



Eklutna Valley Community Council

RESOLUTION 2023-03

A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING REMOVAL OF THE REMAINING EKLUTNA RIVER DAM TO SATISFY THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE 1991 FISH AND WILDLIFE AGREEMENT

WHEREAS, a contract (hereinafter called the Fish and Wildlife Agreement) was signed in 1991 by the State of Alaska, the federal government and the three Eklutna hydroelectric project owners (Municipality of Anchorage, Chugach Electric Association, and Matanuska Electric Association) to address the decades of environmental damage to the Eklutna River and Eklutna Lake resulting from two dams built in 1928; and

WHEREAS, the municipality's ownership share of the Eklutna hydroelectric project is 53.33%; and

WHEREAS, one of the major problems caused by the dams was blocking the upstream passage of returning salmon to most of the river, the lake and its upstream tributaries; and

WHEREAS, the parties were given over 30 years to study the problems and recommend solutions to the Governor; and

WHEREAS, the studies have been concluded and the project owners have drafted the required fish and wildlife restoration program for agency and public review; and

WHEREAS, the project owners' draft restoration plan dated October 2023 has recommended tapping into the Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) water pipeline from Eklutna Lake, diverting some lake water into the river channel about a mile below the dam (the AWWU Portal Alternative); and

WHEREAS, relying on the AWWU water pipeline to introduce lake water into the river could compromise the sole conduit and interrupt the source of 90% of the municipality's drinking water supply, and

WHEREAS, the AWWU Portal Alternative would fail to address any meaningful restoration of Eklutna River, Eklutna Lake and its upstream tributaries by

- 1) reintroducing only 4% of the historic summertime stream flow back into the river,
- 2) leaving about one mile of the river immediately below the dam dry,
- 3) continuing to block salmon from accessing 65% of Eklutna Valley's fish habitat above the AWWU portal, including 100% of potential watershed lake habitat,

- 4) not fully restoring the remaining 35% of former fish habitat in the lower river due to much lower than historic water flow rates, considerably less than those recommended by fisheries experts in state and federal fish and wildlife agencies,
- 5) not addressing the rearing requirements of sockeye salmon, which require access to the lake,
- 6) not allowing returning salmon to reintroduce marine-derived nutrients such as nitrogen, which are the primary drivers of aquatic and floodplain productivity in Alaskan environments, into Eklutna Lake and its upstream tributaries, and
- 7) costing taxpayers and customers millions of dollars without solving the problem as mandated by the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement; and

WHEREAS, the people living in Eklutna Valley, especially in the Native Village of Eklutna, were never consulted in the plan to dam Eklutna River (which had the unintended consequence of killing off most of the river's salmon), they have been waiting patiently for nearly a century for the salmon populations to be restored, and their requests throughout this current planning process have been largely ignored; and

WHEREAS, growing tired of waiting, the Native Village of Eklutna and the Conservation Fund have already removed one of the two dams at a cost of about \$7 million; and

WHEREAS, the cost of removing that dam would have been borne by the project owners, who would have passed it on to consumers; and

WHEREAS, the Eklutna hydroelectric facility generates 40 megawatts, which is 2-5% of the electrical power for the municipality; and

WHEREAS, hydroelectric power is a poor source of alternative energy if it destroys renewable salmon runs in perpetuity; and

WHEREAS, some of the stakeholders, including the Native Village of Eklutna, have recently proposed suspending restoration of the river for up to a decade until the project owners have matched the hydroelectric energy output of Eklutna Lake with other alternative energy sources, and then removing the dam completely; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Eklutna Valley Community Council

- 1) supports the idea of removing the Eklutna River's remaining dam completely within the next decade or, if that proves to be infeasible, to provide fish ladders or another means to facilitate fish passage into and out of Eklutna Lake and year-round river flow rates consistent with those recommended in the draft plan by fisheries experts in the state and federal fish and wildlife agencies, and
- 2) recommends that the Mayor and Assembly use the municipality's ownership share as leverage to accomplish this objective.

Passed this 7th day of December 2023 by a unanimous vote, with one abstention.



Rick Sinnott, President