

**USFWS Virtual Public Meeting for the Red Wolf**

**Virtual Public Meeting Transcript**

**October 5, 2022, 5:00-7:00pm Eastern Time**

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Hello, everyone! I'd like to welcome you all to the US Fish and Wildlife Services Virtual Public Information Meeting for the Red Wolf recovery program. We are going to get folks a few minutes here to join the meeting, and then we will begin the PowerPoint Presentation shortly. So please stay tuned.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: I do want to note that closed captioning is available by selecting the closed caption icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen if

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: you are using the Zoom web portal or Zoom app on your computer. So we'll just give everyone a few minutes to join.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Again, welcome everyone to tonight's meeting. We're going to give folks a few more minutes to join the meeting, so please stay tuned, and we will start the presentation shortly.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Again, I do want to note that close captioning is available by selecting closed caption icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen if you are using the Zoom web portal or Zoom app on your computer.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: And we'll go to the next slide.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: So we're going to go ahead and get started with our meeting tonight. I would like to thank you all for joining us. We appreciate your time and participation. My name is Megan Stone with Environmental Management and Planning Solutions,

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: a contractor for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and I'm going to be one of your meeting facilitators tonight. Additionally, I have several members of the US Fish and Wildlife

Service with me on the meeting tonight, who will be introduced in a moment.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Here is our expected agenda for the meeting tonight. I will first go over some brief ground, rules. The USFWS will provide a PowerPoint presentation on the Red Wolf management program.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Then the US Fish and Wildlife Service will hold a question-and-answer session to respond to participant questions.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: The US Fish and Wildlife Service will then provide some closing remarks and close out the meeting at eight PM Eastern time.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Next slide, please.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Before we get started with the presentation, I'm going to go over some ground rules for the meeting. First, this meeting is being recorded as part of the project record, and a recording will be posted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service website.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Second, your microphones and videos will be turned off for the duration of the meeting tonight. The host will unmute you only if needed during the question-and-answer session if you're joining by phone.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Questions will be addressed during the question-and-answer session after the PowerPoint presentation. As of right now, we are going to first go through our list of questions that were submitted upon registration that are within the scope and ability of the Fish and Wildlife Service to respond to at this time.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: If we have any time remaining in the meeting after we have responded to those questions, we will open up the chat feature to allow participants to submit follow up questions on the Service's responses,

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: and right now you can feel free to go ahead and submit your questions in the chat feature. Again, we will get to those if time allows later on in question-and-answer session,

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: and we will do our best to address questions in the order they come in to allow everyone an opportunity to voice their questions today.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: So with that I'll go ahead and turn it over to John Tirpak with the US Fish and Wildlife Service for some introductions.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Thank you. Good evening, everyone.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: I'm so grateful to be joining you tonight for the second of two informational meetings we're holding, as we continue our commitment to each one of you to hear your feedback, concerns, and voices.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Last night we met in person in North Carolina, and I'm hopeful that tonight will be as informative, inspiring, and engaging as our conversation yesterday.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: My name is John Tirpak, and I'm the Service's Deputy Assistant Regional Director for ecological services in the Southeast, the US Fish and Wildlife Service program that houses Red Wolf recovery.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Before I get into why we're here tonight, I first want to thank all of you for registering and attending.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: I'll speak for the entire team, who you will meet in a moment, when I share just how excited we were to see the overwhelming response to our meeting invitation.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: More than two hundred people registered to attend tonight, which is a great turnout and a testament to the broad interest in Red Wolf recovery.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: During the virtual public meeting we held back in February we noted that we are working to revitalize and transform this program, and a big part of that is being more open and inclusive in our recovery efforts.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Yesterday's and tonight's meetings are part of that continued commitment.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: We know that we cannot recover America's Red Wolf without your engagement, and we are eager to hear what you have to say.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: So a turnout like this is exactly what Red Wolf recovery needs to be successful.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: We know that Red Wolf recovery includes many perspectives, and our approach will include all of your voices.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Our recovery efforts are not always perfect, but we're working hard to chart this new path forward, and your voice can help shape this path of recovery.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: We have been very busy, and we are excited to talk with you about everything that we've been doing, and things that we plan to do.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Tonight, we'll be providing updates on the Red Wolf recovery program as well as the management actions we took this past year as part of our phase two release plan. The plan for this coming year is part of our phase three release plan and

