

A RIVER REVIVAL

A community-driven effort to bring salmon back to the Eklutna River



The Eklutna River basin is rich with history. It's the home land of the Native Village of Eklutna, a source of drinking water for Southcentral Alaska, and a favorite recreation area. The river, once full of salmon, is currently lacking the cornerstone species. We are working to bring them back.

HOW DO WE BRING SALMON BACK?

Clean, cold water and places to lay eggs allow baby salmon to survive and adults to spawn. Today the river runs mostly dry from Eklutna Lake to where it joins with Thunderbird Creek and is a fraction of its former self as it flows to the ocean. Areas in the river basin where salmon used to spawn are now plugged with silt or inaccessible due to a dam that blocks salmon migration. Last summer,

the dam was removed, marking a critical step in restoring salmon runs. Now the Eklutna River, and the salmon and communities that depend on it, need water.

WHERE DO WE GET WATER?

Right now, most of the river that once flowed in the main channel of the Eklutna River is captured and diverted behind the Eklutna Lake dam. Scientists are working to

determine exactly how much water needs to be returned to the river to support a thriving salmon run. Based on initial estimates there is plenty of water to go around. If enough water is returned to the Eklutna River, we can restore salmon runs while still maintaining an important source of drinking water for the municipality of Anchorage, keeping our power affordable, and supporting the Eklutna tailrace fishery.

RETURNING SALMON TO THE EKLUTNA

WHY NOW?

State and federal agencies and the power companies are required by a 1991 agreement to mitigate impacts to the river by the upper dam and hydroelectric project by 2032. Now that the lower dam is gone, 22 miles, plus the portion above the lake, of formerly-blocked habitat could be accessible to salmon. But there is no water flowing in the middle section of river and limited fish passage in other places in the watershed. Alaskans from across the region have expressed excitement about the opportunity to return the Eklutna to the healthy, vibrant salmon-filled river it once was. They don't want to wait. The agencies and power companies have the opportunity to act. The sooner we take steps to rebuild this river, the sooner Alaskans can enjoy its benefits, close to home for so many.



HISTORY OF THE EKLUTNA RIVER



- **1929** Lower Eklutna dam is completed and abandoned a few years later
- **1955** Upper dam is completed, blocking all water flowing out of Eklutna Lake
- **1965** Upper dam rebuilt after being damaged in 1964 earthquake
- **1991** Eklutna Hydroelectric Project purchased by Southcentral utilities
- **2018** Lower dam fully removed, opening access to 22 miles of upstream spawning and rearing habitat for salmon for the first time in 89 years.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Chugach Electric Association, Municipal Light & Power, and Matanuska Electric Association will study and work with state and federal agencies to determine what needs be fixed on the Eklutna River as a result of the hydro-electric project and how to make needed repairs.

A healthy, fully functioning & productive Eklutna River is possible. It's up to Alaskans to create it by being engaged in the process.

YOU CAN HELP

Please take a moment to share your support for a flourishing Eklutna River with decision makers at:

tu.org/project/eklutna-river

Questions? Contact Eric:
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