

# **Proposal for Modification of Knots of Recognition Pertaining to Eagle Palms**

**Proposed and submitted to BSA National Council by:**

**Troy J Pugh**

**314 Ivy St SE**

**Ephrata, WA 98823**

**509-398-5074, mobile**

**Troop 66 Troop Committee Advancement Chairman,  
Columbia Basin District, Grand Columbia Council**

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## Executive Summary

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Scouts who have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout are encouraged to continue their activity in the program, continuing to show leadership and learn. Eagle Palms are designed to provide scouts recognition for their continued leadership, activity, and the achievement of additional merit badges above those required to reach the rank of Eagle. For every three months of service and leadership in their troops and an additional five merit badges above the rank of Eagle they are awarded an additional Eagle Palm.

Regarding Eagle Palms, the following is an excerpt from the *Insignia Guide*:

“Eagle Palm; Boy Scout and Scouter, worn only on the Eagle Award ribbon or Eagle square knot. You may wear only the proper combination of Palms for the number of merit badges you earn beyond Eagle.”

While scouts are youth in the program they wear their Palm pins on the ribbon of their Eagle Scout medal. When scouts become adult scouters they replace their Eagle Scout patch and medal ribbon with the Eagle Scout Square Knot; they subsequently move their Palms from their Eagle medal ribbon to their knot. **In this fashion, BSA allows for the continued recognition as an adult scout for palms earned.**

**Unfortunately, the Eagle square knot’s size is insufficient for a scouter to wear more than four palm pins, effectively causing scouts who have earned more than four silver palms to remove this recognition from their uniforms when they become scouters. (It could be argued that even the wear of more than two palm pins crowd and cover the Eagle square knot inappropriately.)**

**The achievement of Silver Palms is a significant accomplishment. This requires 15 additional merit badges above Eagle Scout and nine additional months of service and leadership in the troop for each Silver Palm earned. Many scouts even exceed these levels of dedication earning several Silver Palms, but they lose the recognition for it when they become adults as there is no space logistically on their uniforms for multiple palm pins, which symbolizes this achievement.**

**My proposal is to award a square knot for the achievement of multiple Silver Palms. This knot would be a device symbolizing the multiple Silver Palms earned. There are two variations explored in this proposal (one at four palms earned, and the other at three silver palms earned as well as much information on the development and application of this idea.**

***The following illustration is a summary of the concepts discussed in this proposal. Please continue to read through the request detail for more information supporting this concept.***



## **Current Recognition Program for Eagle Palms Summary**

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The rank of Eagle Scout is a very significant accomplishment. For those scouts who continue after earning the rank of Eagle Scout to be active in their troops by showing leadership and continuing to develop themselves personally through the achievement of additional merit badges, they are awarded with Eagle Palms for their efforts.

The requirements for an Eagle Palm are as follows:

*After becoming an Eagle Scout, you may earn Palms by completing the following requirements:*

- 1. Be active in your troop and patrol for at least three months after becoming an Eagle Scout or after award of last Palm. (Eagle Palms must be earned in sequence, and the three-month tenure requirement must be observed for each Palm.)*
- 2. Demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath (Promise) and Scout Law in your everyday life.*
- 3. Make a satisfactory effort to develop and demonstrate leadership ability.*
- 4. Earn five additional merit badges beyond those required for Eagle or last Palm. (Merit badges earned any time since becoming a Boy Scout may be used to meet this requirement.)*
- 5. Take part in a Scoutmaster conference.*
- 6. Complete a board of review.*

*You may wear only the proper combination of Palms for the number of merit badges you earned beyond the rank of Eagle. The Bronze Palm represents five merit badges, the Gold Palm 10, and the Silver Palm 15.*

Referencing the appendix of this document, “Appendix – Table of Eagle Palm Achievements”, you will see a table listing the combinations of Eagle Palms a scout can earn, including the total number of palm pins worn at each level of accomplishment.

## Shortfall of the Current Recognition Program

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The Eagle Palm program does not have any shortfalls in terms of offering additional achievement and service opportunities for scouts. In fact, the current program appropriately emphasizes the achievement of the rank of Eagle Scout first and foremost with Eagle Palms supplemental to that rank.

