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November 21, 2023

Anchorage Assembly
Municipality of Anchorage
632 West 6th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

RE: Eklutna Draft Fish and Wildlife Program

Dear Members of the Assembly,

Eklutna, Inc. reviewed the draft Fish and Wildlife Program recently released by the operators of the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project. While we share the goal of environmental restoration, we believe that the current proposal could benefit from further study to deliver a win-win situation for both the environment and the community.

Eklutna, Inc. echoes the concerns forwarded by the Native Village of Eklutna (NVE) in their September 17, 2023 letter to the Anchorage Assembly. In addition to the noted shortcomings of the Project Owners' draft Fish and Wildlife Program, Eklutna, Inc. is frustrated that the AWWU Portal option will continue the devaluation of Eklutna, Inc. lands adjacent to the Eklutna River and diminish economic opportunities for Eklutna, Inc. and others throughout the Eklutna River Valley.

Eklutna, Inc. and the Eklutna people have largely been obliging of a major city growing around it. Eklutna, Inc. has accommodated Anchorage, the State, and the federal government at nearly every turn. When a school site is needed – Eklutna is there. When a right of way for major infrastructure lines or highway projects is required – Eklutna is there. When a community wants new trails or an airport easement – Eklutna is there. When the Alaska Railroad wanted hard rock for rail ballasts – Eklutna was there almost to the point of giving up the resource for which Eklutna is named. When the Municipality needs more housing – Eklutna is there. Eklutna gives without consideration for reciprocation. But once, just this once, we want reciprocation.

Eklutna and NVE were barely a consideration when the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement was established, as evidenced by our absence as a party to the Agreement. The Agreement and associated water allocations resulted from the federal government sidestepping its processes and shirking the federal Indian trust responsibility to the Eklutna tribe. Now, federal agencies and members of Congress are understanding the benefits to our community and the trust responsibilities due to Eklutna. We are grateful for the continued government-to-government relationship with the Municipality of Anchorage and appreciate the Assembly's willingness to support NVE and Eklutna, Inc. in our efforts to restore the lifeblood of the Eklutna people and a source of commerce for the Municipality.

Connecting Eklutna Lake to the Cook Inlet will benefit not just the adjacent landowner but our collective community. We have long been deeply invested in the prosperity of Anchorage and Alaska as a whole. As one of the state's largest land developers, we recognize the critical intersection between environmental stewardship and economic development. Restoring the Eklutna River is more than a conservation effort; it is a strategic investment that will protect salmon habitat, boost tourism, elevate recreational activities, and increase property values.

Over the years, Anchorage has experienced an outflow of residents seeking opportunities elsewhere. We must make Anchorage a city of choice with a high quality of life that will draw people in, rather than away. A thriving Eklutna River, complete with restored water flow and salmon runs to Eklutna Lake, will serve as a cornerstone in achieving this vision.

Eklutna, Inc. has had a long working relationship with the Project Owners. We hope this persists as we continue tackling our community's challenges. An Eklutna River flowing from the Eklutna Lake to the Inlet brings ecological and economic benefits to our people and the Anchorage community at large. We encourage the community and Project Owners to support a proposal that fully addresses the Eklutna River's potential and contributes to making Anchorage a city people actively seek to call home.

We are so proud of the leadership shown by all 12 Anchorage Assembly members to champion the cause of the Eklutna people. We hope the Assembly's effort motivates the Mayor's Office and Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) to add its support. We have worked closely with the Mayor's Office, the Assembly, and AWWU on so many transformative projects in the past. It's Eklutna's hope we can add the full restoration of the Eklutna River to our collective list of accomplishments.

Sincerely,

Kyle Foster
CEO



Michael Curry
President and Chair

