United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: MB
Falls Church, VA 22041

MBPM-6-02
Date: October 23, 2026

MIGRATORY BIRD PERMIT MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Disposition of nonreleasable bald eagles and golden eagles

PURPOSE: This memorandum serves as guidance to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel for placement of live, nonreleasable bald eagles and golden eagles with permitted, federally recognized Tribes in accordance with the Service's trust responsibility to Native Americans.

BACKGROUND: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) administers regulations and permits for the possession of bald eagles and golden eagles for eagle Indian religious purposes (50 CFR 22.60) under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Tribes federally recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs may apply for and, if qualified, receive a Tribe Live Eagle Possession permit for eagle Indian religious purposes (Tribe Live Eagle Possession).

The Service also issues Rehabilitation permits (50 CFR 21.76) to qualified entities authorizing the possession of sick, injured, or orphaned migratory birds, including bald eagles or golden eagles and Eagle Exhibition permits (50 CFR 22.50) to qualified public museums, zoological parks, and scientific societies for educational or scientific purposes.

POLICY: An eagle that has undergone care with a federally permitted rehabilitator and is determined nonreleasable will be made available for Tribe Live Eagle Possession before other qualified facilities. A nonreleasable eagle possessed under an Eagle Exhibition Permit that is no longer suitable for educational purposes may be made available for Tribe Live Eagle Possession when appropriate, depending on the training and temperament of the bird.

Service personnel will follow the guidelines below when placing nonreleasable bald eagles or golden eagles.

1. The Service will specify an authorized number of eagles on the Tribe Live Eagle Possession permit. This authorization will be based on the information provided by the Tribe regarding the number of eagles requested and the facilities available to house the requested number of eagle(s) in humane and healthful conditions.

2. Tribes in possession of fewer eagles than authorized may submit a request for nonreleasable eagle(s) to the Migratory Bird Permit Office (MBPO). The request must include the number and species of eagles; however, Tribes may include additional

information such as sex, age, geographic area, and flight status.

3. When a nonreleasable eagle is available for placement, the MBPO will request information from the rehabilitator or educator regarding the age, sex, type of injury, and temperament of the eagle. The MBPO will notify Tribes with pending requests that match based on the information the Tribe provides in response to #2 above.

4. If an eagle is approved for placement with a Tribe, the Tribe and the permitted source will work together in arranging the logistics for the transfer to the Tribe. The Service does not pay for any costs associated with the transfer.

/s/ Errett Patterson, Acting for Jerome Ford,
10/23/2026

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Jerome Ford
Assistant Director – Migratory Bird Program