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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Climate Chat: EarthX Looks to Convince MVPDs to Launch Linear Network

As the **SEC** announced proposed rule changes Monday that would require publicly traded companies to disclose climate-related risks and greenhouse emissions, some of those publicly traded MVPDs are contemplating launching a linear network focused on the future of the planet—and it's free.

Nonprofit environmental organization **EarthX** had more than 170,000 people at its last in-person gathering in Dallas, pre-COVID-19. The group was founded in 2011 by *Trammell S. Crow*, who was named after his father, head of what at one point was the largest real estate developer in the nation. When the pandemic hit, EarthX had to take its mix of Earth Day panels and conferences virtual. As a result, **EarthxTV** was born. It has beefed up to more than 300+ hours of free content available online and via Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire and Google TV, but it has set its sights on linear distribution.

In November, former **Ride TV** CEO *Michael Fletcher* was brought in as co-CEO to help get the channel launched. He's already held a few meetings with pay TV execs and he's feeling good about securing some distribution agreements soon in both the U.S. as well as Latin America and Europe. "It's the first time in my decades of being in the cable industry when I have gone in, had meetings with programming departments of MVPDs and actually had very little resistance," he told **CFX**. "The channel is free. It is on point with its message. Most of the MVPDs really do care about sustainability."

Fletcher spent years building Ride TV from the ground up before selling it to **GAC Media** last year. So, he's certainly familiar with the operator refrain, 'we'd love to launch you, but there's not enough bandwidth.' Fletcher has gotten a little of that in these early-day talks for EarthxTV, but he has an answer: "1. We're free. 2. We understand bandwidth costs money. Therefore, we have a system whereby you have certain tax benefits that more than offset that. And we do bring marketing cash to the table, so there's marketing support. ... And it's just the right thing to do."

Those tax incentives come down to EarthxTV's launch being considered a charitable tax donation because of the channel space being given to a nonprofit, Fletcher explained.

EarthxTV has a mix of acquired programming and originals, such as seven-episode docuseries, "The Road to Glasgow," which looks at the major events leading up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), the world's largest climate event. Last year, the network brought in **CuriosityStream** exec *Dan Russell* as EVP of Content & Strategy, and he turbocharged programming acquisitions. "Dan's already acquired 400 new hours of content for us and we're in the process of acquiring another 700 hours. We're also in the process of creating new series, with three or four in development right now," Fletcher said.

With no carriage fees, what is EarthxTV's revenue model? It's ad free for now, but it doesn't want to stay that way. Conversations with a select group of advertisers have already



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begun, with any revenue coming in to go back into content and to community impact work, according to Fletcher. Those initial advertiser conversations have been promising. "It's mind blowing how many companies also have ESG [Environmental, Social, Governance] programs that they're very dedicated to, and they would like their customers to know," Fletcher said.

MVPDs are among those with ESG efforts. **Comcast** recently announced an innovative process for recycling coax cable. **Cox** operates one of the nation's largest and greenest fleets, with 90% of network operations vehicles using a hybrid operating system and zero emissions vehicles during aerial operations. **Cable One** has partnered with the Arbor Day Foundation for seven years, planting more than 110,000 trees on behalf of customers who switch to paperless billing.

Operators' own words seem to endorse EarthxTV's mission. "Through the content that we bring into our customers' homes we believe broadcasters have a clear role and responsibility to encourage lifestyle changes that address the climate crisis," Sky CEO *Dana Strong* said in releasing a report on Europeans' view around climate change and TV at COP26.

EarthX is clearly inviting MVPDs to be part of the conversation. The upcoming Earthx2022 Earth Day celebration (April 20-24, Dallas) is also the exclusive host for the United Nations SDG Media Summit, a continuation of conversations from the COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland. Invitations have been extended to two unnamed MVPDs to sit down and discuss with the UN the role media plays in sustainability.

