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Newsmakers

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He wants to be aliens' disc jockey

DELAWARE, Ohio — Robert Dixon has been waiting for years to hear a call from space. But no one's been calling him, so he wants to send a signal out to any extraterrestrials out there.

Dixon is the assistant director of Ohio State University's Radio Observatory, a federally supported listening post for alien signals under the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence program.

"I'm negotiating with the Federal Communications Commission for a license to transmit radio signals to extraterrestrial civilizations," Dixon said.

The FCC has never issued such a license, he said, and if it did, this would be the first use of the radio observatory, or telescope, as a transmitter.

Similar instruments, such as the 1,000-foot radiotelescope at Arecibo, Puerto Rico, have on occasion sent messages into space, but never in a lasting effort, said observatory Director John D. Kraus.

The application is being made despite the observatory's shaky future. The radiotelescope is owned by Ohio State but is on a 20-acre portion of a proposed golf course and housing development.

Kraus, Dixon and a private committee have been pursuing a lease agreement with the developer of that property to preserve the instrument. Radiotelescope supporters offered \$150,000 for the site last September, but the offer was refused, said George Foster, the committee chairman.