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USFWS - John Tirpak: ways that you can help or get involved with Red Wolf conservation.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: We have a number of staff in attendance, including Jennifer Koches, our public affairs specialist,

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Laura Toivonen, one of our biologists,

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Pete Benjamin, a field supervisor for the Raleigh North Carolina Ecological Services Field Office,

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USFWS - John Tirpak: and a whole host of our field staff that are dedicated and have devoted many collected years to saving this highly imperiled species.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Next slide, please.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: I'd like to introduce Joe Madison, the North Carolina program manager for Red Wolf recovery.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Ryan Nordsven, Wildlife, biologist,

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Morgan Lewis, a wildlife biologist,

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USFWS - John Tirpak: and Luke Lokies, the private lands biologist that we have.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: I also want to introduce Emily Weller, our Red Wolf recovery program coordinator, who I'll turn it over to now.

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USFWS - John Tirpak: Take it away, Emily.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Thanks, John.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: This evening I just wanted to start out with next slide, please, Megan.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: This evening I just wanted to start out giving a little bit of information and updates on the broader Red Wolf recovery program. So our mission is to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance endangered Red Wolf.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: We meet this mission through four key components, that when they are working together, give the Red Wolf the best chance at recovery, and those four key components are captive population, wild populations, communication and outreach, and research.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Next.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Along those key components, I'm just going to give a quick summary of some of the program accomplishments this year. Um, a pretty significant action for the program has been the revitalization of our program and our commitment to Red Wolf recovery. As part of this revitalization we're looking at where we've had success in the past,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: but we're also looking at challenges that the program and the species face, whether that's past, present, or future challenges to inform the path forward. And though we're looking at those past successes and proven management techniques, we're also exploring new innovative ideas to address those challenges.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Part of that is a focus on collaborative conservation. That is enhancing collaboration and communication and community and partner engagement

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USFWS - Emily Weller: because we fully acknowledge that successful recovery from Red Wolf will require collaborative efforts with those

that are have a vested interest in red wolves, but most especially in landowners in the local community.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Um, therefore we're working to provide more support to those landowners and stakeholders through increasing engagement, communications and transparency, in all of our actions.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Our first step, um has been strengthening our relationship with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and the local community.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Um, we meet monthly with WRC to share information and updates, and that also provides us another opportunity for greater coordination on Red Wolf recovery actions.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Um, we are using Facebook as a means to provide more regular updates on Red Wolf activities to the public, and we plan to update the website on a more regular basis.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: We've restructured the Red Wolf hotline um, which is now redirected, so that we ensure that we receive calls in a timely manner, so that we can respond in a more timely manner.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Um here in a few minutes, Joe is going to talk about some of the additional actions we've taken on the ground to improve our transparency and engagement in North Carolina,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: and then, finally, a major focus of the recovery team, and the recovery plan is collaborative conservation which I will get to here in just a moment.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: This year we've also continued management of the Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf population with the release of ten red wolves this year. So we'll talk about that here in the moment. Um, I want to take this in time to kind of note that

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USFWS - Emily Weller: in the past we've referred to this population as the North Carolina non-essential experimental population, the NCNEP.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: But we've changed the way that we've referenced this population, NEP: non-essential experimental population is a legal designation, and we feel like this may be undermining recovery efforts, as most people are not really aware of what an NEP means, and non-essential and experimental are often misconstrued, is indicating a lack of value for that population, and not just a legal term. So, while the legal designation remains, we now refer to this population

