

A Brief History of the Voice of America's Dixon Transmitter and Its later acquisition by Globe Wireless for Maritime Communications

When the Office of War Information (OWI) initiated shortwave radio broadcasting during World War II, it turned to commercial broadcasters to fill the need for facilities and equipment and to contract operators to staff the stations. In order to broadcast to target audiences in Asia and the Pacific two identical stations were built in California - one at Dixon, near Sacramento, and the other at Delano, near Bakersfield.

Construction was started at Dixon in 1943. The Dixon station first went on the air on December 27, 1944, operated by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) under contract to the US Government's Office of War Information (OWI). The Delano station was operated in a similar fashion by the Columbia broadcasting System (CBS). Federal government operation of Dixon was assumed on November 1, 1963.

The original complement of the station was four RCA 50 kilowatt transmitters and two Federal Telegraph Company modulators. Each modulator fed two of the transmitters. Federal later built a 200 kilowatt transmitter for Dixon. While operated by NBC, the transmitters at Dixon were operated under the call signs of **KNBA**, **KNBC**, **KNBI** and **KNBX**. The original antennas were rhombics and the target areas were Japan, Australia and the Philippines.

About 1952 two General Electric G-IOOC transmitters, 100 kilowatts each, were installed. A major modernization was undertaken in 1965. The building was expanded at the front and three Collins 821A-I transmitters, 250 kilowatts each, were installed.

The station temporarily ceased broadcasting in August, 1979 and remained in a caretaker status until October, 1983 when it resumed operation. During this period of operation its primary function was to provide Spanish language programming to Central America. Broadcasts were again suspended in April, 1988 as the result of reductions in operating budgets.

On September 30, 1993 the Voice of America relinquished its interest in the 800 acres of land, the buildings, the antennas and the skeletons of five high-powered shortwave transmitters. The property was put up for sale by the San Francisco office of the General Services Administration and ultimately sold to a private owner. The decommissioning of Dixon brought to a close a fifty year long chapter in the history of international shortwave broadcasting by the United States government.

On May 15, 1998 Globe Wireless announced that it had acquired the former Dixon Relay Station, located eight miles Southeast of Dixon, California to be used to connect vessels in the Pacific Ocean with land based electronic mail systems, including the Internet.

Still remaining on the site were two massive dipole curtain arrays and ten rhombic antennas, most still in operating condition. Skeletons of the GE and Collins transmitters also remain.

Globe Wireless plans to install transmitters and antennas for its maritime public coast station **KFS** at the new site. The current **KFS** transmitter location, in Palo Alto,

California, will be phased out of operation over the next few years.

"Room for expansion at MX is severely limited," stated Rod Deakin, Chief Engineer of Globe Wireless. The new site in Dixon will give us plenty of space to add transmitters and antennas as the Global Radio Network grows," continued Deakin. (MX, which stands for Marsh Transmitter, is the traditional landline telegraph designator for the KFS Palo Alto transmitter site -a marshy area on the shore of San Francisco Bay.)

In fact, according to company officials, Globe Wireless may also relocate the transmitters for public coast station **KPH** to the new Dixon location. Transfer of that station's license to Globe Wireless from MCI International is pending FCC approval. The MCI station currently transmits from Bolinas, California.

Aeronautical Radio, Inc. (ARINC) will sublease space at the Dixon site from Globe Wireless. ARINC is installing transmitters to communicate with the flight crews of aircraft flying over the Pacific Ocean and South America.

Globe Wireless^(R) based in Half Moon Bay, California, is a maritime communications service provider dedicated to the modernization of high frequency (HF) radio for marine applications. Their new service, GlobeEmailSM, is revolutionized HF radio data communications. In addition, an entire range of wireless messaging services including electronic mail, facsimile, telex, and telegrams is available worldwide. The company operates the Global Radio NetworkTM of public coast stations including **A9M** in Bahrain, **KEJ** in Hawaii, **KFS** in California, **SAB** in Sweden, **VCT** in Newfoundland, **WNU** in Louisiana and **ZLA** in New Zealand.

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