

**From:** [mail=eklutnahydro.com@wpdatacenter.com](mailto:mail=eklutnahydro.com@wpdatacenter.com) on behalf of [Lizzy Dean](#)  
**To:** [Sam Owen](#)  
**Subject:** New Message From Eklutna Hydro - CONTACT US  
**Date:** Monday, February 19, 2024 11:57:13 PM

---

To the Owners of the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project,

This comment is in regard to the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project's Draft Fish and Wildlife Program for the Eklutna River. I do not believe that the plan's proposal to utilize the existing Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) water supply infrastructure meets the needs of salmon, the vision of the Native Village of Eklutna, or your legal obligation to mitigate the project's impact on fish and wildlife. I support the Native Village of Eklutna's vision for river restoration and ask you to consider dam removal or another alternative that will fully reconnect the river and return the water flows needed to support the river's fisheries. As an Anchorage resident, utility payer, and water drinker, this is also my vision - undoing the damage caused by this project in the first place and restoring the Eklutna River and its salmon runs.

The current proposal leaves a mile of the river dry, releases only 3% of historical flows, and does not provide fish passage into the lake and upstream habitat. Salmon populations will only recover with a reliable and consistent water supply and access to crucial upstream spawning and rearing areas. This proposal is unacceptable and needs to go further to restore the river's salmon runs. I attended one of the public comment meetings in Anchorage in January and spoke with you - the project Owners. You stated that your main concern for increasing flows to the river beyond what is in the draft proposal is the threat of erosion to pipe infrastructure underneath the river channel. When I asked you for specifics about this, you could not provide details on how various flow rates might affect the pipe infrastructure. You also could not provide information on any studies that you undertook to understand engineering or other solutions that might mitigate this risk of erosion while returning life-sustaining flows to the river. Given the mandate of the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement, these are unsatisfactory answers and I implore you to do more research before making such an impactful decision.

I do not believe that the draft proposal and studies included by the out-of-state consultant took into account sufficient data and knowledge from the Native Village of Eklutna. When I asked one consultant about their process for understanding pre-dam salmon levels in the river, they gave many reasons why this number is so difficult to quantify and then outlined their process of sampling the lake, which gave them a range of population numbers. When I asked if they talked to the people with knowledge and experience fishing that river before the dam went in, they acknowledged that oral histories tell them that there were abundant salmon runs in the river before the dam. And yet the cost-benefit calculations throughout the report leave out this critical piece - the impact of this dam on a generation of salmon runs and a generation of people. The calculations do not include the enormous cultural, social, nutritional, environmental, and economic loss that this dam inflicted. When I asked the consultant if she thought that this was a problem, she sort of cryptically but also very tellingly told me that I was asking the right questions. The draft proposal for the Eklutna River minimizes the concerns, vision, and voice of the Eklutna people. It also minimizes the voices of all of us interested in a balanced solution - one that provides clean water, a restored ecosystem with salmon runs, and a future of renewable energy. I believe that we can do better than this proposal to strike that balance.

The Native Village of Eklutna has communicated its vision for thriving wild salmon in the Eklutna River. Dam removal looks to be the most effective way to achieve this important goal. I understand the reliance on this hydroelectric energy source in the near term. That said, I believe that the numbers were misrepresented in the public meetings - the power coming from the hydroelectric dam as a percentage of renewables is just 2 - 3% of the electricity on the grid as a whole. I support the plan to remove the dam within the next decade when replacement renewable energy is expected to be available. We cannot continue to rely on a system that is inflicting harm and pretend that it is without consequence. Can you imagine if there was a proposal, in 2024, to dam the Kenai River for hydroelectric power, eliminating the sport and subsistence fisheries there? It would never happen. This is a once in a generation opportunity to come together with a bold, forward-thinking, responsible vision to restore a cherished and beloved river system and mitigate the harm caused to its people, its salmon, and its ecosystem. It is a once in a generation opportunity to work hand-in-hand, and in good faith, with the Native Village of Eklutna. I urge you to reconsider the draft proposal which disappointingly fails to prioritize salmon return or the voice of the Native

Village of Eklutna.

Thank you for considering this comment.