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USFWS - Emily Weller: as the Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf population.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: The Service has funded a study in Louisiana, a Canid study um. This one was a follow up to another one that was published in 2018 that found Red Wolf ancestry persist in wild canids of Southwest Louisiana. So this most recent study was published just a couple of months ago in Science Advances.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: The canid sampled carried between thirty-eight and sixty-two percent Red Wolf ancestry. The study is ongoing, and we expect it will provide additional valuable insight into the canid in that area.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: The Service has worked with the captive population, the species survival plan program, which is now called the SAFE Saving Animals From Extinction program.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: We've been working with them to increase space capacity, so that breeding efforts can expand as we grow a more robust population to support recovery efforts

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USFWS - Emily Weller: and then we convened a new fifty-one-member recovery team tasked with updating the recovery plan and we have a draft revised recovery plan out for review and comment now,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: next.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: So the captive breeding program is an essential component of Red Wolf recovery. Um, like I said, it is overseen by AZA's SAFE program. Releases of red wolves from that population into the Eastern North Carolina red wolf population really help build that wild population to reach a peak

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USFWS - Emily Weller: of one hundred and twenty animals in 2012, and now they're the source of the red wolves for efforts to create new Red Wolf breeding pairs in North Carolina.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Human contact with captive red wolves is minimized to promote avoidance behavior to support bare bonding, breeding, pup rearing, and a healthy pack structure.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: The Service coordinates regularly with the SAFE management team to evaluate and select red wolves for release into the wild based on their genetic makeup, reproductive performance, behavior and physical suitability.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: So currently, there are two hundred and forty-three red wolves in forty-nine um SAFE facilities across the country. In the 2021-2022 breeding season there were twenty-eight breeding pairs established.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Forty-six pups and thirteen litters were born, of which twenty-nine survived, adding to the SSP population.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: With additional space capacity and the need to increase the captive population, the draft number of breeding pairs for the upcoming 2022-2023 breeding season increase to forty pairs.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Currently the goal is to increase the captive population to three hundred and thirty red wolves.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: To do that, additional space is needed. The Service through three recovery challenge grants has contributed over seven hundred and seventy thousand to increasing that space capacity. With matching funds from award recipients, thirty new enclosures have been built or funded.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Next,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Since the Red Wolf was listed, the Service has published three recovery plans for the Red Wolf. The original was in '82 followed by updates in 1984, and in 1990. Because significant time had passed since that last update, and there has been um a lot of new information that has become available, much has changed on the ground, and we have learned a lot about red wolves,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: we updated the recovery plan to guide recovery actions, considering the current status of the species and new information. So to do that we convene that recovery team like I said, it's fifty-one members, including representatives from seven State wildlife agencies, including North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission, researchers, private citizens, wildlife, biologists, natural resource managers, zoo biologists and others.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Not only was this team tasked with updating the recovery plan, but they are also tasked with developing a recovery implementation strategy.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: These previous versions of the recovery plan follow kind of the old recovery plan format. This one is the first under the Service's Recovery Planning and Implementation Guidance, which is a three document approach to recovery planning. The first document is a Species Status Assessment which evaluates Red Wolf viability, and then provides that foundational biological information to develop a Recovery Plan that was completed for the Red Wolf in 2018.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Then you have the Recovery Plan itself, which is a streamlined- It contains a streamline overview that describes what recovery looks like for this species, a strategy for how we get there,

and then the three elements required under the Endangered Species Act. That's recovery criteria, recovery actions, and time and cost estimates.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Um,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Then the third document is the Recovery Implementation Strategy. That is, an operational plan that steps down those actions identified into the Recovery Plan into more detailed activities. It's the who does what, when, where, and how.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Um. That document is flexible and can be updated as appropriate.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: The draft revised Recovery Plan that is out now is based on that 2018 SSA. And a series of recovery team workshops held in late August, early September of 2021.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Next.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Um, in the interest of time tonight I'm going to go over the general strategy that is outlined in their Recovery Plan.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: So the first key component is to expand the distribution of the species. That's establishing additional populations in areas of adequate habitats, ideally different habitats that will support multiple packs. At this time, we don't have um additional population locations identified, but a population viability analysis is currently being developed by the recovery team that will help characterize sites that could potentially support viable

