

# FirstLight High-Speed Internet Service Expansion Update

Over the past four years a team of residents and local leaders in the Mahoosuc region (i.e., SAD44 towns) has been actively pursuing the expansion of affordable, reliable, high-speed, universal broadband service for the towns of Bethel, Gilead, Greenwood, Newry and Woodstock plus the Unorganized Territory of Albany. This effort has contributed to FirstLight being awarded a \$5.3 million Partnerships for Enabling Middle Mile (PEMM) grant from the Maine Connectivity Authority that will support the expansion of high-speed internet service across 23 towns and communities, including the Mahoosuc towns.

The towns of Bethel, Gilead, Greenwood, and Woodstock plus Oxford County contributed \$317,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the project, and FirstLight is matching the PEMM grant.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***1. What towns and communities are included in this project?***

Bethel, Newry, Greenwood, Woodstock, Bryant Pond, Albany Township, Gilead, West Bethel, Mason, Upton, Buckfield, Hartford, Canton, Sumner, West Paris, North Norway, Andover, Roxbury Pond, Turner and North Turner and parts of Mason Township, Byron, Hanover, Minot and Livermore.

### ***2. What service is FirstLight making available?***

FirstLight is expanding its fiber optic network which delivers high-speed internet service and enhances remote work opportunities, e-commerce capabilities, access to online education and training programs and supports economic growth and entrepreneurship. Unlike other technologies that are asymmetrical (i.e., higher download speeds than upload speeds), fiber is symmetrical which means that upload and download speeds are the same. Fiber is also more reliable and future-ready than other broadband technologies.

### **3. What is the cost per month and is there an installation charge?**

The residential installation charge of \$99.00 and \$199.00 for businesses is waived for the promotional period of one year following completion of the project in each town.

#### **Residential Pricing**

<b>Speed</b>	<b>Non-Recurring Charge*</b>	<b>Monthly Charge</b>
50/50 Mbps	\$99.00	\$49.99
100/100 Mbps	\$99.00	\$59.99
300/300 Mbps	\$99.00	\$89.99
500/500 Mbps	\$99.00	\$99.99
1/1 Gbps	\$99.00	\$125.00

#### **Business Pricing**

<b>Speed</b>	<b>Non-Recurring Charge*</b>	<b>Monthly Charge</b>
50/50 Mbps	\$99.00	\$69.99
100/100 Mbps	\$99.00	\$79.99
300/300 Mbps	\$99.00	\$109.99
500/500 Mbps	\$99.00	\$149.99
1/1 Gbps	\$99.00	\$199.99

*\*For the promotional period (1 year from build ready), NRC shall be waived pursuant to Section 2.3(a).*

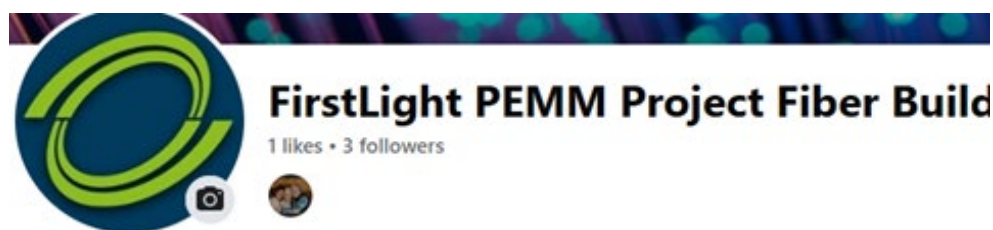
### **4. When will this service be available in my town?**

Fiber expansion will occur in two two-year phases. Phase One will be completed in 2025 and 2026, and Phase Two will be completed in 2027 and 2028. FirstLight's infrastructure build-out has begun in the Mahoosuc region. Below is a preliminary schedule for the project that is contingent on the weather.

Phase	Build	Town	Approximate Dates
1	1	Bethel	Nov 2024 - Feb 2025
1	2	Newry	Feb 2025 - April 2025
1	3	Locke Mills	May 2025 - June 2025
1	4	Bryant Pond	Jul 2025 - Aug 2025
1	5	Albany	Sep 2025 - Oct 2025
1	6	Gilead	Nov 2025 - Dec 2025
1	7	West Bethel	Jan 2026 - Apr 2026
1	8	Mason	May-26
1	9	Upton	Jun 2026 - Jul 2026
1	10	N Turner	Aug 2026 - Sep 2026
1	11	Turner	Oct 2026 - 1Q 2027
2	12	Buckfield	2027
2	13a	Canton	2027
2	13b	Sumner	2027
2	14	West Paris	2027
2	15a	Andover	2028
2	15b	Roxbury Pond	2028
2	16	North Norway	2028

## 5. When can I place my order?

You may request service after you receive a letter in the mail letting you know that Fiber is available at your location. You can also track FirstLight’s progress on its Facebook page, “FirstLight PEMM Project Fiber Build.”



In addition, a message will be added to the bill for active accounts (i.e., FirstLight active subscribers). FirstLight will also contact all residents who have an active account or inactive account with FirstLight, provided FirstLight has a current phone number or email address.

