

**FINAL**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**THE RED WOLF EDUCATION AND  
HEALTH CARE FACILITY  
POCOSIN LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

**TYRRELL COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA**



**U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
POCOSIN LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
COLUMBIA, NORTH CAROLINA**

**DECEMBER 2006**

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**Tyrrell County, North Carolina**

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**THE RED WOLF EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE FACILITY  
POCOSIN LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
Columbia, North Carolina**

**SECTION 1.0 – PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

**SECTION 1.1 – INTRODUCTION**

The red wolf (*Canis rufus*) was listed as endangered in 1967 under the provisions of the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966 (32 Federal Register 4001), and subsequently the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544, 87 Stat. 884), as amended. Indigenous to the eastern United States, the red wolf was nearly eliminated through predator eradication programs in the late 1800s and early 1900s (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1990). With red wolf numbers reduced, hybridization with coyotes (*Canis latrans*), a recent arrival from the west, further contributed to the red wolf's demise (Parker, 1988). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) studied the few remaining wild wolves in the 1960s only to determine that the fate of the wolves in the wild was precarious at best. As a result, 14 red wolves, captured from the coastal border of Texas and Louisiana, became the founding animals of a captive breeding program in the mid-1970s, with the goal of reintroducing the red wolf back into portions of its former range (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1990). In 1987, that goal was realized when four pairs of red wolves were released on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, in Dare County, North Carolina (51 Federal Register 41790). Since that time, red wolf recovery efforts have seen many successes. Currently, more than 100 wild-born red wolves range over one million acres in Beaufort, Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell, and Washington counties, North Carolina (Waddell, 2002).

The proposed action is to construct a Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility (Facility). Due to the expansion of the red wolf's range in eastern North Carolina and the increase in the public's interest in this species, a need exists to provide an education center with basic veterinary and health care capabilities that is centrally located within the species' expanded range that can be used by the Red Wolf Recovery Program and the Red Wolf Coalition (Coalition)<sup>1</sup> for species' education, conservation and recovery activities. The proposed Facility would provide educational and outreach activities and opportunities for the invited public to comfortably and safely experience red wolves housed and on exhibit. As the red wolf expands its range, public awareness and support must be fostered for the wolf restoration program to continue its success. In addition, the Facility would support basic veterinary health care services for the Red Wolf Recovery Program in managing the exhibit wolves and the wild wolves. As the red wolf recovery area continues to expand, commute time for field personnel and the transportation of wolves requiring veterinary care and attention substantially increases. Existing Red Wolf Recovery Program offices and veterinary facilities are not conveniently located within the red wolf recovery area, and are sub-standard and inadequate for basic veterinary procedures.

The Service, in partnership with the Coalition, is proposing to build the Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, in Tyrrell County, North

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<sup>1</sup> The Red Wolf Coalition is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to the long-term survival of red wolf populations by teaching about the red wolf and by fostering public involvement in red wolf conservation.

Carolina. The proposed Facility will include a guest and media reception area with informational exhibits; an off-exhibit area for basic animal health care; an outdoor, semi-natural viewing enclosure capable of housing red wolves, and small office space for the Service and/or the Coalition. Specifics of the partnership between these two organizations are in a Memorandum of Agreement (Appendix A).

This project was identified in the Refuge Operational Needs System and is being funded through the Visitor Facilities Enhancement program<sup>2</sup>. The Coalition is contributing in-kind services in the development of educational and outreach materials and by providing experienced, volunteer staff knowledgeable of red wolf for public education and outreach activities at the Facility. The Service is the lead agency for the proposed action.

## **SECTION 1.2 – PROJECT AREA**

Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is located in Hyde, Tyrrell, and Washington counties, in eastern North Carolina. The refuge was formally established in 1990, although, the Pungo Unit was established in 1963 as the Pungo National Wildlife Refuge. Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge consists of more than 110,000 acres of open water, riverine swamp, pocosin wetlands, agriculture land, grass fields, and pine and hardwood forests, and is home to a variety of wildlife, including several federally-listed endangered and threatened species.

## **SECTION 1.3 – PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED ACTION**

This Environmental Assessment, prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), evaluates alternatives for the construction of a Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose of the proposed action is to construct a centrally located education center with a viewing area for the invited public, as well as capabilities for the Red Wolf Recovery Program staff to conduct basic veterinary care of red wolves. The proposed action would also provide informative displays and office space for the Service and the Coalition to further conservation of this species.

## **SECTION 1.4 – NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION**

Currently, there are no locations in the red wolf recovery area that can address the needs of the public interest that exists for the red wolf. The Coalition maintains office space in downtown Columbia, North Carolina, and has regular office hours open to the public. And while the

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<sup>2</sup> In 2001, the Service and Coalition entered into an agreement (see Appendix A) to develop a Red Wolf Education and Viewing Center. The original concept, estimated to cost \$500,000, included a two-phased project on Pocosin Lakes NWR – Phase I included wolf enclosures and a temporary educational facility (e.g., mobile trailer); Phase II included a permanent educational and viewing center with veterinary facilities. The Coalition would fund Phase I and raise additional funds through a fund-raising campaign to contribute about half of the total costs of the project. The Service would seek funds for the remaining costs. Upon completion of the project, the Coalition would donate the facilities to the Service but continue to operate the facilities for the Service on the premise that admission fees could be charged to cover operational expenses. In 2001, Pocosin Lakes NWR requested about \$250,000 in the Refuge Operational Needs System (RONS) for the project. The RONS project was funded in 2005. However, because of the uncertainty surrounding whether or not an admission fee could be charged and the funds made available to the Coalition to operate an on-refuge facility, the Coalition and the Service explored other options for developing an educational and viewing center. The result was the proposed project.

