

From: [Aurora Roth](#)
To: [Sam Owen](#)
Subject: Comment on the Eklutna River Draft Fish and Wildlife Program
Date: Sunday, February 18, 2024 12:09:44 PM

To the Owners of The Eklutna Hydroelectric Project,

I am commenting on the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project's Draft Fish and Wildlife Program for the Eklutna River. The preferred restoration option of using existing AWWU infrastructure, leaving 1 mile of the river disconnected from the lake, and releasing only 3% of historic flows is insufficient and disappointing. The Native Village of Eklutna (NVE) has shared many times that their vision for the Eklutna River is to fully remove the dam. While this is the most expensive option for the owners and presents challenges, I believe that creative solutions can be found with the two year extension that the Anchorage Assembly has proposed. I urge the owners to support the dam removal option and work toward legal pathways to allow for two more years of study and planning to make this a reality.

As an earth scientist myself, I appreciate the years of study and work that have gone into developing the different restoration pathways in this process. I've also been following the updates and discussion at Chugach Electric Association board meetings for the last year. I believe the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project owners have been, in good faith, trying to find an acceptable restoration solution. However, the restoration of the Eklutna River and the Draft Plan, do not exist in isolation of other challenges on different timescales – from colonization and the destruction of the NVE's relationship to the river in the early 1900s, to the current gas crisis and need for renewable energy.

The importance of Eklutna to our renewable energy needs and the desire to keep energy costs low has been repeatedly stated by the owners, but how do we weigh this with the unprecedented opportunity to correct a historical injustice and center the needs of the Native Village of Eklutna? How do we assess the value of a thriving river with all five species of salmon to our communities against our energy costs? I know the owners have been grappling with these exact questions. The current timeline to provide a draft plan to the governor by April 2024 does not allow for an adequate resolution to these questions. Continuing to move forward with a plan that does not meet NVE's goals for the river is a missed opportunity.

The utilities have plans to adopt more renewable energy in the coming years (and doing so would lead to lower energy costs than continuing to rely 80% on gas). If larger renewable energy projects and associated storage for regulation are brought online, the argument of keeping the Eklutna dam and hydroelectric project for our renewable energy portfolio begins to dissipate. While I understand the 1991 Agreement may not necessarily legally require complete restoration and a return of the river to historic flows, it's about doing what's right and seeing this as an opportunity. The Native Village of Eklutna and conservation

organizations are ready to work toward creative solutions, to raise money to ease the financial burden to ratepayers, and to share a common goal with you, the project owners. The question is whether you choose to work toward what is right, despite the challenges, or hide behind legal language while knowing your current preferred option will result in dollars spent toward a solution that does not meet everyone's needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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