**However, a shortfall appears most specifically in the case of scouts who earn more than twelve Eagle Palms (four Silver Palms), which represents an additional 60 merit badges and at least three years additional activity and leadership in scouting after earning the rank of Eagle Scout.**

This is no simple accomplishment. And the shortfall is outlined in the following paragraphs:

While a scout, Eagle Palms are worn pinned to the Eagle Award. Twelve Eagle Palms is represented by four Silver Palms for a total of four palm pins. The Eagle Award ribbon is sufficiently large enough to accommodate the wearing of this number of palm pins. (The Eagle Award ribbon actually is sufficiently large enough to accommodate up to seven palm pins. It is fairly tight, but they will fit.)

When that scout reaches adulthood he modifies the insignia on his uniform to the specifications issued in the *Insignia Guide*. This document states that adult scouts are to wear the Eagle square knot in lieu of their rank patch and Eagle Award ribbon. It also states the following regarding the wear of Eagle Palms:

“Eagle Palm; Boy Scout and Scouter, **worn only on the Eagle Award ribbon or Eagle square knot**. You may wear only the proper combination of Palms for the number of merit badges you earn beyond Eagle.”

Specifically, the shortfall is that scouts who earn more than four Silver Palms find themselves without sufficient space on their Eagle square knot to wear all their palm pins. (The square knot is smaller than the award ribbon.) This forces these scouts to remove this hard-earned recognition from their uniforms, even though the *Insignia Guide* allows for this continued recognition.

This issue is represented in the following illustrations:

**Four silver palms on an Eagle Square Knot (front, back using small pin backs)**



As you can see, four palm pins is the limit as to what is feasible to wear. Even with four there are significant issues with this configuration. The crowding of pins diminishes the acknowledgment of the Eagle Scout rank and the pin backs crowd and overlap, thus causing them to fail and release (displayed are the smaller backs – the problem is worse with the larger pin backs).

For illustration purposes, the following illustration is the back of my personal Eagle Award on which I have my seven palm pins attached. I have a combination of small and large pin backs, and even with the additional space they do not hold well and can easily release.



**Thus, the shortfall of the current program is those scouts who have earned more than four Silver Palms are not able to continue to wear them in their careers as scouters. Regardless the smaller number of scouts who reach this achievement, these are the scouts who should be able to continue to wear their hard-earned recognition.**

***It can be argued that the accomplishment of any number of silver palms is one of the most significant accomplishments that a youth scout can achieve, simply considering the fact that the scout has continued in activity after earning the rank of Eagle.***

**While four Silver Palms represents the most palm pins that can possibly be pinned onto an Eagle square knot, the most reasonable maximum number of pins to be pinned onto the Eagle square knot is two. Otherwise, the square knot is covered by the pins.**

## **Resolution of the Shortfall of the Current Recognition Program**

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The simplest resolution is the creation of a square knot to represent Silver Palms earned. For purposes of this proposal I will call the knot the “Palm Knot.” Additional details on the requirements to be awarded the “Palm Knot” will be discussed in the section titled, “Proposed Requirements and Variations.”

Square Knots are generally representations of other awards or medals awarded to scouts or scouters. The idea of this knot applies the same practical approach that has been used to develop the current knot program. While the achievement of a number of palms do not represent one single award to be consolidated as is the case in the rest of the Knots of Recognition program, I feel that the use of a knot for this purpose is an excellent alternative to the current shortfall of the program.

Other key points include the following:

- Square knots are for significant achievements. Palms are very significant, especially considering the leadership time required to earn palms. Of those scouts who earn the rank of Eagle, many of them do so at the last minute before their eighteenth birthdays. The achievement of Palms suggests that they are more proactive in earning the rank.
- The current placement of palms for adults utilizes the Eagle square knot.
- Eagle palms by definition are permanent recognitions allowed to be worn as adults, just as award knots.

**But most importantly, a significant achievement such as this should not have to be removed from a scouter’s uniform due to uniform logistics.** The creation of a square knot will ensure that this achievement remains on their uniforms. This is going above and beyond the rank of Eagle and worthy of maintaining this recognition as an adult scouter.

The primary drawback is that there is a natural resistance to change, large or small. The following are some ideas that I came up with that may deter the adoption of this request:

- There are simply a small number of scouts to whom this applies.
- This is yet another square knot to add to the Knots of Recognition program.
- It could be considered that this is an attempt of BSA to encourage merit badge achievement while forsaking more fundamental ideals of scouting. (Yes, I have heard this argument. It doesn’t make much sense to me as this in my opinion is a natural extension of the rank of Eagle Scout. If it did make sense then there would be a lobby to remove the merit badge/Eagle Palm component of scouting all together.)

