

February 18, 2024

To operators of the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project,

We were saddened to read what you proposed for returning water to revive the Eklutna River and its five species of salmon in draft Fish and Wildlife Plan. How can a non-contiguous flow of water from Eklutna Lake to the Inlet be considered an option? This plan does not meet your legal obligation to mitigate the project's impact to fish and wildlife. As we understand it, your proposal would still leave almost a mile between the lake and the "river" with no water flowing?? Also, the amount of water you suggest, (3 percent of the historic amount of water in the river) seems like a paltry amount for fish to survive. Steve and I don't see how anyone serious about really restoring this fishery could actually support this proposal. We feel that this is an attempt to deal with the problem without really coming up with a viable solution. Your recommended proposal will not restore the river's salmon runs and is unacceptable.

The Eklutna people and all Alaskans expect that this wrong be corrected. It is obvious to us that you need to remove the second Eklutna Dam to fully reconnect Eklutna Lake to the Inlet via Eklutna River. In addition, it is a no brainer for anyone who knows anything about salmon, that adequate, year-round flows of water from Eklutna Lake all the way to Cook Inlet are necessary for successful reintroduction of viable salmon runs. This should be the minimum requirement in your proposal for this wrong to be corrected.

We have lived in the Peter's Creek area since 1985, so we understand the need for the energy provided by the hydro power plant, but a viable proposal would address this issue and look at options for renewable energy that could replace this need. There have been huge improvements in our ability to harness energy in other ways including wind, geothermal, tidal options and certainly, in the summer, solar energy. Your proposal needs to look toward the future and suggest options that will actually bring the salmon back. As we understand it, there is a commitment from The Conservation Fund to orchestrate and fund removal of the second Eklutna Lake Dam. They already helped with the more expensive, bigger dam down river, so why not take advantage of this offer? It is at least a start toward moving to a permanent viable solution.

The Eklutna Hydroelectric Project deprives the Eklutna River of water and blocks salmon from migrating in and out of Eklutna Lake. Salmon populations will never recover without a reliable and consistent supply of water and access to important up-stream spawning and rearing areas. This is particularly true for sockeye salmon. If they can't access Eklutna Lake and its tributaries they cannot survive. All involved parties cannot meet their mitigation obligations without removing the second dam as a start to solving the problem, in my opinion.

The Native Village of Eklutna has been clearly wronged and a majority of Alaskans also feel that protecting and revitalizing all waterways that have, or once had, healthy salmon runs is very important. Locals and visitors alike are in favor of a proposal that will bring back the wild salmon species in healthy numbers to the Eklutna River, including Eklutna Lake and headwater tributaries.

Owners of the Hydroelectric Power Company and other involved parties need to make this right and not propose something that will cost a lot of money and still NOT FIX THE PROBLEM you are tasked with. Please invest in revitalizing the Eklutna River so that it is a viable habitat for the five species of salmon and right a wrong that has already taken too long to be resolved. This is something that you could take great pride in and show your support for the Native community that depended on the salmon, Alaskans, and our beautiful state's resources.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Johnson

Steve C. Johnson