



Native American Hopi Tribe and the Use of Golden Eagles

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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For Native Americans, permits to take eagles from the wild are limited to tribes that can show a traditional religious need that the USFWS's National Eagle Repository cannot meet. The primary example of this is the Hopi, who have collected nestling GEs from specific nest sites for their religious ceremonies for centuries. Historically authorized take of GEs, including the Hopi's, was examined in the USFWS's 2009 Final Environmental Assessment (FEA) of a proposal to permit take as provided under the Eagle Protection Act (hereafter referred to as 2009 FEA; USFWS 2009b). The USFWS considered this take part of a the biological baseline in the 20009 FEA, above which regional take "thresholds" for GEs are established to ensure USFWS does not authorize take that is not compatible with the preservation of eagles, as the Eagle Act requires. Annually since 1986, the USFWS's Southwest Region (Southwest Region) has issued a permit to the Hopi for take of nestling GEs. The allowed level of take has ranged from a low of 12 to an unlimited number. Since 1997 the permit has authorized the Hopi to take 40 nestling GEs, although annual reports from the Hopi indicate annual take during 1997-2012 averaged 23 nestlings. In 2012, the Southwest Region evaluated the population biology and "harvest management" of GEs on lands of the Hopi and Navajo. By 2012, enough data had been collected by the tribes and the USFWS to support a more specific analysis of the Hopi's take of nestling GEs on sustainability of the GE population at multiple spatial (geographic) scales than had been done previously. A team that included eagle experts from the USFWS and both tribes completed the work as a comprehensive technical assessment (TA; Appendix A). Information from the TA and related supplements in appendices of this document supported this EA. Relying on the TA, the Southwest Region developed three alternatives for issuing a permit to the Hopi in 2013. Alternatives B and C each considered multiple scales. Scales include: (1) Bird Conservation Region 16 (BCR 16), the Southern Rockies – Colorado Plateau Region; (2) the Hopi and Navajo lands "local area population" (LAP), which includes GEs on and within 140 miles of this area; 3) the area where the Hopi have collected nestling GEs in recent years (collection area, or CA) and a subset of this, the portion of the CA that is on Navajo lands (Navajo CA).

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