

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Anchorage Assembly commits to returning flowing water & fish passage to the Eklutna River with sweeping support of Resolution

On September 27, the Anchorage Assembly passed resolution 2022 –262 supporting restoration of salmon to the Eklutna River by an 11-1 vote. Assembly Vice Chair Christopher Constant and Assembly Members Kevin Cross, Forrest Dunbar and Austin Quinn-Davidson championed the resolution. It recognizes that restoring the Eklutna River, including allowing salmon passage the length of the river and to and from Eklutna Lake, is important and will benefit the Native Village of Eklutna and Municipality residents. The resolution commits the Anchorage Assembly's support for providing instream flow and fish passage, and requests that Chugach Electric Association and Matanuska Electric Association commit as well.

This news is being celebrated by Native Village of Eklutna, Eklutna Inc., The Conservation Fund, The Alaska Center and Trout Unlimited for demonstrating the Assembly's strong bi-partisan support for restoring salmon to the Eklutna River. Similar resolutions have been adopted by the [Native Village of Eklutna](#), [Eklutna Inc.](#), the [Alaska Federation of Natives](#), and others.

For more than 60 years, the Eklutna Hydropower Project has blocked salmon migration and taken all the water from the Eklutna River, causing eight miles of the river from the outlet of Eklutna Lake to the confluence of Thunderbird Creek to run dry or very low.

"For at least 700 years, Idlyutnu, or By the Two Knobs River, and the 5 species of salmon that returned in significant numbers until 1929 are the reason that my ancestors chose this location and I feel I owe it to them to make sure that fish will once again return in meaningful numbers throughout the entire system," said Aaron Leggett, President of the Native Village of Eklutna.

Chugach Electric Association and Matanuska Electric Association operate the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project which is subject to a 1991 Eklutna Power Purchasers Agreement that requires the utilities to make up for the projects' impacts to fish and wildlife. Federal and state agencies and the utilities are in the process of identifying what steps may be necessary to make up for the impacts of the project to fish and wildlife. The Assembly's resolution is the will of the people of Anchorage and sets a clear

expectation that some water must be returned to the river and salmon need to be able to swim into and out of Eklutna Lake.

“Ultimately, I do think many of us want the same thing. We want to restore the river in some fashion. We want to do right by the native people of Eklutna who were left out of the 1991 agreement in a way that is frankly shameful, and I appreciate that they have been let back in in a heightened capacity, but not in the legally binding way they should have been in 1991,” said Assembly Member Dunbar.

“The Native Village of Eklutna Tribal Council and Anchorage Assembly have been working collaboratively on Government-to-Government issues over the last couple of years and this resolution is perfect example of the hard work that gone on between these two governments to support each other,” said President Leggett.

Eklutna, Inc. shared their enthusiasm for the adopted resolution as well. Kyle Foster, CEO of Eklutna, Inc. said, “The Shareholders of Eklutna, Inc., are excited and encouraged by Anchorage’s community leader’s efforts to return salmon to the Eklutna River.”

“It is heartwarming, and we feel the respect from the city and the people of Anchorage represented by the majority of the Assembly with this resolution that they just passed,” stated Curtis J. McQueen, the Former CEO Eklutna Inc, an adopted Eklutna Tribal Member, and Board Member for the Rasmuson Foundation. “In 2020, the entire Alaska Federation of Natives, and all Native leaders came together and unanimously passed a resolution in support of having Eklutna Lake water once again being released into the Eklutna River. In just over two weeks, the Alaska Federation of Natives will gather once again in Anchorage for the first time since 2019 and for the Assembly to pass this resolution right before AFN is apropos and really makes a statement.”

“Alaska sets the gold standard for salmon conservation,” said Brad Meiklejohn, Senior Alaska Representative for The Conservation Fund. “The Eklutna River is our chance to show the world how to fix a broken salmon river.”

“It takes vision to heal a fractured river and return salmon to it. And with vision and leadership like the Assembly had in passing the resolution, we can be optimistic that abundant salmon runs one day will return to the Eklutna River,” said Nelli Williams, Alaska Director of Trout Unlimited.

“As the decision on the future of the Eklutna River draws closer, it is all the more important to ensure that water returns directly from the lake, and that fish can return home to Eklutna lake as their ancestors did until 93 years ago,” said Polly Carr, Executive Director at the Alaska Center. “At the Alaska Center, we know that a just transition must include restoring and protecting our salmon streams and a return of stewardship to the communities who rely on them. We are deeply grateful for the assembly acting to support that future and will continue to work with them and other governing agencies to secure that reality.”

This press release is issued on behalf of the Eklutna River Restoration Coalition which includes the following groups & entities:

Native Village of Eklutna

The Village of Eklutna is located near the Eklutna River in Southcentral Alaska, serving less than 400 Tribal Members located throughout their traditional territory as they have for centuries, with the majority living in Anchorage. This federally recognized Dena'ina tribe is the only traditional Native village in the Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska. The mission of NVE is to empower Eklutna Village Dena'ina by promoting history, culture, and identity of their sovereign nation, and to assist in the education and well-being of their Tribe. For more information: Eklutna-nsn.gov

Eklutna, Inc.

Incorporated in 1972 under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, Eklutna, Inc. has played a vital role in the economic landscape of the Anchorage area. It is an ANCSA Corporation, organized under and bound by the Alaska Corporations Code and the provisions of ANCSA and is the largest private landowner in Anchorage. Today, the Corporation represents more than 170 shareholders and manages a variety of investments, including commercial properties and residential developments. Learn more at eklutnainc.com.

Trout Unlimited

Trout Unlimited, the nation's oldest and largest cold water fisheries conservation organization, is dedicated to caring for and recovering America's rivers and streams so our children can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon. Across the country, TU brings to bear local, regional, and national grassroots organizing, durable partnerships, science-backed policy muscle, and legal firepower on behalf of trout and salmon fisheries, healthy waters and vibrant communities. In Alaska, we work with sportsmen and women to ensure the state's trout and salmon resources remain healthy far into the future through our local chapters and statewide program. Learn more at tu.org

The Alaska Center

The Alaska Center is a non-partisan organization that works to educate, engage, and empower Alaskan voters. At The Alaska Center, it is our belief that the more Alaskans get involved in the decisions affecting our home, the better the future will be for everyone. Learn more at akcenter.org

The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund is a national non-profit organization dedicated to creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense. Founded in 1985, The Conservation Fund has maintained an office in Alaska since 1994 and has worked across the entire state from Ketchikan to Barrow. For more information: conervationfund.org

For more information: eklutnariver.org