



NEWS RELEASE

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Non-Eagle Feather Repositories Receive Grants from Fish & Wildlife Service

Albuquerque, NM – Two non-eagle feather repositories established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (Service) Southwest Region have been awarded Service migratory bird program grants to assist in providing legally obtained bird feathers and parts for Native American cultural, ceremonial and religious needs.

The two national non-eagle feather repositories were established in 2010 through an agreement between the Service, Oklahoma’s Comanche Nation Ethno-Ornithological Initiative (Sia), and Liberty Wildlife Rehabilitation Foundation (Liberty Wildlife) in Arizona.

Through that agreement, both Sia and Liberty Wildlife were issued permits to salvage, receive, and distribute regulated migratory bird feathers, deceased birds and parts from Service permitted zoos, falconers, rehabilitators, and other legal sources. Once the permits were put in place, requests for non-eagle feathers and parts began pouring in from federally enrolled tribal members across the country.

“We clearly had a responsibility to provide a way for Native American tribal members to access these important components of their religious and cultural practices,” said the Service’s Southwest Regional Director Benjamin Tuggle. “Once we partnered with Sia and Liberty Wildlife, we knew we could make our vision a reality.”

For hundreds of years, Native Americans have used wildlife and other natural resources for subsistence, as well as for cultural and religious purposes. Migratory birds play a unique and significant role in tribal culture, especially in American Indian spiritual and religious beliefs and ceremonies. The feathers and parts of many migratory birds are fundamental to most Native American tribes.

While eagle feathers are available to tribes and tribal members through the Service's national eagle repository outside of Denver, that repository discontinued distribution of non-eagle feathers and parts from birds that are central to tribal ceremonial and ritual practices in the late 1990s.

"Once the National Eagle Repository discontinued providing both eagle and non-eagle feathers, there developed a tremendous unfilled need for tribes to legally obtain non-eagle feathers and parts for Native American religious and cultural practices" Tuggle said.

Over the last several years, the Oklahoma and Arizona repositories have filled requests for 2295 feathers, parts and whole bird species to Native Americans across the country. The two non-eagle feather repositories combined have provided items for members of 265 tribes in 40 states.

"We have a long and proud tradition of working in partnership with tribes in the Southwest," noted Tuggle. "We take our tribal trust responsibilities very seriously and are committed to continually strengthening our tribal partnerships."

Tuggle indicated that the grants to the two non-eagle feather repositories will meet both Sia and Liberty Wildlife's needs and meet the growing demands for feathers and parts to support Native American religious and cultural traditions for tribes nationwide.

To find out more about the Southwest Region's non-eagle feather repository program at:

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/NAL/feathers.html>

For more information on SIA in Oklahoma, visit: <http://comancheeagle.org/home.html>

To learn more about Liberty Wildlife in Arizona, visit:

<http://www.libertywildlife.org/>

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