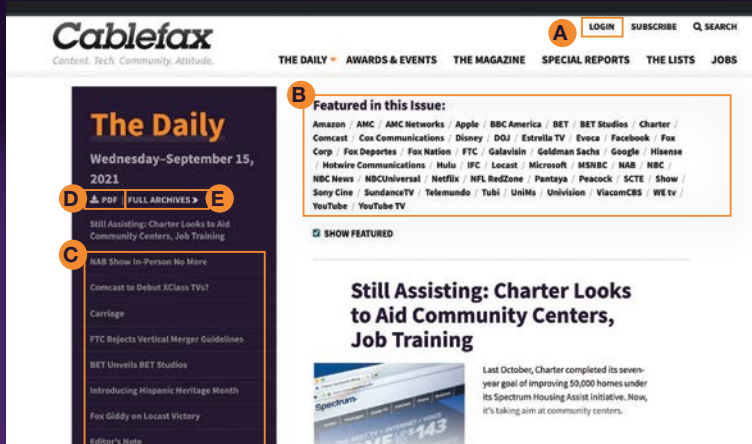
Next week, EarthxTV is hosting a discussion in Washington for

members of Congress and cable leaders to delve into what's happening in sustainability. Special guests include House Commerce Ranking Member *Cathy McMorris Rodgers* (R-WA), House Communications Subcommittee Chairman *Mike Doyle* (D-PA) and Charter SVP, Government Affairs *Vanessa Sinders*. "We'll be doing this a lot. We'll look for new opportunities to bring stakeholders together," Fletcher said. "To my knowledge, there's certainly no one else investing the kind of capital that we're investing in content, and then building out a 24/7 network. We think it's incumbent upon the cable operators, and of course, satellite as well, to kind of put their money where their mouth is and do something they can feel good about and launch a channel that has meaning for the planet."

DATE SET FOR FCC'S 2.5 GHZ AUCTION

The official start of bidding in the **FCC's** 2.5 GHz band spectrum auction is set for July 29. The Commission voted to adopt application and bidding procedures for the auction, which will place approximately 8,000 flexible-use county-based overlay licenses up for grabs to support 5G wireless services. Commissioner *Brendan Carr* made it clear in a statement that he still stands by the Commission's original January 2021 proposal that would have seen a simultaneous multi-round auction format be used, but he voted to approve an ascending clock format to prevent any further slowdowns in scheduling. In conjunction with the release of the auction procedures, the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau and Office of Economics and Analytics released a mapping tool that should help potential participants identify whether there is unassigned 2.5 GHz spectrum in a given county.

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NIELSEN REJECTS TAKEOVER BID

Nielsen revealed Sunday that it turned down an unsolicited bid from a private equity consortium that valued the measurement company at \$25.40/share. The announcement seemingly confirmed reports from last week that **Elliott Management** and **Brookfield Asset Management** had joined together in a consortium to propose a \$15 billion purchase of Nielsen. Nielsen's board said it reached the decision to reject the offer after a comprehensive review of the proposal as well as discussions with **The WindAcre Partnership**, one of Nielsen's largest shareholders. A determination was made that the deal was unlikely to receive approval from the company's shareholders. "We are always open to exploring any avenue to create value for shareholders, but the Board is in agreement with WindAcre, one of our largest shareholders, that the Consortium's proposal significantly undervalues the Company," Board Chair *James Attwood* said in a statement. He added that the board plans to move forward with \$1 billion in share repurchases in an effort to show its confidence in Nielsen and its growth opportunities. That's set to begin sometime after the company's 1Q22 earnings release on April 21. Nielsen's stock had dropped nearly 7 points at market close Monday.

VERIZON GAINS ACCESS TO MORE C-BAND FASTER

Verizon has negotiated deals with some satellite providers to grant it early clearance of the second phase of C-band spectrum, allowing it to bring its 5G Ultra Wideband service to more metro areas much sooner than expected. Verizon wasn't expecting to see that spectrum until December 2023, its original scheduled clearance date. Now, at least 30 additional market areas will gain access to the service by the end of the year, including Atlanta, Denver, Baltimore and DC.