Coalition's offices are conveniently located, they do not offer an opportunity for the public and special visitors (e.g., dignitaries and visiting scientists) to interact with staff or other associates of the Red Wolf Recovery Program. The proposed Facility would provide informational opportunities and additional office space for the Service and the Coalition to host invited public educational and conservation interactions, as well as an opportunity for visitors to view red wolves held at the Facility. Furthermore, the red wolf captive breeding facility on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge is closed to the public for the safety of the wolves and the biologists working with wolves. However, the pressure for special public visits and presentations at that facility continues to increase. The Coalition partners with the Service on Howling Safaris<sup>3</sup> and other red wolf educational events to better accommodate the growing numbers of local and visiting people interested in participating in red wolf activities. About 17 Howling Safaris are scheduled each year and attendance has grown to over 60 people at each event, with as many as 120 individuals on occasion. In an effort to limit the number of attendees for safety purposes, the Coalition and the Service have implemented a reservation policy. By taking reservations, the number of attendees can be limited; requests for attendance are turned down once the event is full. Although the Howling Safaris are popular as they are currently done, a specific location for people to comfortably see and hear red wolves, such as the proposed Facility, would make the experience more educational, enjoyable, and safe for the attendees. Additionally, many other red wolf and refuge programs could be done on a scheduled or impromptu basis at the Facility.

In addition to the need for the educational and outreach opportunities, updated veterinary facilities are required. The Service's Red Wolf Recovery Program offices and facilities are located at the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge office in Manteo, Dare County. This facility is available to perform all services in support of the red wolf recovery program; however, it is not conveniently located within the red wolf recovery area. Transporting wolves from the wild to this facility may take an hour or more of drive time. An additional facility for providing basic veterinary services to wolves, centrally located within the recovery area, could reduce travel times and increase efficiency in the recovery program. In addition, the Red Wolf Recovery Program has been cited by the Service for failing to maintain proper ventilation, sanitation, and storage at the current facility (reference 29 CFR 1910.1450 (Laboratory Safety Standard), National Fire Protection Association Articles 45(Standard on Fire Protection for Laboratories Using Chemicals) and 101(Life Safety Code), 432 FW 1.2 (Physical Security in Service Facilities)).

## **SECTION 1.5 – REQUIRED DECISIONS**

The Service, as the Federal project sponsor, will determine if the proposed Facility will be constructed on Pocosin Lakes National Refuge after a thorough public review of the project design, and after fully considering all comments.

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<sup>3</sup> A Howling Safari consists of a 20-30 minute, evening presentation by a Service or Coalition representative at the entrance to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge (along US 64). After the presentation, the participants drive in their vehicles about six miles through the refuge to a point near the captive red wolf facility (participants are not allowed to enter the captive facility). Presenter and participants "howl" to get the captive wolves to howl back.

## **SECTION 1.6 – COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION**

This project was coordinated through an Internal Scoping Team (Team). The Team, comprised of Service biologists, was formed specifically to establish evaluation criteria to assist in identifying a location for the Facility and to coordinate the environmental review process.

## **SECTION 2.0 – EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The Internal Scoping Team established the following evaluation criteria for assistance in determining the location for the proposed Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility:

- The Facility should be built on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge property in Tyrrell County in the heart of red wolf recovery area and afforded security with federal regulations;
- The Facility should be in an area with a low density human population in the immediate vicinity of the site;
- The Facility should provide all-weather road access;
- The Facility should be conveniently located within five miles of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge office to provide assistance and security when needed; and,
- The Facility should have minimal wetland, archeological, and endangered species impacts.

## **SECTION 2.1 – ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)**

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1501.3), the Service is required to consider the no action alternative. Under this alternative, no action would be taken to construct a Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility. This alternative would not provide an educational center and viewing area of red wolves, nor would it provide an area for basic veterinary services to wolves. The problems associated with addressing the public and the media's interests in the red wolf would continue in its current capacity. In addition, the problems associated with addressing the veterinary and animal care needs of the Red Wolf Recovery Program and conservation functions with regard to the red wolf would continue in its current capacity. Thus, this alternative would not satisfy the purpose and need.

## **SECTION 2.2 – ALTERNATIVE 2 (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)**

Under this alternative, the Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility would be constructed on a three acre parcel of land, owned by Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, on the east side of Highway 94, approximately 1.3 miles south of US 64 and the Town of Columbia, in Tyrrell County, North Carolina (Figure 1). The Center would consist of a 1,200 square foot main building that includes adjoining outdoor enclosures for holding and viewing wolves. Approximately half of the Facility would be devoted to educational and office activities, while the remaining portions would be for veterinary and animal care services. Parking and invited public restroom facilities would be associated with the Facility. The Service's Red Wolf Recovery Program and Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge staff and facilities will support the Facility by providing veterinary care services for the wolves, purchasing veterinary and

animal care supplies, funding utilities and other operational costs, and other means of support. The Coalition would provide knowledgeable staff for educational and outreach events and informational materials in support of educational and outreach activities.

### **SECTION 2.3 – ALTERNATIVE 3**

Under this alternative, the Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility would be constructed on a parcel of land, owned by Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, on the west side of Highway 94, approximately 1.3 miles south of US 64 and the Town of Columbia, in Tyrrell County, North Carolina. The Facility would consist of a main building and outdoor enclosure and associated parking and restroom facilities similar to that described in the preferred alternative. However, a refuge duck banding site, an educational reforestation project, and a proposed refuge fire suppression and maintenance facility adjacent to this site would restrict the boundaries of the proposed Facility. As a result, this alternative would not include enclosures for public viewing of wolves or the housing of injured or other wolves as described in the preferred alternative.