These truly aren’t drawbacks as they are easily dispelled or managed.

## Proposed Requirements and Variations

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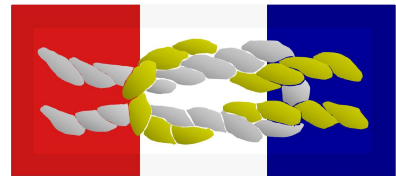
Initially, my thoughts were that this knot concept would be to recognize those scouts who earned all the merit badges possible while they were youth scouts. After further review, a more universally appealing approach was to award this knot to those scouts who earned four silver palms, which is the maximum number of palms that will fit on an Eagle Knot (as referenced above). However, the idea still has the drawback that 60 additional merit badges may be perceived as unachievable and may not provide a level of motivation that would encourage Eagle Scouts to continue to be active in the program. Therefore, an alternative may be that the knot is achieved with the earning of three silver palms. Both of these iterations are listed below.

The proposed award knot and corresponding requirements are the following:

### Palm Knot (“purist” 4 Silver Palm alternative)

A scout must achieve one of the following:

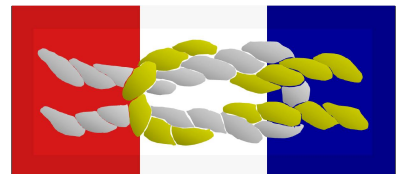
1. Earn four silver palms. – OR –
2. Do all of the following:
  - a. Earn the rank of Eagle Scout.
  - b. Do the following from the time you earn the rank of Eagle Scout through your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday:
    - i. Be active in your troop and patrol after becoming an Eagle Scout until your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
    - ii. Demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath (Promise) and Scout Law in your everyday life.
    - iii. Make a satisfactory effort to develop and demonstrate leadership ability.
  - c. Earn a total of 60 merit badges beyond those required for Eagle. (Merit badges earned any time since becoming a Boy Scout may be used to meet this requirement.)
  - d. Take part in a Scoutmaster conference.
  - e. Complete a board of review.



### Palm Knot (“motivating” 3 Silver Palm alternative)

A scout must achieve one of the following:

1. Earn three silver palms. – OR –
2. Do all of the following:
  - a. Earn the rank of Eagle Scout.
  - b. Do the following from the time you earn the rank of Eagle Scout through your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday:
    - i. Be active in your troop and patrol after becoming an Eagle Scout until your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.





- ii. Demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath (Promise) and Scout Law in your everyday life.
- iii. Make a satisfactory effort to develop and demonstrate leadership ability.
- c. Earn a total of 45 merit badges beyond those required for Eagle. (Merit badges earned any time since becoming a Boy Scout may be used to meet this requirement.)
- d. Take part in a Scoutmaster conference.
- e. Complete a board of review.

The second “OR” option on each of these variations allows for those scouts who earn the number of merit badges equivalent for the number of palms, but who did not have sufficient time to meet the palm time requirements. However, this remains contingent on the scout remaining active in his troop through his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. For example, if a scout earns the rank of Eagle on his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and earns an additional 60 merit badges remaining active in his troop until age 18, he would be awarded the Palm Knot even though he didn’t have sufficient time for the four Silver Palms. This recognizes that the scout remained active until his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Subsequent palms earned would be pinned on the “Palm Knot”. Even if the alternative of three silver palms is used, subsequent palms up to the maximum available would still fit on the knot.

Hence, the only real difference between these “purist” and the “motivating” alternatives is that the “purist” is tied directly to the maximum number of palm pins that can fit on the square knot and the “motivating” is simpler to achieve, yet still tied to the maximum number of palm pins that can fit on the square knot. It is primarily an issue of the timing of the maximum number of palm pins that can fit on the square knot as scouts under the “purist” alternative would wear four palm pins at palms 10 and 11 just before the Palm Knot is achieved and scouts under the “motivating” alternative would wear four palm pins at palms 19, 20, and 21, if they make it that far. So in some ways, it could be construed that the “motivating” 3 Silver Palm alternative is a superior alternative on several counts. Personally, I would agree, especially considering that more scouts would be able to achieve this level and that fact that it would provide greater potential motivation.

The final consideration is whether the knot is awarded at the achievement of the Silver Palm or whether it is awarded with the Bronze Palm above the Silver Palm, i.e. the fifth Bronze Palm would technically be the palm that wouldn’t fit, while the fourth Silver Palm did fit. This proposal is such that it would be awarded at the Silver Palm simply to follow the focus of the hierarchy of the palms with Silver Palms being the pinnacle of each group of palms earned.

