

Eklutna Hydroelectric Project

Fish & Wildlife Agreement Implementation Stakeholder Meeting

Date: April 16, 2020

Time: 1:00 – 5:00 pm AKT

Location: Video Conference

Attendees: **Mike Brodie** Chugach Electric, **Julie Hasquet** Chugach Electric, **Brian Hickey** Chugach Electric, **Tony Zellers** MEA, **Traci Bradford** MEA, **Julie Estey** MEA, **Eugene Ori** ML&P, **Steve Padula** Hydro Regulatory Services, **Samantha Owen** McMillen Jacobs, **Cory Warnock** McMillen Jacobs, **Chuck Sauvageau** McMillen Jacobs, **Tracey Schutt** McMillen Jacobs, **Dudley Reiser** R2 Resource Consultants, **Kathy Dube** Watershed GeoDynamics, **Allie Harvey** Information Insights, **Kasey Casort** Information Insights, **Tom Barrett** ADNR, **Mike Walton** ADNR, **Kimberly Sager** ADNR, **Kurt Hensel** Chugach State Park, **Sara Meitl** OHA, **Jim Rypkema** ADEC, **Charley Palmer** ADEC, **Ron Benkert** ADFG, **Kirk Warren** AEA, **Betsy McGregor** AEA, **Sean Eagan** NMFS, **Alisha Falberg** NOAA, **Kevin Foley** USFWS, **Michael Knapp** ADOT&PF, **Jeanette Holt** ARRC, **Joe Sanks** AWWU, **Dean Day** CIAA, **Marc Lamoreaux** NVE, **Carrie Brophil** NVE, **Brad Meiklejohn** The Conservation Fund, **Austin Williams** Trout Unlimited, **Eric Booton** Trout Unlimited, **Nabi Qureshi** The Alaska Center, **Ceal Smith** ALICE, **Kerry Williams** ALICE, **Erin Larson** APU

Welcome and Introductions

Samantha Owen with McMillen Jacobs Associates (McMillen Jacobs) welcomed everyone and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to address any preliminary comments or questions on the Draft Initial Information Package (IIP), review the information matrix and agree on information needs, and establish a technical work group for study planning. Samantha introduced Alli Harvey with Information Insights who will be the neutral meeting facilitator for all stakeholder meetings and technical work group (TWG) meetings going forward. Samantha then introduced the project owners' representatives and consultant team and also called on agencies and interested parties to introduce themselves. Alli reviewed the meeting agenda and confirmed the shared expectations and norms for conducting an effective meeting.

Review Sections 1-5 of the Draft IIP (Existing Information)

The intent of this discussion was to briefly review each section and provide an opportunity for people to ask questions or get clarification before the comment deadline on April 24, 2020.

Section 1.0 Introduction

Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) gave a brief overview of the content in Section 1. No one had any preliminary comments or questions.

Section 2.0 Schedule and Communication Protocols

Samantha Owen gave a brief overview of the content in Section 2. She recognized that potential delays in the schedule may be caused by the current COVID-19 pandemic and stated that it was still the owners' intent to complete the study planning effort this year as planned.

Brad Meiklejohn with The Conservation Fund asked if draft documents are distributed to the owners' representatives first, or are they distributed to all parties at the same time? Samantha Owen responded that yes draft documents prepared by the consultant team are distributed to the owners' representatives first. The 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement puts the responsibility for developing documents (including the eventual Study Plans and Fish and Wildlife Program) on the project owners. Any draft documents prepared by the consultant team are prepared on behalf of the owners. All drafts released for public review are "owners" drafts, not "consultants" drafts.

Regarding "Finalize IIP and Key Evaluation Parameters" in Table 2-1 on page 22, Sean Eagan with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) stated that he did not see any key evaluation parameters listed and asked what the key evaluation parameters are. Samantha Owen clarified that this refers to the information matrix (Table 6-3) on page 144.

