



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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National Park Service News Release

RELEASE Date – July 7, 2005
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Secretary Norton Takes Action to Strengthen and Improve Repatriation Compliance

WASHINGTON—Interior Secretary Gale Norton today announced new measures to strengthen and improve compliance with provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Norton signed Secretarial Order 3261 which assigns the the responsibility for ensuring that museums comply with the repatriation provisions under the Act to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

“This is an important issue and I take this responsibility seriously,” Norton said. “This action will ensure that our commitment to the law is fulfilled and our responsibility under the Act is carried out to its fullest extent.”

The Assistant Secretary will be responsible for ensuring that federal agencies and museums comply with the repatriation provisions under the Act. The Act requires all federal agencies and museums to repatriate Native American human remains and other cultural items to the appropriate lineal descendants, Indian tribes, or Native American organizations. The Assistant Secretary will also have the authority to investigate museums that may not have complied with the law and assess civil penalties if they found to be non-compliant.

The Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, Wildlife and Parks will also be responsible for granting extensions of NAGPRA inventory deadlines; awarding NAGPRA implementation grants to Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations and museums; and will work with the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs to promulgate NAGPRA regulations. The National Park Service will provide staff support and technical assistance.

NAGPRA was congressionally enacted in 1990, to address the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations to Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony with which they are affiliated. The law requires federal agencies and museums to consult with tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations, provide summaries and inventories of their collections, and upon receipt of a valid claim, repatriate cultural items to the appropriate parties.

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