



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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## Big Bend National Park News Release

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### NPS Seeks Input on Proposed Communications Tower at Panther Junction



Simulation of proposed tower

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK, TEXAS - Commnet Four Corners, LLC (Commnet) has requested a special use permit from the National Park Service (NPS) to build a new communication tower in the Panther Junction developed area. The tower and associated facilities would support an emergency first responders network known as FirstNet. It would also allow co-location of roaming cellular services installed by Commnet Wireless and communication equipment from Big Bend Telephone. The NPS neither favors nor opposes this project.

The proposed telecommunication facility would be placed adjacent to the existing Big Bend Telephone Company building within the maintenance yard at Panther Junction. The project would construct a 54-foot-tall monopole (includes a 4-foot lightning rod) that would be colored brown to reduce its visibility. The existing Big Bend Telephone 30-foot-tall pole would be

removed, and its function would be replaced by the new tower. Details on this proposal, including schematic drawings, photo simulations of the proposed tower, and the permit application are available for public review on the NPS Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC) webpage linked below.

The proposed project would include facilities to serve the FirstNet Nationwide Safety Public Broadband Network (“FirstNet network”) as well as the wireless carrier AT&T’s commercial customers. The FirstNet network will provide first responders with priority access to wireless communications services on a single nationwide network, enabling increased coordination among first responder agencies and decreased response times. To expedite FirstNet deployment, Commnet is assisting AT&T in obtaining all requisite leases, approvals, permits and materials.

Commnet is a wireless service carrier providing wireless wholesale roaming services in remote locations where there is little telecommunication infrastructure. Commnet's goal for the project is to provide roaming services to additional carriers, provide more cellular coverage in the Park and supply a co-location opportunity for AT&T’s FirstNet installation and Big Bend Telephone.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires the NPS to consider permits for infrastructure that could expand internet, cellphone and radio service. Following cultural resource surveys of the proposed site, the NPS has determined that the proposal would have no adverse effect on historic properties. The NPS has consulted with the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer, who has concurred with this determination. The NPS expects this proposal to fall within a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act, unless any major resource impacts or concerns emerge from public comments.

Big Bend National Park staff welcome your feedback on this proposal. Please provide your comments by January 15, 2023. Comments may be submitted in two ways:

- online through the NPS Planning website, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/bibe>
- or through regular mail to:  
Superintendent, PO Box 129, Big Bend National Park, TX 79834-0129.