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Red Wolf populations.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: The second key component is to increase the population abundance and maintain genetic diversity long term.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: To establish multiple populations, we need a robust captive population to support releases, pup fostering, and maintain uh gene diversity long term. Establishing populations will also likely require translocation of wild red wolves within and among,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: either reintroduce populations or propagation sites, and adaptive management.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: But for Red Wolf populations to ultimately be viable and successful, they must not be reliant on extensive human interventions, which we define as annual or frequent releases of pup fostering, translocation, and placeholder management.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: To further increase population numbers, maintain genetic diversity, and eliminate that need for extensive human interventions, threats to the Red Wolf, whether the captive or wild, must be adequately addressed to ensure survival, growth, and long-term viability.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: And finally, the third key component is implementing collaborative conservation. Um. This component was a major focus of the recovery team.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: For any species, but I think particularly this one, effective recovery will require participation and involvement of all parties at State/Other Federal agencies, private landowners, local communities, local governments,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: NGOs, and academia. Cooperation among all of these stakeholders will be critical in minimizing those threats to a level that will allow the species to persist without those extensive interventions, while also ensuring management actions and recovery strategies have social acceptance and support.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: And to achieve that social acceptance, stakeholders, particularly private landowners, must be engaged in the management of red wolves. Um, including participation in

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USFWS - Emily Weller: management and recovery planning processes. Efforts must be planned with the needs of the community in mind.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Stakeholder engagement will require establishing trust and building a true partnership which includes having a shared understanding among all parties regarding goals, objectives, roles and responsibilities, and expectations.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Next.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: So, a copy of the draft Revised Recovery Plan can be found on several of the Service's websites. The addresses are here on the screen.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: You may comment, either through email or US mail at the addresses on the screen.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: To ensure consideration, we must receive written comments on or before October 28, 2022, um, though we do accept information about any species at any time. And then all comments received, including names, addresses, phone numbers,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: email addresses, or personal identifying information, will become part of the decision record and will be available to the public.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Next.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: So, I gave you our accomplishments for this past year. Um, I want to go through a few of our goals for the upcoming 2022-2023 year. So, first is to finalize the recovery plan. Um a final plan is due for a settlement agreement February 28, 2023.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: The recovery plan provides us direction. Um: What does recovery look like? What steps are needed to get us there? And it will allow everyone, us and our partners, to be strategic in our actions and work as one body. Um, while we have a recovery plan for the species, and we have continued to carry out recovery actions,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: this updated recovery plan is an opportunity to refocus the efforts.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: We anticipate work on the recovery implementation strategy to begin in early 2023. Again, this document includes those step-down activities needed to carry out or implement those actions that are identified in the recovery plan.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: I look at this document as the playbook that all partners can pull from.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: I look at this document as a means to spark more collaborative efforts, reduce redundancy or inefficiencies, and focus this on - focus us on those activities um, that will have the greatest impact in moving us towards recovery.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Again, this document is flexible, and can be modified to incorporate new information and adapt to changing circumstances.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Increasing the captive population remains one of the Service's priorities. Again, a robust captive population is critical to maintaining, uh, the species genetic diversity, and supporting the establishment of future population through releases. Um, while great progress has been made with those thirty uh newly built and funded enclosures, um, we still we have that - we still have a little bit more space that we need to reach

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USFWS - Emily Weller: um with the safe management team. We want to continue working with them to maintain a captive population that is suitable for release, um, Joe will discuss that a little bit um

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USFWS - Emily Weller: here in a few minutes and discuss possible solutions and potential ways to evaluate individual red wolves to identify those that might be better suited for release.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: We will continue um management of the Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf population and growing that population which Joe will cover here.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: And then finally, um, we want to further program revitalization. While we've taken steps to increase our engagement, communication, and transparency,

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USFWS - Emily Weller: we know there is more to be done, but we don't know what all that might look like, and it's not completely up to us to decide that. We need to hear from the local community, from landowners and others on the best way to engage and communicate.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Also, through this revitalization, we would like to address conflict head on. That includes social conflicts that may be inhibiting acceptance of and progress towards recovery goals.

