EKLUTNA VILAGE NEWS



Summer 2023

2023 Annual Tribal Membership Meeting

This year's meeting was a hybrid in-person and online meeting. There were ninety-three (93) voters for the April 1, 2023, election. It was a relaxed, friendly atmosphere with Tribal Members and their families gathering at the CIRI Building, first-floor Eklutna room.



Our new Tribal Administrator, Brenda Hewitt, started us out with a beautiful heartfelt prayer and our Finance Director, Tonya Gamble, flew up from Arizona to present the financial report. She was happy to see familiar faces again.

Congratulations and welcome to Shirley Craig as the new Vice President and to Kim Zello as the new Treasurer. Both are experienced and ready for more responsibility.



Above: Photos of the Annual Tribal Membership Meeting at the CIRI building.



Above Left: Kim Zello, the new Treasurer Above Right: Shirley Craig, the new Vice President

Native Village of Eklutna Tribal Council Members

Aaron Leggett, President Shirley Craig, Vice-President Kim Zello, Treasurer Dorothy Cook, Secretary Tresia Coleman, Trustee Dustin Lorah, Trustee Angeleen Waskey, Trustee

Mission Statement

To empower Idlughet Qayaht'ana (Eklutna Village People) and stenghten our Nation.



This publication is funded in full or in part through grants, compacts, or contracts obtained by Native Village of Eklutna, a federally recognized Tribal Government.

2023 Annual Tribal Membership Meeting (con't)

Former Vice President Maria Coleman, now 70 years old, will continue to serve as Lead Judge in other part-time capacities due to her historical knowledge and skills. She is looking forward to finishing work on the Eklutna River restoration and having time for creative projects, beadwork, drawing, and grandchildren.

Ten children received door prizes, including McDonald's gift cards, backpacks, and school supplies. Twenty adults received door prizes, including cash.



Above: Maria Coleman and James Mills

Votes were as follows:

<u>Vice President:</u> Maria Coleman 41, Shirley Craig 52 <u>Treasurer:</u> Adam Leggett 35, Kim Zello 56, Shirly Craig 1 <u>Trustee:</u> Tami Doone 19, Kaylene Larwin 19, Angeleen Waskey 52, Adam Leggett 1



Congratulations to Shirley Craig, Kim Zello, and Angeleen Waskey!

Clockwise: Margaret Kuphaldt and Ellen Leisner; Lester Stephan, Aaron Leggett and Jack Racette; Tresia Coleman, Tia Hale, Jessica Ross, and Aaron Leggett; Curtis McQueen; and ; the Mills sisters - Geraldine Mills, Maria Coleman, and Beverly Mills.













Need Help with Applications and Resources?

Family Health Resources are available through Southcentral Clinics (SCF). The teams can screen and assist community members and beneficiaries to apply for additional insurance coverage and resources over the phone that may be available to them including:

Medicaid/ Medicare, Social Security, Veterans Health Benefits, TSHIP, food stamps and other assistance programs.

For assistance please call, Inga Moe 907-631-7352 at Valley Native Primary Care Center or Call the direct number at Alaska Native Medical Center 907-729-4470 and ask to speak to a Health Benefits Specialist.

Enrollment Drive Ongoing

NVE Enrollment office is conducting an Enrollment Drive. If you know of someone who has not got their enrollment paperwork submitted, please have them contact 907-688-6020 or email <u>nve.enrollment@eklutna.us</u>. Enrollment applications can be found on the NVE website under the Forms tab.

NVE Food Bank

The NVE Food is open on Wednesdays from 1pm to 4pm. During this time, we are asking recipients to call the main office Tuesday or Wednesday morning before they arrive to the food bank location and order a food box. Food boxes are pre-made when ordered and will be available for contactless pickup on the stairs of the food bank. The food bank is located beside the main office For more information, call 907-688-6020



Congresswoman Mary Peltola visits Eklutna

Congresswoman Mary Peltola and her state director, Josh Revak, spent two hours at the Eklutna Clinic Conference Room on April 6th, 2023, listening to a presentation by President Aaron Leggett, Consultant Curtis McQueen and Land and Environment co-Director Carrie Brophil as they explained the proposed Native Village of Eklutna's river restoration project.





Peltola was interested in hearing about the work that had already taken place to bring Eklutna's salmon back to the Eklutna watershed. She learned about the gigantic historical king salmon and that all five species used to thrive in the Eklutna ecosystem. She knew about the removal of the lower older hydroelectric dam and was interested in how her office could help the electric companies "do the right thing" in releasing more water flow. She said that this project is a moral and environmental justice issue

One proposal on her desk is for funding the US Army Corps of Engineers to help design and construct an alternative channel that will not only help fish migration but will also protect the railroad and road infrastructure.

