

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 10, with the estimated total population of approximately 19-21 red wolves. All of the collared red wolves have orange collars.
- All collared red wolves are within their areas of expected use, except one of the yearlings (2 years old in April) that was fostered has begun to disperse. She has not settled into one area yet and had traveled over 30 air miles at one point. Her movements are being monitored as closely as possible.
- As of last week, 4 of the 6 of the red wolf pups born last spring on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge are known to have survived. Video posted online suggests that a fifth pup may still be alive on the landscape, but that is not confirmed. There was one known mortality of one of the pups due to a vehicle strike in October.
- No other known red wolf mortalities since the last PCC

- Management

- Ground telemetry conducted several days a week to get locations for all collared red wolves and sterilized coyotes. There are 23 sterilized coyotes with active radio collars.
- Over 40 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 Phase III release plan. Includes:
 - Increasing the number of breeding pairs in the wild, particularly by pairing a captive born red wolf with a wild red wolf. We currently have two wild female red wolves in acclimation pens with captive born males, one on Pocosin Lakes NWR and one on Alligator River NWR.
 - Pup fostering whenever possible. Too soon to know what pup fostering opportunities we will have.

- Translocating a wild female red wolf from St. Vincent NWR to the ENC RWP. The female was captured in November, and she is one of the wild females in an acclimation pen with a captive born male.
 - A minimum of 4 captive born red wolves will be released and up to 9. In addition to the pairs mentioned above, there is a family group of 3 also in an acclimation pen on Pocosin Lakes NWR and a single captive born male in an acclimation pen on Pocosin Lakes NWR within the territory of a wild female red wolf.
- Capture operations within the ENC RWP started in early December and are ongoing both on the refuges and on private land with landowner permission. Attempts to capture the pups born last spring on Alligator River NWR will begin within the next couple of weeks.
- Due to ongoing concerns regarding the habituation of the pups on Alligator River NWR from the volume of people that were remaining in close proximity to them throughout the day and incidents of suspected feeding, in close coordination with Refuge leadership the area where the incidents were occurring was posted as “No Stopping or Standing” in mid-November. Although there was a reduction in incidents, there were still lots of folks out of compliance and in mid-December personnel from Refuges, the Red Wolf Recovery Program and Law Enforcement installed gates at three locations and the area in question was temporarily closed to the public. The closure has made a noticeable positive difference on both the behavior and movements of the red wolf family group. The public is continuing to get good looks at them out in the fields but at a distance that is far less likely to cause issues.
- Met with the Dare County Public Works Director to discuss wildlife issues related to the County Landfill/Transfer station located adjacent to Alligator River NWR and ways to reduce those issues. Discussions are ongoing and discussions with potential NGO’s to assist Dare County have been initiated.
- During the first week of December, on multiple occasions Joe Madison met with the researcher from Western Transportation Institute on the ground within the ENC RWP. He is under contract with FWS to do a Red Wolf Road Ecology study. He also meet with other folks involved with this issue such as DOT, WRC, Refuge staff, etc.
- In late October, Emily Weller and Joe Madison met with Mexican Wolf Recovery Program staff and leadership for the captive breeding programs for both the red wolf and Mexican wolf in New Mexico for information sharing between the programs, to discuss issues and work toward ways to improve success.
- Meet with WRC multiple times a month on a set schedule, and as needed, to coordinate canid management within the ENC RWP.
- A windstorm on December 23 blew over two of the highway signs on Highway 264 running through Alligator River NWR. We were able to put them upright using heavy equipment, but they are currently not completely functional and we are working on getting them serviced.

- Continuing to sponsor two NCSU engineering student groups who are exploring ways to reduce vehicle strike mortalities and other aspects of red wolf conservation.
- Two Student Conservation Association interns work with the Red Wolf Recovery Program in NC from mid-October through mid-April to assist with Program tasks.

Outreach

- We are continuing to contact private landowners where we know red wolves are spending time based on tracking/monitoring to make them aware of the presence of red wolves on their property and to address any potential concerns or issues.
- Red Wolf Recovery Program staff are promptly responded to all calls, texts or emails received from landowners and members of the public regarding their questions, concerns, sightings and potential issues, including addressing time sensitive calls 24/7. As is typical, call volume this time of year has increased.
- Working to finalize multiple Prey for the Pack and other agreements geared toward providing access, monitoring and tolerance of red wolves on private lands. Some of the parcels being discussed are in key spots from a red wolf standpoint and are with large landowners that had previously revoked access about a decade ago. Multiple encouraging in person meetings have occurred as we work toward the agreements. We've also started using a category of Prey for the Pack that doesn't involvement cost shares or habitat projects for landowners that do not want those components but are still interested in supporting red wolf conservation on their lands.
- In late November, Rebekah Martin (Coastal North Carolina NWR Complex Project Leader) and Joe Madison attended a virtual meeting facilitated by Weiler Woods with several wildlife photographers to discuss their and our concerns regarding the family group on Alligator River NWR.
- Working with folks from the NC Museum of Natural Sciences on a potential program for this coming summer that would involve teachers working with the Red Wolf Recovery Program to be present on Alligator River NWR during busy wildlife watching times to educate the public on red wolves and wildlife in general. These individuals would also assist with other Program tasks such as radio tracking and the monitoring of remote sensing cameras.