

Our Vision for the Eklutna River

A River Revived

The Eklutna River lies at the crossroads of Alaska. Eklutna is midway between the two major population centers of Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley, right off the Glenn Highway. Thousands of commuters pass over the Eklutna River daily, and hundreds of thousands drink its pure glacier water from their home taps. The dramatic Eklutna Valley is one of the most scenic and popular destinations in Chugach State Park, for tourists, kayakers, bicyclists, fishermen, photographers, walkers, hikers, mountaineers and campers.

The Eklutna River watershed is home to one of the oldest villages in Southcentral Alaska, the Native Dena'ina Village of Eklutna. For thousands of years the people of Eklutna were fed by the Eklutna River. Salmon by the thousands swam past the village, climbed the canyon and finished their lives in the lake, returning each year to the people and their home waters.

Change came fast for the Eklutna Dena'ina. The City of Anchorage grew rapidly in the early 1900's, hungry for land, hungry for fish, hungry for power. The Eklutna River was put to work for Anchorage when hydropower dams blocked the fish runs, first in 1929 and then again in 1953. The river was turned off for 90 years, completely dry for miles unpassable to fish, a paradoxical salmon river without water. No one asked the Eklutna Dena'ina how they felt about any of this, and amazingly, they and the salmon have managed to hang on.

Our vision is for an Eklutna River revived. We see an Eklutna River, once again turquoise and full of fish, that runs year-round from mountains to ocean. We see salmon, including the mighty kings and the bountiful reds, flooding the river, and swimming back to the lake. We see the bears and belugas and birds that thrive on this salmon system all again celebrating the reborn Eklutna River. We see people making their livelihoods along the banks of this river once again, only feet from their Eklutna Dena'ina homes and a stone's throw from Alaska's largest city.

Our vision of the Eklutna River:

- The Eklutna River running freely, continuously, and naturally from its glacial headwaters through its dramatic canyon and its productive estuary to the marine waters of Cook Inlet.
- All five species of Pacific salmon (King, sockeye, silver, pink & chum) again swimming freely from Knik Arm through the entire length of the Eklutna River to their spawning grounds at Eklutna Lake.
- An abundant salmon fishery that supports the Eklutna Dena'ina and the people of Southcentral Alaska.
- Eklutna Lake, centerpiece of Chugach State Park, full to its natural lake level to support sockeye salmon shore spawning and human-powered recreation.
- An Eklutna River that rebalances the needs of fish, the Eklutna Dena'ina, drinking water for Anchorage, and low-carbon power production.

Steps needed for recovery of the Eklutna River:

- 1. Regular and continuous water flowing the entire length of the Eklutna River based on its natural hydrograph.**
- 2. Fish passage for upstream and downstream migration throughout the Eklutna watershed, including at the Eklutna Lake outlet for adult and juvenile fishes at all future water levels and at all times of the year.**
- 3. Future river flows at adequate volumes to support off-channel and riparian habitat for spawning, rearing, and migration of wild salmon.**
- 4. Periodic "flushing flows" adequate for sediment transport throughout the Eklutna watershed.**
- 5. Stable water levels in Eklutna Lake to maintain salmon spawning and rearing along lake shores and nearby riparian habitat.**
- 6. Physical restoration of habitat along the Eklutna River to accommodate predicted stream flow regimes and habitat needs.**

**Endorsed By:
Native Village of Eklutna
Eklutna Inc.
The Conservation Fund
Trout Unlimited
The Alaska Center**