Peltola is well versed in fisheries and Alaska Native land and environment issues. We hope this is the first of many visits by Alaska's congresswoman.



Photos: Upper Right: Congresswoman Mary Peltola, NVE President Aaron Leggett, and Curtis McQueen.

Above: Discussing the issues

Right: Congresswoman Mary Peltola and NVE Staff during the Congresswoman's visit to Eklutna

COMMUNITY NEWS



Duane Craig NVE Tribal Member, age 12 and in 6th grade was born with 50% hearing loss. In 2017 he had surgery to fix a hole in his ear drum. Since then, he has normal hearing. Parents Val Craig and Shirley Craig, NVE Tribal Member and NVE Council Vice President, are very excited to announce that he is in the Talented and Gifted Program with an IQ of 131.



Future events will be posted on the NVE website and Facebook as they are created. If you would like to join an email mailing list for NVE Events, please email cbrophil@eklutna.org or call 907-688-8522

An event calendar is now online! Check out the calendar at <u>www.eklutna-nsn.gov</u>.



We would like to take a moment to remember our elders and community members who have passed this past year. All will be remembered with love in our hearts.



NVE Job Postings can always be found online at <u>www.eklutna-nsn.gov/jobs/</u>

NVE Council is looking for a **Eklutna Tribal Council Support Position.** Part-time position, 30-60 hrs/month. Pay is DOE. Position is open until filled.



Ondola Cousins

From Left to right: Dorothy Cook, Agena More ,Gina Ondola, Kaylene Larwin, Diane Bulls, Aaron Leggett, Angela Racette, Adam Leggett.

Is your contact information correct?



Please take a few minutes to make sure your current contact information is available to the Enrollment office. This is where the mailing lists come from for sending out newsletters, important information, and information for the annual meeting and elections.



The Address Change form can be found under the forms tab on the NVE website (<u>www.eklutna-nsn.gov/forms/</u>) or contact the main office and a form can be emailed or mailed to you.



OVERNIGHT OATS

PREP TIME SERVINGS 5 mins 1

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 1/2 cup liquid (water, milk, almond milk, powdered milk, etc.)
- 1-2 tsp sweetener (maple syrup, honey, sugar)
- Fruit (frozen, fresh, dried)
- Nuts, nut butter, or seeds

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix together all ingredients in a mason jar or glass container.
- 2. Store in refrigerator overnight.
- Enjoy cold, or microwave in the morning for a quick, healthy breakfast.

This recipe is very flexible and you can use whatever items you have on hand!





Quick breakfasts are needed for our busy lives. Everyone feels better after eating in the morning and the healthier the breakfast is, the longer you feel good.

Overnight Oats is an easy way to have a hardy breakfast. It is simple to make, quick to grab, and sticks with you until lunch.

Quick additions:

- local berries (fresh or frozen)
- spruce tips
- seeds
- birch syrup
- or anything else you have on hand!



We would love to post some local or traditional foods!

If you have a recipe that you would like to share with everyone please submit it to NVE via email at nve@eklunta.org or snail mail at 26339 Eklutna Village Rd., Chugiak, AK 99567.



NVE Staff

NVE has updated the phones and staff members now have direct lines. The department direct lines and emails are listed below. For general information contact the main office at 907-688-6020 or nve@eklutna.org.

Administration

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Sharron Munson smunson@eklutna.org 907-688-6020

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Enrollment

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Lewis Stephan 907-688-6020

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Marc Lamoreaux marcl@eklutna.org 907-242-6967

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Office 907-688-8522

Offices are staffed from 9am - 5pm Monday - Friday

New Staff

Brenda Hewitt, NVE's Tribal Administrator, was hired by the tribal council and began work on February first. If you came to the annual meeting, you may have met her, and she said she looks forward to meeting all the tribal members.

Brenda was raised in Fairbanks, graduating from Lathrop High School. She attended the University of Alaska and received a master's degree in political management from George Washington University in Washington DC.

Her background in Alaska has been varied, ranging from owning her own public relations firm to being the special assistant to Lt. Governor Jack Coghill. She was also a legislative liaison for the Department of Transportation and Chief of Staff for Doug Isaacson. While working as a supervisor in the Local Government Assistance division of Community and Regional Affairs, Isaacson called to ask her to work with him for Minto's corporation, Seth De Ah Ya doing economic development prior to coming to work for Eklutna.



