



Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Dawn for Navajo Nation Zoo

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – Saving the lives of eagles.

That's one goal of a new Navajo Nation Eagle Aviary here at the Navajo Nation Zoo.

Navajo Nation Zoo Department Manager David Mikesic, said "Thanks to a host of partners, we will now be able to build a new eagle aviary to help save the lives of eagles that have been injured in the wild."

An 80 feet by 30 feet observation type of facility will be constructed to house approximately 20 golden eagles. It will also include an adjoining office, food prep room and a medical center for eagles.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided initial funding of \$200,000, which was used for planning and design. The Navajo Nation Council also approved an appropriation of \$401,000 from the Navajo Nation Undesignated Unreserved Fund Balance in May. The Navajo Tourism Department under the Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development also contributed \$200,000 to help construct a new eagle aviary.

"I want to thank all of our partners for their support and funding that we received," Mikesic stated. "This is a very exciting and important project for the Navajo people."

The four main goals of the Navajo Nation Eagle Aviary are to save the lives of injured eagles; It will allow the Navajo people to legally obtain eagle feathers; The facility will be used to educate the public about eagle conservation and it will allow the Navajo people to view and maintain a spiritual connection with eagles.



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The Navajo Nation Eagle Aviary will primarily house injured golden eagles; however, it will also include injured bald eagles.

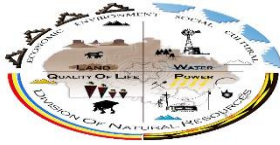
“Although there are legal ways to obtain an eagle feather, there are still individuals out there who are shooting eagles and selling their feathers illegally in the black market,” Mikesic noted. “In addition to education, the Navajo Nation Eagle Aviary will also be used to help the public establish a spiritual connection to the eagles.”

Mikesic said it is hoped the Navajo Nation Eagle Aviary Project will begin construction in July.

The Navajo Nation will also soon be home to a black-footed ferret, which was once considered the most endangered mammal in the U.S.

“The black-footed ferret was once part of the natural environment on the Navajo Nation,” Mikesic explained. “It went extinct from the Navajo Nation in the 1930’s due to canine diseases, reductions in prairie dog towns and other grassland issues.

After the ferret was rediscovered in Wyoming in the 1980s, a number of zoos began captive breeding programs to increase the number of ferrets in the U.S. The young produced from breeding programs are then trained to be put back into the wild. After the ferret was rediscovered in Wyoming in the 1980s, a number of zoos began captive breeding programs to increase the number of ferrets in the U.S. The young produced from breeding programs are then trained to be put back into the wild.



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According to Mikesic, there are approximately 25 locations that black-footed ferrets have been reintroduced into the wild and reintroduced into the western U.S - the closest being the Big Boquillas Ranch in northern Arizona.

The Navajo Nation Zoo also recently renovated three exhibits in its Discovery Center facility, which features a greatly enlarged pond, lizards, Gila monster and other species.

The Navajo Zoo features over 100 different animals of 50 different species and is the only zoo in the U.S. that is managed and owned by an American Indian tribe. It is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, visit their website at navajozoo.org or contact them at (928) 871-6574.