## Benefits of the Palm Knot

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The merits of the Palm Knot are tied specifically to the merits of the Palm program. It simply provides the following enhancements:

**A permanent recognition for scouts who continue to achieve beyond the rank of Eagle.** This knot award simplifies the wearing of palms and avoids the potential that a scout must remove palms from their uniforms due to uniform logistics.

**A meaningful and achievable set of goal that can be achieved above the rank of Eagle.** The Palm Knot is a very specific and meaningful achievement. In all, the achievement of 60 additional merit badges and 36 months required activity is in some ways more significant than the earning of the Eagle rank in itself. Obviously there are differences which include the fact that the merit badges are in essence all elective and that there is no specific project that needs to be completed. However, 30 elective merit badges versus a mix of 21 required and elective merit badges is a significant amount of work. And in all, the Eagle rank requires a minimum of 16 months of troop activity versus the additional 60 that would be required for the Palm Knot (either the 36 month time period or activity until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, whichever comes first). I wouldn't go as far as to say that the Palm Knot is a "double", "triple", or "quadruple" Eagle but it does represent something significant that would be a significant honor for a scout to continue to wear into adulthood.

**The knot can be a meaningful motivator to individual scouts and to the mass of scouts who witness other scouts go above and beyond the rank of Eagle.** In a time when the scouting program is looking for ways to increase the activity of scouts including their tenure after reaching the rank of Eagle, this would be just one way to encourage continued activity. And anything that can increase the activity of seasoned scouts can only improve the program and the retention of younger scouts. Unfortunately, I'm not sure if this knot concept addresses the issue of scouts becoming active after an absence from their troops just to earn the rank of Eagle before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays.

## Overcoming Drawbacks and Enhancing the Knots of Recognition Program

One significant feeling that I have gotten as I have developed this request is that there are a few negative opinions regarding the strength of the Knots of Recognition program. While I am sure you have heard these opinions, I will list some of them here.

Regarding knots earned while adults:

- There should be fewer adult-earned knots. The focus should be on the scouts.
- There are too many District/Council recognitions and knots compared to recognitions for those who are working closest to boys.
- Cub Scout leaders have too many knots for similar training.
- Some knots are simply “paid for.”

Regarding knots earned while scouts:

- There should be more youth-earned knots. The focus should be on the scouts.

While the lists above are far from complete, this knot would accommodate most concerns about the current program and would probably introduce few new concerns.

One important point is that this knot follows other award knot recognition requirements in terms of service and leadership tenure. The following table is the tenure requirements of the three most common scouter knots of recognition compared to the “Palm Knot”.

<u>Knot of Recognition</u>	<u>Age of Achievement</u>	<u>Required Tenure</u>
Scouter Award of Merit	Adult	18 Months
Scouter Key Award	Adult	36 Months
Scout Leader’s Training Award	Adult	24 Months
Palm Knot (3 Silver Palm alternative)	Youth	27 Months*
<b>Palm Knot (4 Silver Palm alternative)</b>	<b>Youth</b>	<b>36 Months*</b>

*\*or through the scout’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday—it can be assumed that the number of merit badges required at each of these levels would already represent a significant time commitment to scouting and the troop.*

**This is an opportunity to enhance the Knots of Recognition program by adding an additional knot focused on youth achievement, service, and leadership, which has nothing to do with monetary contributions to Scouting. In doing this, a current problem is resolved by allowing scouters to continue to be recognized for their achievements and service as youth.**

## **Additional Notes on the Development of This Request**

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In preparation to submitting this request I have discussed this issue with many people, both in public and private forums. In all cases I have made it clear that I am an individual who has something to gain from this request—I earned 126 merit badges and six Silver and one Gold palm during my time as a scout. Not only did I accomplish this, but two of my brothers also earned all merit badges available to them while they were scouts, each with 119.

However, I think there is sufficient cause and reason outside of my own personal recognition for the committee to give this request the appropriate level of consideration. After all, the information presented in this request has far-reaching motivation and recognition benefits that can be achieved, much further beyond my personal scope. Discounting this request due to the fact that I am the person who is suggesting it and that I also would be recognized by it wouldn't be appropriate; this is an achievement-based recognition, not a nomination by peer group recognition.

