

Date: January 16, 2024

To: Planners & operators of the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project

From: Ellen VandeVisse, biologist

Re: comments on Eklutna Mitigation Plans

If you're like me, you always strive to do a good job, and welcome and value ways to improve draft work that a wider perspective brings in.

It is in that spirit that I speak to the current mitigation plan.

We live in a world constantly notified of another habitat lost, another species extinct, another culture & its wisdom shoved aside, another beautiful place destroyed. With this project, we Alaskans have an exciting opportunity to reverse degradation, bring back our salmon, and create a win-win future with restoration.

Rather than the current mitigation plan

- Dam removal or dam modification that does not allow salmon to do their migration or return upriver, due to a mile of dry bed,
- Restricts water flow way below minimum needs for a stream ecosystem & healthy salmon
- Costs more than it benefits
- Puts low quality water into the habitat from the AWWU

I urge you to develop the alternatives and remedy some weak points. That is, build features that:

- Restores the Eklutna River to flow naturally out of Eklutna Lake.
- Reverses 100 years of cultural and environmental neglect.
- Allows for the recovery of salmon, by re-connecting the river to the lake, opening up 65% of their available habitat in Eklutna Lake and its upstream tributaries
- Saves utility ratepayers and MOA taxpayers from rate and property tax hikes to pay for a \$57 million for a plan with few benefits.
- Provides time to transition to new renewable energy projects.
- Does not jeopardize the Anchorage drinking water system.
- Protects popular lakeside trails from erosion caused by fluctuating lake levels.

We will be watching and cheering you on as you revise your drafts and revitalize a treasured area.

Thank you