Ceal Smith with the Alaska Institute for Climate & Energy (ALICE) stated that the review and comment period for the Draft IIP was listed as March 24, 2020 to April 10, 2020 in Table 2-1 on page 21 and asked if this had changed. Samantha acknowledged that was probably confusing and pointed out the next two rows in the table on the next page that show the current stakeholder meeting as well as "Additional time for written comments on Draft IIP" from April 20, 2020 – April 24, 2020. Samantha clarified that this is where the April 24th comment deadline comes from.

Section 3.0 History of Development in the Eklutna Basin and Project Tailrace Area

Samantha Owen gave a brief overview of the content in Section 3 and asked if anyone had any preliminary comments or questions.

Tom Barrett with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) commented that this section was a great read.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) stated that per Section 3.4.3 (Project Sold to the City of Anchorage) the original hydropower project built in 1929 was purchased by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) sometime prior to completion of the Federal project. Brad asked if there was any information regarding which of the facilities from the 1929 project were conveyed to USBR with the purchase. Samantha stated that she only remembers seeing vague references such as "all appurtenant facilities" and does not remember seeing a list of specific project facilities that were sold to USBR. Brad responded that this information is important and stated that the Draft IIP appears to place the blame for the loss of a sockeye salmon run on the construction of the lower dam and that this impact is separate from the impacts of construction of the Federal project. Brad further stated that the impacts cannot be segregated and that they are intertwined. Samantha responded that they would continue to look for more detailed information on this topic.

Austin Williams with Trout Unlimited (TU) stated that more information is needed regarding the native historical use of the project area and that the perspective of the Eklunta people needs to be more represented. Samantha Owen responded that the sections in the Draft IIP that directly pertain to the

Native Village of Eklutna (NVE) were sent to NVE one week prior to the Draft IIP being uploaded to the project website in order to provide NVE with the opportunity to comment on these sections ahead of time so that the owners' team could make any necessary edits before the document was made publicly available. Samantha further explained that NVE had not yet provided feedback and had stated that the one-week time window had not been sufficient to responsibly review and comment. Marc Lamoreaux with NVE stated that they will have a lot of comments on those sections and will provide their comments prior to the April 24th deadline. Marc further stated that Traditional Ecological Knowledge provides the best evidence for how abundant salmon were in the Eklutna River and that Traditional Ecological Knowledge is recognized in U.S. cultural resources protection law as equally valid with western science derived information. NVE appreciates that it has been incorporated into the Draft IIP. Marc asked if all comments that are submitted on the Draft IIP be published. Samantha responded that yes, all comments will be compiled into a comment/response table and included in Appendix B of the Final IIP. Sarah Meitl with ADNR's Office of History and Archaeology (OHA) stated that she agreed that traditional tribal knowledge is very valuable and should be taken into consideration. She also stated that certain archives may have additional information such as transcripts of interviews with tribal elders who have passed and offered to help with locating that information.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) stated that Section 3.5.3 (Stream Diversions) should also reference the creek on the south side of the Eklutna River that was diverted into the "pond" between the remnants of the old storage dams and the current storage dam. Samantha responded that she knew which creek he was referring to and stated that she was unable to find any reference to that creek actually being diverted; it's her understanding that the flow from that creek was captured when the current dam was constructed approximately 1,400 feet downstream from the natural lake outlet after the 1964 earthquake. Brad stated that historical photos located at the Eklutna Water Treatment Plant show the original alignment of that creek. Joe Sanks with Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) stated that he would look for that photo.

Brad Meiklejohn also stated that some discussion was warranted in Section 3.9 (Eklutna Water Project) regarding AWWU selling water to various bottled water companies. Samantha responded that they would include some information on this topic.

Section 4.0 Project Facilities and Operations

Samantha Owen gave a brief overview of the content in Section 4 and asked if anyone had any preliminary comments or questions.

