to conducting network speed testing of residential ISP customers, PAgCASA will also be testing the network speeds and quality of service for schools, libraries, county government office buildings and other county facilities such as: fire departments, water treatment plant, healthcare facilities, etc.

"PAgCASA is honored to be selected by Polk County to conduct this important work," said Executive Director Garland McCoy. McCoy noted that the genesis of his organization's work in this area came from Polk County's long-standing interest in ensuring broadband access for its citizens.

A citizen-focused broadband access questionnaire/survey campaign launched by Polk County officials four years ago caught the attention of one of its citizens, PAgCASA co-founder Peter Harter. Peter and his wife farm in Polk County and do not get the minimum level (25/3 Mbps) of broadband access.

PAGCASA has already started its outreach campaign for broadband data in Polk County by meeting with local officials, ISP staff, local businesses, and residents of the targeted areas. There is an overall drive to generate tests on the FasterInternetOregon.org site, and PAGCASA will then review the data looking for households receiving poor quality broadband. PAGCASA engages these homes to validate the numbers with a machine-to-machine test over several days, and the participating household receives a \$100 gift card for hosting the device.

PAGCASA's work is part of a national broadband data validation effort with hundreds of stakeholders, including state and local government officials, the private sector, academic institutions and civic groups. These stakeholders are investing their time and expertise in helping to gather the broadband network service speeds and service availability that will help improve the FCC's National Broadband Map, and in turn, result in better informed federal infrastructure spending to ensure broadband access and equity for every American citizen.

PAGCASA is a national non-profit organization based in Arlington, Virginia focused on equitable broadband access to promote rural prosperity. PAGCASA utilizes industry standard network monitoring/metering devices (same as used by the largest ISPs), litigation-ready methodologies, an expert team, and numerous partnerships at the state and community levels to accomplish its goals. Find out more at paqcasa.org.

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