

## **Policy Concerning Distribution of Eagle Feathers for Native American Religious Purposes**

Memorandum of President of the United States, Apr. 29, 1994, 59 F.R. 22953:

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Eagle feathers hold a sacred place in Native American culture and religious practices. Because of the feathers' significance to Native American heritage and consistent with due respect for the government-to-government relationship between the Federal and Native American tribal governments, this Administration has undertaken policy and procedural changes to facilitate the collection and distribution of scarce eagle bodies and parts for this purpose. This memorandum affirms and formalizes executive branch policy to ensure that progress begun on this important matter continues across the executive branch.

Today, as part of an historic meeting with all federally recognized tribal governments, I am directing executive departments and agencies (hereafter collectively "agency" or "agencies") to work cooperatively with tribal governments and to reexamine broadly their practices and procedures to seek opportunities to accommodate Native American religious practices to the fullest extent under the law.

As part of these efforts, agencies shall take steps to improve their collection and transfer of eagle carcasses and eagle body parts ("eagles") for Native American religious purposes. The success of this initiative requires the participation, and is therefore the responsibility, of all Federal land managing agencies, not just those within the Department of the Interior. I therefore direct each agency responsible for managing Federal lands to diligently and expeditiously recover salvageable eagles found on lands under their jurisdiction and ensure that the eagles are promptly shipped to the National Eagle Repository ("Repository"). To assist agencies in this expanded effort, the Secretary of the Interior shall issue guidelines to all relevant agencies for the proper shipment of eagles to the Repository. After receiving these guidelines, agencies shall immediately adopt policies, practices, and procedures necessary in accordance with these guidelines to recover and transfer eagles to the Repository promptly.

I support and encourage the initial steps taken by the Department of the Interior to improve the distribution of eagles for Native American religious purposes. In particular, the Department of the Interior shall continue to adopt policies and procedures and take those actions necessary to:

- (a) ensure the priority of distribution of eagles, upon permit application, first for traditional Native American religious purposes, to the extent permitted by law, and then to other uses;
- (b) simplify the eagle permit application process quickly and to the greatest extent possible to help achieve the objectives of this memorandum;
- (c) minimize the delay and ensure respect and dignity in the process of distributing eagles for Native American religious purposes to the greatest extent possible;
- (d) expand efforts to involve Native American tribes, organizations, and individuals in the distribution process, both at the Repository and on tribal lands, consistent with applicable laws;
- (e) review means to ensure that adequate refrigerated storage space is available to process the eagles; and
- (f) continue efforts to improve the Repository's ability to facilitate the objectives of this memorandum.

The Department of the Interior shall be responsible for coordinating any interagency efforts to address continuing executive branch actions necessary to achieve the objectives of this memorandum.

We must continue to be committed to greater intergovernmental communication and cooperation. In addition to working more closely with tribal governments, we must enlist the assistance of, and cooperate with, State and local governments to achieve the objectives of this memorandum. I therefore request that the Department of the Interior work with State fish and game agencies and other relevant State and local authorities to facilitate the objectives of this memorandum.

With commitment and cooperation by all of the agencies in the executive branch and with tribal governments, I am confident that we will be able to accomplish meaningful progress in the distribution of eagles for Native American religious purposes.

The Director of the Office of Management and Budget is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the Federal Register.

***William J. Clinton***