

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 official known population of wild red wolves (e.g., radio-collared individuals) in the ENC RWP is 15, with the estimated total population of approximately 27-29 red wolves. All collared red wolves have orange collars, 8 of the 15 are GPS collars.
- The Milltail family group on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge (ARNWR) had a litter of 5 pups and an additional pup was fostered in from Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium. As of mid-June all of the pups were still accounted for.
- In May, 7 new adult/subadult red wolves were released into the ENC RWP, including 6 from SAFE facilities and 1 translocated from St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge (SVNWR). They were in 4 separate acclimation pens, 3 of which were attempted pairings between a wild red wolf a red wolf born from a SAFE facility. And 1 acclimation pen with a family group of 3 from a SAFE facility. Two of the acclimation pens had litters of 4 pups each, both on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (PLNWR) but there was 1 pup mortality before release.
- There have been 3 mortalities of wild red wolves to report since the last PCC. Necropsies are pending on all 3 so there are not any official causes of death. One appears to be of natural causes of the 14 year old female, one appears to be a vehicle strike and the other is one of the newly released males and is a law enforcement investigation.
- One of the newly released males was captured and placed back into a SAFE facility due to substantial concerns that he would be unable to survive in the wild as a result of his unwillingness to leave an area of these homes and his complacency around people and pets, including during the day and in yards, despite repeated harassment.

- Management

- Ground telemetry conducted several days a week to get locations for all collared red wolves and sterilized coyotes. There are 26 sterilized coyotes with active radio collars.

- Over 45 remote sensing cameras deployed and monitored on a weekly basis throughout the ENC RWP on refuges and private land with landowner permission.
- USFWS has drafted the next phase of the release plan, but it is not finalized. Will generally follow the same priorities as this year including taking advantage of all pup fostering opportunities and attempting to pair wild red wolves with red wolves from SAFE facilities.
- Road closures implemented on ARNWR in mid-April due to the high degree of public near the den site and rearing habitat for the Milltail family group. Closure will be lifted at the end of August.
- Road closure implemented on PLNWR earlier this week because of a handful of individuals/photographers repeatedly getting really close to the Pungo family group's rendezvous site raising concerns that they would be pushed from that area due to the harassment.
- Meet with WRC multiple times a month on a set schedule, and as needed, to coordinate canid management within the ENC RWP.
- Currently working on hiring a FWS biological technician to replace the one that left last August. The Red Wolf Recovery Program will also be hiring a wildlife biologist and community engagement specialist over the coming months.

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.
- Continuing to work towards multiple Prey for the Pack and other agreements geared toward providing access, monitoring and tolerance of red wolves on private lands, as well as potentially allowing pup fostering and releases on their lands. Exploring ways to expand the program, develop companion programs or see if it would fit under existing programs through other Federal agencies, that may also potentially include the ability to have some sort of pay for presence program. All very much in the initial exploration stage.
- Continuing to work collaboratively with the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, with additional funding support by NCWF, to implement the Red Wolf Teacher Ambassador program this summer. We've seen success with the program this first year on ARNWR that we can likely build on in the future. The presence of local area teachers out on the Refuge has been beneficial by providing outreach on site, having a FWS presence that has led to higher compliance with Refuge regulations and its provided assistance to the Red Wolf Recovery Program by conducting

radio telemetry and monitoring remote sensing cameras on the refuge. The teacher ambassadors will take that knowledge and skill set back to the classroom and also develop lesson plans to be shared.

- FWS conducted an in-person public meeting and a virtual public meeting in mid-May in Swanquarter, North Carolina. Transcripts and video of the virtual public meeting are available on the Service's Red Wolf Recovery Program website at redwolfcountry.com
- The Red Wolf Recovery Program has conducted multiple presentations to local area groups and civic organizations over the past several months, including the Science of the Sound series at the Coastal Studies Institute.