

From: j.lhesli@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of [J Lhesli Benedict](#)
To: [Sam Owen](#)
Subject: Free the Eklutna River
Date: Saturday, February 17, 2024 11:37:57 AM

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.

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,
J Lhesli Benedict
Soldotna, AK 99669
j.lhesli@yahoo.com