

**From:** [bwsantana@everyactioncustom.com](mailto:bwsantana@everyactioncustom.com) on behalf of [Barry Santana](#)  
**To:** [Sam Owen](#)  
**Subject:** Free the Eklutna River  
**Date:** Saturday, February 17, 2024 1:47:58 PM

---

Dear Operators of the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Fish and Wildlife Plan proposed for the Eklutna River. Thriving salmon runs are essential to the majority of Alaskans — whether as a source of income, a way to practice culture or a way of filling the freezer. Unfortunately, the Eklutna River has been disrupted for nearly 70 years, causing salmon to significantly struggle, impacting the Peoples of Eklutna and Southcentral residents. The proposed plan, unfortunately, omits a complete mile between the lake and the portal valve which would continue to prohibit salmon from returning to the lake and upper tributaries to spawn. The plan would also fail to return the river to its historic flow levels, further impacting habitat and wildlife.

I strongly urge you to heed the recommendations of the Native Village of Eklutna to remove the dam and fully restore the Eklutna River. Not only would removing the dam restore salmon to the river, it would avoid financially burdening utility ratepayers and MOA taxpayers with a short-term, insufficient plan. Instead, the dam removal costs could be covered by two nonprofit organizations who have agreed to pay for it.

At a minimum, I ask you to revise your Plan to provide realistic evaluation of the Community Supported Alternative to remove the dam and restore original flow to the Eklutna River that was never considered as an alternative. This allows other parties to fund removal of the main earthen dam and restore the river to its original flows. This will avoid the \$57 million cost passed on to CEA and MEA ratepayers, provide 10 years of business as usual while still providing Eklutna Lake power capability at a lower, potentially intermittent rate for the long term. The AWWU water intake is below the lowest level of the lake in your lake level graph when the lake is managed for hydro power, so the lake as water source will still be viable.

Replacement of the 40 MW of Eklutna hydropower after 10 years can be accomplished with intermittent solar and wind power backed up by the stable, continuous and much larger projects coming online from the Dixon Diversion addition at Bradley Lake and/or the Long Duration Energy Storage project at Healy.

The results of the Community Alternative can move CEA and MEA further toward renewables while adding the potential for restored, cold water 5-species, salmon habitat in the Eklutna Lake drainage for Southcentral Alaskans in the future.

You have the opportunity to be leaders in learning from historic mistakes of damming rivers, in restoring a wild salmon run, and in righting a historic wrong on the Eklutna River.

Sincerely,  
Barry Santana  
Wasilla, AK 99623-9259  
[bwsantana@gmail.com](mailto:bwsantana@gmail.com)