

Eklutna Hydroelectric Project

1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement Update



Welcome

As we move into our fourth year of coordination and efforts associated with the 1991 Fish & Wildlife Agreement, a great deal of work has been accomplished to date and we owe much gratitude to our many partners and stakeholders who have helped get us to this point. Like last year, 2022 will be busy with new studies focused on cultural resources, wetlands, wildlife, recreation, engineering feasibility, and the associated economic analysis.

In this newsletter you will read about the 2021 studies and the process for analysis and reporting the data from those studies. As we gear up for this year's field work, we look forward to expanding the Technical Work Groups, continuing our coordinated studies with the Native Village of Eklutna, and prioritizing communication with interested stakeholder groups.

This newsletter is published quarterly to provide information and updates regarding this long-term project. If you would like to subscribe or unsubscribe, please use the Contact Us box at www.eklutnahydro.com.

Study reporting & planning

After completing the first year of field work, the project team started analyzing the data that was collected during the 2021 research season. Preliminary results from the Year 1 studies were presented to the Aquatics Technical Working Group (TWG) in early Nov. 2021. Since then, the team has been focused on drafting Year 1 study reports which were distributed to the Aquatics TWG on Feb. 11, and members will have one month to review. It should be noted that some of the aquatic studies initiated in 2021 will continue in 2022. For these studies, the Year 1 study report is considered an "interim" report, and the final study report will be distributed after the second study year.

A proposed study program framework for Year 2 was also presented to all four TWGs in early November. After

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Study reporting & planning

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receiving feedback from the TWGs regarding what should be studied in 2022, the project team started drafting the Year 2 study plans, which were distributed to all four TWGs as well as the parties to the 1991 Agreement on February 11. Following the same timeline as the study reports, the TWGs and the parties to the 1991 Agreement will have one month to review the draft Year 2 study plans and provide comments to the project owners. Shortly after the comment deadline, the project owners will schedule a series of TWG meetings to address any substantive comments that may warrant further discussion. The project team will then revise the Year 2 study plans and distribute the Proposed Final Study Plans to the parties to the 1991 Agreement for concurrence. The goal of the project owners is to receive concurrence from all of the parties to the 1991 Agreement by mid-May so that we can initiate our second field season by late May. Year 1 study reports and Year 2 study plans will be posted to the project website (www.eklutnahydro.com) after they are finalized in May.

Coordinating with NVE

A few studies being conducted by the project team overlap with some of the ongoing study efforts by the Native Village of Eklutna (NVE). These include the fish studies being conducted in both the Eklutna River and Eklutna Lake, as well as the cultural resources study. In order to avoid duplicating efforts, and with the goal of developing a more robust data set, these studies will continue to be closely coordinated with NVE.



Field crew collecting data during flow release



June 2021 TWG visit at the lower dam site

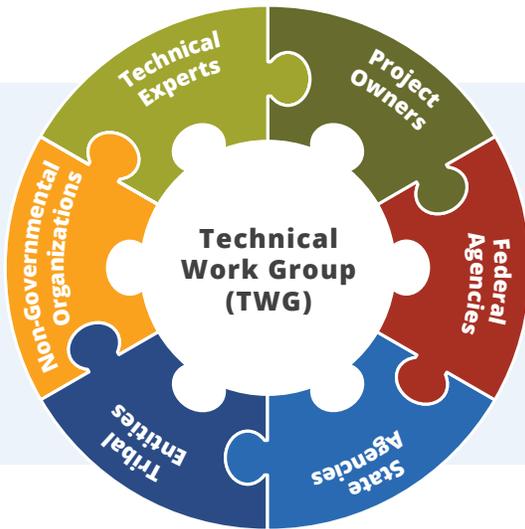
New Technical Work Groups

Early in the Year 1 study planning process, the project owners established a Technical Work Group (TWG) to assist in study planning and review technical information developed by the study program. Since one of the primary interests of the agencies and interested parties to the 1991 Agreement has been to evaluate the potential for providing flows to the Eklutna River and improving salmon habitat, the focus of the first year of studies and initial TWG was on aquatics-related resources. Several entities with relevant expertise accepted our invitation or volunteered to participate in the Aquatics TWG.

In 2022, the project owners will conduct new studies focused on additional resource topics including terrestrial (wetlands and wildlife) recreation and cultural resources.

