

Eklutna Hydroelectric Project

Fish & Wildlife Agreement Implementation Quarterly Update Call

Date: June 2, 2020

Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm AKT

Location: Video Conference

Attendees: **Mike Brodie** Chugach Electric, **Brian Hickey** Chugach Electric, **Julie Hasquet** Chugach Electric, **Tony Zellers** MEA, **Traci Bradford** MEA, **Julie Estey** MEA, **Eugene Ori** ML&P, **Samantha Owen** McMillen Jacobs, **Tracey Schutt** McMillen Jacobs, **Steve Padula** HRS, **Tom Barrett** ADNR, **Sara Meitl** OHA, **Ron Benkert** ADFG, **Betsy McGregor** AEA, **Sean Eagan** NMFS, **Kevin Foley** USFWS, **Cynthia Ferguson** ADOT, **Alex Prosak** AWWU, **Ryan Wagner** CIAA, **Marc Lamoreaux** NVE, **Carrie Brophil** NVE, **Brad Meiklejohn** The Conservation Fund, **Nabi Qureshi** The Alaska Center, **Austin Williams** Trout Unlimited, **Erin Larson** APU, **Alli Harvey** Information Insights

Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Purpose

Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) welcomed everyone, introduced the representatives for the three utility owners, the consultant team, and Alli Harvey the meeting facilitator. Samantha stated that the purpose of this meeting was to provide an update to the stakeholder group on the owners' efforts to comply with the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement and to discuss the revised Information Matrix distributed to the stakeholder group prior to the meeting. Alli Harvey (Information Insights) reviewed the meeting agenda and meeting agreements.

Initial Information Package (IIP) Comments Status

Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) stated that the owners' team received several comment letters on the Draft IIP. All of the comment letters have been uploaded to the project website for easy access. The consultant team has compiled all of the comments into a comment/response table and reviewed it with the project owners. Samantha also stated that she would be reaching out to certain people over the next few weeks as needed for further clarification regarding specific comments.

Review Updated Information Matrix

The owners' team updated the Information Matrix based on stakeholder feedback and comments, then distributed the updated matrix to the stakeholder group in advance of this meeting. Steve Padula (HRS) reviewed the updated Information Matrix. Major revisions are summarized below:

- Reorganized the table into 3 columns (Evaluation Parameters, Existing Conditions, Difference in Condition for each Alternative)
- Combined fish habitat and fish assemblage into one evaluation parameter
- Made water quality a separate category with specific evaluation parameters

- Added macroinvertebrates as a category with specific evaluation parameters
- Added wetlands as a category with specific evaluation parameters
- Added belugas, bears, moose, and migratory birds as wildlife evaluation parameters
- Moved bear/human interactions from wildlife to safety
- Moved hunting from wildlife to recreation
- Combined reservoir recreation, river recreation, and tailrace recreation into one category
- Included downstream property with downstream infrastructure
- Refined the power production evaluation parameters

Regarding barriers to upstream passage under fish habitat, Sean Eagan (NMFS) noted that the existing condition is changing and asked what would be used as the baseline. Steve Padula (HRS) acknowledged that the existing condition may change overtime during the study program and Fish and Wildlife Program development, and that determining the baseline condition for these evaluation parameters is something that will need to be discussed with the TWG.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) pointed out a typo: “Difference is Usage” should be “Difference in Usage”. Brad also suggested adding movement as a wildlife evaluation parameter and current cultural resources as a cultural resources evaluation parameter. Marc Lamoreaux (NVE) and Carrie Brophil (NVE) agreed with adding current cultural resources as an evaluation parameter. Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) ask if Marc could identify specific current cultural resources that the owners’ team should pay attention to. Marc said he would provide a list of current cultural resources after the meeting.

Austin Williams (Trout Unlimited) suggested included fishing in the Eklutna River and economic activity for guiding fishing and hunting in the river basin as recreation evaluation parameters. Austin also recommended adding subsistence uses in the river as a cultural resources evaluation parameter. Austin also noted that listing summer and winter rearing habitat as separate evaluation parameters under fish habitat was helpful, but suggested that at some point it might be appropriate to break it down even further adding fall and spring categories. Steve Padula stated that was a good suggestion and responded that this could be addressed by the TWG when developing the study plan. As an alternative, Austin suggested combining summer and winter into one “rearing habitat” evaluation parameter without specifying seasons. Samantha Owen responded that the owners’ team is open to reorganizing the fish habitat section as needed, but also pointed out that rearing habitat had been separated into summer and winter in response to one of Sean Eagan’s comments on the Draft IIP. Sean Eagan suggested flagging this as a topic for the TWG to discuss.

