

# Eklutna Hydroelectric Project

## 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement Update



## Welcome

The past few months have been busy for the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project team. Hundreds of hours have been spent in the field conducting the initial phases of our two-year study program examining the impacts of the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project on fish and wildlife.

In this issue of the project newsletter, we will discuss all that goes into the approval process for our study plans, the field work already completed this summer, our outreach efforts, and plans for the months ahead.

This newsletter is released quarterly to provide information and updates regarding this long-term project. Thank you for taking the time to read it. If you would like to subscribe or unsubscribe, please use the Contact Us box at [www.eklutnahydro.com](http://www.eklutnahydro.com).

## Study plans approved

In the Spring newsletter, we highlighted our months of coordination with the Technical Working Group (TWG) to develop the Proposed Final Study Plans. In February, we distributed the study plans to the parties listed in the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement for their review and concurrence. With that request for feedback, the project owners received additional comments on the study plans from both the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF). The team responded to each agency indicating how their comments were considered.

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# Study plans approved, *continued from page 1*

The project owners are happy to report that we have now received letters from all of the parties in the 1991 agreement officially concurring with the scope of work in the study plans. Following the process outlined by the state agencies, the concurrence letters from the four state agencies and the Proposed Final Study Plans were then

sent to the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) as the governor's representative for review. The AEA provided no additional comments, and the study plans were finalized in May. They are now available on the project website at [www.eklutnahydro.com](http://www.eklutnahydro.com).

## Flow studies progress

- ✓ Address any safety concerns
- ✓ Define flow releases and develop study plans
- ✓ Conduct condition assessment of the drainage outlet gate
- ✓ Evaluate potential impacts to existing fish habitat
- ✓ Evaluate potential impacts to downstream infrastructure
- ✓ Evaluate potential impacts to lakeside trail
- ✓ Obtain all necessary permits and authorizations
- ✓ Calculate cost of providing flows and assess feasibility
- ✓ Address legal concerns

**Flow studies planned for September 2021**

## Project location



*Project Location Map*



*Eklutna Dam and spillway looking upstream towards Eklutna Lake*

# Reaching out

The team continues to prioritize working with and updating our growing list of stakeholders and other interested parties for this project. In addition to our frequent meetings with the Technical Working Group (TWG), we continue to host quarterly updates with our diverse list of stakeholders which includes multiple government agencies, non-governmental organizations, tribal entities, community groups, and individuals. If you'd like to be added to our outreach list, please contact us at [info@eklutnahydro.com](mailto:info@eklutnahydro.com).

The third quarter stakeholder update was held on Aug. 23 and included the latest on the summer field work, discussion of permits and waivers necessary to complete the planned flow releases, and a preview of what's ahead in the coming months and next year. Earlier this summer, members of the project team provided a quarterly update to the Anchorage Assembly's Enterprise and Utility Oversight Committee and gave project briefings to the Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) Board of Directors and to the Chugiak Community Council. If your group would like to request a presentation, please let us know. Presentation slide decks are available at [www.eklutnahydro.com](http://www.eklutnahydro.com).

In June, the project team also met with Tribal Council members from the Native Village of Eklutna (NVE). Plans are underway for an in-person meeting this fall, including board members from Chugach Electric Association, Matanuska Electric Association, the Municipality of Anchorage, and representatives from NVE's Tribal Council.

*If you have a suggestion of how we can keep people up to date, we'd love to hear your feedback.*

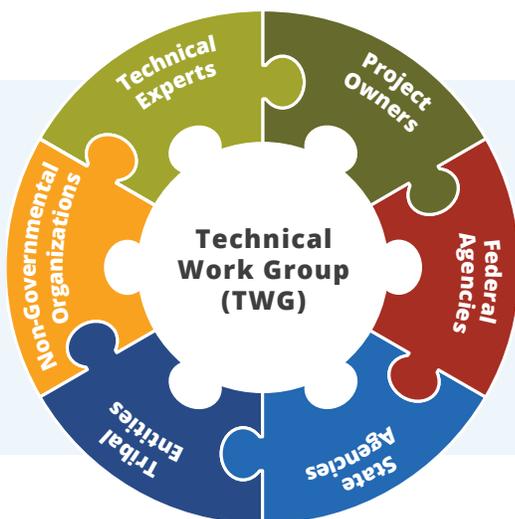


Technical Working Group site visit, June 2021



Meeting with Native Village of Eklutna, June 2021

## What is the TWG?



## Project partnership requires a multitude of stakeholder involvement.

The TWG meets regularly and is comprised of technical experts and representatives.

