

**From:** [Janice Banta](#)  
**To:** [Sam Owen](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comments on Power Companies Draft Eklutna River Fish and Wildlife Plan  
**Date:** Sunday, February 18, 2024 5:33:33 PM

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Fish and Wildlife Plan proposed for the Eklutna River.

I request the power companies (MEA, CEA and MOA) adopt the community alternative for restoring the Eklutna River based on the following factors:

Restoration of culturally and biologically significant salmon runs:

Adopt the “community alternative” of dam removal to bring back a once-thriving salmon river to its historic capacity, thus providing restoration of culturally significant salmon resources to the Eklutna Tribe and access to large multi-species salmon runs to residents of Southcentral Alaska. Only restoration of significant in-stream flow from mouth to headwaters will fulfill the requirements of the 1991 agreement. Anything that does not do so leaves the power companies liable for not meeting the agreement requirements and open to legal action for not doing so.

Zero effects on the electricity in South Central Alaska:

Eklutna hydroelectric currently is a source of only 2.2% of the Railbelt’s energy capacity. The community alternative, which calls for the removal of the dam, would take place within the next decade, and only when replacement renewable energy is expected to be available. It is shameful that the power companies never evaluated dam removal despite being requested to multiple times and then used their own hand picked consultant to deliver one-sided information to support the abrogation of their duty under the 1991 agreement. It is significant that the hydro project remains still operational even with the dam removed!

Zero effects on drinking water:

The water intake is located low in the lake and if the dam were to be removed, the lake would return to natural levels and leave the water intake (as well as the hydro intake) unaffected.

Power companies’ proposal puts increased costs on the backs of ratepayers and abrogates their fiduciary responsibilities:

The proposal in the draft plan from the hydroelectric project owners would cost ratepayers and taxpayers an estimated \$57 million, while the community alternative replaces the Eklutna hydro capacity and removes the dam at no cost. This power company plan predicts rate increases of .65% for CEA ratepayers, .87% MEA ratepayers, and \$0.54 annually for Anchorage taxpayers. And, this does not include any consideration of legal costs once a poor decision heads to court.

Summary:

The deeply flawed power company proposal generated by a one-sided, poorly run technical review process along with the refusal to incorporate community input during the “working group” process also leaves a mile of the river dry, which prevents salmon returning to the lake

and upper tributaries. In contrast, the removal of the dam (community alternative) would be paid for by two non-profit organizations that have agreed to cover the costs. Why are the power companies ignoring a cheaper and more community-oriented proposal and instead pushing blindly ahead with an ill-considered option that puts additional costs on the backs of rate payers? This is truly headed to court and throwing away ratepayers money beyond even the \$57M initial cost. Furthermore, it is unconscionable that the power companies are choosing to not honor the Municipal Assembly request to wait two years for making this significant decision, especially when the Assembly’s interests have not been included or even represented during this terribly flawed review process.

**Closing:**

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 will 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 - learning from historic mistakes of damming rivers, by restoring a wild salmon run, and in righting a historic wrong on the Eklutna River all while making the appropriate fiduciary decision for rate payers.

Sincerely, Joe Banta

Eklutna Dam Issue	Community Proposal	Power Company Proposal
COST	Zero cost to ratepayers	\$57M on backs of ratepayers and headed to litigation
DAM REMOVAL	Yes	No
DRINKING WATER	No effect	No effect
SALMON RUN RESTORATION	Yes	No
CULTERALLY RESPONSIVE	Yes	No
PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT	Consensus based	One sided and technically flawed