Brenda's heart is truly in Alaska. She loves the people, the outdoors and of course Alaska's great seafood. She is married with four children between her and her husband Tony and three grandchildren living in Anchorage. Please take the time to stop by her office in the community clinic to introduce yourself and share a story or two.



My name is Whitney Waskey, the new Receptionist/ Food bank Assistant at Native Village of Eklutna. Being born and raised in Chugiak, Alaska, I love being outside hiking, fishing, camping, spending time with family, and going to special events. When I was 14, working with CITC Rural Youth Services in Eklutna, I've always wanted to work within my community. Since then, I've been in customer service for several years. I went to training for Youth Build in CITC Youth Services, then afterwards was an Administrative Assistant. My goal is learning more about our culture and history to assist in any way I can. I am honored and excited to be here.



Whitney with Kyle Robillard in the NVE Food Bank



Land and Environment News

The Land and Environment office is always busy! We have so many things going on. Over the winter was our slow time. Reports were written, data collected in the summer was analyzed, presentations were made and presented, meetings were attended, and grants were researched and applied for.



Eklutna Lake Right: old photo of the Alex Cabin

Last fall, a few beams from the Eklutna Alex cabin washed up on the shore of Eklutna Lake by the campground. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was able to temporarily store this for us and Archeologists from JBER were able to wrap the piece for us so that the beams can dry slowly. This piece is now being stored in a temperature-controlled building until it is decided what is to be done with it.

The L&E Department has also been attending meetings on Permafrost and slope failures. These are attended to assist with management recommendations and for emergency purposes.

Staff attended state conferences to network and learn with continuing education.

Mat-su food security meetings have also been attended. NVE is working with this group of people to make sure that if there is a disaster, all people are able to get food. This extends to the NVE tribal community even in Anchorage.

Staff presented the river work at three conferences. These included the Mat-Su Salmon Symposium, the Navigating the New Arctic (NNA) Conference in Anchorage, and at the Alaska Water Resources Association.



Planning is also underway for all of the summer programs, the big one being the Culture Camp – July 31st to Aug 4th. Some other events that are being planned are traditional foods harvesting, introducing agriculture, bird and bogs, and bat monitoring.

This summer, the Land and Environment Department is planning on building a pavillion to hold education events and elder lunches (in warmer weather), building a greenhouse for the community garden through the Eklunta Tribal Conservation District, and putting up a community smokehouse. The department woud love volunteers for these projects!





We are hopeful the salmon will return to us



WWW.EKLUTNARIVER.ORG



Scan the QR code to go to the NVE L&E Webpage.

Beluga Monitoring along the Upper Cook Inlet Knik Arm

At the end of May 2022, a beluga biologist from JBER came out to the village to set two beluga acoustic monitoring devices as part of an ongoing monitoring project with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). These devices will "listen" for the whales and record their sounds. The information obtained will help researchers get an estimate on the population of Knik Arm Beluga, and to see where they are traveling. The device on the rock stayed in over winter. We ask that if you see these devices to not disturb them, but please let us know if you see any damage.

Upper Cook Inlet Beluga are rarely seen and their numbers have been diminishing rapidly over the last few years. At the last estimate, there are only 280 whales in this population. Belugas use echolocation to "see" where they are going, communicate, and find prey – much like bats. There are different sounds for different activities, only some of these sounds are audible to us (what we hear). More information on the Upper Cook Inlet Beluga and this project can be found at <u>www.fisheries.noaa.gov</u>.

Upper Photos: JBER Biologsit Garner and his technician installing the acoustic moniotors.

Right: Monitor 1 installed on a rock

Below: Monitor 2 installed in-ground.









Birds of Eklutna

The Village of Eklutna is situated on an important migratory bird flyway. Dozens of species of birds pass through every year, moving from their wintering grounds in the south to their food-rich summer nesting areas across Alaska. Being situated on the Cook Inlet, next to the Eklutna River and its wetlands, and adjacent to the Palmer Hay Flats, Eklutna provides productive nesting grounds for dozens of species of birds and is an important stopover for many more migrants.

Staff in the LE Department began participating in ADFG's Birds N Bogs program in 2022, with the goal of integrating the program into the Department's environmental education offerings in 2023. Birds N Bogs is a long-term Citizen Science program that involves participants monitoring their assigned wetland during breeding season for at least 1 hour, for 1 day, in each of the study's 4 periods. Participants make note of birds that are seen during these times, with special attention paid to 12 target species, which are species of concern in the state.

Of the 12 target species, we observed 7 of them in the wetlands around the Eklutna River. In addition to these 7 species, 46 other were observed along the Eklutna River throughout the spring and summer, for a total of 53 identified species.