## Field work initiated in May 2021

After finalizing the study plans and receiving all required permits, the project owners began field work for the study program in late May. This included installing stream gauges in the Eklutna River and temperature loggers in Eklutna Lake; sampling for fish and macroinvertebrates in both the lower and upper Eklutna River; conducting a reconnaissance survey of potential fish habitat in Eklutna Lake and its tributaries; and surveying the lakeside trail for evidence of erosion. The project owners are collaborating with NVE to conduct adult salmon surveys in the lower Eklutna River.

### **Eklutna Studies**

Two of the primary studies being conducted this year are an instream flow study to determine what flows would be needed to create quality fish habitat in the river, and a geomorphology/sediment transport study to determine how all of the sediment that has accumulated in the river would move under various flows and the impact that might have on spawning salmon. Both of these studies require our technical team to establish transects (cross sections) in the river for data collection. The project owners conducted a site visit with the TWG in June to establish those exact transect locations.

### **Work at the Eklutna Dam**

In order to collect data for both the instream flow and geomorphology/sediment transport studies, the project owners are planning to use the drainage outlet gate at the base of the spillway in the dam to release specific flows into the river this fall. However, this gate is not used on a regular basis and a large pile of rocks and debris had accumulated in front of it over the years. The project owners hired a team of divers to remove the rocks from the front of the gate so we could inspect the gate and determine if it was operational to conduct the study flows.

The rock and debris removal was initiated in June and is scheduled to be completed in August. Upon inspection, there was some concern that the gate was not in good enough condition to conduct the flow releases this fall, so the decision was made to replace the gate in August at the same time as the remaining rock and debris are removed.



*2021 summer field work*



*Eklutna River fish survey*



*Establishing survey points at the dam*

# Looking ahead: Flow releases planned

The study flow releases this year are scheduled to start in mid-September and last approximately four weeks.

The project owners will initially release approximately 150 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water into the Eklutna River for up to two weeks, then 75 cfs for one week, and then 25 cfs for another week.

During and after the flow releases, our technical team will be collecting important data to help inform the development of a future fish and wildlife program for the Eklutna watershed. The ability to provide the specified flows is dependent upon the water level in Eklutna Lake, and inflows to the lake from Eklutna Glacier have been slower than normal this year.

In order to prepare for the flow releases and make sure the lake level gets high enough, the project owners have reduced generation at the Eklutna Lake Hydro Plant for the past several months. They are also working with agencies and other impacted parties on necessary permitting and approvals.



2021 site visit



Eklutna Dam and spillway

## Project timeline - at a glance



# Project team

Chugach's Mike Brodie is leading the project on behalf of the owners. In addition, the owners have contracted McMillen Jacobs Associates (MJA) to assist with meeting the requirements of the 1991 Agreement. Samantha Owen with MJA is the Project Manager and main point of contact for the Project. MJA is also providing study program management, water quality expertise, engineering services, and GIS support.

Subcontractors to MJA include Hydro Regulatory Services providing senior advisory services, R2 Consultants providing instream flow and fisheries expertise, Watershed GeoDynamics providing geomorphology and sediment transport expertise, and Information Insights providing neutral meeting facilitation.

Additional technical experts in recreation, cultural resources, wetlands, and wildlife will be added to the Project Team as the process progresses. The Project Owners have also contracted Joy Huntington with Uqaqti Consulting to provide support regarding stakeholder outreach and communication.

## Technical Working Group Members

Native Village of Eklutna (NVE)

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

Trout Unlimited (TU)

Alaska Pacific University (APU)

Project Owners

## Project owners

In 1967, the Alaska Power Administration (APA) was established and all responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project was transferred from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to the APA. In 1989, the APA entered into the Eklutna Purchase Agreement with the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), Chugach Electric Association, Inc. (Chugach), and the Matanuska Electric Association (MEA).