Substantial compromises in the Facility's services could be made to accommodate the boundary restrictions by building the Facility without the holding enclosures. Additionally, the Facility's services would have to be incorporated into the refuge's proposed fire suppression and maintenance facility plan. However, Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge does not currently have funding for the proposed fire suppression and maintenance facility, nor a site plan. Furthermore, the Facility's services might not be included in the refuge's fire suppression and maintenance facility site plan because of the undetermined refuge maintenance facility's boundary and potential funding restrictions. If the Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility cannot be built independently of the refuge's fire suppression and maintenance facility site plan, construction activities of the Facility would potentially be delayed a year or more until the plans for the other refuge's facility are finalized.

This site alternative is expected to be similar in costs to that of the preferred alternative provided that all the Facility's components can be constructed concurrently. Increases in construction costs could result from a delay in the proposed construction start date or if the Facility's services (wolf exhibit and holding enclosures) are postponed. Furthermore, this site alternative would likely interfere with and be negatively affected by other refuge functions, such as the proposed refuge maintenance facility.

### **SECTION 2.4 – OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

A parcel of property owned by Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, located on the north end of Roanoke Island, near Manteo, in Dare County, North Carolina, was considered but not evaluated. This property was not located within the red wolf recovery range and had high human density in the immediate vicinity. Because this alternative did not satisfy the Internal Scoping Team's evaluation criteria, this alternative was not given further consideration.

Private and State properties in Tyrrell County were not considered due to limitation of access and security issues and because these properties did not meet the Internal Scoping Team's evaluation criteria.

## **SECTION 3.0 – AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

### **SECTION 3.1 – ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)**

Under the No Action alternative, addressing the demand for the public’s interest in the red wolf and informational conservation activities would continue under the current strategy and veterinary and animal care functions would continue as currently conducted. The Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility would not be built; therefore, physical or biological impacts to plant communities, wetlands, fish and shellfish habitat, essential fish habitat, and threatened and endangered species would not occur. Management issues related to maintaining wolves in captivity would not change from current conditions.

### **SECTION 3.2 – ALTERNATIVE 2 (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)**

#### **SECTION 3.2.1 -- PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is located on the Albemarle-Pamlico peninsula and encompasses more than 110,000 acres of open water, riverine swamp, pocosin wetlands, agriculture lands, grass fields, and pine hardwood forests. The topography is generally very flat, ranging from practically sea level to about 19 feet above. The natural hydrology is sheet flow (surface flow or runoff of water over saturated soils). Prior to refuge ownership, the majority of the land was severely ditched and channelized to drain the wetlands for timber harvest, agriculture, and peat mining.

Soil types in the project area include Altavista, Augusta, Tomotley, and Dorovan. Altavista, Augusta, and Tomotley soils have moderate permeability, and are slightly higher in elevation than Dorovan soils. The majority of the acreage with these soil types is cultivated and pasture with some woodlands. Dorovan soils are lower in elevation and wetter.

#### **SECTION 3.2.2 – BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT**

##### **A. Plant Communities**

The preferred alternative project area consists of old-field and woodlands. The old-field is currently mowed at least three times a year. The dominant vegetation in the old-field consists of successional grasses and the forested area of yellow-poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), hickory (*Carya* spp.), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), various oaks (*Quercus* spp.), and loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*). The understory includes dogwood (*Cornus florida*), sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*), and a variety of briars and reeds.

##### **B. Wetlands**

The preferred alternative project area is nearly level with poorly drained soils. However, the proposed site for the Facility does not contain jurisdictional wetlands based on an on-site evaluation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (see Appendix C).

### **C. Fish and Shellfish Habitat and Essential Fish Habitat**

The preferred alternative project site is a terrestrial environment, and it does not support any fish or shellfish habitat or essential fish habitat.

### **D. Wildlife Habitat**

Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge provides habitat for a variety of species of wildlife; waterfowl, white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), and black bear (*Ursus americanus*) are abundant in the natural setting. Several impoundments and adjacent farmlands provide habitat for large concentrations of wintering swans, geese, and ducks. The preferred alternative project area is an old-field and pine-hardwood forest, which provides habitat for deer and small mammals, neotropical migratory birds, and a variety of reptiles and amphibians.

### **E. Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat**

A list of the federally threatened and endangered species known from Tyrrell County is included in Appendix D. Red wolves are known to occur in the vicinity of the project area. While red wolves are not known from the project site, they are a highly mobile species and could potentially move through the area. The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), and American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) also are known to occur within Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, but none are known to be present in the vicinity of the preferred alternative site based on the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program database and site visits by refuge biologists. Also, the habitat at the site is not suitable for these species.

## **SECTION 3.2.3 – CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES**

### **SECTION 3.2.3.1 – Cultural Resources**

The North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office's statewide inventory contains information on nineteen prehistoric and historic archaeological sites in Tyrrell County; however, none are within the project area boundaries (North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, May 19, 2003). Three properties in Tyrrell County are listed in the National Register of Historic Places – the Columbia Historic District was listed in 1993, the Scuppernong River Bridge listed in 1992, and the Tyrrell County Courthouse listed in 1979 (North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, May 20, 2003). None of these Historic Places are within the project area boundaries. In addition, Richard Kanaski, the Service's Archaeologist and Regional Historic Preservation Officer, evaluated the project area for cultural resources (July, 2000), but none were found.

### **SECTION 3.2.3.2 – Recreational Resources**

The Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is open to the public for a number of recreational activities. Fishing opportunities are available year-round on most waters within the refuge. Hunting for deer and small game is allowed on the refuge, as well. State season and bag limits apply throughout the refuge with the exception of the Pungo Unit. Archery hunting for deer is

available on the Pungo Unit during State seasons and closes at the end of November. Gun hunting for deer is allowed on the Pungo Unit only during the refuge permit-hunts, usually consisting of five two-day hunts falling on the weekends during the month of October when archery hunting is closed. Wildlife observation and photography opportunities also are available throughout all public areas of the refuge. The preferred alternative project site is currently open to public use but not hunting; although the site is rather small compared to other refuge lands. Areas for fishing are not available on this site.

