



# News Release

Public Affairs Office  
PO Box 1306  
Albuquerque, NM 87103  
505/248-6911  
505/248-6915 (Fax)

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) [www.fws.gov/southwest/](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/)

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**Contacts:** Christine Tincher at 505/248-6909 or Joseph Early at 505/248-6602

## Establishment of the First Non-Eagle Feather Repository

(Albuquerque, New Mexico) Today, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service), in cooperation with the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, established a two-year pilot, non-eagle feather repository to provide Native Americans with a permitted source to obtain non-eagle feathers from federally regulated migratory birds for religious and cultural use.

For decades Native Americans have used various natural resources and wildlife for subsistence, as well as for cultural and religious purposes. Feathers remain one of the most sought after items by tribal cultural and religious practitioners. To assist in legal acquisition of federally regulated migratory bird feathers, the Service established the National Eagle Repository in Denver, Colorado. This repository serves as a legal source of eagles and eagle feathers for qualified, federally enrolled, tribal members for use in religious ceremonies.

At one time, this repository also distributed other protected and regulated migratory birds, like hawks and falcons. However distribution of these non-eagle species was discontinued in the late 1990s. Since then, the Service has looked for ways to help meet tribal needs for non-eagle feathers.

In cooperation with the Comanche Nation, the Service is issuing a permit to establish the first Native American-managed non-eagle feather repository. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and a permit were signed today enabling the Comanche Nation Ethno-Ornithological Initiative (SIA) based in Cyril, Okla., to receive and distribute regulated migratory bird feathers, deceased birds and parts from zoos, falconers, rehabilitators and other permitted sources to federally enrolled tribal members across the country. This pilot project will be in effect beginning today and evaluated for two-years. The permit and MOA do not allow for the take of any protected migratory birds. The majority of feathers will be obtained through birds that naturally molt feathers.

“Establishing this tribally managed repository demonstrates our commitment to working collaboratively with tribes to promote natural resources conservation activities that honor Native American culture and religion,” said Benjamin Tuggle, Regional Director for the Service’s Southwest Region.

Various protected migratory birds, feathers and parts will be authorized for transfer to this new repository by Service bird rehabilitators, zoos, falconers, and other Service-permitted entities. Based on the process used by the Service’s eagle repository in Denver, federally enrolled tribal members will now be able to apply for, acquire and possess non-eagle federally regulated migratory bird feathers and their parts for religious and cultural use through SIA.

2-2-2-2-2-2 Establishment of non-eagle feather repository

For more information on this new repository, contact Bill Voelker, Director of the SIA at (580) 464-2750, or visit his website at <http://www.comancheeagle.org>, You may also contact the Fish and Wildlife Service's Native American Liaison, Joe Early, at (505) 248-6602, or [joe\\_early@fws.gov](mailto:joe_early@fws.gov)

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit **[www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)**

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## Attachment - Background on the National Eagle Repository

The National Eagle Repository is located at Rocky Mountain Arsenal northeast of Denver, Colorado. Its purpose is to provide a central location for the receipt, storage, and distribution of bald and golden eagles that are found dead, and their parts. The eagles, and their parts, are shipped to qualified Native Americans for use in religious Indian ceremonies.

It is illegal for any individual to possess a bald or golden eagle, including its parts (feathers, feet, etc). The distribution of bald and golden eagles, and their parts to Native Americans is authorized by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and Regulations found in 50 CFR 22. Qualified Native Americans wishing to obtain bald or golden eagles or their parts, must submit a [new application](#) for a new applicant and if you have applied before using a [re-order request application](#) to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [Wildlife Permit Office which services the state where the applicant resides](#). The completed application is sent to the National Eagle Repository and the order is filled on a first come, first serve basis. In 1995, there were approximately 3,000 more approved applications for eagles on file than there were available eagles.

Federal and State conservation agencies, zoological parks, rehabilitators, and others who may legally possess and transport dead bald and golden eagles are encouraged to send the dead birds, and their parts, to the Repository so they can be reutilized by Native Americans. Contact the Repository prior to shipping of the eagles to ensure someone will be present to receive them.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
National Eagle Repository  
Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Building 128  
Commerce City, Colorado 80022  
phone: (303) 287-2110  
fax: (303) 287-1570

[http://library.fws.gov/Bird\\_Publications/eaglerepository05.pdf](http://library.fws.gov/Bird_Publications/eaglerepository05.pdf)