Ron Benkert (ADFG) commented that the downstream bridges category appeared to be missing the AWWU bridges. Samantha Owen clarified that the AWWU bridges were listed under the municipal water supply category.

Steve Padula stated that the owners’ team would update the Information Matrix again based on feedback today and include it in the Final IIP, and if everyone approves the updated Information Matrix with the additional suggested edits, then the next step would be for the TWG to use the Information Matrix to develop a study program. Allie Harvey (Information Insights) asked if everyone on the call

agreed to adopt the updated Information Matrix as a provisional working document, and everyone on the call agreed.

Additional Data Collection Updates

Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) provided an update on the aerial imagery, videography, and LiDAR acquisition. Quantum Spatial conducted their flights in May. Data collection occurred along the entire Eklutna River and along the northeast shoreline of Eklutna Lake. The data is currently being processed and final deliverables are due from Quantum Spatial in July. One of the deliverables will be a public link to the video that can be easily shared with the group. Samantha Owen asked if there were any updates on other ongoing data collection efforts in the Eklutna basin.

Austin Williams (Trout Unlimited) stated that he had no new information to share, and that once any new information is available, he would be sure to share it with the group.

Ron Benkert (ADFG) provided an update on the aquatic habitat monitoring post dam removal. They finished their spring data collection last week. Ron stated that they noticed a shift in particle size this year and a lot of young yearly fish. There also appears to be a lot of junk such as old fuel tanks being uncovered as the accumulated sediment behind the dam is flushed downstream. Samantha Owen asked if this was ADFG's third year of monitoring post dam removal. Ron confirmed this was their final year, then they will be wrapping it up per their agreement with Eklutna, Inc. However, if additional funding becomes available, ADFG will continue their monitoring effort.

Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) stated that they still have a time lapse camera with a birds eye view of the canyon, and that they would be willing to leave it in place to continue to capture images. It's been operating for the last 3 years and provides a continuous set of photos. Sean Eagan (NMFS), Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs), and Steve Padula (HRS) all agreed the data would be very valuable.

Erin Larson (APU) stated that one of her undergraduates has started working on sampling macroinvertebrates in the river, and that she is also planning to deploy a water quality monitor in the river. Erin offered to provide the resulting data to be used for the study program. Ron Benkert (ADFG) suggested coordinating efforts to avoid duplication. Erin stated she would follow up with Ron to discuss further.

Marc Lamoreaux and Carrie Brophil (NVE) stated that the final report for their 2019 survey was completed and would be available to the group shortly. It's a large file, so they're trying to figure out the best way to distribute it. Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) commented that the information from NVE's final report would be included in the Final IIP if available.

Betsy McGregor (AEA) stated that she's not directly involved with the feasibility study for the pump storage concept, but she would follow up with Samantha to confirm the scope of the study. Brad Meiklejohn (The Conservation Fund) suggested a separate briefing on the pumped storage concept. Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) stated she would reach out to Ceal Smith (ALICE) to schedule a follow-up meeting.

Upcoming

Samantha Owen (McMillen Jacobs) stated that the Project owners added new technical experts to the project team including Dudley Reiser (R2 Resource Consultants) and Kathy Dube (Watershed GeoDynamics). The owners' technical team originally planned to conduct a site reconnaissance in June to better familiarize the Dudley and Kathy with the existing conditions in the river. However, due to travel restrictions resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this site reconnaissance will likely need to be postponed until July. Brad Meiklejohn noted that the owners' team will need to coordinate with Eklutna, Inc. for a permit to access the river, since all of the land surrounding the lower river is privately owned. Samantha agreed and stated they were aware of the need for a permit and would coordinate with Eklutna, Inc. once the dates for the site reconnaissance have been confirmed.

Samantha Owen also provided an updated on the formation of the Technical Work Group (TWG). Samantha has reached out to each of the entities who either agreed or volunteered to participated in the TWG to identify one or more representatives for each entity. Samantha will then schedule the first TWG meeting to be held after the site reconnaissance. Samantha also clarified that due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this will likely be a virtual meeting.