## 6. How can I sign up for this service?

To request service, go to <https://firstlight-maine.com/>

Input your street address and you will find your options. You may also call **1-833-673-9911** and choose option #3.

**7. Will the *PEMM Grant Fiber* connect to every location?**

FirstLight will provide a fiber connection up to 1000 feet to a residence or business at no cost, using existing conduit if possible. There may be locations that FirstLight cannot connect to, such as if there is more than 1000 feet of underground wiring to the location or if the location doesn't have access to electrical power.

**8. Will *FirstLight* connect to my location if I have solar power?**

Yes, FirstLight should be able to connect to locations with solar power. FirstLight can offer a battery backup to customers with solar power. (A battery backup of up to 8 hours is provided to each Fiber customer. FirstLight also sells a battery backup of up to 24 hours.)

**9. I am a current subscriber to *FirstLight Fiber*. Can I get the pricing that the *PEMM Grant Fiber* subscribers are getting?**

Yes, customers may call and request the PEMM pricing. PEMM pricing is available upon request to locations with the town(s) that are in the process of being built or have been built.

**10. I have had access to *FirstLight Fiber* prior to the *PEMM Grant* but haven't signed up for service yet. Can I get the pricing that is available to *PEMM Grant Fiber* subscribers?**

Yes, customers may call and request the PEMM pricing. PEMM pricing is available upon request to locations with the town(s) that are in process of being built or have been built.

**11. I have a landline phone with service from *Oxford Networks*, and I want to keep it. Do I have to sign up for *Fiber internet service* and will the pricing for my phone service change?**

You may keep your phone service, and the pricing will not change. Signing up for Fiber internet service is optional.

## 12. What level of internet service should I subscribe to?

It depends on how you will be using the internet and the number of devices connected to the internet. See the table below.

<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Number of Devices</i>	<i>Recommended speed range</i>
Browsing the internet and email	1 – 2	3 – 10 Mbps
Browsing the internet, email and Streaming	3 – 5	10 – 100 Mbps
Browsing the internet, streaming, gaming, remote work	6 – 10	100 – 500 Mbps
Competitive gaming, ultra-connected smart home, content creation	10 – 40	500 – 1,000 Mbps
Heavy internet use, bandwidth-intensive tasks, high-resolution video and data transfers	40 and up	1,000 Mbps & up

Source: USA Today

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## Digital Support for Oxford County Residents

Below and on **Community Concepts Finance Corporation's website** is information about digital equity resources available in Oxford County (<https://www.ccfcmaine.org/service/internet-computer-resources/>).

- **Lifeline** provides a \$9.25 monthly subsidy for phone or internet service for residents whose income qualifies them for this subsidy. Contact Julie at CCFC for help applying for Lifeline (207-743-7716).

Customers who have landline phone service and no internet may also qualify for Lifeline which provides a total monthly credit of \$10.25.

Besides the income qualification, which is 135% below the Federal Poverty Guidelines, participation in any of the following programs also qualify for Lifeline:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid or MaineCare
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Veterans Survivors Pension Benefit

## • DEVICES

- **Recycled/refurbished tablets and laptops** are available to Oxford County residents who need a device and cannot afford to buy a new one. Contact Julie at CCFC to apply for a laptop or tablet (207-743-7716).
- **GiveIT.GetIT**, based in Waterville, is another source of refurbished, low-cost laptop and desktop computers (207-338-4233, <https://giveitgetit.org/get-it/apply-for-it/>).

## • SKILLS TO USE A DEVICE

- **Free Tech Help** is available at nine libraries and organizations around the County every week:
  - Ludden Library in Dixfield
  - Rumford Public Library
  - HOPE Association
  - Bethel Library
  - Whitman Library in Woodstock
  - Norway Library
  - West Paris Library
  - Fryeburg Library
  - Paris Library

Call or email CCFC's Digital Navigator, Jim, to schedule an appointment (207-508-1757, [jawhitman@community-concepts.org](mailto:jawhitman@community-concepts.org)). Walk-ins are welcome, too.

- **The National Digital Equity Center** offers 40+ free online and onsite interactive classes. Nine locations in Oxford County offer NDEC classes:
  - Bethel Library
  - SAD44 Adult Education
  - Region 9 Adult Education
  - HOPE Association
  - Lake Region & Fryeburg Area Adult Education
  - UMA Rumford
  - Progress Center
  - Fryeburg Library
  - SeniorsPlus in Norway

Check NDEC's website for available classes. (<https://digitalequitycenter.org/classes/>).

## • INTERNET SAFETY AND FRAUD PREVENTION

- **Fraud prevention presentations** are available from Oxford Federal Credit Union. Contact Emily Jamison (207-369-1322, [emilyj@ofcu.org](mailto:emilyj@ofcu.org)) to request and schedule a presentation.
- **The AARP Fraud Watch Network** has a Scam-Tracking Map available to check on and to report scams and fraud. Visit [www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/tracking-map/](http://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/tracking-map/).
- **VASAFE.gov** is a new website and call center to protect veterans, service members and their families from fraud and scams. You can also call 833-388-7233 for more information.

