

From: elizabeth.vc.dean@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of [Lizzy Dean](#)
To: [Sam Owen](#)
Subject: Comment on the Eklutna River Draft Fish and Wildlife Program
Date: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 12:01:05 AM

Dear 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. 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.

Thank you for considering this comment.

Sincerely,
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