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Department of Natural Resources

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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State Expands Real-Time GNSS Coverage to Western Alaska

New infrastructure will speed disaster response, reduce costs, and improve data accuracy for Alaska's coastal communities.

(Bethel, AK) – The Alaska Continuously Operating Reference Network (ACORN), a statewide system of real-time Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) reference stations, is expanding to include five Western Alaska villages: Chevak, Scammon Bay, Kongiganak, Quinhagak, and Eek. These communities, which were among those most heavily impacted by Typhoon Halong, will soon benefit from state-of-the-art geodetic infrastructure that supports precise mapping, surveying, and disaster recovery operations.

ACORN (which is operated in collaboration with local, regional, and state partners) provides real-time correction data to improve the accuracy of GNSS positioning from meters to centimeters, while ensuring all base data is on one common coordinate system. The expansion into these Western Alaska villages significantly enhances the efficiency of emergency response, infrastructure reconstruction, and environmental monitoring in a region facing rapid coastal change and climate-driven challenges.

"The ACORN expansion is about much more than technology—it's about resilience," said Erik Oppegard, ACORN Administrator for the Alaska Department of Natural Resources "Every hour saved in the field can make a real difference for communities rebuilding after a storm. These stations will serve as a foundation for smarter, faster, and safer disaster response across Western Alaska."

"Events like Typhoon Halong remind us how critical it is to be ready," Nathaniel Betz of Coastal Villages Region Fund, a key partner, said. "With these stations in place, acquisition teams will have pre-existing geodetic control. That enables significant savings in time and money—as well as quicker access to high-quality data."

In practical terms, the presence of ACORN stations enables a single coordinated mission to accomplish what currently takes several. This not only accelerates data collection in the critical hours and days following a disaster but also provides long-term benefits for infrastructure design, erosion monitoring, water level tracking, flood modeling, and community planning.

The new ACORN stations are designed for year-round operation in Alaska's challenging environment, providing real time and archived data to those who need it. Once the network is fully expanded statewide, ACORN will further integrate Alaska into the national geospatial infrastructure, benefiting both local and federal partners engaged in disaster preparedness and infrastructure modernization. These systems will also help to drive down the long term costs

associated with mapping, surveying, engineering and planning to build communities' ability to be more prepared and resilient during storm events and reducing recovery costs to residents.

The Department of Natural Resources' mission is to develop, conserve, and maximize the use of Alaska's natural resources consistent with the public interest.

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