This agreement outlined the terms and conditions for the sale of the Eklutna Project to the utilities. Transfer of ownership became effective on October 2, 1997 (Transaction Date). MOA's share of the project is 53.33%, Chugach's share is 30%, and MEA's share is 16.67%.

## Stop the Spread

### Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.



Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



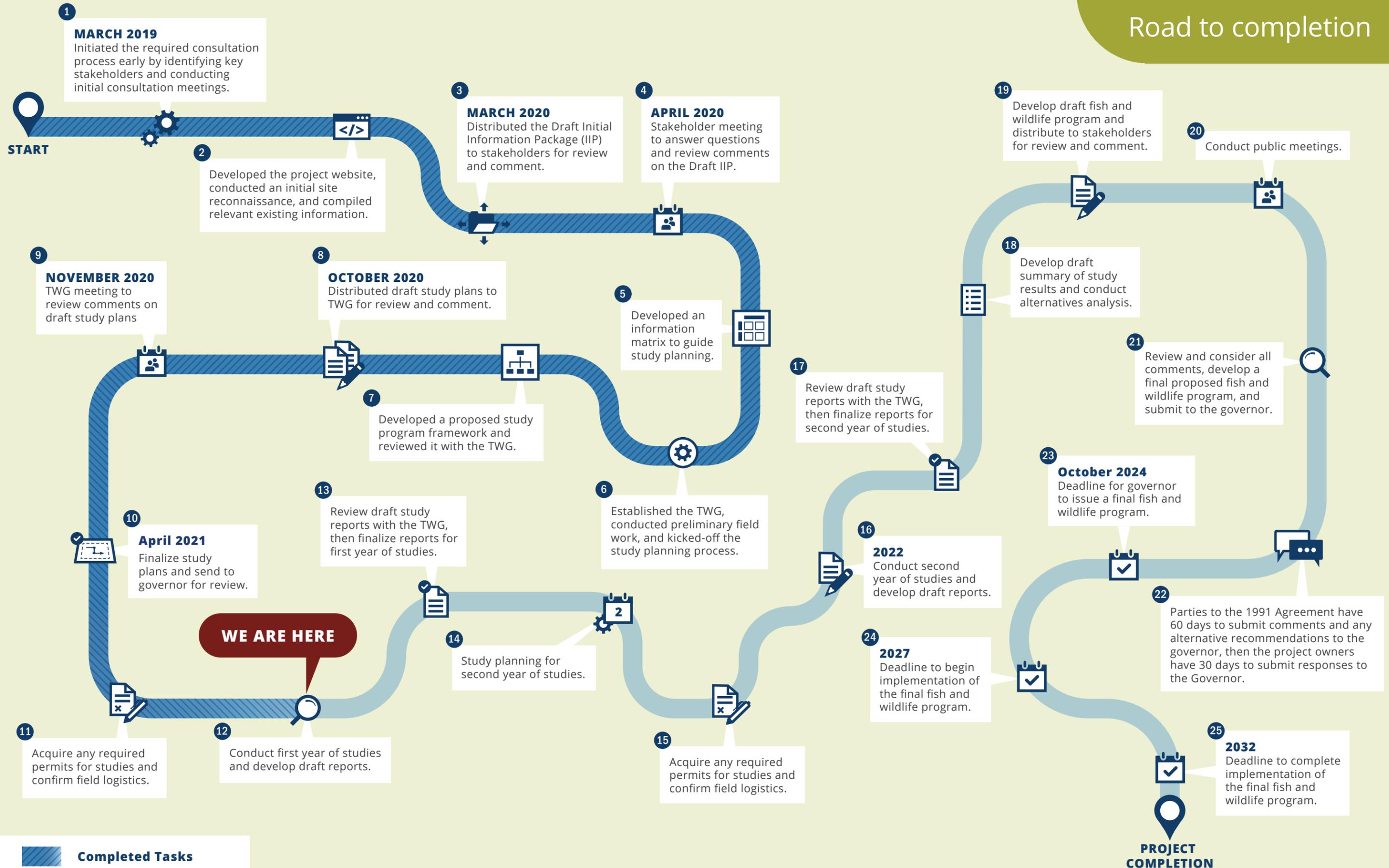
Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

### For more information:

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**Completed Tasks**