## **SECTION 3.2.4 – ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESOURCES**

### **SECTION 3.2.4.1 – Economic Resources**

Tyrrell County is the least populated county in North Carolina and ranks one of the lowest in per capita income (97 out of 100 in 2004) (North Carolina Department of Commerce, December 20, 2006). With a population of 4,203 persons (2005 population), there are less than 11 people per square mile. The local, State, and Federal governments employ about 47.1% of the County's workforce. Traditional enterprises in Tyrrell County include fishing, farming, forestry, and hunting. The Town of Columbia is the largest town and the county seat of Tyrrell County. The Town has recently been selected as a Small Town Economic Prosperity (STEP) community ([www.ncruralcenter.org/STEP](http://www.ncruralcenter.org/STEP)) by the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center. Two highways – US 64 and Highway 94 – intersect the Town of Columbia. Highway 94 is the main road between the Town of Columbia and neighboring Hyde County and the only route to the preferred alternative project area.

### **SECTION 3.2.4.2 – Social Resources**

The preferred alternative project site is easily accessible via Highway 94 from the historic Town of Columbia and other local tourist attractions, and is in close proximity to the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge office (located at the Walter B. Jones, Sr., Center for the Sounds on the corner of US 64 and Highway 94 in Columbia). The preferred alternative project site is located across the highway from a reforestation project and a refuge duck banding site, and in the vicinity of several single-family dwellings. Maintaining wolves in captivity in proximity to residential areas and other refuge facilities must be given special consideration in terms of security and husbandry methodologies. Local residents and the visiting public may have concerns related to the health and aesthetics of a captive wolf facility.

## **SECTION 3.3 – ALTERNATIVE 3**

### **SECTION 3.3.1 -- PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Similar to that described in Section 3.2.1. However, construction of the proposed Facility at this location would place it adjacent to a refuge duck banding site, and educational reforestation project, and a proposed refuge fire suppression and maintenance facility. This alternative would not include the public wolf viewing enclosure or the holding enclosure for injured or other wolves as described in the preferred alternative.

## **SECTION 3.3.2 – BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **A. Plant Communities**

Similar to that described in Section 3.2.2. However, a refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are constructed on this site, and the construction of a refuge fire suppression and maintenance facility is proposed.

### **B. Wetlands**

Similar to that described in Section 3.2.2.

### **C. Fish and Shellfish Habitat and Essential Fish Habitat**

Similar to that described in Section 3.2.2.

### **D. Wildlife Habitat**

Similar to that described in Section 3.2.2.

### **E. Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat**

Similar to that described in Section 3.2.2.

## **SECTION 3.3.3 – CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES**

### **SECTION 3.3.3.1 – Cultural Resources**

Same as that described in Section 3.2.3.1.

### **SECTION 3.3.3.2 – Recreational Resources**

Same as that described in Section 3.2.3.2. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are constructed on this site, and the construction of a refuge fire suppression and maintenance facility is proposed. Thus, portions of this site are closed to the public.

## **SECTION 3.3.4 – ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESOURCES**

### **SECTION 3.3.4.1 – Economic Resources**

Same as that described in Section 3.2.4.1. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are constructed on this site, and the construction of a refuge fire suppression and maintenance facility is proposed.

This site alternative is expected to be similar in costs to that of the preferred alternative provided that all the Facility's components can be constructed concurrently. Increases in construction

costs could result from a delay in the proposed construction start date or if the Facility's services (wolf exhibit and holding enclosures) are postponed.

#### **SECTION 3.3.4.2 – Social Resources**

Similar to that described in Section 3.2.4.2. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are constructed on this site, and the construction of a refuge fire suppression and maintenance facility is proposed. This site alternative would likely interfere with and be negatively affected by other refuge functions, such as the duck banding site. Portions of this site are closed to the public.

### **SECTION 4.0 – ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

#### **SECTION 4.1 – ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)**

Under the No Action alternative, addressing the demand for the public's interest in the red wolf and informational conservation activities would continue under the current strategy and veterinary and animal care functions would continue as currently conducted. Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge activities would continue in their current capacity. The Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility would not be built; therefore, physical or biological impacts to plant communities, wetlands, fish and shellfish habitat, essential fish habitat, and threatened and endangered species would not occur. Management issues related to maintaining wolves in captivity would not change from current conditions.

#### **SECTION 4.2 – ALTERNATIVE 2 (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)**

##### **SECTION 4.2.1 -- PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Under the preferred alternative, fill dirt and gravel would be brought on to the site (although there are no wetlands present, see Appendix C). Surface water flow would not be substantially affected on the proposed project site because the fill would be limited to the parking area, building site, and portions of the wolf enclosure and exhibit. The elevation would increase in the parking area about 1-2 feet, and on the building site and at the wolf enclosure fence lines and limited parts of the enclosure as much as two feet.

A sewer system is not currently available at the proposed site. However, proposed septic plans include (1) a "peat fibre biofilter" (e.g., Puraflo) constructed on the proposed site, or (2) the Service pumping sewage from the proposed facilities under Highway 94 to a septic field on property owned by Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Septic design for the proposed project would meet or exceed local and State regulations, minimizing any negative impacts to the soils and water quality on and around the site.

##### **SECTION 4.2.2 -- BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT**

###### **A. Plant Communities**

The parking area and a portion of the Facility's building would be located on prior farmland with early successional grasses. The remaining portion of the Facility's building and the entire wolf compound area would encompass forested land. Efforts would be made to limit the amount of trees and shrubs removed because the existing vegetation would provide shade and cover for the wolves and increase the aesthetics of the Facility.