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USFWS - Emily Weller: Um. So we are looking at conflict transformation to build trust, improve relationships, and improve the effectiveness of recovery efforts. Um and now with that I will pass it on to Joe.

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USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide, please. Thanks, Emily.

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USFWS - Joe Madison: And in line with Emily's talking about that increased community engagement, and being more transparent with our actions, I'm going to go through a lot of information to provide, you know, what has happened over the last couple of years, and what the current status is, and what our plans are moving forward, particularly over the next six months here in Eastern North Carolina.

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USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide, please.

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USFWS - Joe Madison: I just want to remind folks that we are continuing to operate under the 10(j) rule that was left updated in 1995 that spells out the management of this population here in Eastern North Carolina, in conjunction with applicable court decisions that have occurred since then. And one of those more recent ones is in January 2021

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USFWS - Joe Madison: court issued a ruling that US Fish and Wildlife Service to draft the plan to release captive red wolves into Eastern North Carolina. Fish and Wildlife Service subsequently submitted implementation plans Phase I and Phase II that covered timeframe around March 24, 2021, to May 2022. I'll go over briefly what that entailed, and the results of that.

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USFWS - Joe Madison: And then it is also led to the development of Phase III release plan that covers from about now through next May, and that was - has been coordinated with the folks at the Wildlife Resource Commission that we meet with regularly and collaborate on these types of issues, and it was submitted to the court in September.

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USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide, please.

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USFWS - Joe Madison: So I'm gonna start by talking about the existing condition, and I'm going to kind of go back to how we got to where we are. There's currently ten radio collared adult red wolves in the Eastern North Carolina red wolf population,

00:26:55.410 --> 00:27:05.099

USFWS - Joe Madison: and they all have orange collars, the adults, one of which is a GPS collar, and we also have six pups on the landscape, and I'll talk more about those as we go along.

00:27:05.610 --> 00:27:21.210

USFWS - Joe Madison: The estimated total wild population in Eastern North Carolina is around 20 Red Wolves, somewhere in the 19-21 range, and that takes an account, you know, the ten collared, the six pups,

and then other individuals that potentially might be on the landscape that are either not collared that we

00:27:21.220 --> 00:27:32.799

USFWS - Joe Madison: see on, uh remote sensitive cameras as potential red wolves or red wolves that who are collared but the batteries may have - are no longer working on their radio call, so we're not able to actually track them.

00:27:33.770 --> 00:27:47.629

USFWS - Joe Madison: And we also, we resumed efforts to increase the wild population in Eastern North Carolina red wolf population in 2019, with the translocation of an individual male from St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, which I'll speak to in a bit as well.

00:27:47.840 --> 00:27:49.000

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:27:51.780 --> 00:28:02.760

USFWS - Joe Madison: In 2019, we captured a male on Saint Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, and translocated him up and paired him with - attempted to pair him with a resident female in Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge

00:28:02.990 --> 00:28:22.879

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh and release them in 2020. That individual did not stay in the area for more than three, four weeks, and then he moved out of the area, and we were tracking that individual but about it was about the same time that Covid hit, unfortunately, and he continued to move, and we lost track of that animal. His fate is currently unknown.

