



NATIVE VILLAGE OF EKLUTNA

November 10, 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,

We are grateful for your ongoing interest in the restoration of the Eklutna River. Thank you for the invitation to the December 7th, 2023, work session.

The Draft Fish and Wildlife Program was released by the Eklutna Owners (Chugach Electric, Matanuska Electric and the Municipality of Anchorage) on October 27, 2023. In the Draft Program the Eklutna Owners endorse the AWWU Portal Alternative as their preferred course of mitigation.

We do not support the AWWU Portal Alternative because: 1) it fails to remedy the harms to sockeye salmon that instigated this process, 2) it leaves one mile of dry riverbed that prevents fish from reaching Eklutna Lake 3) it blocks access to the majority of salmon spawning habitat (26 out of 38 miles) found in the lake and its tributaries, 4) it delivers less than 5% of historic river flows and less than 5% of the water diverted for hydropower, 5) it ignores the requests of the Eklutna Dena'ina people for the recovery of a natural river after 94 years of harms, 6) it ignores the position of two federal agencies (US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries), 7) it might jeopardize the Anchorage drinking water system, and 8) it burdens ratepayers and taxpayers with \$57 million in unnecessary expenses.

The Eklutna Owners are not providing decision-makers and the public with the full range of mitigation alternatives and possible solutions to meet the requirements of the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement. Throughout the Alternatives Analysis process, The Conservation Fund repeatedly asked the Eklutna Owners to analyze the removal of the Eklutna Lake dam. The Native Village of Eklutna also made a formal request for this analysis on October 5, 2023. These requests were rebuffed by the Eklutna Owners.

The choice here is not limited to the AWWU Portal Option. An alternate solution exists that needs to be fully analyzed, as requested.

We propose simply removing the Eklutna Lake dam within the next decade when sufficient renewable generation capacity exists to replace any power production capacity lost at Eklutna. The benefits of removing the Eklutna Lake dam are:

[26339 Eklutna Village Road, Chugiak Alaska 99567](https://www.nvofeklutna.com/)

1. The Eklutna River would flow naturally out of Eklutna Lake after nearly a century of harms.
2. Re-connecting the river to the lake would allow for the recovery of sockeye salmon, the principal driver of the mitigation process.
3. Ratepayers and MOA taxpayers would be spared from rate and property tax hikes to pay for the \$57 million AWWU Portal.
4. The AWWU drinking water system would be secure.
5. Popular lakeside trails would be protected from erosion caused by fluctuating lake levels.
6. We would address a century of cultural and environmental neglect.

The Eklutna Lake dam does not impound Eklutna Lake but merely serves to increase lake storage capacity for hydropower generation. In doing so it severs the connection between the Eklutna River and Eklutna Lake, blocking all outflow of water, drying up the Eklutna River and decimating the salmon runs. The Conservation Fund has pledged to pay all the costs of removing the Eklutna Lake dam, and even with the dam removed the Eklutna Owners could generate some hydro power.

The Eklutna River has been degraded by hydropower for 94 years; it is not worth rushing into an expensive and ineffective solution now when we can properly fix the problem in the next decade. Rather than commit ratepayers and taxpayers to a \$57 million expense for the AWWU Portal, we suggest saving that money and waiting a few more years to do the job right at little to no cost to ratepayers and taxpayers.

We are committed to the expansion of renewable energy in Southcentral Alaska, and we are eager to work with all parties towards that goal. Recent projections are that Alaska will easily meet the 80% renewable portfolio standard by 2040 given the known opportunities that include a major expansion of the Bradley Lake hydro that will generate more power than the Eklutna project, and an estimated 200 MW of new wind and solar projects under consideration across the Railbelt.

We look forward to our work session with you on December 7th to discuss these matters.

Sincerely,



Aaron Leggett
President, Native Village of Eklutna



Nelli Williams
Alaska State Director, Trout Unlimited



Chantal de Alcuaz
Co-executive Director, the Alaska Center



Brad Meiklejohn
Senior Alaska Representative, The Conservation Fund