



Eklutna Valley Community Council

RESOLUTION 2016-01

A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THAT ENOUGH LAKE WATER BE RELEASED INTO EKLUTNA RIVER TO SUSTAIN A VIABLE POPULATION OF SALMON

WHEREAS, When the Alaska Power Authority sold the Eklutna Lake hydroelectric project to a consortium of electric utilities in 1997, the transfer was subject to an agreement signed in 1991 (attached) in which the consortium promised to examine, and quantify if possible, the impacts from all hydroelectric development in Eklutna Valley, beginning in 1928, and to “protect, mitigate damages to, and enhance fish and wildlife” affected by hydroelectric development; and

WHEREAS, The agreement was signed by Anchorage Municipal Light and Power, Chugach Electric Association, and Matanuska Electric Association (the “consortium”); and

WHEREAS, The deadline for completion (or implementation) of studies and all rehabilitation efforts was extended 30 years after the transfer, i.e, to 2027; and

WHEREAS, The consortium is required by the 1991 agreement to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Alaska departments of Fish and Game, Environmental Conservation, and Natural Resources in the development of the mitigation plan; and

WHEREAS, The final draft of the mitigation plan must go through a public review process and be reviewed by the Governor at least three years prior to implementation; and

WHEREAS, Time is running out; and

WHEREAS, One of the biggest hurdles to restoring salmon populations in Eklutna River is the removal of an obsolete diversion dam built in 1928-1929 about 1.5 miles upstream of the Old Glenn Highway, and The Conservation Fund, a nonprofit conservation organization, and Eklutna, Inc., the dam’s owner, are planning to remove that dam in 2016 and 2017; and

WHEREAS, However, when the diversion dam is removed salmon habitat will remain limited in the upper reaches of Eklutna River due to the lack of water; and

WHEREAS, According to the consortium's water rights certificate, "any and all" of the water flowing into Eklutna Lake is reserved for hydropower; and

WHEREAS, However, the water reservation was amended in 1986 to allow the Municipality of Anchorage to divert up to 72 million gallons per day into the city's water distribution system; and

WHEREAS, approximately 85% of the water flowing into Eklutna Lake is used to generate electricity and the remaining 15% is diverted into Anchorage's municipal water supply while, in most years, no lake water is allowed to flow into the upper river; and

WHEREAS, Thatchkatnu Creek and another small, unnamed tributary that drains into the river just above the storage dam might be rerouted to enter the river below the dam or, alternatively, water might be piped from the lake to the upper river, possibly allowing some generation of electricity; and

WHEREAS, the entire stretch of Eklutna River above the obsolete diversion dam is located within the boundary of Eklutna Valley Community Council; however, restoring the river's salmon will also benefit the Native Village of Eklutna as well as users of Chugach State Park and other Anchorage residents; and

WHEREAS, as indicated above, the 1991 agreement requires the consortium to pay for studies and mitigate the adverse effects of hydroelectric development in Eklutna Valley, and subsequent actions have set a precedent for using Eklutna Lake water for public purposes in addition to hydropower; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that Eklutna Valley Community Council recommends that the Mayor direct Municipal Light and Power, in cooperation with its consortium partners, to coordinate with the natural resource agencies mentioned in the 1991 agreement and fund appropriate studies to determine the various options, feasibility, cost, and long-term public benefits of spilling water into upper Eklutna River with the goal of releasing enough water into Eklutna River to restore and sustain a viable population of salmon.

Passed this 25th day of April 2016.



Rick Sinnott, President