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What the Industry Reads First

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Spectrum Sharing: Federated Deploying Commercial CBRS

Federated Wireless has reached the end of a long, winding road, announcing Tuesday that it will be the first company to begin initial commercial deployment of its CBRS services to more than 20 customers across 36 states immediately upon the **FCC's** public notice of approval. Federated has been working toward the goal since 2012, most recently completing a \$51mln round of Series C funding and receiving FCC certification of its environmental sensor capability in late April. Longtime Federated customers **Verizon**, **Charter** and **American Tower** are onboard for the initial launch. For Verizon, it's all about densifying its network and how CBRS could benefit 5G deployment. At its best, the dynamic spectrum sharing (when paired with scheduler algorithms) will allow the carrier to deploy 5G with 4G carriers. The promise of what CBRS could do to increase broadband availability in rural America has enticed cable operator **Midco** to become a Federated customer. Through their partnership, Midco and Federated will attempt to connect rural communities via fixed wireless solutions. "Now they can tap into the LTE ecosystem instead of using proprietary technology. They can tap into more spectrum to increase the throughput capabilities of these networks," Federated CTO *Kurt Schaubach* told **Cablefax**. "Of all the applications, this one will probably scale the quickest." That's because operators like Midco are already on the ground in their communities and have the equipment necessary to quickly expand their subscriber base and improve offerings to their current customers. "They don't have to wait for device penetration because they'll just deploy as they need to," Schaubach explained, adding that significant announcements around fixed wireless could be coming as quickly as in the next few months. "These companies are ready to scale up in a big way very quickly." Travelers may also begin to see improvements in their wireless experiences with **Boingo Wireless** signing on to partner with Federated. The CBRS deployment will begin at Dallas Love Field Airport, which serves more than 15mln passengers annually. Boingo will then be able to set up a neutral host network in the airport, allowing for part of the network to serve private airport employees while the rest stays available to those coming and going. Even though the 150MHz of spectrum available in the CBRS band has long been seen as an area of opportunity, finding a way to bring on new band users without disrupting incumbents (including the US Navy) slowed commercial deployment until now. And now some believe that the creative thinking by both the private companies looking to deploy com-



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mercial CBRS and federal agencies will serve as an example of what’s possible when all parties are willing to do what it takes to deliver the best wireless experiences to the American public. “We must remember the decision to replace static exclusion zones with dynamic protection areas is what got us to this point where nationwide wireless broadband service could even be viable in the mid band, 3.5GHz,” **NTIA** associate administrator, office of spectrum management *Charles Cooper* said at the agency’s Spectrum Policy Symposium Tuesday. “This is a kind of bold and innovative thinking that the spectrum community needs.” **The CBRS Alliance** will celebrate the launch on Sept 18 in DC with **FCC** commish *Michael O’Rielly*, **WISPA** pres/CEO *Claude Aiken* and Verizon svp, network planning *Adam Koeppe* all set to make appearances at the 9am breakfast.

Disney Issues DirecTV Blackout Warning: **ESPN** came out swinging during the first MNF game of the season, running a graphic during its telecast warning **AT&T/DirecTV** customers that they could soon lose the channel and others. Despite the splashy venue for the warning, Disney’s website on the carriage negotiations was more bare bones than notices it previously ran against **DISH** when the **Fox Networks** were facing a possible drop. The DirecTV-focused site reads more like a legal notice with tiny print outlining the **ABC** O&Os and other Disney networks that could be removed from DirecTV and AT&T if a new deal isn’t reached soon (reportedly around the end of the month). **ACC Network**, which has carriage on DirecTV but not AT&T, is also included in the negotiations. Not included are the Fox networks Disney recently bought. That’s because AT&T and Fox reached a broad, multi-year renewal last fall that included the **FX**, **Nat Geo**, Fox O&Os, **FS1**, regionals sports nets (now owned by **Sinclair**) and other channels. Both sides, which have been involved in a flurry of negotiations lately, said they hoped to reach a deal. “Our contract with AT&T for the ABC, ESPN, Disney, and **Free-form** networks is due to expire soon, so we have a responsibility to make our viewers aware of the potential loss of our programming. However, we remain fully committed to reaching a deal and are hopeful we can do so,” ESPN said. AT&T’s statement: “We’re disappointed to see The Walt Disney Co. put their viewers into the middle of negotiations. We are on the side of consumer choice and value and want to keep Disney channels and owned-and-operated local ABC stations in eight cities in our customers’ lineups. We hope to avoid any interruption to the services some of our customers care about. Our goal is always to deliver the content our customers want at a value that also makes sense to them. We’ll continue to fight for that here and appreciate their patience while we work this matter out.”