SPECTRUM LAUNCHES ENTERPRISE NETWORK EDGE

Spectrum Enterprise launched a new solution Monday aimed at helping businesses more easily manage larger-scale networks. Enterprise Network Edge brings together advanced security functionalities, connectivity options and co-management capabilities. It all can be accessed via a cloud-based portal. The product also supports hybrid WAN configurations in areas where there are various mixes of legacy WAN and newer SD-WAN infrastructure.

BLUE RIDGE SPEEDS TOWARDS 10G

Blue Ridge Communications tapped cloud and software platform provider **Calix** to help it deliver higher symmetrical speeds to its entire footprint. Once deployed, Calix's Intelligent Access EDGE solution should allow for the delivery of 10Gbps speeds to the provider's entire service area, which includes more than 250,000 homes. Blue Ridge expects a significant drop in operating expenses, up to 50%, as well as a drop in energy consumption of up to 90% over DOCSIS/HFC.

FOX, HALL ASSISTED BY SAVE OUR ALLIES

Last week, **Fox News** staffers were attacked by incoming fire from Russian military. Two were killed and correspondent *Benjamin Hall* was hospitalized, but his status was unclear for a short period. Eventually, it was announced Hall left Ukraine safely,

which was assisted by **Save Our Allies**. The organization's founder *Sarah Verardo* was on Fox News Monday to discuss the operation, adding Hall is continuing his recovery in Germany. "This is a very complex situation, but we have people on our team that are willing to go into harm's way to protect those from evil and especially when we got that call for help from Fox, we could not move quickly enough to mobilize a multi-national effort to secure Ben's extraction from a very dangerous combat zone," Verardo said on the air. She added the operation to get Hall out of Ukraine would typically take "months to plan" alongside coordination across multiple government agencies and countries.

COMCAST EXPANDS IN PACIFIC NW

Comcast is expanding service to Silverton, Oregon, in a \$10.6 million project that'll grant nearly 5,000 residents access to Xfinity Internet. Customers can have speeds of up to 1.2 Gbps, and **Comcast Business** will enable speeds of up to 10 Gbps for commercial customers. – **Comcast** opened a new 1,569 square-foot Xfinity store in Covington, Wash., to meet needs of a growing customer base in the area. Comcast now has 20 Xfinity retail locations in Washington.

CARRIAGE

FOX News Media is expanding distribution of its streaming services across **DirectTV** platforms. **FOX Nation** is available as a premium add-on for \$5.99/month with plans to expand availability to DirectTV Stream in the summer. For a limited time, DirectTV customers can get a 60-day free trial. **FOX Weather** is set to debut on DirectTV Stream on March 29. – **Curiosity Inc.** partnered with **LG** to launch **Curiosity Now**, a FAST channel available on all LG Smart TV 4.0 and newer models. The channel offers select programming of original and curated documentaries such as "Ancient Engineering," "The Secret Lives of Big Cats," "Stephen Hawking's Favorite Places," and more.

ON THE CIRCUIT

The **WICT Network** unveiled the lineup for its [Signature Luncheon](#) on April 14. *Jen Neal*, EVP, Live Events & Specials, **E!** News will serve as the luncheon's honorary chair and facilitate a keynote conversation alongside **NBC Sports** commentator *Kathryn Tappen*. The lunch includes a fireside chat with *Allison Glock* and *Dawn Porter*, filmmakers of **ESPN's** Fifty/50 Initiative. Additionally, Title IX champion *Aja Evans*, WICT Network Global Board Chair *Sandra Howe* and *Leigh Woisard*, SVP, Corporate Communications, **Cox Communications**, will present celebratory medals to a number of Title IX champions.

PEOPLE

Long-time **NTIA** leader *Evelyn L. Remaley* joined **Wilkinson Barker Knauer** as a partner. Remaley most recently served as Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and Acting Administrator at NTIA. She's also been involved in the NTIA's Office of Policy Analysis and Development where she led a team providing senior policy support to the Secretary of Commerce and the White House. – After a year-long sabbatical, former **Univision** PR pro *Rosemary Mercedes* is joining **BBC Studios** in the Americas to run its communications.