## **B. Wetlands**

A November 29, 2001 determination by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers indicated that the proposed project would not impact any jurisdictional wetlands (Appendix C).

## **C. Fish and Shellfish Habitat and Essential Fish Habitat**

The proposed project site is a terrestrial environment, and it does not support any fish or shellfish habitat or essential fish habitat.

## **D. Wildlife Habitat**

The proposed fenced compound and the building area would total no more than three acres of potential wildlife habitat. The construction of the building and associated facilities would permanently impact some small mammal, bird, and possibly reptile and amphibian habitats. The fenced areas may affect some small mammal and reptile and amphibian habitats, but will remain usable for bird species because most trees will not be removed. Substantial effects to the wildlife community on the project site are not expected to occur because of the small size of the Facility and the available surrounding habitats.

## **E. Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat**

The red wolf is known to occur in the vicinity of the project site; however, the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect this species. While the construction and operation of the Facility may affect the small mammal community, adverse effects to red wolf foraging or other habitats are not expected, or would be so small as to be insignificant in their effects on the red wolf. Wolves held in captivity may attract visitation from wild wolves in the area, especially during the breeding season, and may interact via vocalizations during any time of the year. However, the captive wolves would be separated from the wild wolves and all other wildlife via a pen fence and a perimeter fence. Negative effects from the interactions are not expected. No other threatened or endangered species are known to occur or expected to be present on the project site, thus none would be affected. The Intra-Service section 7 biological evaluation and Intra-Service concurrence, dated January 10, 2000, are included in Appendix D.

## **SECTION 4.2.3 -- CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES**

### **SECTION 4.2.3.1 – Cultural Resources**

A review of the Regional Site Files, the National Register of Historic Places, and the available technical literature did not reveal any recorded archaeological sites or National Register-listed

properties in the project area. The Columbia Historic District, listed on the National Register in 1994, is located approximately 1.5 miles north of the “area of potential effect.” An archaeological survey was conducted in July 2000 by the Regional Archaeologist with the assistance of Refuge staff and interns. A total of 13 shovel test units was excavated along three parallel transects. The recovered artifact assemblage, such as plastic bottle and clear bottle fragments, was limited to the plowzone. The material dated to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and was interpreted as agricultural field scatter. The proposed construction of a Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility will, therefore, have “no effect” upon any of the Refuge’s historic properties or on the nearby Columbia Historic District. A technical report will be available soon, and consultation with the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act will be completed in the near future.

### **SECTION 4.2.3.2 – Recreational Resources**

The project area is included within a larger area (all refuge land east of Rider’s Creek Road) that is already closed to hunting for safety reasons associated with nearby houses and refuge activities; no refuge projects are currently located at the proposed project site, thus none would be affected. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are located across the highway (Highway 94) from the proposed project site, and a maintenance and fire suppression facility is proposed for the same parcel. However, the proposed action is not expected to negatively affect the functioning of these refuge facilities.

## **SECTION 4.2.4 -- ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESOURCES**

### **SECTION 4.2.4.1 – Economic Resources**

Under the preferred alternative, the Facility would not maintain regular hours of operations. However, the Facility’s hours of operation would be established to correspond with seasonal and/or public interests. As currently planned, the Facility will be available to the public and special visitors by appointment only. Access to the facility by people not affiliated with the Red Wolf Recovery Program may be allowed in the case of special events, such as scheduled tours with dignitaries or elected officials. Hours may be expanded to accommodate public visitation during “normal business hours,” especially during local festivals or events. Negative economic impacts related to the operation of the proposed Facility are not expected to occur. Letters of support for the Center from the Tyrrell County Board of Commissioners, Greater Tyrrell County Chamber of Commerce, and the Tyrrell County Ecotourism Committee are included in Appendix E.

### **SECTION 4.2.4.2 – Social Resources**

Under the preferred alternative, access to the Facility would slightly increase traffic on Highway 94 and may affect noise levels and the surrounding local traffic flow. Parking for the Facility would be planned to safely accommodate staff and any visitors.

During dusk, evening, and early morning hours the wolves held in captivity could vocalize (i.e., howl or bark). Captive wolves may begin vocalizing in response to vocalizing wild wolves in

the vicinity of the project area. Local landowners may hear the howling and become disturbed by these events. However, wild wolves currently occur in the area and vocalize on occasion. Given the low density human population surrounding the proposed project site, impacts from howling wolves are not expected to be substantial or long-lasting. In fact, the community has been part of the red wolf recovery area for many years with no adverse public impacts. In addition, nearby business owners and homeowners adjacent to the proposed facility have been contacted and, in general, have responded positively to the construction and operation of the Facility. Comments against the Facility expressed by one nearby landowner were based on concerns for the safety of his family and pets should a red wolf escape the facility.

Wolves housed at the Facility would be born and raised in captivity or wild wolves held temporarily associated with veterinary care. The escape of a captive held wolf is extremely rare. However, a Red Wolf Escape Contingency Plan (Appendix H) has been developed and would be in effect for the facility. In addition, a perimeter fence surrounding the wolf enclosure would reduce the likelihood of a wolf leaving the Facility grounds. In the event that a wolf escapes the proposed Facility, though, the Service would be contacted and recapture efforts would begin immediately in accordance with the contingency plan.

Under the preferred alternative, the wolf enclosure would be mostly or entirely hidden by vegetation. Any visitors to the Facility would not be allowed to enter the enclosure or touch the fencing of the enclosure; a viewing window would allow visitors to view wolves from inside the Facility. Though captive wolves are generally shy and will not approach the fence when humans are present, a wolf may approach a pet if it approaches the fence. Pets will not be allowed near the fencing and neighbors will be encouraged to keep their pets on their own property. Also, a perimeter fence would surround the enclosure fence for the protection of visitors, pets, and wolves. Current federal regulations prohibit allowing domestic animals to roam uncontrolled on refuge property.