Austin Williams (TU) stated that he's under the impression that there should be a periodic review by ADNR of water rights and water usage and asked what information from ADNR might be appropriate to include in this section?¹ Samantha Owen responded that because the project does not require a license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), it falls under State jurisdiction and is overseen by ADNR's Dam Safety Program. Regarding periodic reviews, ADNR issues a "Certificate to Operate a

¹ Clarification: LAS 2569 allows AWWU to divert an average of 41 mgd of water from Eklutna Lake for the purpose of public water supply. ADNR is required to reevaluate the quantity of water associated with LAS 2569 after 9, 15, 20, 25, 30, and 35 years from the date of issuance. ADL 44944 allows the hydropower project owners to utilize any and all of the natural inflow to Eklutna Lake, except that quantity of water which may be diverted from Eklutna Lake for the purpose of public water supply per LAS 2569. The requirement to reevaluate the quantity of water only applies to LAS 2569; it does not apply to ADL 44944.

Dam” every 3 years. In order to obtain this certificate, the project owners must maintain an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and an Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Manual and hire an independent consultant to conduct a Periodic Safety Inspection (PSI) every 3 years. Tom Barrett (ADNR) concurred with that summary of the State’s dam safety program and added that the utilities are also required to report their water usage. Austin stated that he had hoped that some of the water usage information would be included in the IIP. Samantha responded that the annual water usage for the project is shown in Table 4-1 in Section 4.2.2 (Water Usage, Energy Generation, and Cost of Power).

Sean Eagan (NMFS) pointed out that the average annual runoff of the Eklutna River from 1924 to 1928 shown in Table 5-1 in Section 5.3.2 (Hydrology) was approximately double the current average annual water usage for the project shown in Table 4-1. Sean asked if there was simply more water available in previous years or if the reporting for 1924-1928 was incorrect. Samantha responded that she was unsure of the reason for the large discrepancy between historic and current inflows, and that this would at least be pointed out in the Final IIP.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) pointed out that Section 4.2.2 states that the project “produces nearly 6% of the project owners combined generation”. Brad further stated the owners’ combined installed capacity is 132 MW, which means the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project would actually represent 3.8% and that more information on how this value was calculated is warranted. Tony Zellers with Matanuska Electric Association (MEA) responded that 6% is based on the owner’s combined actual generation, not installed capacity.

Eric Booton (TU) requested that additional information be included in Section 4.2.2 regarding what other generation facilities are utilized by the project owners in order to evaluate the project’s value regarding diversification of energy sources. Samantha responded that more information on this topic can be included in the Final IIP.

Section 5.0 Description of Existing Environment

Samantha Owen gave a brief overview of the content in Section 5 and asked if anyone had any preliminary comments or questions.

Regarding Section 5.7.1.4 (Eklutna-Peters Creek Planning Unit) on page 117, Kurt Hensel with Chugach State Park stated that the State Park is also concerned with potential impacts from high reservoir levels to the infrastructure along the lakeside trail including bridges and public use cabins, not just impacts to the trail itself. He also noted that there are two new public use cabins closer to the outlet of the lake that are not shown on Figure 5-27. Samantha acknowledged Kurt’s concerns regarding potential impacts and noted that Figure 5-27 is from the 2016 Chugach State Park Management Plan, and any recreational facilities built since then will be added to the figure.

Charley Palmer with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation’s (ADEC) Division of Environmental Health noted that ADEC has recently updated the drinking water source protection area above the Eklutna intake and that he didn’t see anything in the Draft IIP regarding drinking water. Samantha referenced page 119 of the Draft IIP which discusses watershed management at Eklutna Lake and protection of the drinking water supply for the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) as one of the primary goals for establishing Chugach State Park. She also stated that additional information can be added, and a figure can be developed that shows the drinking water source protection area.

