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Karuk Tribe



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Karuk Tribe

DRONE USE POLICY

AS APPROVED

JULY 25, 2025



Karuk Tribe Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Policy

Purpose

This policy establishes unified guidelines for the use of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), or drones, across all departments, programs, and individuals acting under the authority of the Karuk Tribe. UAS operations must respect Karuk cultural values, comply with federal regulations, and ensure the safety and privacy of the Tribe and its members.

SECTION I.

Authorization to Operate a Drone

No individual may operate a UAS on behalf of the Karuk Tribe without the following:

- **Completion of FAA Part 107 certification**
- **Submission of FAA certificate and proof of training to the Public Relations Office**
- **Formal approval by the Karuk Tribal Council**

Approval is contingent upon ongoing compliance with this policy and applicable laws.

SECTION II.

Notification Requirements

Before commencing any UAS operation, the authorized operator must send an **email notification** to the following:

- Karuk Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Karuk Tribal Council
- **Karuk Tribal Housing Authority (KTHA)**, if flight is over or near Tribal housing areas

Notification should include:

- Date and time of operation
- Purpose and planned location of flight
- FAA-certified pilot name and contact information

SECTION III.

Approved Purposes for Drone Use

Drone use is limited to tribal-authorized purposes, including but not limited to:

- Cultural and environmental documentation (excluding sacred sites)
- Development of promotional materials for the Tribe
- Content creation for the Karuk Library archive
- Emergency management and survey needs as approved



SECTION IV.

Prohibited Use

To respect Karuk culture, privacy, and spiritual sovereignty:

- **Drones shall not be flown over ceremonial events** — including traditional dances, spiritual gatherings, or funerals — under any circumstances. These moments are sacred and private, and aerial surveillance is strictly incompatible with cultural values.
- **Drones shall not be used to film sacred sites or cultural resource areas**, as designated by the Tribal Council. These areas represent vital connections to Karuk identity, tradition, and history, and must remain protected from any form of aerial documentation without express permission.
- **Use of drones over large public events (50+ attendees)** must receive prior written approval from both the Tribal Council and relevant event organizers. This ensures community awareness and avoids disruption or unintended privacy violations.
- **Drones shall not be used to surveil or record private individuals or residences without consent.** This includes any attempt to monitor tribal members or guests on private or trust land.

SECTION V.

Compliance and Consequences

All operators must comply with:

- FAA regulations and applicable federal, state, and tribal laws
- Karuk-specific flight restrictions and cultural sensitivity standards

Violation of this policy by employees will result in:

- Immediate suspension of drone privileges
- Formal report to the FAA for investigation
- Possible disciplinary action, up to and including termination

Non-tribally authorized drone activity over Karuk lands or within designated tribal airspace boundaries will be subject to enforcement under the strictest applicable laws. The Tribe reserves the right to pursue legal remedies for unauthorized aerial activity or surveillance.

SECTION VI

Data Ownership and Use

All drone footage, imagery, and data collected under this policy are the exclusive intellectual property of the Karuk Tribe. External licensing or sharing is prohibited without written authorization in accordance with the Tribe's media and data governance policies.

SECTION 8.



Amendments

This policy may be updated or amended by the Karuk Tribal Council. Operators are responsible for staying informed of any changes.

SECTION 9.**Acknowledgment**

By operating a UAS under the authority of this policy, individuals agree to uphold the laws, cultural responsibilities, and values of the Karuk Tribe in all aerial operations.