The veterinary care area (for providing medical and other services to the wolves) at the Facility would have a separate entrance, and be blocked from general public access. The wolf enclosure and wolf husbandry techniques for the Facility will meet or exceed standards set by the Service and the Red Wolf Husbandry Manual (Appendix F) (Waddell, 1998). It is unlikely that the small number of wolves would cause fecal coliform water contamination. Feces will be removed and disposed of as per the Red Wolf Husbandry Manual. In addition, wolves held in captivity would be vaccinated for rabies, distemper, and other canine diseases.

Captive wolf food storage and feeding areas would be kept clean and free of rot to avoid health or aesthetic concerns. Wolves held at the Facility would be fed a high quality diet of dry kibble with supplements of deer meat and zoo canine diet. Fecal smell would be minimal. No food supply would be available for wild wolves or other resident wildlife and, if necessary, aversive treatments could be used to minimize resident wildlife occurrences near the food storage.

Under the preferred alternative, the Facility grounds would be kept in accordance with Service standards with regard to mowing and general maintenance and appearance. All structures and signs would be approved by the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Signs and fencing would be used to discourage trespassing and other criminal activity.

Pesticide use on the property would follow current Service regulations and suggestions for wolf parasite management from the Red Wolf Husbandry Manual. The pesticide use on the surrounding farm and other private lands will not be affected by the construction or operation of the proposed action.

## **SECTION 4.3 – ALTERNATIVE 3**

### **SECTION 4.3.1 -- PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Similar to that described in Section 4.2.1. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are constructed on this site, and the construction of a refuge fire suppression and maintenance facility is proposed. Thus, portions of the physical environments of this site have been impacted.

### **SECTION 4.3.2 -- BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT**

#### **A. Plant Communities**

Similar to that described in Section 4.2.2. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are constructed on this site, and the construction of a refuge fire suppression and maintenance facility is proposed. Thus, portions of the plant communities of this site have been altered.

#### **B. Wetlands**

Similar to that described in Section 4.2.2. However, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdictional determination has not been completed for this site.

#### **C. Fish and Shellfish Habitat and Essential Fish Habitat**

Similar to that described in Section 4.2.2.

#### **D. Wildlife Habitat**

Similar to that described in Section 4.2.2. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are constructed on this site, and the construction of a refuge fire suppression and maintenance facility is proposed. Thus, portions of the wildlife habitat of this site have altered. However, additional construction on this site may interfere with refuge activities that support wildlife conservation (e.g., duck banding facility).

#### **E. Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat**

Similar to that described in Section 4.2.2.

## **SECTION 4.3.3 -- CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES**

### **SECTION 4.3.3.1 – Cultural Resources**

Similar to that described in Section 4.2.3.1. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are located adjacent to this site, and a refuge maintenance and fire suppression facility is proposed for the same parcel.

### **SECTION 4.3.3.2 – Recreational Resources**

Similar to that described in Section 4.2.3.2. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are located adjacent to this site, and a refuge maintenance and fire suppression facility is proposed for the same parcel. Thus, portions of this site are closed to the public.

## **SECTION 4.3.4 -- ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESOURCES**

### **SECTION 4.3.4.1 – Economic Resources**

Similar to that described in Section 4.2.4.1. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are located adjacent to this site, and a refuge maintenance and fire suppression facility is proposed for the same parcel.

This site alternative is expected to be similar in costs to that of the preferred alternative provided that all the Facility's components (wolf exhibit and holding enclosures) can be constructed concurrently. Increases in construction costs could result from a delay in the proposed construction start date or if the Facility's services (wolf exhibit and holding enclosures) are postponed. Furthermore, this site alternative would likely interfere with and be negatively affected by other refuge functions, such as the neighboring duck banding site.

### **SECTION 4.3.4.2 – Social Resources**

Similar to that described in Section 4.2.4.2. However, this alternative would not include the storage facilities or the temporary holding enclosure for injured or other wolves as described in the preferred alternative. Impacts associated with these structures would not occur. A refuge duck banding site and an educational reforestation project are located adjacent to this site, and a refuge maintenance and fire suppression facility is proposed for the same parcel. Thus, portions of this site are closed to the public.

## **SECTION 5.0 – DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVES**

Under the No Action alternative, addressing the demand for the public's interest in the red wolf and informational conservation activities would continue under the current strategy and veterinary and animal care functions would continue as currently conducted. Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge activities would continue in their current capacity. The Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility would not be built; therefore, physical or biological impacts

to plant communities, wetlands, fish and shellfish habitat, essential fish habitat, and threatened and endangered species would not occur. Management issues related to maintaining wolves in captivity would not change from current conditions. For these reasons, this alternative was deemed inadequate to fulfill the purpose and need of the proposed action.

The alternative (Alternative 3) to construct the Facility on the parcel of land on the west side of Highway 94 (across from the preferred alternative) would satisfy all evaluation criteria established by the Internal Scoping Team. However, the refuge's current and proposed uses of areas adjacent to the site would restrict some boundaries of the Facility. For example, the refuge's duck banding site and an educational reforestation project would restrict the boundaries of the wolf enclosure to include few, if any, trees and other vegetation. This would result in little cover for the wolves held at the facility. The proposed refuge fire suppression and maintenance facility plan for this site has not been designed, nor has funding been appropriated to design, fund or construct this facility. In the absence of a site design for the proposed refuge facility, land utilization for the Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility and the support facilities remain unknown. However, the outdoor wolf holding enclosure areas would not be constructed concurrently with the educational and veterinary care facilities. It is estimated that the design phase of these facilities combined with the proposed fire suppression and maintenance facility will take about 12 months and will likely create extra costs associated with additional architectural fees and construction costs. For these reasons, this site alternative was deemed inadequate to fulfill the purpose and need of the proposed action.