Charley Palmer (ADEC) also noted that the Draft IIP did not have a figure showing the project boundary and asked if the Eklutna Lake Management Area shown in Figure 5-29 on page 121 was the project boundary. Samantha clarified that the Eklutna Lake Management Area shown in Figure 5-29 is one of the areas defined by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) to regulate hunting and trapping activities; it is not the project boundary. Samantha further clarified that although all FERC projects have a defined project boundary, since the Eklutna project doesn't require a FERC license, the Eklutna project does not actually have a defined project boundary. Instead the IIP defines what facilities are included as part of the project (i.e. the dam, intake, tunnel, penstock, powerhouse, tailrace, etc.). The owners' team is also looking at the area around the project facilities and reservoir that might be impacted by changes in operations (i.e. around the lake and the Eklutna River).

Charley Palmer (ADEC) commented that he did not see a figure showing the watershed boundary (including the East Fork of Eklutna Creek) in the Draft IIP. Samantha responded that Figure 5-6 on page 76 shows the Eklutna River watershed and sub-basins, including both the East and West Forks of Eklutna Creek.

Regarding Section 5.1.2 (Climate Change), Ceal Smith (ALICE) commented that more detailed data exists on the melt rate of the Eklutna glacier. Samantha responded that the owners' team has actually accumulated a lot of information about the Eklutna glacier and debated about what was relevant and how much to include in the IIP. The general consensus of the meeting attendees was that more information about the Eklutna glacier should be included in the IIP.

Erin Larson with Alaska Pacific University (APU) stated that she has some preliminary macroinvertebrate sampling data that was collected last summer, and that she is currently working on plans to conduct fieldwork in the Lower Eklutna during this upcoming summer (pending COVID-19). Samantha responded that the macroinvertebrate data from last summer was included in the Draft IIP (Section 5.4.3.4, page 98) and that the owners' team would welcome any additional data collected this summer if she's able to share it.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) commented that the Draft IIP was missing information on the marine environment, including Beluga whales that have been impacted by the decline in salmon populations.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) noted that the Land Ownership section is within the Chugach State Park section and commented that because most of the land adjacent to the Eklutna River and around Eklutna Lake is actually owned by Eklutna, Inc., the Land Ownership section needs to be separated out from the Chugach State Park section. Samantha responded that those sections can be reorganized to address that issue. Brad also commented that Figure 5-25 showing land ownership is inadequate and a better land ownership map should be developed. Samantha responded that's something the owners' team can look into developing.

In order to ensure that there was time to make it through the rest of the agenda, Alli Harvey (Information Insights) ended the discussion on Section 5 of the Draft IIP and stated that if there was time at the end of the meeting, the group could circle back to this discussion.

Review Section 6 of the Draft IIP and Agree on Information Needs

Steve Padula with Hydro Regulatory Services (HRS) gave a brief overview of the content in Section 6 of the Draft IIP, including Table 6-3 on page 144 which shows the information matrix and key evaluation parameters. Steve stated that the information matrix was intended as a “first cut” and welcomed any feedback from agencies and interested parties.

Sarah Meitl (OHA) commented that she was glad to see potential impacts to cultural resources included in the information matrix and also noted that new historic resources may be discovered during this process that will also need to be evaluated. She also recommended that additional information be collected regarding cultural resources in the project area.

Erin Larson (APU) commented that the lower parts of the food web (macroinvertebrates) appeared to be missing from the information matrix and she recommended that it be included.

Sean Eagan (NMFS) noted that the 1991 Agreement did not provide a defined role for native people and asked if that could be changed. Steve Padula responded that although the 1991 Agreement only requires the owners to consult with specific state and federal agencies, the owners’ team has expanded their consultation to include other interested parties and that NVE and Eklutna, Inc. were some of the first entities that the owners consulted with. Steve further stated that it is the owners’ intent to fully engage with NVE and Eklutna, Inc. throughout the process and that their contributions to the consultation process are highly valued by the owners. Marc Lamoreaux (NVE) expressed appreciation for how the owners have been engaging NVE in the consultation process. He also stated that NVE would be submitting a letter with their comments on the Draft IIP requesting formal recognition like the other state and federal agencies and hoped it would be well received.