00:28:23.920 --> 00:28:39.560

USFWS - Joe Madison: In 2020 we captured two adult males on St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, and translocated them up, and they were both uh paired with resident females on Alligator River. One of those was subsequently a vehicle strike mortality,

00:28:39.710 --> 00:28:41.410

USFWS - Joe Madison: and the other one-

00:28:41.440 --> 00:28:56.010

USFWS - Joe Madison: we wanted to pair him with the younger female in Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. We were unable to capture

her, to put her in an acclimation pen with him. Uh, but we did capture her mother. It was past her breeding age, but uh,

00:28:56.200 --> 00:29:05.849

USFWS - Joe Madison: we realized that we had the opportunity to put this male from St. Vincent, the wild born male with this resident female; and even though she was no longer a breeding age,

00:29:05.860 --> 00:29:23.890

USFWS - Joe Madison: the thinking was that if he, if she accepted him into the area, then so would her daughter. And over time, as they were in an acclimation pen within their territory, the daughter would visit the pen regularly, and - we time the release of this male to when that younger female was likely in heat,

00:29:24.010 --> 00:29:46.509

USFWS - Joe Madison: and after his release, he pretty much went straight to this female, and she was paired, or at least hanging out with a sterilized coyote at that point. But over the course of about the next three to four weeks that red wolf male displaced that coyote who then moved out of that territory, and he paired with that female. We had hoped that perhaps they got together soon enough,

00:29:46.580 --> 00:30:07.150

USFWS - Joe Madison: that they would have a litter in 2021, but that didn't happen; but they bonded and stayed together throughout the year, and all evidence pointed that they were a bonded pair, and as many of you know, that is the male that became the father of the litter here on Alligator River this past spring, and I'll talk about that again in a bit as well.

00:30:07.430 --> 00:30:23.730

USFWS - Joe Madison: Also in 2021, we released four adult wolves from captivity. The captive-born red wolves, a pair on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and a pair on the Coastal Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Unfortunately, the parent Alligator River were both vehicle strike mortalities,

00:30:23.740 --> 00:30:33.649

USFWS - Joe Madison: and uh, one of the individuals released on the Coastal Lakes was also a vehicle strike mortality, and the other, several months later, was a gunshot mortality.

00:30:34.990 --> 00:30:44.409

USFWS - Joe Madison: As well in 2021, we fostered four captive born pups into a wild female den on the Coastal Lakes National Wildlife Refuge,

00:30:44.650 --> 00:30:58.809

USFWS - Joe Madison: and the two males and two females were fostered into that den. And uh, we know that at least two of those that survived. And I'll go into that a little bit as well, and there's potentially an additional one that might be out there as well. Next slide.

00:31:02.550 --> 00:31:09.910

USFWS - Joe Madison: As I mentioned, we had a wild red wolf litter here in Eastern North Carolina for the first time since 2018, as a result of that,

00:31:09.950 --> 00:31:12.949

USFWS - Joe Madison: that pairing that from the translocation,

00:31:13.480 --> 00:31:31.700

USFWS - Joe Madison: and we've also had thirteen known red wolf mortalities over the last two years, seven in the previous twelve months and six previous to that, and eleven of those thirteen mortalities were captive born red wolves and I'll talk about mortality more specifically on the next slide.

00:31:31.930 --> 00:31:37.529

USFWS - Joe Madison: We had one known hybrid litter in 2022 and three in 2021.

00:31:38.750 --> 00:31:46.000

USFWS - Joe Madison: And I wanted to show the age class structure for the wild red wolf population, and this does include the pups in there.

00:31:46.010 --> 00:32:05.789

USFWS - Joe Madison: The six pups from this year on the bottom line there, and you can kind of get a sense that we're skewed to a heavily female population right now and toward older population, particularly for wild red wolves. There's some out on the landscape that are beyond the average age that you would expect for wild red wolves, and they're beyond their reproductive years at this point.

00:32:06.860 --> 00:32:07.990

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:32:10.130 --> 00:32:16.909

USFWS - Joe Madison: As I mentioned, thirteen - of the thirteen mortalities of the last couple of years, eleven were captured-born releases, and the

00:32:16.920 --> 00:32:38.890

USFWS - Joe Madison: break down of those mortalities were five vehicle strikes, three gunshots, three unknowns. One of those unknowns has a necropsy result that are still pending, and two of those are because of the condition of the carcass, the necropsies were inconclusive, one the cause of death, and then two additional ones that are suspected vehicle strikes, but those necropsies are pending as well

00:32:39.720 --> 00:32:40.850

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:32:43.250 --> 00:32:57.900

USFWS - Joe Madison: This maps give you a general idea of the distribution of the red wolves throughout the Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf population, covers about 1.7 million acres, and, as you can see, even though the population is not large, it covers across that area.

