



ALASKA MIGRATORY BIRD CO-MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Alaska Natives now permitted to sell handicrafts and clothing that include feathers and other nonedible migratory bird parts**

Since the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, the sale of products incorporating the nonedible parts of migratory birds, such as feathers has been prohibited. New regulations publishing on Monday by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will allow the sale, including consignment sale, of authentic Alaska Native handicrafts or clothing that incorporate nonedible migratory bird parts. Handicrafts must be made from migratory birds harvested for food during the subsistence season. There are 27 bird species from which parts may be used.

The new regulations were developed in response to a request for regulatory changes submitted by Alaska Native artisans from Kodiak Island to the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council. The Council formed a special committee to address the request. The committee, comprised of Alaska Native representatives from eight rural regions in Alaska (Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Bering Straits-Norton Sound, North Slope, Kodiak, Bristol Bay, Gulf of Alaska, Aleutian-Pribilof Islands, Northwest Arctic) and representatives from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked together over a four-year period to develop the new regulations.

“Indigenous people traditionally used all the parts of the animals they took for subsistence. This new regulation will allow them to continue that tradition of not wasting what the animals have given,” said Patty Schwalenberg, Executive Director of the Council. “The handicrafts created by Alaska Natives express appreciation for the animal’s sacrifice.”

After hearing about this regulatory change, world renowned Alaska Native Alutiiq mask maker Perry Eaton said, "This is a very good change in the law as those parts of the bird were just wasted and while the art work continued, we were not able to make it in our traditional manner. Our ancestors are smiling today!"

The committee ensured compliance with the various international migratory bird treaties and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act while developing these new regulations. More than 45 public meetings were held during the course of the development period. Public comments were sought on the proposed regulations and any comments submitted were considered and addressed prior to publication of this final rule.

“Alaska’s indigenous people have been harvesting plants, fish, game and birds since time immemorial and have been stewards to these resources for generations,” said Greg Siekaniec, Regional Director for the Alaska Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “We’re pleased to help make a change that

supports spiritual and cultural practices critical for preserving a way of life. I want to compliment the work of the AMBCC for their tenacity in seeing this through”.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Subsistence Director, Hazel Nelson added, “This new regulation promotes non-wasteful subsistence uses, supports traditional skills and crafts, and provides the opportunity for a small, supplementary income for Alaska Native artists.”

The Alaska Federation of Natives supports this regulatory change. “AFN appreciates the common sense actions by the Department of Interior on the handicraft rule. It supports Alaska Natives who continue to express our culture through art,” said AFN President Julie Kitka

Under Article II(4)(b) of the Protocol between the United States and Canada amending the 1916 Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds in Canada and the United States, only Alaska Natives are eligible to sell handicrafts that contain the inedible parts of birds taken for food during the Alaska spring and summer migratory bird subsistence harvest. This subsistence harvest of migratory birds equates to less than 1% of the total migratory bird harvest in the United States and, therefore, allowing the sale of handicrafts and clothing that incorporate the inedible parts of harvested birds does not present a conservation concern. These new regulations implement provisions of the treaty between the U.S. and Canada, which allow for the sale of handicrafts. The treaty has the same legal authority as a federal statute.

You can read the public comments and the Service’s responses in the final rule.

Find the final rule and learn more about the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council at: <https://www.fws.gov/alaska/ambcc/Index.htm>.

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The Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council, formed in 2000, consists of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and representatives of Alaska's Native population.