Austin Williams (TU) commented that Section 6 did not include much information on fish passage at the upper dam or any information on fish habitat or assemblage in the lake or its tributaries. Austin further stated that this information was important for evaluating potential mitigation alternatives and should be included in the information matrix. Steve Padula stated that the information matrix can be revised to include these parameters. He also pointed out that sockeye salmon had been included under Eklutna Lake in the Fish Assemblage section. Austin responded that while sockeye are the obvious and most common species that utilizes lake habitat, other fish species utilize lakes as well, and that there was not a lot of discussion in the IIP regarding this. Austin recalled that at the 2018 workshop hosted by TU, the East Fork of Eklutna Creek was identified as likely having fish habitat for sockeye (historically) and other fish species. Steve responded that the owners’ team will look into this and will expand the information matrix to include these parameters.

Carrie Brophil (NVE) commented that Section 6 does not appear to present any options for restoring the flow regime in the Eklutna River to what was presented by the USFWS in their 2019 report and shown in Table 6-1 of the Draft IIP. She also stated that some consideration should be given to the pumped storage option developed by ALICE which would be able to provide that flow regime. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs) asked Carrie if NVE was relying solely on the preliminary data from the USFWS as justification for providing that flow regime. Carrie responded that the “system” can do anything a natural river would do and that the “system” could be adjusted to provide any flow regime. Steve Padula also commented that although the study conducted by the USFWS is a good start, their study

only focused on one point in the Eklutna River and more information is needed to determine what flow regime would provide the most benefit to fish for the entire Eklutna River.

Ceal Smith (ALICE) clarified to the group that the “system” being referred to is a concept based on adding pumped storage at Eklutna Lake. She further stated that it’s a complex idea that will take some time to fully understand and that they will be doing an energy/water flow study. Steve Padula responded that it’s his understanding that the State has agreed to conduct a feasibility study and asked if that was correct. Ceal responded that yes, in February the Governor directed the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) to conduct a feasibility study for the Eklutna Pumped Energy Storage (PES) concept and that they expect the study to be focused on engineering and financial assessment. A separate technical group is looking at specifics related to salmon fisheries, which is being done separately from AEA. Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) suggested a separate session to educate the group on the pumped storage concept. Ceal agreed that ALICE would conduct a separate session focused on the Eklutna PES concept.

Sean Eagan (NMFS) pointed out that because this is not a FERC project, there is no FERC docket, and asked how the group would know when comments are submitted. Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) responded that all comment letters will be uploaded to the project website. In addition, all comments will be compiled into a comment response table which will be included as Appendix B of the Final IIP.

Nabi Qureshi (The Alaska Center) asked what “avoided cost” meant under Efficient and Economical Power Production in the information matrix. Steve responded that if a mitigation alternative resulted in a reduction in energy generation for the Eklutna project, that energy generation would need to be replaced by something else. Since Eklutna hydro is the lowest cost energy for all three owners, the replaced energy production would cost more. Therefore, the owners need to understand impacts to generation at the project and the generation that would need to be replaced and evaluate that “delta” the same way the owners will look at impacts to other resources. Mike Brodie with Chugach Electric Association, Inc. (Chugach Electric) further stated that the 1991 Agreement requires the owners to evaluate the cost to rate payers.

Establish a Technical Work Group (TWG)

Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) discussed the need for a technical work group (TWG) and clarified that the TWG should include the agencies/individuals with technical expertise related to study plan development (methods, timing, logistics, etc.). The intent of the owners is to start with one TWG centered around development of an instream flow study and then once the effort to determine necessary studies related to flows is underway, attention would turn to establishing separate TWGs or sub-groups, if needed, to evaluate potential impacts to other resources such as downstream infrastructure, recreation, and cultural resources. As a starting point, Samantha recommended that representatives from NVE, USFWS, ADFG, and NMFS be included in the TWG along with the owners’ technical experts. Samantha clarified that the owners’ team would post meeting minutes from the TWG meetings to the project website and will continue to conduct the quarterly update calls and post general updates to the project website as well. Samantha further stated that the owners’ team welcomes any feedback and open discussion regarding who should participate in the TWG.