00:32:57.970 --> 00:33:02.220

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um. Up in the Milltail area you can see that there's the-

00:33:02.240 --> 00:33:03.550

USFWS - Joe Madison: We have

00:33:03.650 --> 00:33:17.029

USFWS - Joe Madison: nine red wolves, including the pups that actively use that area. Uh the pair, the bonded pair and their pups, and her mother is still in that same general area. And then a little further south you can see the Gator

00:33:17.040 --> 00:33:25.510

USFWS - Joe Madison: female, but she actually moves between the bombing range and the Milltail area, so sometimes she's up where the bonded pair and the pups are as well.

00:33:26.890 --> 00:33:38.930

USFWS - Joe Madison: And then, further down to the south, there's the Boundary animals. It's one male and one female, but those are not -

that's not a pair and they're half siblings. So even though they're use areas overlap, they are not a Red Wolf pair.

00:33:39.250 --> 00:33:56.259

USFWS - Joe Madison: To the far lowest of the screen, you can see the Pungo area, and that is the adult female red wolf and the two uh- two of the females that we fostered are still within her territory that we know survived. So we have three females in that area at this point,

00:33:56.270 --> 00:34:02.559

USFWS - Joe Madison: And then on the further north of the screen, is the Northern female that lives

00:34:02.670 --> 00:34:05.509

USFWS - Joe Madison: on the eastern Pocosin area.

00:34:07.480 --> 00:34:08.629

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:34:11.580 → 00:34:30.460

USFWS - Joe Madison: This slide is to give you a general idea of the use of the landscape by red wolves. This is the pair that had the litter. Uh, the blue dots are the points for the last year for the male. He's wearing a GPS collar, and this GPS collar takes a point every thirteen hours.

00:34:30.620 --> 00:34:37.060

USFWS - Joe Madison: So then, over time, it gives us a look at where he's moving uh throughout the day and night,

00:34:37.159 --> 00:34:52.669

USFWS - Joe Madison: and you can see that they're pretty heavily tied to the farm field areas or the wood blocks adjacent to those farm field areas which is highly, you know, uh, due to the prey availability, and habitat availability of those particular areas.

00:34:53.380 --> 00:35:05.190

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, the yellow dots are a female, the breeding female that had the litter, and those are based on telemetry points from the ground in the air, on routine monitoring of that individual.

00:35:07.790 --> 00:35:09.279

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide, please.

00:35:11.600 --> 00:35:22.890

USFWS - Joe Madison: This is a female Red Wolf that was shown as the in the northern part of the area, and it again, it shows you her general use area. She has a pretty small home range from a red wolf standpoint

00:35:22.940 --> 00:35:26.660

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh, and it's again- it's based on prey availability.

00:35:26.890 --> 00:35:36.330

USFWS - Joe Madison: And she uses that same farm field and the wooded edges, and the early successional forested habitat that blinds those farm fields.

00:35:37.330 --> 00:35:38.770

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide, please.

00:35:40.570 --> 00:36:00.020

USFWS - Joe Madison: And this is an additional female adult, Red Wolf, and shows the type of area she's covering as well, and again it's tied to those the same type of habitat use and same general size of home range and territory that she's within, and she has the two fostered pups, and they all are active within that same

00:36:00.060 --> 00:36:07.490

USFWS - Joe Madison: same timeframe, and we often find them in close proximity together, but not always. But they're always within that same general territory.

00:36:08.800 --> 00:36:10.299

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide, please.

00:36:11.360 --> 00:36:18.179

USFWS - Joe Madison: Now I'm going to kind of loosely, chronologically go through what has occurred in 2022 from the winter until now.