Also, I have created a design worthy of use for this “Palm Knot.” The following illustration is an actual image of my knot design:

**“Palm Knot”**



The background of the design is red white and blue to represent that the achievement of Eagle Scout is the foundation of the achieving of Eagle Palms. The two strands are colored silver and green representing the border colors of required and elective merit badges; after all, merit badges are the primary driver for the earning of Eagle Palms after service and leadership. I realize that typically the darker dominant color strand is on the left of the knot. However, in this situation I have selected the silver strand as it represents the more core required merit badges.

As you can see, this is a very striking knot design. It is very appropriate for those youth scouts who dedicate meaningful time and efforts to scouting, even after earning the rank of Eagle Scout.

***While a fourth color palm may also serve the same purpose of this knot, most scouts would still prefer a knot device over a collection of pins. They are just simpler to maintain. There are also undoubtedly other variations of this recognition that can be reviewed as well. In fact, I would think that some earners of the Palm Knot may forego wearing their additional palm devices for simplicity.***

## Conclusion

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In conclusion, I feel I have presented a fundamental modification to the current Knots of Recognition program that meets the following criteria:

- Provides motivation to scouts for additional achievement, service, and leadership regardless of the program level they in which they participate, i.e. Boy Scouts, Venturing, etc.
- Enhances while not diminishing the current Knots of Recognition program.
- Resolves a de-motivating factor of the current program.
- Remains in-line with the current use of Palms and award knots.
- Remains in-line with the service tenure of other knots in the program.
- Presents a solution that is highly functional and a preferred method of displaying recognition.
- Provides a level of recognition to a sizable number of scouts, potentially effecting thousands of scouts each year.

In my opinion, this additional knot has no downside. I am more than happy to answer questions or provide additional information regarding this request. I would also be willing to discuss the development of this request and/or related issues with the committee or any subcommittee assigned to consider this further. My contact information is as follows:

Troy J Pugh  
314 Ivy St SE  
Ephrata, WA 98823  
509-398-5074, mobile  
mail@troypugh.com

More information about me:

I am the youngest of four boys in my family who are all Eagle Scouts. I earned the rank of Eagle Scout while still twelve years old on February 20, 1985. Two of my older brothers earned all the merit badges possible (119 each), and I made it my goal to follow them in these same footsteps. During my continued activity in my troop over the next five years up until my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday I completed the 126 merit badges that were available to me and was awarded a total of six silver and one gold palm. My older brother, Ryan G Pugh, the first one in my family to earn all the merit badges was a great example and motivating factor in my Boy Scout achievements; I dedicate my efforts in this regard to him as he was killed in an automobile accident in 2001. In fact, because he was such a motivation to me and other scouts in our troop I would request the committee to name this knot after him.

I currently serve as the Advancement Chair on my troop's Troop Committee and have a son who just finished his Arrow of Light and is excited about his coming adventures in Boy Scouting.

## Appendix – Table of Eagle Palm Achievements

The following table illustrates how many and which Eagle Palms may be achieved by scouts after the rank of Eagle Scout has been achieved. This table illustrates numbers of merit badges and service time requirements for each palm. The table color table represents the qualification alternatives of the Palm Knot at both the 4 Silver Palm and 3 Silver Palm alternatives.

Palm Number	Merit Badges beyond the 21 required for Eagle Scout	Total Merit Badges	Service Tenure	Number of Palms to be worn			
				Bronze	Gold	Silver	Total
1	5	26	3 mo	1			1
2	10	31	6 mo		1		1
3	15	36	9 mo			1	1
4	20	41	<b>1 yr</b>	1		1	2
5	25	46	1 yr 3 mo		1	1	2
6	30	51	1 yr 6 mo			2	2
7	35	56	1 yr 9 mo	1		2	3
8	40	61	<b>2 yr</b>		1	2	3
<b>9</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>2 yr 3 mo</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
10	50	71	2 yr 6 mo	1		3	4
11	55	76	2 yr 9 mo		1	3	4
<b>12</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>3 yr</b>			<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
13	65	86	3 yr 3 mo	1		4	5
14	70	91	3 yr 6 mo		1	4	5
15	75	96	3 yr 9 mo			5	5
16	80	101	<b>4 yr</b>	1		5	6
17	85	106	4 yr 3 mo		1	5	6
18	90	111	4 yr 6 mo			6	6
19	95	116	4 yr 9 mo	1		6	7
20	100	121	<b>5 yr</b>		1	6	7
21	105	126	5 yr 3 mo			7	7