

**Eklutna Valley Community Council**  
**April 25, 2016**  
**Meeting minutes**

The meeting was chaired by council president Rick Sinnott and began at 7:05 p.m. The council met at the new Eklutna ranger station. Twenty-two council members attended: Debbie and Steve Thon, Keith and Vicki Darby, Josiah Trout, Tena and Skip Cheely, Buff and Deb Rix, Margan Grover, Dan Thompson, Randy Bangerter, Glen and Mary Keller, Bob Reagan, Cindy and Bob McElroy, Helen Bohn, Steve and Cheryl Remme, Lisa and Rick Sinnott, and Curtis McQueen (CEO, Eklutna, Inc.). Guests included Brad Meiklejohn (Alaska Director, The Conservation Fund), Mark Johnston (General Manager, Municipal Light & Power), Anna Henderson, and Julie Harris (also with ML&P).

The minutes of the February 3, 2016, meeting were approved with no changes. Lisa reported \$466.64 in the council's funds.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Lower Eklutna River dam removal and restoring salmon in the river.** Brad Meiklejohn and Curtis McQueen showed slides and discussed their plan to remove the lower Eklutna River dam. The dam is obsolete. It was last used to generate electricity in the mid-1950s, having been replaced by the dam at the lake's outlet and the tunnel under Twin Peaks. After regular maintenance ended, its reservoir filled with sediment. The Conservation Fund and Eklutna, Inc., plan to stage equipment across the road from the AWWU treatment plant this summer and finish removing the dam in summer 2017.

According to Brad, Curtis and Rick, removing the dam is the first major hurdle in getting salmon back into the upper river. The next step will be adding water to the upper river. Currently, 12-15 cubic feet per second spills over the lower dam. That's enough water to get salmon upstream for a few miles after the dam is removed. But the upper river will still be dry.

According to Brad and Rick, there is only one way that salmon habitat can be restored to upper Eklutna River. The fish and wildlife agreement that ML&P, the Municipality of Anchorage, and others signed in 1991 must be implemented. The city, the electric producers and the agencies had forgotten about the agreement because it had allowed 35 years to develop a plan and restore lost habitat. The agreement specified that the electric producers would pay for any required restoration. The agreement also specified deadlines and a public process that will require several years. Research to document current conditions, to predict how much water is needed for salmon, and to balance competing interests such as the cost of electricity and lake water quality will take years. Hence, there is a pressing need to see a plan and get the process started well before the deadline for getting the final, publicly reviewed plan to the governor in 2024.

According to Mark Johnston, ML&P is the primary owner of Eklutna Lake's water. The other electric producers are Chugach Electric Association and Matanuska Electric Association. Mark Johnston said he has met with some of the agencies that will be involved in the restoration plan and he's talked to the mayor about it, but the mayor has yet to direct ML&P to fund the studies needed to develop the plan.

Our community council discussed this issue at its February 2016 meeting. Further discussion and action were postponed until this meeting so that we could better explore the pros and cons of restoring salmon habitat in the river.

Having heard from The Conservation Fund, Eklutna, Inc., and ML&P a motion was made and seconded to send a resolution to the mayor and ML&P supporting restoration of salmon habitat. Rick had prepared a draft resolution. Members voted on the “resolved” portion first: 21 yea, 1 nay. Then Rick read the “whereas” portion and members voted on the resolution as a whole: 21 yea, 1 nay.

Note: Eklutna Valley Community Council resolution 2016-01 has been sent to council members, the mayor, assembly, ML&P, the muni’s planning department, and other Eagle River, Chugiak and Birchwood community councils.

Anchorage’s community councils are advisory to the mayor, assembly and municipal agencies. According to Rick, there is no formal mechanism for us to advise Chugach Electric or Matanuska Electric associations; however, we will send them a copy of the resolution.

**Mail boxes.** At the last two council meetings we discussed moving the mailboxes to the bottom of Eklutna Lake Road. More detail can be found in the minutes to those meetings. A month or so ago, Rick emailed a page with details on location and cost to council members and received positive responses from only four families. We decided to drop the idea for now.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Chugach State Park closure of community trail.** Rick reported that about a week before the meeting, Chugach State Park erected signs that closed the community trail to motorized vehicles such as four-wheelers and snowmachines. The community trail connected Cheely’s parking lot to the motorized vehicle parking area in the park. The community trail was authorized by the park about a decade ago to facilitate access to the park by local residents. At that time, park authorities advised residents that the trail couldn’t tolerate a lot of use and might not be authorized forever.

Park officials have told Rick that a similar community trail in the Hatcher Pass area was discovered by the public and, when told it was intended for resident use, a motorized vehicle organization sued the Division of Parks and Recreation. The user group won the suit; therefore, to avoid a similar situation in Eklutna Valley, the park closed our trail to all motorized use. Anyone may still walk or ski the trail. Rick will pass any additional information on to council members when he gets an official notice from the park.

**Prioritize 13 capital projects in the municipality.** Every year community councils receive a survey from the municipality asking them to prioritize potential projects in their area and any other projects that might affect their members. Normally, EVCC’s council officers consult on the priorities and don’t involve all members. This year, because there were so many projects and the spring meeting was scheduled during the survey, we decided to consult members.

When the 13 projects were revealed at the council meeting, members started advocating a variety of choices. Rather than spending a lot of time discussing and voting on each project at the meeting, we decided to poll all council members. Rick agreed to send out a survey asking all members on the mailing list to rank the projects. He said he’d allow a week for the

community survey. After receiving responses, Rick will average the individual rankings to obtain a community-wide ranking for each project and send the final priority list to the municipality.

**Clean-up day.** Our annual effort to pick up trash along Ekutna Lake Road will take place on Saturday, May 7. We'll meet at Cheely's parking lot at 9 a.m. and divvy up segments of the road.

The meeting adjourned at about 9:05 p.m.