## **SECTION 6.0 – RATIONALE FOR SELECTING THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

The preferred alternative would construct a Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge property on the east side of Highway 94, approximately 1.3 miles south of Columbia, in Tyrrell County, North Carolina. The proposed Facility will include a guest and media reception area with informational exhibits; an off-exhibit area for basic animal health care; an outdoor, semi-natural viewing enclosure capable of housing red wolves, and small office space for the Service and/or the Coalition to continue conservation and management actions for the red wolf. The preferred alternative also satisfies the evaluation criteria established by the Internal Scoping Team and would be unencumbered by other refuge activities or facilities.

## **SECTION 6.1 – CEQ ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

This document provides information and analyses which will be used to determine whether an Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be issued. This Environmental Assessment represents the basis for determining whether the proposed action would significantly impact the human environment. A federal action which significantly impacts the human environment, in either a positive or negative manner, requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Under Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1508.27), the determination of "significantly" requires consideration of both context and intensity.

## **SECTION 6.1.1 – CONTEXT**

The level of significance for an action varies within the setting, or context, in which the action occurs (Eccleston, 1999, p. 183). Context recognizes that in addition to the intensity of project impacts, the setting, potentially affected resources, and location in which an environmental disturbance occurs must all be evaluated in determining the significance of the action. Context may be considered as a measure of the existing conditions, or the environmental baseline, within which the action would occur.

The proposed action would occur on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge is managed by the Service for the purposes of conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats and to administer lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats. The objective, in part, of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is to protect those species which are classified as endangered, threatened or of special concern, including the federally-endangered red wolf. Therefore, in the context of red wolf conservation, the proposal to construct and operate a Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility for the Red Wolf Recovery Program on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge represents a similar ongoing function of the refuge in endangered species management and protection.

The geographical context would not be national, but only regional and mostly local in context. The proposed Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility and associated grounds would encompass about three acres, and represent less than one percent of the more than 110,000 acres of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Furthermore, human activities on adjacent private and federal properties would not be affected by the construction and operation of the proposed Facility. Therefore, when the entire refuge or county is considered, any impacts, either positive or negative, would be small in geographical extent.

## **SECTION 6.1.2 – INTENSITY**

Intensity, as defined by the CEQ, refers to the severity of impact. The CEQ regulations (40 CFR §1508.27(b)) list ten factors that should be considered in evaluating the intensity of a proposal's impacts. The role of these ten factors in determining the intensity of a proposal's impacts are discussed by Eccleston (1999, pp. 184-186). Each of the ten points is considered below.

First, the magnitude of both beneficial and negative impacts should be considered. The Service anticipates minimal additional impacts to public access to the refuge as a result of the proposed construction and operation of the Facility. The preferred alternative site location is rather small, and is already closed to hunting, and it does not offer optimal habitat for wildlife watching. There may be perceived negative impacts associated with the holding of captive wolves at the Facility, but such perceptions are likely based on misconceptions of the red wolf and an incomplete knowledge of the role of the Red Wolf Recovery Program. Public outreach programs by the Service and the Coalition should address and minimize most of these misconceptions. There may be positive benefits to visitors of the Facility by providing greater opportunities to educate and inform them of the conservation of the red wolf. The Facility will be a positive benefit to the Red Wolf Recovery Program in implementing actions to conserve the red wolf.

Second, there should be a consideration of the impact on public safety. Holding red wolves in captivity would not have a discernable impact on human safety. The Facility will be secured, maintained, and managed by the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, which imposes regulations and carries out functions to ensure public safety. The proposed action would not add or detract from existing public safety regulations.

Third, there should be consideration of impacts on historic and cultural sites, parklands, farmland, wetlands, scenic rivers and ecologically critical areas. The proposed Facility would be within a National Wildlife Refuge and close to historic sites, such as the Columbia Historic District, the Scuppernong River Bridge, and the Tyrrell County Courthouse. However, the proposed action would not limit access to these historic sites, nor would it impair the public appreciation of their historic significance. Access to public lands at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is managed by the Service under various laws, regulations, and policies; thus, public access to the proposed Facility would not be affected beyond current conditions. Public outreach programs and information at the proposed Facility should help clarify any misconceptions and minimize any controversy associated with the red wolf.

Fourth, intensity may be influenced by the level of controversy created among visitors of the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, the proposed Facility, and local residents. Some segments of the public may be concerned about the maintenance of wolves in captivity (or more likely in the wild). However, any wolves treated and maintained at the Facility will follow the standards set by the Service and the Red Wolf Husbandry Manual. Although the likelihood of a wolf escaping is low, a Red Wolf Escape Contingency Plan has been developed and will be followed. Public outreach programs and information at the proposed Facility should help clarify any misconceptions and minimize any controversy associated with the red wolf.

Fifth, intensity can be influenced by the degree to which possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. The Service currently houses captive wolves on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and has for a number of years since wolves were first released in 1987. This facility is closed to the public for the safety of the wolves and the biologists working with wolves. The proposed Facility, while open to the invited public, would limit visitor access to the wolves to an indoor viewing area, thus reducing the likelihood of adverse impacts. Overall, the Service anticipates minimal effects to the human environment. The proposed action does not involve any unique or unknown risks.

Sixth, intensity can be influenced by the degree to which the action establishes a precedent for future actions with significant impacts or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. As noted, wolves have been held in captivity at Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge for a number of years without incident. Therefore, the proposed action is not expected to set any precedents for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration because wolves have been treated and maintained on a nearby refuge and within the red wolf recovery area.