Comcast Brings on the (Hallmark) Drama: It’s been nearly two years since **Crown Media** launched its third standalone linear network, **Hallmark Drama**, and carriage has been steadily climbing. On Tuesday, **Comcast** announced it is now offering the channel on its Digital Preferred package. The deal gives Hallmark Drama carriage in about 25 million homes,



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up from about 5mln at its October 2017 launch. The net has deals in place with most major platforms, including **DirecTV** and **Cox**. Still in the works? **Verizon**, some **NCTC** members, and **Charter**, which only carries Hallmark Drama on its TV Essentials OTT offering. Crown launched the new channel at a time when distributors have been pushing for a downsizing of the programming bundle. Even powerhouse **ESPN** has encountered roadblocks in getting carriage for the new **ACC Network**, which Comcast still hasn't agreed to offer. "We've seen interest. I think because of the success of **Hallmark Channel** and **Hallmark Movies & Mysteries** and just the success our content has created. There's this sensational appetite for Hallmark content," *Erin McIlvain*, evp content strategy & distribution, told **Cablefax**. "Timing wise, we wish we were in 70mln homes today, but the reality is the distributors are really, really busy and we have to pick our timing in order to get fully engaged." The Comcast launch coincides with Hallmark Drama's first original content, including holiday specials "Christmas Cookie Match Up" and "Project Christmas Joy" as well a sequel to 2016 Hallmark Movies & Mysteries original movie "JL Family Ranch," with *Jon Voight*, *James Caan* and *Bo Derek*. McIlvain said Hallmark Drama became **Nielsen** rated in April and has pretty consistently seen HH coverage ratings in the Top 50, if not Top 40.

Maine Hit with A la Carte Lawsuit: **A+E Networks**, **C-SPAN**, **CBS**, **Discovery** and a beaucoup of media companies joined **Comcast** in filing suit against the state of Maine over a law passed by the legislature that requires cable operators to offer subs the option of purchasing channels or programs individually. "Maine's effort to foist an 'à la carte' regime on these industry participants not only is unlawful, but would end up causing the very harms it seeks to avoid—namely, higher costs and reduced programming choice," the lawsuit said, arguing that Maine's statute is prohibited by federal law and violates First Amendment rights. The companies need the court to act soon as the law is scheduled to take effect on Sept 19. Also joining the suit are **Disney**, **Fox**, **NBCU**, **New England Sports Network** and **Viacom**.

Sports Ousts News Out of Top Ratings Spot: **ESPN** edged out **Fox News** for the No 1 spot in prime among cable networks last week, with 2.53mln total viewers compared to the news net's 2.22mln. ESPN's college football match-up between Notre Dame and Louisville was the top cable program of the week, but it was also helped by strong numbers for the US Open. The 2019 US Open was the most watched ever on **ESPN**, pulling in an average of 1.275mln viewers (P2+), up 23% from last year. The previous best was 2015, ESPN's first year of exclusivity and airing the entire tournament with 1.265mln. Fox News held on the top spot in total day, out pacing ESPN with 1.31mln to its 1.03mln. "Hannity's" broadcast on Sept 4 ranked the highest-rated non-sports cable telecast for the week with 3.42mln viewers.

Apple TV+ is (Finally) Coming: Is it really September if **Apple** doesn't make a slew of announcements? The company's upcoming streaming service **Apple TV+** will launch on Nov 1 for \$4.99 per month after a 7-day free trial, and includes family access for up to six people. Plus, buy a new iPhone, iPad, Mac, iPod touch (they still make those?) or Apple TV and get the streamer free for a year. The \$4.99 price tag is cheaper than nearly all of its major competitors, but it's important to note that Apple doesn't have the backlog of content that upcoming HBO Max and Disney+ will have to lean on while producing new content. However, Apple is leaning into originals, with *Bloomberg* reporting the company upped its content budget for the first year from \$1bln to \$6bln. Plus, it has Oprah...

Discovery Goes All in on TV Measurement: It's an exciting time to be in the ad attribution space, and **Discovery** is getting in on the action in a partnership with **605**. The TV measurement firm has the nation's largest combined dataset from multiple MVPD and ACR viewership sources, totaling nearly 40mln households. With this partnership, Discovery and 605 can use data to help brands determine campaign effectiveness across the full marketing funnel, from brand lift to engagement to sales and return on ad spend. Discovery says it will now be able to target audiences who are most responsive to TV campaigns and improve campaigns on an ongoing basis. The new service will be offered through the Discovery Engage product, its data management and analytics platform for targeting, optimization and measurement beyond traditional demographic information.

WarnerMedia Shakes Up Distribution: The **Turner** and **HBO** distribution teams are coming together, led by *Sofia Chang* and *Rich Warren*, who will now share the title president, WarnerMedia Distribution. The pair will oversee distribution for all Turner channels, HBO, **Cinemax** and **HBO Max**. Chang most recently held the title evp, global distribution, HBO and Warren served as president, Turner content distribution. Warren will remain in Atlanta and Chang in NYC, with teams in both cities. While the pair will work closely together, Chang will have more of a focus on marketing and partner managements, and Warren will focus on distribution deals, business & legal affairs, strategic and financial planning, operations and business development.

A Very Brady Monday: The Monday night premiere of "A Very Brady Renovation" on **HGTV** delivered a 1.43 P25-54 L+SD rating and a 1.52 P2+ L+SD rating, making it the highest-rated season premiere in HGTV history. The 90-minute episode goes down as HGTV's highest-rated telecast in over two-and-a-half years.