

Red Wolf Partnership Coordination Call – Q2
April 16, 2020

GENERAL UPDATES

Red Wolf Recovery Program

As mentioned on the last call, one of the current focuses for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Red Wolf Recovery Program is updating the Red Wolf Recovery Plan. To help ensure a transparent, joint stakeholder/agency/partner process based on the best scientific information, we are contracting out facilitation and modeling services. That process has started. We received a couple of proposals this week which we are reviewing to determine next steps. We anticipate contracted services to begin in a couple of months.

WILD POPULATION

North Carolina Nonessential Experimental Population (NEP)

The management of the wild red wolf population in the NC NEP is being conducted under the 10(j) rule updated in 1995 along with the permanent injunction put in place by a Federal court in November 2018 regarding take.

The current known population of red wolves (e.g. radio-collared individuals) in the NC NEP is 10 red wolves with the estimated total population approximately 18 - 20 red wolves.

- We lost the radio collar signal from a really old collar on one male red wolf in January. However, we also found tracks on the bombing range of a female whose old radio collar died over a year ago.

There has been 1 mortality in 2020 resulting from gunshot on private property. The law enforcement case is open so no other details can be shared.

During this past winter's trapping and translocation efforts, 7 red wolves were captured between the NC NEP and St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

- After their captures, one of the Milltail males was translocated to Pocosin Lakes NWR and placed in an acclimation pen with the female red wolf from the Pungo area until February 5th.
- After her capture, the previous Milltail breeding female was placed in the acclimation pen in the Milltail area of Alligator River NWR with the male red wolf translocated from St. Vincent NWR. They were released together February 18th. The daughter of the Milltail breeding female had also been captured and she was released at the same time and place as the pair from the acclimation pen.
- All red wolves captured were released wearing bright orange VHF radio collars to help the public distinguish them.

Tracking has been very limited because of the COVID-19 measures and we have not been able to conduct any aerial telemetry for several weeks.

- Some ground telemetry is occurring on the refuges and we have increased it this week to try and determine if any denning is occurring. No sign of denning yet.
- Based on limited tracking, there are no red wolf pairs currently together.

- The male translocated to Alligator River NWR from St. Vincent NWR remained with the Milltail female and/or her daughter for several weeks after release from the acclimation pen, but we have not located him in about three weeks. Both of those Milltail females remain on the refuge within the areas they are typically found.
- The female red wolf in the Pungo area of Pocosin Lakes NWR remains in her traditional territory and the male translocated there from Alligator River NWR is usually within or immediately adjacent to that territory, but not with her.
- We are hopeful that perhaps one or both of the pairs in acclimation pens mated before they separated, but there's no sign of that to this point.

The male translocated from NC Zoo to St. Vincent NWR was released onto the island on February 14th and was soon with the other red wolves.

- All 5 radio-collared red wolves (two adults, one juvenile and 2 yearlings) are remaining together at this point, but there has been no sign of denning yet.

Prey of the Pack

FWS, through its Partners for Fish and Wildlife program (PFW) in partnership with the North Carolina Wildlife Federation (NCWF) and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) will be initiating a program to help incentivize interested and willing private landowners to create/improve habitat for red wolf prey species on their lands (e.g. early successional forest). In general, the FWS PFW would pay for a portion of the cost for landowner's to do habitat work on their lands in exchange for agreeing to be tolerant of red wolves on their property and potentially allowing for some level of monitoring by FWS personnel.

We have old used radio collars that are no longer in use that we could provide to folks if they are interested in using them for educational purposes. Contact Morgan Lewis at (252) 475-8350 for more information.

There is a map of the historic range of red wolves on the Red Wolf Recovery Program website. If anyone is wanting to print of that map at a larger size for educational purposes, we have a higher resolution version we can send to you electronically. Contact Morgan Lewis at (252) 475-8350 for more information.

COMMUNICATION/OUTREACH/EDUCATION

Nothing to report.

RESEARCH

NAS Taxonomic Studies

On the last call, FWS updated everyone on the status of work contracted with NAS to assist with taxonomic studies of unidentified wild canids in southern Louisiana and other geographical areas. Applications were accepted through December 3, 2019. NAS received 3 proposals. FWS has received NAS' s report on their review of the applications and their recommendations. In short, NAS' s review found that two of the applications together could yield reliable conclusions about the identity of canids in southwestern LA and southeastern TX and recommended funding specific aspects of each of the two applications. FWS is currently working to finalize the work with the two applicants and anticipates finalizing contracts very soon.

The public report can be found online at <https://www.nap.edu/read/25661/chapter/1>