



June 29, 2012

Word is out about a possible hydroelectric project at Chikuminuk Lake. The Lake sits at the upper reaches of the Nuyakuk-Nushagak drainage in northern Wood Tikchik State Park. I want to share with you what is happening, and what is not happening.

We have only just begun to explore the viability of this project. Last year Nuvista, a Southwest Alaska non-profit electric cooperative, received funding from the State to assess the feasibility of a hydroelectric project at Chikuminuk Lake. Nuvista is starting conversations with communities, tribes, organizations and residents within the Calista and Bristol Bay regions as well as state and federal agencies to determine if this project should move forward.

At this very early stage, data gathering is limited to exploratory walks supported by floatplane, helicopter aerial surveys, and boat trips across Chauekuktuli Lake into the lower reaches of the Allen River. Our team is diligently following all the State Park rules for this area. This means no powered boats, no helicopter landings and no shovels. Only after we receive the State Park's permit will more in-depth data gathering be done, such as fieldwork to understand geotechnical constraints and cultural resources in the area. More on the ground time and data collection will be required to learn about fish and wildlife use of the lake, its tributaries and the connections between Chikuminuk and downstream water conditions. This would include work by a team of hydrologists, fish biologists, geologists, civil engineers, archaeologists, and others in coordination with state and federal agencies. These types of important information have never been gathered and do not even exist for the area, so it will be useful for everyone.

Many questions need to be answered before anyone will know if this project is a feasible, low impact solution to the region's energy challenges. This remote site was chosen because there is no known salmon in the lake, and seasonal recreation and subsistence use is limited. The new data we gather will help us understand the lake ecosystem, amount of power that could be generated, and how this power might be able to be distributed.

The only thing we do know is that western Alaska needs sustainable, affordable and reliable energy solutions. Energy conservation and alternative sources like hydro, wind, and biomass are clearly part of this solution. Nuvista is working on behalf of Southwest Alaska to see if hydropower at Chikuminuk Lake could help sustain the region's health, all of our Native cultural traditions, subsistence and our modern economic lifestyles. We look forward to continuing this discussion, sharing what we learn, and working together to help our communities survive. Please visit our website (www.nuvistacoop.org) and feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you. Elaine "Chicky" Brown, (907) 868-2460