

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Red Wolf Recovery Program

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### Update on the Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population (ENC RWP)

#### - Population

- The current known population of wild adult red wolves (e.g., radio-collared individuals) in the ENC RWP is 13, with the estimated total population of approximately 20-22 red wolves. All known adult red wolves are collared with orange collars.
- All collared red wolves are within their areas of expected use, except one 2-year-old female that continues to move around over a large area. She has a GPS collar that we currently have set to send a point once a day so we can monitor her movements as closely as possible.
- As of last week, we have captured 5 of the 6 red wolf pups born last spring on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. However, one of the pups was a mortality in December in what appears to be a vehicle strike mortality on Highway 264. We have also not captured the fostered male or been able to identify him on remote sensing camera footage for a couple of months, so his fate is currently unknown.
- The family group on Pocosin Lakes NWR comprised of a wild female, male originally from the SAFE population and 2 of the 4 pups born in an acclimation pen and released at the end of May 2023 are all collared with orange collars and remaining together out on the landscape. They spend about 50% of their time on PLNWR and about 50% on private lands.
- There have been no other known red wolf mortalities since the last PCC beyond the red wolf pup mortality in December.
- There is a red wolf pair remaining in the wild on St. Vincent NWR, but there was no evidence of a litter last year. We're hoping they'll have a litter this year but if not, we will need to make some changes.

- Management

- Ground telemetry conducted several days a week to get locations for all collared red wolves and sterilized coyotes. Aerial telemetry conducted periodically.
- There are currently 31 sterilized coyotes, 9 of which are additional sterilized coyotes this trapping season, including 4 on private lands.
- Over 50 remote sensing cameras deployed and monitored on a weekly basis throughout the ENC RWP on refuges and private land with landowner permission.
- We are continuing the implementation of the 2023-2024 release plan. Includes:
  - Increasing the number of breeding pairs in the wild. We currently have three active acclimation pens and depending on capture operations could add up to 2 more.
  - Pup fostering whenever possible. Too soon to know what pup fostering opportunities we will have.
- Capture operations within the ENC RWP started in early November and will be ongoing both on the refuges and on private land with landowner permission through around March.
- Due to ongoing concerns regarding the habituation of red wolves on Alligator River NWR and Pocosin Lakes NWR from the volume of people that were remaining near them throughout the day, in close coordination with Refuge leadership the areas of use by the red wolf family groups have been closed to the public for the past several months. Closures have made a positive difference in the behavior and movements of red wolves. These closures are re-evaluated on a regular basis.
- Meet with WRC multiple times a month, and as needed, to coordinate canid management within the ENC RWP.
- Continuing to sponsor two NCSU engineering student groups who are exploring ways to reduce vehicle strike mortalities and other aspects of red wolf conservation.