The Birds N Bogs survey runs from early May through early June, prime breeding time for the target species. The LE Department would like to invite anyone interested to join us on these surveys. This is a great way to get outside, learn more about the amazing birds in our area, and participate in a long-term citizen science project. The data collected is compiled and used to assess population trends for these threatened species. The site for this season is the Eklutna Tailrace, which hosts an abundance of birds throughout the season.

There will be learning opportunities and materials available for those that are interested in participating. If you or anyone you know are interested, please contact the LE Department at (907)688-8522 or email at krobillard@eklutna.org. Dates and times will be decided upon soon, hopefully with input from anyone interested in participating.

Target Species

Common Loon Pacific Loon Red-Throated Loon Red-Necked Grebe Horned Grebe* Lesser Yellowlegs* Greater Yellowlegs* Solitary Sandpiper Rusty Blackbird* Olive-Sided Flycatcher* Tree Swallow*

*Observed in 2022 near Eklutna





Searching for Bats at Eklutna

This past summer, the Land and Environment Department partnered with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Threatened, Endangered, and Diversity (TED) program to monitor for bats in the areas surrounding the Village.

Little Brown Bat Photo credits unknown

As part of this program, an educational session focused on bats in Alaska and their conservation was held at Eklutna on June 24th. A biologist from ADFG and a graduate student from UAA researching bats delivered a presentation focusing on Alaskan bats, including their ecology, threats, and ADFG's monitoring programs. Taxidermy bats, bat skeletons, and bat houses were on hand for attendees to view, as well as several different types of acoustic monitoring equipment. This equipment is deployed in likely bat habitat and records the high frequency sounds that bats emit. The sounds are recorded and are later analyzed by scientists.

In early July, the biologists returned and led youth volunteers into the field to deploy acoustic monitors (called AudioMoths) at four locations in the Eklutna area. These monitors were left in place for one week to record any bats in the area. After one week, the monitors were recovered, and the recordings were analyzed. This period was used because young bats leave the roost around this time. Interestingly, no bats were recorded during this period.

This does not mean that there are no bats in the Eklutna area. NVE Staff noticed bat droppings on an outbuilding in the Village and discovered a roost of 5 little brown bats (Myotis lucifugus). Bats were observed using this roost from June through September. The LE Department hung two bat boxes in the area of the roost, to encourage the bats to roost elsewhere.



The L&E Dept. and ADFG will continue this partnership this year. We are planning to redeploy the AudioMoths next season in different locations, and would welcome any volunteers to participate and to learn more about bats and their status in Alaska. Arin Underwood, a wildlife biologist with ADFG, will be providing a recorded educational talk that will be posted on the NVE Facebook page and website. This is a great educational opportunity for our youth to learn and to participate in a realworld scientific program.

More information will be available as summer approaches, and any questions can be directed to the Land and Environment Department at (907)688-8522 or krobillard@eklutna.org

Eklunta River Restoration

West Fork Eklunta River, June 2022

The NVE Tribal Council passed a resolution in May 2022, on behalf of the Native Village of Eklutna people supporting restoration of Eklutna River and Lake salmon habitat, in hopes the salmon will return to us. Specific restoration recommendations include: "1) continuous flow in the river below the lake sufficient to support thriving salmon populations, with intermittent higher, habitat maintenance and re-creation flows, 2) salmon passage between Eklutna River and Lake, and 3) moderation of Eklutna Lake level variability, at levels sufficient to facilitate sockeye spawning." You can read the resolution on the Land and Environment webpage and use it to help promote the restoration effort.

Public outreach to increase support for the river restoration is important to help bring the salmon back in abundance that Eklutna people enjoyed before the dams. Native Village of Eklutna has formed the Eklutna River Coalition to promote the health of Eklutna River and its salmon runs with The Conservation Fund, Trout Unlimited, and The Alaska Center. You can visit the Coalition website www.eklutnariver.org to learn more about the vision, history, lower dam removal, returning water, media, and how you can get involved with the restoration effort.



