

# LINE OF SIGHT

## A Message from the Editor

### The Last Mile vs. The Last 30 Miles

**W**ith all of the hoopla over BPL (both pro and con), it is not without competition from other “last mile” providers. What may be the sleeper competitor, however, is WiMAX, the potential last 30-mile provider. Furthermore, here is where ham radio operators have the golden opportunity to look like heroes.

For more than a year we ham radio operators have been beating up utility companies and the FCC over BPL. On June 10, 2004 something happened at the FCC that, for me, makes it look like the FCC has heard our concerns. Seemingly off our radar screen because it is not on our frequency allocation was the creation of the Broadband Radio Service (BRS). For a press release on this FCC groundbreaking ruling, see: [http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/DOC-248267A1.doc](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-248267A1.doc) for a MS Word document, and go to: [http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/DOC-248267A1.pdf](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-248267A1.pdf) for a pdf file of the same. You might also look at each of the commissioners’ positive comments on the ruling. They are fascinating reading. You can find them at the FCC URL: <http://www.fcc.gov> under the June 10, 2004 date. Ironically, the comments written about BRS are very similar to what they previously wrote about BPL, that being their interest in enabling the development of broadband Internet access for the entire country and how BRS will be yet another way to bring about this development.

What does BRS have to do with ham radio? With regard to our future and BPL’s threat, everything! It is within BRS that WiMAX will find a home.

What does WiMAX have to do with ham radio? While the jury is still out concerning the development of this new technology, some say that it is possible that we can develop the technology on our frequency allocations. If this is so, then this is great for utilizing unused amateur radio frequencies. Furthermore, it is great for incubation of commercial systems, which brings me to my most important point: There is something far more important for us hams in WiMAX than a new toy. It is a venue for good public relations.

Let’s face it. Our image in the media right now is not the best. We appear to be a bunch of crybabies complaining about how the utility companies are trying to play fast and easy with the truth and claiming that government agencies such as NTIA and FEMA are not showing backbone in their weak stances concerning BPL interference issues. Granted, there is some truth to these complaints.

However, our days of being the canary in the mine are over—mainly because the utility companies keep hiding the mines. Furthermore, our days of being David against Goliath are over as well. We have thrown more than enough stones at those giant utility companies. Now it is time to borrow a 15-year-old movie title and focus on the building of our own *Fields of Dreams*. While the original Field of Dreams was limited to a cornfield in Dyersville, Iowa, ours potentially could have many 30-mile perimeters.

Here is how: There is a small, but fast growing interest in HSMM technology—that being the use of 802.11 technology under Part 97 regulations as opposed to under Part 15 regulations. Early this past June, Walt DuBose, K5YFW, of the Texas Roadrunners Microwave Group, and Ron Cole, N5HYH, of the North Texas Microwave Society, gave a presentation to the Roadrunners at their meeting in San Antonio, Texas. They explained what HSMM is all about and how one can put together a home station and an access point (AP). They also explained the difference between operating under Part 97 and Part 15 regulations.

More recently, at the HamCom convention also this June, around ten different HSMM forums were presented. In addition, Walt DuBose, K5YFW, Assistant ARRL HSMM Working Group Chairman, and Webmaster Dr. Gerry Creager, N5JXS, of Texas A&M University, Network Infrastructure Specialist, received Certificates of Merit from the ARRL for their outstanding accomplishments.

Here is where the Fields of Dreams come into play. There are huge transferable skills between WiFi and WiMAX. Therefore, hams who are developing WiFi systems can also be in on the ground-floor development of WiMAX systems. As I stated above, amateur radio frequencies might be able to be used for incubation of WiMAX systems, which then can be transferred to commercial application on the new BRS frequencies. Even if the technology is not able to incubate on our frequencies, hams can be the ones to develop the technology on the BRS frequencies. They can get together and form micro industries for profit (since this will be a commercial operation on commercial frequencies) and set up rural systems for the purpose of supplying broadband Internet access to their neighbors. Imagine this: Hams being perceived as good neighbors for a change!

There is a fascinating ancient story of a king, his queen, the prime minister, and the queen’s uncle. In this story the prime minis-

ter gets angry with the queen’s uncle for his failure to give proper homage to him as the prime minister. In retaliation he gets the king to issue an irrevocable decree to destroy the tribe to which the uncle belongs. The uncle intercedes with his niece over his concerns for the future of their tribe, warning her of her responsibility and the consequences if she fails to intercede with her husband concerning the future of the tribe, concluding with this prophetic rhetorical question: “What’s more, who can say but that you have been elevated to the palace for just such a time as this?”

In the end the queen is successful in getting the king to issue another decree that allows the tribe to defend itself, which effectively negates the king’s former decree. For his part in the shenanigans, the prime minister is hung on the gallows that he had prepared for the queen’s uncle.

What does this ancient story have to do with ham radio? With the FCC’s June 10, 2004 ruling they have given ham radio the opportunity to defend itself in a positive way against the BPL threat. It is now up to us to use our creativity to make it happen. Are we going to be a part of the problem or are we going to be a part of the solution? Perhaps a bit of rewording of the uncle’s question might be in order for us and our hobby: “What’s more, who can say but that we are active in our hobby for just such a time as this?”

#### Next Issue of CQ VHF

New columnists: The fall issue will feature two new columnists, John Champa, K8OCL, and Keith Pugh, W5IU. You have read articles by John in several of past issues. In this issue is Part 3 of his series on HSMM communications. In the fall issue he will step in to fill the shoes of Neil Sablatzky, K8IT, who had to step down due to other obligations.

Keith Pugh, W5IU, fills the shoes of Tom Webb, WA9AFM. Tom has had an increase in job responsibilities which prevents him from doing much with ham radio. Now that Keith is retired, he is able to devote more time to the hobby. Knowing how one’s schedule gets filled once one retires, I moved quickly to secure Keith before he got too busy. Keith is in charge of AMSAT’s on-the-air nets and is the former Vice President for Operations for AMSAT. This is not the first time that Keith and I have worked together. When I was editor of the *QCWA Journal*, Keith was my satellite columnist. I am sure that as you already have come to appreciate John’s con-