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Unprecedented Response to CVRF Community Survey Indicates Western Alaskans Are Most Concerned About Housing and Making Ends Meet

ANCHORAGE, AK - Between January 3 and March 6, 2018, Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF) conducted a survey of the 20 western Alaska communities it serves. The response was overwhelming. Nearly 2,000 people, approximately 35% of the adult population, responded online, by phone, or by mail. A summary of the survey's key results is available [here](#).

"We were pleased to see such a high level of interest and engagement in this effort amongst the residents of our region and are grateful to everyone who took the time to respond," said Angie Pinsonneault, CVRF's Director of Business Development. "The nearly 35 percent response rate is remarkably high for a rural survey. When we shared these results, the Congressional delegation asked CVRF to join the local task force of the U.S. Census Bureau to compile best practices for gathering comprehensive data in western Alaska in preparation for the 2020 census."

CVRF is part of the Western Alaska Community Development Quota (CDQ) program. It harvests fish in the Bering Sea and uses the proceeds to fund economic development projects. Residents from Scammon Bay in the north to Platinum in the south and along the Kuskokwim River to Oscarville responded to questionnaires distributed in English, Yup'ik, and Cup'ik.

"We commissioned the survey to improve our understanding of the issues facing our communities and to gain insight into our residents' awareness and perception of our programs and CVRF in general," said Nathaniel Betz, CVRF's Community Benefits Manager. "We want to effectively communicate how we invest in our communities and what our mission is. The survey provides a baseline for measuring how well we do at that and improvements over time." CVRF recently launched a series of educational videos to help explain the CDQ program and CVRF's mission. They are available [here](#).

The survey found that CVRF's residents are deeply concerned about the economic well-being of their communities. Ninety-seven percent (97%) reported that people in their communities have difficulty making money and paying for things their families need. Other key highlights include:

- Most residents see making money (34%) and housing (28%) as the biggest challenges facing their communities. All other challenges, including public safety and healthcare, scored much lower.
- Residents expressed familiarity with CVRF's economic development mission (52%) and how its programs are funded (47%) and are quite familiar with CVRF's programs. For example, 88% are familiar with People Propel[®], which subsidizes purchases of big ticket items such as ATVs and snowmachines, and 85% are familiar with Youth to Work, which

is on track to employ approximately 800 teens this summer. Although it is only in its second year, 34% are familiar with CVRF's newest youth program Ciuneq, which introduces high-achieving students to colleges and vocational education schools, to encourage them to do well in school and consider professions supporting their communities.

- Two-thirds of residents (66%) are familiar with CVRF's "Just Fix CDQ" campaign, which seeks to ensure that the benefits of the CDQ program flow fairly and equitably to the more than 26,000 residents of the 65 CDQ communities. Currently, those benefits flow overwhelmingly to the CDQ groups serving the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands, which have far fewer people and far less need according to an economic need assessment recently released by CVRF. The full report and an executive summary are available [here](#) and [here](#).

"Some of the results surprised us," said Michelle Humphrey, CVRF's Outreach Manager. "For example, we know there is a housing crisis in our communities, but we did not know that it is the greatest concern for nearly a third of residents, ahead of public safety and other issues that tend to draw more attention. We will certainly be taking that and other results into account as we evaluate CVRF's current programs and design new ones."

"Other results confirm what we hear from our residents at community meetings. When we discuss our 'Just Fix CDQ' campaign, people understand that the unbalanced CDQ quota allocations result in unfair benefits distribution and express a lot of frustration with the federal officials who are hesitant to make things right. These results show just how widely the message and voter awareness have spread. We expect the message will resonate with other CDQ communities that are affected by the inequity in the CDQ program, such as those in Norton Sound, as we share it with them this summer," continued Humphrey.

CVRF has been discussing the gross imbalance in CDQ benefits, the need assessment, and the survey results at community meetings in western Alaska, with federal and state politicians, and at trade shows such as the Bristol Bay Fish Expo in Naknek earlier this month. More community meetings are scheduled next week in Goodnews Bay, Quinhagak, Tununak, and Toksook Bay, culminating in a meeting in Nome at Old St. Joe's Hall on Friday, June 29, 2018, at 5:30 pm.

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Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF) is a 501(c)(4) Alaska non-profit corporation with 20 member communities located along the west coast of Alaska, from Scammon Bay to Platinum. It is one of six Community Development Quota (CDQ) groups granted fishing rights in the Bering Sea to foster sustainable and diversified local economies in western Alaska.

CVRF is dedicated to creating sensible, tangible, and long-term economic development opportunities that generate hope for the more than 9,300 residents of its communities. CVRF is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of one member elected from each community. It is the largest Alaskan-owned seafood company in history and the first CDQ group to own and control the vessels that harvest the vast majority of its CDQ allocations.

*For more information, visit www.CoastalVillages.org and
www.facebook.com/CoastalVillagesRegionFund.*