With that in mind, the project owners established three new TWGs for each of the new focus areas. We want to thank the following entities which are currently participating in one or more of the TWGs.

- Native Village of Eklutna
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- Trout Unlimited
- Alaska Pacific University
- Chugach State Park
- Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources - Office of History and Archaeology
- Project Owners



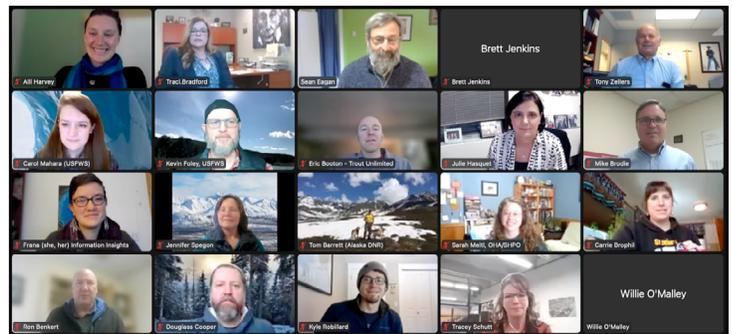
Project partnership requires a multitude of stakeholder involvement.

The TWGs meet regularly and are comprised of technical experts and representatives.

Community engagement

Community outreach remains a priority for the project team as we move into 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to hamper efforts to have in-person meetings. However, we remain committed to maintaining our quarterly updates with project stakeholders using virtual platforms.

On Feb. 9, the project owners provided an update on Year 1 study reporting and Year 2 study planning to the larger stakeholder group as part of the quarterly updates. A similar presentation was given to the Anchorage Assembly's Enterprise & Utility Oversight Committee on Feb. 17. We look forward to expanding our ability to benefit from the knowledge and expertise of subject matter experts from many of our stakeholder organizations through the newly formed Technical Work Groups.



Feb. 9 update with stakeholder group

Project team expanded

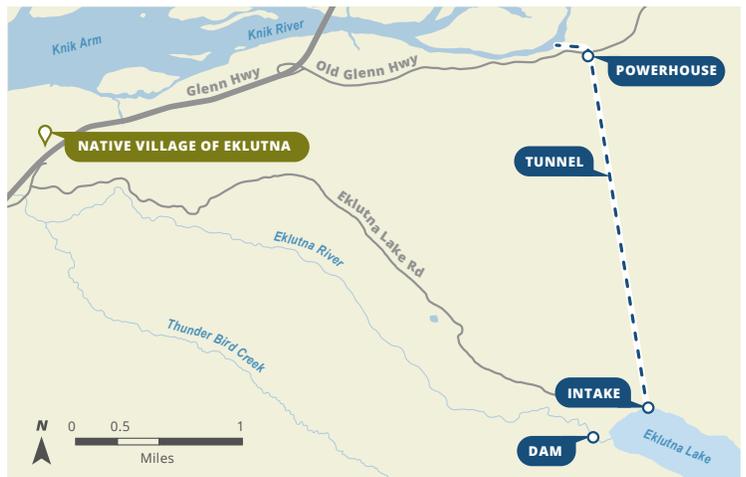
Chugach's Mike Brodie continues to lead the project on behalf of the owners. In addition, McMillen Jacobs Associates (MJA) is contracted to assist with meeting the requirements of the 1991 Agreement. Samantha Owen with MJA is the Project Manager and main point of contact for the Project. MJA is also providing study program management, water quality expertise, engineering services, and GIS support. Subcontractors to MJA include Hydro Regulatory Services providing senior advisory services, Kleinschmidt Associates providing instream flow and fisheries expertise, Watershed GeoDynamics providing geomorphology and sediment transport expertise, and Information Insights providing neutral meeting facilitation.

Because studies are being proposed in 2022 that will focus on new resource areas, additional technical experts have been added to the project team as subcontractors to MJA. ABR, Inc. will provide terrestrial wildlife and wetlands expertise; R&M Consultants, Inc. will provide expertise in recreational use and facilities; and Cultural Resource Consultants (CRC) will provide expertise in historic and archaeological resources. All three new contractors are Alaska based companies.

The project owners also contract with Joy Huntington of Uqaqti Consulting to provide support on stakeholder outreach and communication.



Site visit with new project team members



Project Location Map

Project timeline - at a glance



2019

Initiate consultation process, develop a website, gather existing information, conduct site reconnaissance, and develop a long-term plan.

