



ASSEMBLY BRIEFING: EKLUTNA RIVER RESTORATION PROJECT

Why the Need for Eklutna River Restoration?

For nearly a century, migration of Eklutna River salmon has been blocked by hydroelectric dams and impacted by water diversions that have badly degraded the condition of the river. **Recent efforts by the Eklutna River Restoration Coalition have resulted in the removal of the Lower Eklutna Dam, an important initial first step in the restoration.** However, **at present, little to no water flows out of Eklutna Lake into the Eklutna River**, and as a result, accumulated sediments have built up, hindering the recovery of salmon habitat.

Through a government-to-government relationship established in 2021, the Anchorage Assembly and the Native Village of Eklutna have determined that one of the top priorities of the collaboration is restoration of the Eklutna River to allow for the recovery of salmon habitat.

The Problem

While a 1991 Eklutna Power Purchasers Agreement requires the utilities to make up for the projects' impacts to fish and wildlife, the parties to that agreement – Municipality of Anchorage, Chugach Electric Association (CEA), and Matanuska Electric Association (MEA) – have been slow to adopt changes to restore the flow of water to the Eklutna River.

In September 2022, the Anchorage Assembly passed AR 2022-262, As Amended and **made a commitment to the restoration of the Eklutna watershed, including providing instream flow and fish passage the length of the Eklutna River and into Eklutna Lake, and requested that Chugach Electric Association, and Matanuska Electric Association commit as well.** To date, a response to the resolution from the parties has not been received.

The Request

The Anchorage Assembly and the Eklutna River Restoration Coalition agree that the restoration of instream flow to the Eklutna River and restored fish passage to and from Eklutna Lake are the most desirable forms of mitigation for impacts caused by the Eklutna Power Project and have requested that Municipality of Anchorage, Chugach Electric Association (CEA), and Matanuska Electric Association (MEA) restore instream flow.

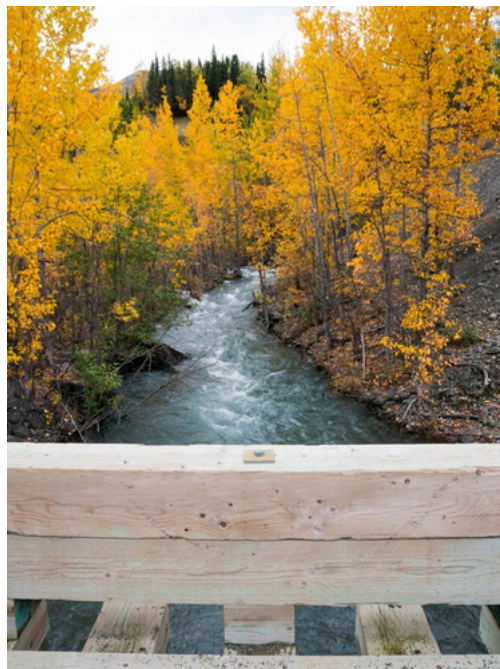
- **Restored instream flow is necessary to flush the accumulated sediments downstream and allow for the recovery of salmon habitat.**
- **Stabilized lake levels and fish passage for upstream and downstream migrating salmon to and from Eklutna Lake would restore important spawning and rearing habitat for salmon.**

THE REQUEST TO EKLUTNA POWER PROJECT MEMBERS: RESTORE INSTREAM FLOW TO THE EKLUTNA RIVER

The Eklutna River Restoration Project

As the ancestors of the oldest and largest Dena'ina settlement in the Municipality of Anchorage, the Native Village of Eklutna has championed an effort to restore the river and fish passage to and from the lake. The Native Village of Eklutna, The Conservation Fund, Trout Unlimited and the Alaska Center form the Eklutna River Restoration Coalition, which works to **return water to the Eklutna River to support the return of wild salmon and restore the Eklutna to a healthy and fully functioning state for the benefit of Native Village of Eklutna and all Alaskans.**

- The Native Village of Eklutna, Eklutna Inc., and The Conservation Fund collaborated on a **\$7.5 million project to dismantle the Lower Eklutna River dam and in 2018, the abandoned hydroelectric dam that blocked salmon migration for nearly 100 years was successfully removed**, an important initial first step in restoration and investment in the river's health.
- At present, a second dam at the outflow of Eklutna Lake diverts all of the water in the lake to fuel the Eklutna Hydropower Project and provide drinking water for Anchorage and **little to no water flows out of Eklutna Lake into the Eklutna River.**
- An experimental **three-week period of flushing flows in September 2021** created some sediment transport and re-establishment of the river channel, which has **allowed for more meaningful study results and better mitigation design.**
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, Trout Unlimited, the Native Village of Eklutna, Eklutna Inc. and The Conservation Fund **requested another period of restored instream flow in 2022, but the request for restored instream flow in 2022 was denied by the Eklutna Power Purchasers.**



Photos: the Eklutna River, September 9, 2021 (left) and September 18, 2021 (right) at 150 CFS during the 2021 flushing flow.

A second flushing flow was requested in 2022, but was denied by the Eklutna Power Purchasers.