Austin Williams (TU) asked if the TWG would strictly be looking at instream flows. Samantha responded that the 1991 Agreement requires the owners to first look at potential protection, mitigation, and

enhancement (PME) measures for fish and wildlife, and then look at potential impacts to other resources that could result from implementing those PME measures. Therefore, because the owners' team has been hearing from agencies and interest parties that the preferred PME measure is providing flows into the Eklutna River, an instream flow study needs to be conducted to evaluate alternative flow regimes and their ability to provide fish habitat. Once flow regimes have been identified, then the owners' team can start evaluating impacts to other resources, which may require additional studies and TWGs or sub-groups. Steve Padula clarified that the owners are not pushing the evaluation of impacts to other resources down the road, but that determining potential flow regimes is the priority and will trigger the other items. It's a secondary step to see what else needs to be addressed. Austin appreciated the emphasis on flow as the primary issue and wanted to be sure that the other issues aren't being lost. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs) clarified that in addition to hydrologists, the TWG would also include fish biologists and geomorphologists who can assist with defining studies to assess all things aquatic that need to be addressed when developing an instream flow study (fish, sediment, water quality, flows, etc.) and recommended calling it an aquatics TWG instead of an instream flow TWG. Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) agreed that was a good idea.

Steve Padula asked if the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) would be included on the TWG since it would be beneficial to get their input regarding sediment transport. Samantha responded that the owners' team reached out to USGS early last year to see if they wanted to participate in the consultation process. The USGS responded that they were interested in being updated on the project but would not be able to participate in the consultation process. Samantha further clarified that the USGS has been included on all website update emails, and that she could reach out to them again to see if they would be willing to participate in just this part of the consultation process (the TWG).

Dudley Reiser (R2 Resource Consultants) stated that he has worked on several instream flow TWGs in the past and that TU had been a valuable contributor to several of those TWGs. Austin Williams (TU) stated that TU would be interested in participating in the TWG and that he could reach out to others within TU with relevant expertise.

Ron Benkert (ADFG), Sean Eagan (NMFS), Kevin Foley (USFWS), and Carrie Brophil (NVE) all stated that they were willing and able to participate in the TWG. Tom Barrett (ADNR) stated that ADNR might be able to participate in the TWG. Erin Larson (APU) stated that she would also like to participate in the TWG if her expertise would be helpful. She also stated that Jason Geck with APU wasn't available to call in, but he also has experience in hydrology and glaciology and does research in the upper Eklutna watershed. Ceal Smith (ALICE) stated that ALICE has a range of expertise including biology, hydrology, geology, and engineering and that they would explore who from ALICE might be able to participate on the TWG.

Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) reviewed the next steps for getting the TWG started. After the call, Samantha will reach out to those that offered to participate on the TWG. Once the TWG has been established, Samantha will work to schedule the first TWG meeting. The first meeting had been tentatively scheduled to occur in May. However, the owners' team needs to do a site reconnaissance with their new technical experts to observe the current condition of the river before the owners' team can have a substantive meeting with the TWG, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it's unlikely that the owners' team will be able to get their technical experts out into the field until at least June. Samantha will keep the group updated on any changes to the schedule going forward.

Steve Padula (HRS) stated that the owners' team is working with Quantum Spatial to acquire aerial imagery, videography, and LiDAR data in May, weather permitting, and that this data will be made available to the TWG to assist with study planning. Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) confirmed that she spoke with Quantum Spatial recently and that they were still planning on acquiring the data in May.

Review Section 7 of the Draft IIP (Next Steps)

Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) repeated that the immediate next steps will be to establish the TWG, finalize the IIP, gather aerial imagery/videography/LiDAR, and schedule the next quarterly update call.