2020

Retain technical experts, develop study plans in consultation with state and federal agencies and any interested parties, and submit study plan schedule to the Governor for approval.

2021-2022

Conduct studies as described in the study plans (assuming 2 years of studies), develop a draft Summary of Results, and distribute to stakeholders for review and comment.

2023-2024

Develop a draft F&W Program, distribute to stakeholders for review and comment, conduct public meetings, resolve any disagreements, and submit proposal to the Governor.

The importance of the Eklutna River

By: Curtis McQueen, Rasmuson Foundation Board member, former CEO Eklutna Inc., Native Village of Eklutna tribal member

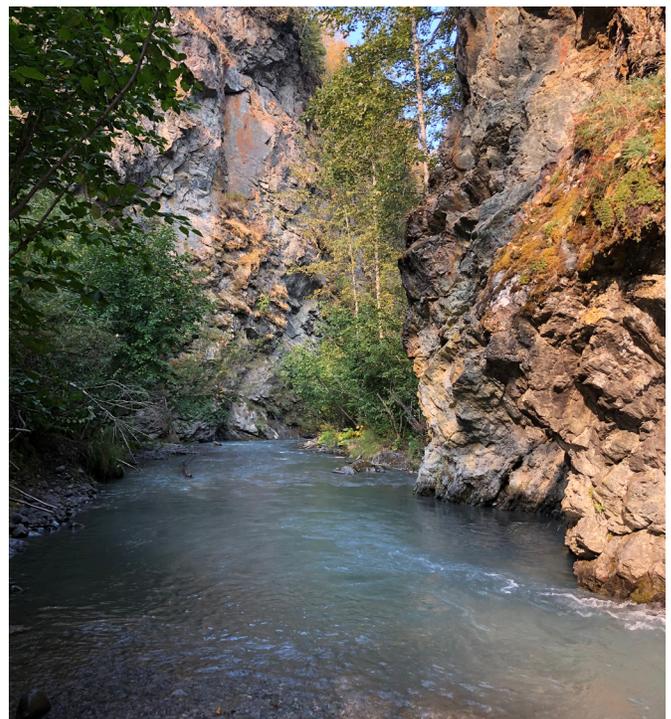
As I was thinking about what to write for the newsletter on behalf of the Eklutna people, as it relates to their land around the village and its relationship with the Eklutna River, it occurred to me to celebrate one of our biggest supporters, and now a legend for the State of Alaska, Ed Rasmuson.

Ed was known by every Alaska Native leader. Over his incredible career, he visited most every village and community in Alaska, investing in good causes, moreover, investing in Alaskans. Leading the Rasmuson Foundation, Ed personally got involved with and supported me and our team at the Corporation and the team at the Native Village of Eklutna in our efforts to get back lands owned by Wells Fargo behind the village known for many years as the “Picnic Grounds.” Once owned by the National Bank of Alaska, the property was transferred to Wells Fargo during the acquisition. Ed and his family loved those lands and enjoyed his relationship with so many Eklutna leaders of the past. With his support, and then Wells Fargo Alaska President Joe Everhart, and the support of The Conservation Fund, we were able to raise \$1.5 million and Wells absorbed \$1.5 million totaling \$3 million, to turn over the land back to our people. Ed said, “It’s the right thing to do.”

A few years later, Ed toured the old dam site with me on the river as we were planning to take it out. With Ed’s leadership, the foundation donated \$250,000 toward the costs of the demolition. “It’s the right thing to do” he said. At every Rasmuson Foundation board meeting, including the last one he attended in November, he would ask me for an update on our progress towards getting the water to flow back into the river. Ed knew that this project was

key to Eklutna’s identity, and said fish, if managed right, are forever. Sometimes it’s not about the money. Yes, he was a retired banker; yes, he made money over the years, but he gave so much more back than he took in, and he loved watching our efforts on this project. On behalf of all of us, Ed thank you for being such an invested stakeholder!

Editor’s Note: The lower dam was constructed in 1929 as part of an old hydroelectric project. The lower dam itself was later transferred to Eklutna Inc. who partnered with The Conservation Fund and the Native Village of Eklutna to remove the dam in 2018. The lower dam removal project was separate from the ongoing efforts by the owners of the existing hydroelectric project to comply with the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement.



Eklutna River canyon

For more information:

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