Seventh, intensity may be increased if the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant impacts. A significant level of impacts exists if it is

reasonable to anticipate a cumulative impact on the environment. The proposed Facility will be additive (cumulative) to the facilities that have been, and will be, constructed for the operation and maintenance of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and the Red Wolf Recovery Program. However, it is the conclusion of the Service that the beneficial and adverse impacts of any facilities are small and, therefore, insignificant due to the existing impacts, both beneficial and adverse, already resulting from operation and maintenance of the Red Wolf Recovery Program and Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge facilities and their respective missions to conserve the red wolf.

Eighth, the intensity of impacts can be increased by the degree to which the action would adversely affect structures or other objects listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. The proposed action would not affect entities on the National Register of Historic Places or other cultural sites in either a positive or negative manner.

Ninth, intensity can be influenced by the degree to which the action may adversely affect federally listed species or habitat determined to be critical for the recovery of these species. Any impacts from the construction and operation of the Facility are likely to be beneficial to endangered and threatened species, particularly the red wolf. The proposed Facility will provide educational and outreach opportunities and accommodate continued and improved veterinary care procedures for the general management and conservation of the red wolf.

Tenth, intensity can be increased if the proposed action would violate a federal, state, or local law or regulation imposed for the protection of the environment. The Facility is proposed to be constructed on federal land under the jurisdiction of the Service. The mission of the Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The mission of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is to administer lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans. The objectives of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge are to provide habitat for migratory waterfowl and other birds; to protect and enhance a unique type of wetlands (pocosin); to provide opportunities for wildlife-oriented interpretation, outdoor recreation and environmental education; and, to protect and enhance habitat for those species which are classified as endangered, threatened or of special concern, including the federally-endangered red wolf. The mission of the Red Wolf Recovery Program is to coordinate the mission of the Service specifically for the red wolf. In seeking to ensure the survival and conservation of the red wolf for future generations, the proposed action to construct a Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility is consistent with the mission of the Service, the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and the Red Wolf Recovery Program. The proposed Facility will not violate any federal, state, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The action does not produce a large change in the existing environment, but merely seeks to construct and operate a Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility for the purposes of conserving the red wolf. The proposed action may limit some types of activities within a relative small portion of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, but all activities within the refuge are

already strictly monitored by the Service with conserving wildlife and other natural resources.

### **SECTION 6.1.3 – BASIS FOR DETERMINING LEVEL OF IMPACTS**

This Environmental Assessment was circulated for public review from October 8, 2006 to October 26, 2006. Comments were solicited regarding the level of significance of the proposed construction and maintenance of the Center, and on the ten factors which influence the intensity of impacts on the human environment. All comments received are provided in Appendix G.

### **SECTION 7.0 – COMPATIBILITY WITH MISSION AND OBJECTIVES**

The proposed action will fulfill the Service's Southeast Region goal by working with our partners to "achieve our vision of a better place for fish and wildlife and the people who enjoy them." The proposed action will fulfill the Service's Mission "to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people." The proposed action also will fulfill a National Wildlife Refuge System objective to protect "those species which are classified as endangered, threatened or of special concern."

### **SECTION 8.0 – COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS, REGULATIONS, & POLICIES**

This Environmental Assessment was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. It is consistent with the policy contained in the Service's Manual (550 FW 3), and employs a systematic, interdisciplinary approach. The proposed action does not involve the disposal of fill material into waters of the U.S.; therefore, authorization is not required by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977, as amended, nor is a State water quality certification under Section 401 of that Act.

Other Federal and State issues reviewed for compliance for the proposed action include, but are not limited to, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended; the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997; Archeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974; National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended; Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management); and, Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands). Full compliance with relevant laws and regulations will be achieved upon review of this Environmental Assessment by appropriate agencies and interested parties, and the signing of a Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Action Statement.

This Environmental Assessment was available for public review from October 8, 2006 to October 24, 2006. All public comments received in response to the Environmental Assessment are provided in Appendix G. Those comments did not require any additional alterations or changes to the Environmental Assessment. The comments, however, are noted for the record.

### **SECTION 9.0 – PREPARERS**

This Environmental Assessment was prepared by David Rabon, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, of the Service's Raleigh Field Office.

## **SECTION 10.0 – AGENCIES AND PERSONS CONTACTED**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Internal Scoping Team:

Buddy Fazio, Red Wolf Species Coordinator, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge

Howard Phillips, Project Leader, Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

David Kitts, Assistant Project Leader, Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Wendy Stanton, Wildlife Biologist, Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Chris Lucash, Red Wolf Biologist, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Region:

Richard S. Kanaski, Regional Archaeologist and Regional Historic Preservation Officer

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Division, Washington Field Office:

Tom Walker, Project Manager

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

David Denton, Division of Conservation Education

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation

Tyrrell County Board of Commissioners:

Thomas W. Spruill, Chairman

Florence E. Bryant, Vice Chairman

Nina B. Griswell

Carl Willis

Zacharias Brickhouse

Connie Hopkins, Clerk

Greater Tyrrell County Chamber of Commerce

Tyrrell County Health Department:

Mitchell Patrick, Tyrrell County Health Department

Tyrrell County Ecotourism Committee

Columbia Town Council

Partnership for the Sounds

Red Wolf Coalition

Aubrey White-Remige, Board Member

Jennifer Gilbreath, Board Member

Ricky & Dawn Van Horn (Landowner), Columbia, NC

Katherine Cooper (Landowner), Columbia, NC

Feather Phillips, Millennium Forest (Business Owner), Columbia, NC

## **SECTION 11.0 – LITERATURE CITED**

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Figure 1. Proposed location for the Red Wolf Education and Health Care Facility.