Steve Padula (HRS) reviewed the long-term next steps, which include completing study planning and submitting a final study plan to the Governor by the end of this year. Steve also stated that the 2021 studies will likely inform what additional studies, if any, need to be conducted in 2022. If 2022 is not needed as a study year, then the overall schedule can be accelerated.

Sean Eagan (NMFS) stated that the ability to actually release flows into the river and evaluate impacts to things like turbidity would be helpful and asked if engineers could start evaluating what mechanisms might be needed to release water from the lake into the river. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs) asked Sean to clarify if his concern about turbidity was regarding the amount of accumulated sediment and what flow would be needed to wash that sediment out of the system. Sean confirmed that yes, he's concerned about the accumulated sediment behind the lower dam site and all debris flows from the canyon walls, and that he would like to see on the ground results vs. theoretical assumptions. Mike Brodie (Chugach Electric) responded that the owners will let the TWG determine if/how much flow should be released as part of the instream flow study, with the caveat that the owners still need to work through several "prerequisites" to releasing water including water rights and potential impacts to downstream infrastructure and property. Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) acknowledged that an instream flow study with flows is better than an instream flow study without flows and that the owners' team will be looking at ways to release water from the lake into the river for the purposes of conducting an instream flow study.

Section 5.0 Description of Existing Environment – Continued Discussion

Samantha Owen circled back and again gave a brief overview of the content in Section 5 of the Draft IIP and asked if anyone had any additional comments or questions.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) commented that either Sections 5 or 6 needs to include some discussion regarding impacts to wetlands from construction and operation of the project. Samantha Owen agreed that was relevant information and stated that it would be included in the Final IIP.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) stated that three years of aquatic habitat monitoring data (including channel morphology) had been conducted in the lower Eklutna River since the lower dam removal, and that either NMFS or ADFG should be able to provide that data for inclusion in the IIP. Samantha responded that Ron Benkert with ADFG had provided his preliminary report and that information had been included in Section 5.4.2 on page 93. Sean Eagan (NMFS) clarified that this summer will be the third year post dam removal, and that all of the previous data had not been written up yet, but that they would be able to provide the final report after this summer's data collection.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) also commented that discussion regarding Chinook salmon in the Upper Cook Inlet was warranted, and that NVE had recent data regarding Chinook escapement into the Eklutna River. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs) stated that if NVE could provide that data it would be very helpful. Marc Lamoreaux (NVE) stated that the most recent data NVE had regarding adult salmon use in the Eklutna River was the 2002 and 2003 fish counts which have already been included in the IIP. He further stated that the people who fish the Eklutna River say that the Chinook in the Eklutna River are larger than in other drainages; one was measured to be 56 inches long. Carrie Brophil (NVE) stated that NVE is planning to conduct additional fish sampling studies in the Eklutna River and that the final report for the Habitat Characterization Study conducted last summer will be posted to the NVE website soon.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) stated that Eklutna, Inc. has been conducting studies post dam removal to monitor sediment accumulation at the bridges and that they should be asked to provide the results of their study for inclusion in the IIP. Samantha responded that she was aware that Eklutna, Inc. was conducting this monitoring and had reached out to Eklutna, Inc. for the data. Samantha stated that she would reach out to Eklutna, Inc. again for an update.

Meeting Summary and Next Steps

Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) thanked everyone for their participation and feedback on the Draft IIP. She reminded everyone that all comments should be submitted in writing prior to the April 24th comment deadline. Once all comments are received, the owners' team will finalize the IIP and upload it to the project website. She stated that they will continue to hold quarterly update calls and will work to schedule the first TWG meeting. The schedule from the Draft IIP will also be updated and posted on the project website, then updated as needed. Steve Padula (HRS) reiterated that the owners' team is still hoping to be able to conduct a site reconnaissance with their technical experts in June and schedule the first TWG meeting shortly after. Samantha will send a meeting invite for the next quarterly update call as soon as it is scheduled.