

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Red Wolf Recovery Program

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General Red Wolf Recovery Program Update

- After a thorough review process, establishment of the new Red Wolf Recovery Team was recently finalized. There are a total of 50 members on the team. Now that the team is established we are anxious to move forward and schedule the various workshops with the revised recovery plan set for completion by the end of February 2023.

Update on the North Carolina Nonessential Experimental Population (NC NEP)

- The current known population of wild red wolves (e.g. radio-collared individuals) in the NC NEP is nine with the estimated total population approximately 17-20 red wolves. Eight of the collared red wolves have orange collars, including two that are GPS collars.
- There have been five known wild red wolf mortalities since our last call Partners call in April. That brings the total mortalities of wild red wolves this year to six, of which five are believed to be as a result of vehicle strikes. The other is an unknown cause of death because it had been heavily scavenged before it was found. Two of the mortalities have been of adult red wolves born in the NC NEP and the other four have been captive-born red wolves. Necropsy results are pending on the four more recent suspected vehicle strikes.
 - o Three of the vehicle strikes occurred on highways and the other two were on smaller, but paved farm roads.
- Tracking
 - o Aerial monitoring continues to be conducted once or twice a week depending on weather and pilot availability.
 - o Ground telemetry continues as well to get more precise locations on specific individuals or in areas of interest.
 - o In addition, we receive periodic GPS point locations for the two red wolves with GPS collars. One is on a schedule of sending points every 2.5 days and the other we are currently receiving points once a day.
 - o All collared red wolves remaining on the landscape are within their areas of expected use.
- Management

- As most, if not all, of you are aware, in close coordination with the SSP, four captive red wolves from three separate SSP partner facilities were identified to be released into the NC NEP this spring. All four red wolves (two males and two females) arrived to NC in late April and were fitted with GPS collars before being placed in temporary acclimation pens (one pair on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and one pair on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge).
 - Unfortunately, the two red wolves from the Alligator River NWR acclimation pen account for two of the vehicle strike mortalities within a week of being released.
 - The two red wolves from the Pocosin Lakes NWR acclimation pen traveled extensively and separately throughout multiple counties once they were no longer in the acclimation pen. Unfortunately, the female was one of the vehicle mortalities about a month later. The male remains on the landscape and appears to have settled into an area over the last several weeks.
- In addition, in very close coordination with the SSP, the Akron Zoo and Lighthawk, four captive born pups were flown from the Akron Zoo and fostered into a wild red wolf mother's den on May 1. After moving all of the pups (captive and wild born) after the disturbance of us entering the den, the mother continued to den and remain in the area of the new den, an indication that the fostering was likely successful. Since that time we have continued to monitor the mother closely, but we have not re-enter the area of her den to limit potential detrimental impacts on her and the pups from our presence. She has at least one yearling assisting in the den area. We have placed remote sensing cameras in the general area at a safe distance and hope to obtain images of pups to monitor their survival and well-being as they begin to move around more.
- As part of the court order regarding releases, FWS will be submitting a status update to the court by August 15th, along with a revised plan outlining strategies for the release of additional captive red wolves into the NC NEP this winter and next spring, particularly taking into account the high level of mortality that has occurred and the low population level.
- Potential strategies to reduce vehicle mortalities are being discussed with multiple partners to include signage, aversive conditioning, wildlife crossings, road reflectors, etc. just to name a few. We are currently coordinating with the NC Department of Transportation and our partners regarding some of these potential strategies.
- The vegetation management project on Pocosin Lakes NWR designed to increase and support the prey base for red wolves will begin implementation this year. This project is being done in collaboration with the North Carolina Wildlife Federation.
- In St. Vincent NWR, in mid-April the breeding female was found in mortality mode. The cause of death is unknown, but it is possible based on the circumstances that it was from an alligator. The male red wolf released onto the island this winter after being in the acclimation pen for a few months with the breeding female, swam off of the island in mid-April and spent time within developed areas on the mainland in close proximity to people. He was captured about a week later and was placed back into a SSP facility.

due to concerns over his habituation. There are currently two female red wolves remaining on St. Vincent NWR. The plan is to transfer a male red wolf from the SSP to St. Vincent NWR this fall and hope to create a new breeding pair.

Outreach

- Prey for the Pack (P4P)
 - o We are currently working on the agreement paperwork for multiple new landowner agreements under P4P and are continuing to have dialogue and site visits with several others. One of the agreements currently being worked on is a large piece of private land adjacent to refuge lands where there has been red wolf use over the last several years. This particular landowner is well respected in the local community and although we have had a pretty good relationship with them over the years, they are sometimes been outspoken about FWS and red wolves, so being able to engage with this landowner in a positive way as part of P4P will be beneficial to red wolves and the program.
 - We are also working on the language for other categories within P4P, such as agreements where landowners do not want to accept FWS funds, but would like to do habitat work beneficial for red wolf prey and acknowledge allowing red wolves on their property without being harassed and allow monitoring.

Questions?