

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2023

Arthur Miller
Chugach Electric Association, CEO
5601 Electron Drive, Anchorage AK 99519-6300
PO Box 196300, Anchorage AK 99519-6300

Dear Mr. Miller,

I write to you regarding the Eklutna River, and the requirements of the 1991 Agreement passed by Congress and led by the late Congressman, Don Young. As required by Congress, the utilities you manage are re-balancing hydropower production with the interests of the Eklutna Dena'ina and the needs of salmon. Like my predecessor, Congressman Don Young, I support the efforts of the Eklutna Dena'ina to restore their river and the salmon runs they depend upon. The Eklutna Dena'ina Village has been at its current location for over a thousand years.

In the collisions of history, Alaska Natives often came last. This is certainly true with the Eklutna Dena'ina and the Eklutna River. The Eklutna River was repeatedly dammed without consulting the Native Village of Eklutna, cutting off water to salmon and blocking access to their spawning grounds. Without water and without fish passage, the salmon in the Eklutna River dwindled, and the culture of the Eklutna Dena'ina dwindled.

I commend the people of Eklutna for their patient endurance and quiet determination to recover from the slings of history. The Eklutna Dena'ina led the removal of the Lower Eklutna River Dam, a complex and difficult project that captured national attention and broad popular, political, and financial support. That was only the first step, however.

Now we must take the next step. In the months ahead you will consider ways to mitigate the impacts of the Eklutna Hydropower Project. Built by the federal government in 1953 and sold to your utilities in 1997, the Eklutna Project never reckoned with its effects on Alaska Natives and salmon. The intent of Congress in authorizing the sale of the Eklutna Hydropower Project was clear: you must mitigate for drying up the Eklutna River for the past 70 years.

In another oversight of history, the Eklutna Dena'ina were not a party to the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement that now guides the work underway. The Eklutna Dena'ina have asked to be recognized as a formal party to the 1991 Agreement, and it is my hope that they be treated as such. To give full weight to the interests of the Eklutna Dena'ina, the Final Fish and Wildlife

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Program should have consensus support from all the signatories to the 1991 Agreement and the Native Village of Eklutna.

I encourage you to find ways to restore continuous water flows and fish passage so that salmon can swim from the ocean to Eklutna Lake. A wide variety of funding mechanisms exist to implement engineering solutions that meet these goals, and I stand ready to assist in securing federal funds as needed. I recognize that Eklutna Hydro is an important source of low-cost renewable energy, but it should not come at the expense of salmon, our ultimate renewable resource. Let's not forget what an incredible business partner the Eklutna people have been to the utilities since the passage of ANCSA and the formation of Eklutna Inc. in 1972. Since then, every time the utilities needed land for development of their infrastructure, land for powerlines and new generation stations, the Eklutna people stepped up and showed support. Now they are asking for your support.

Salmon bind us together as Alaskans. You and your utilities can be heroic here, and I encourage you to join me in stepping up to this challenge.

Sincerely,



Mary Peltola

Congresswoman for all Alaska