NVE Land and Environment Department (NVE LE) is performing salmon habitat surveys in Eklutna River below and above Eklutna Lake. We are finding valuable salmon habitat in the East and West Fork Eklutna River tributaries above Eklutna Lake. Other researchers have found that Eklutna Lake could provide plentiful, rich spawning habitat for a prolific sockeye population that would offer the most productive Eklutna River watershed fishery. It is interesting that 2021 research found 331 spawned out 4.5 to 6.5 inch kokanee (landlocked sockeye salmon) around Eklutna Lake. Restoring fish passage between the lake and river would allow kings and silvers to return, to spawn in the lake tributaries, and allow the sockeye to migrate to the ocean, proliferate and grow to normal size

NVE LE 2021 and 2022 surveys found salmon numbers in the lower Eklutna River were drastically lower compared to numbers observed in 2002 and 2003, with the exception of pink salmon (see chart). We're not sure what has caused this decline, but reducing or eliminating fishing pressure should help the salmon numbers increase. Habitat improvements in the lower river will also help to increase salmon populations.

NVE LE has started a study of Eklutna salmon genetics in 2022. Traditional knowledge states that Eklutna kings are larger than kings caught in other area streams. Although we are no longer seeing these large salmon, we are hoping the genetics are still here so that with habitat improvements and more water the salmon will grow larger. Genetics work will also help to choose stocks if any reintroduction is needed in the system in the future.

Maximum Count					
Species	2002	2003	2021	2022	
Chum	1051	272	9	8	
Coho	131	39	8	18	
Chinook	36	29	6	6	
Pink	42	18	136	104	
Sockeye	2	21	0	0	

Average Maximum Count					
Species	2002-2003 average	2021-2022 average	Percent Change		
Chum	661.5	8.5	-98.7%		
Coho	85	13	-84.7%		
Chinook	32.5	6	-81.5%		
Pink	30	120	300.0%		
Sockeye	11.5	0	-100.0%		
Total	820.5	147.5	-82%		

The charts to the left show the actual numbers of salmon counted during the 2002/2003 and 2021/2022 study seasons. You can see the decline in numbers from year to year, and the lower chart shows the percent decline in numbers during the 20 year period.



Right: a minnow trap. This is the trap that NVE LE Dept uses to catch and identify juvinilles for species composition in the river. Left: a dolly varyden char caught in the trap. This guy was released unharmed.





Left: Redd counts were performed in 2021 and 2022. Redds are the "nests" that salmon make to lay the eggs into. This chart shows that during the 2002 season, redds were made further upriver past the Thunderbird confluence. Some reasons as to why this happened is that the water release in 2021 exposed more suitable substrate for redds and that the water was higher in the river in 2022 due to increased snow melt during the spring and consistant rains during the fall months.

Below: We are able to see the composition of the fish species using the river during our juvinelle surveys. This composition will change from year to year, but we can see that the majority of small fish in the system were sticklebacks, dolly varden char, and coho. This survey is only done on the lower river





Work is underway on the Community Garden! We have been hard at work preparing the site for the garden over the past year. Trees were removed, debris was picked up, and the existing gravel pad was leveled! A Conex was purchased and placed on the gravel pad for the aquaponics portion of the greenhouse and hügelkultur beds were created on part of the outdoor area. These beds will provide nutrients to the plants and will help build the soil. We will start to plan the beds as soon as the snow melts and the soil warms up enough. This winter we were gifted with manure to help with the soil creation - and we got a lot! If you need manure for your home garden, let us know, we do have some to share.

A sunken greenhouse will be built adjacent to the Conex for extended season growing. Materials are being ordered so that we can get this built this spring. If you would like to volunteer to help with the greenhouse build, call 907-688-8522.

The ETCD crew has also been busy this winter with educational events. We presented on hügelkultur gardening and orchard starting. We are working with partners at Alaska Pacific University, Seeds of Change, and Alaska Villige Initiatives to create educational events for the local community and for other villages througout the state to assist in the need for food security.



Left and right: conceptual drawings of what the greenhouse/garden will look like.

Below left: the conex in place this past fall

Below right: hügelkultur row construction



Fishing Season is here!

The Educational Fish Net is available for the 2023 season. Dates run from **July 1st - September 30th.**

Sign-ups open June 15th. Call the office at 907-688-6020 or the LE Dept at 907-688-8522 to sign up for a date.

More information is on the Land and Environment Webpage for the 2023 season.



Stock Photo, NVE LE Dept.

Dena'ina words for the summer season





Native Village of Eklutna 26339 Eklutna Village Rd. Chugiak AK 99567

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NVE Newsletter

Eklutna Native Village Tribal Office 26339 Eklutna Village Road Chugiak, AK 99567

Main Office Phone : (907) 688-6020 Fax : (907) 688-6021 Email : nve@eklutna.org

Land and Environment Office Phone: (907) 688-8522 Fax: (907) 688-6021

Eklutna Village Clinic 26341 Eklutna Village Road Chugiak, AK 99567 Phone : (907) 688-6031 Fax : (907) 688-6032