

ALERT

NTIA Releases Report on Quantitative Assessments of Federal Spectrum Candidates for Commercial Use

November 21, 2016

On November 17, 2016, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) released a report on Quantitative Assessments of Spectrum Usage (Report) providing quantitative assessments of several frequency bands currently allocated for federal use that have the greatest potential for sharing with commercial providers without adversely affecting agencies' missions. The Report, which NTIA released in response to a 2013 Presidential Memorandum, will be valuable to NTIA and industry in their efforts to identify spectrum that can be repurposed for commercial uses.

The Report presents quantitative assessments of the 1300-1390 MHz, 1675-1695 MHz, 2700-2900 MHz, 2900-3100 MHz, and 3100-3550 MHz bands and looks at whether frequency, geographic, or temporal sharing opportunities appear promising for further study. According to NTIA, the findings from its Report will be one consideration as it decides whether to study further a particular band, stating that "any such further detailed evaluations would need to take into account all current and future federal activities in a band as well as technical, operational, and cost considerations." NTIA also plans to incorporate the quantitative assessment processes into its regular reviews of agency frequency assignments.

The Report notes that the methods used to quantify spectrum use did not take into consideration airborne use or federal assignments that authorize federal use across the entire United States.

Authors

Edgar Class
Partner
202.719.7504
eclass@wiley.law

Daniel P. Brooks
Partner
202.719.4183
dbrooks@wiley.law

Practice Areas

Telecom, Media & Technology

Below is an overview of some of the key findings in the Report.

1300-1390 MHz Band. The Report finds that the opportunities for frequency and geographic sharing in the 1300-1350 MHz sub-band are extremely limited and that there will be no opportunities for time sharing while federal government long-range radars remain in the band. The Report notes, however, that an interagency initiative is currently underway to explore the feasibility of relocating Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) long-range air surveillance radars to the 2700-3100 MHz band, which would significantly improve the potential for sharing in the 1300-1350 MHz sub-band.

The Report similarly concludes that there are no opportunities for frequency sharing in the 1350-1390 MHz sub-band and that opportunities for geographic sharing are limited. With the exception of a small number of long-range surveillance systems, however, the Report states there is an opportunity for time sharing with terrestrial and airborne systems operating in the 1365-1390 MHz range.

1675-1695 MHz Band. The Report finds there are no opportunities for frequency sharing in the band, but notes there may be geographic sharing opportunities with federal receive stations, contingent upon the successful completion of a feasibility study. The Report indicates the planned migration of radiosonde receive stations from this band to the 400.15–406 MHz band will significantly improve opportunities for geographic sharing with federal receive earth stations, though a feasibility study will be required to assess the potential impact to other systems that remain in the band. The Report did not consider the widespread use of non-federal earth stations by broadcast stations, universities and public-safety organizations receiving meteorological data from federal satellites.

2700-2900 MHz Band. The Report finds there are no opportunities for frequency or geographic sharing. In addition, because Air Traffic Control (ATC) and Next Generation Radar (NEXRAD) systems supporting safety-of-life functions are operating essentially 100 percent of the time, there is no opportunity for time sharing.

2900-3100 MHz Band. The Report finds there are no opportunities for frequency sharing and that opportunities for time sharing are limited. Geographic sharing opportunities may exist, however, contingent upon the successful completion of a sharing feasibility study. The Report states that a significant change in the quantitative assessment frequency and geographic usage data would occur if relocation of FAA long-range surveillance radars from the 1300-1350 MHz band to this band is found to be feasible.

3100-3550 MHz Band. The Report finds there are potential opportunities for frequency sharing, particularly in the 3505-3550 MHz portion of the band. In addition, geographic sharing opportunities may exist, particularly in the upper 45 MHz portion of the band, contingent upon the successful completion of a feasibility study.