00:36:18.690 --> 00:36:25.350

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh the kind of the starting point of all this was we held, we held a public meeting in February 1st, virtual public meeting,

00:36:25.660 --> 00:36:45.919

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh, very similar to what we're doing now, and in that meeting we talked about red wolf recovery in general, and our upcoming release plans, our coyote sterilization program that we have,

and Prey for the Pack which Luke will talk about in a little bit, and increasing community engagement, of which this is part of, and what we have

00:36:45.930 --> 00:36:58.709

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh boosted quite a bit since that public meeting, and there was announcement of a recommitment to the Red Wolf recovery program in general and specifically into the Eastern North Carolina-Eastern North Carolina red wolf population.

00:36:59.060 --> 00:37:00.520

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide, please.

00:37:04.370 --> 00:37:22.180

USFWS - Joe Madison: So we start off the process with uh what was going to happen over the winter in the spring by evaluating potential release areas within the National Wildlife Refuges of Eastern North Carolina, looking at areas that have no known current Red Wolf use. You know we didn't want to put red wolves, where there was existing territories or pairs.

00:37:22.190 --> 00:37:30.090

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, but also areas that had adequate prey base to support red wolves and habitat security for them to be able to safely raise their young.

00:37:30.490 --> 00:37:49.340

USFWS - Joe Madison: We worked with the management team of the SSP, the wolves under human care uh to discuss releases and individuals that were appropriate for release, and also worked with WRC during our collaboration meetings to discuss what our upcoming plans were, and to make sure we were all on the same page.

00:37:50.500 --> 00:37:55.899

USFWS - Joe Madison: The plan was to release nine red wolves with the hope of increasing the number of breeding pairs,

00:37:55.910 --> 00:38:11.710

USFWS - Joe Madison: and to try to reduce the causes of mortality, human causes in particular, like since, as I mentioned last year, the we had a high vehicle strike mortality. So we were going to try to address that, as well as the ongoing issue with gunshot mortality.

00:38:12.020 --> 00:38:22.859

USFWS - Joe Madison: So the initial plan was to release a group of five, a family group on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, which was comprised of two adults, two yearlings and a pup of the year,

00:38:22.900 --> 00:38:26.949

USFWS - Joe Madison: and to release two pairs in Alligator River in separate areas.

00:38:27.280 --> 00:38:44.460

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, the timing of the release would be between February and April, and that would be dependent on - when we decided to do the releases based on the numerous factors, including the individual Red Wolf behavior, the pair status of the wolves that were together, reproductive cycle, weather, and other factors.

00:38:45.460 --> 00:38:56.739

USFWS - Joe Madison: And we acknowledged that we were planning on pursuing additional pairs if the opportunity arose and uh definitely wanted to take advantage of pup fostering, if it was possible.

00:38:56.800 --> 00:38:57.919

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:39:02.750 --> 00:39:10.359

USFWS - Joe Madison: During the winter we constructed multiple acclimation pens on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and the Coastal Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

00:39:10.370 --> 00:39:35.749

USFWS - Joe Madison: We worked with Moye Fence Company, which did a really great job of constructing some very uh high security uh mobile fence panels that we were able to create some uh on the hard side acclimation pens, and those hard-sided ones are really just as much to keep bears out, and as they are to keep the wolves in, because bears are always an issue, even in the winter times, particularly when there's a food source inside the fencing.

00:39:36.460 --> 00:39:53.530

USFWS - Joe Madison: These animals that were placed in these acclimation pens received as little human interaction as possible during the months that they were in these acclimation pens. These acclimation pens were constructed in the areas that we thought could best support red wolves in the wild, and again, didn't have resident red wolves,

00:39:53.620 --> 00:40:11.420

USFWS - Joe Madison: unless we were trying to pair it with a Red Wolf from that territory, and they were fed natural prey items only. We also use soft sided pens and some locations which those bottom two pictures depict. It's- it's basically uh like deer fencing that's electrified on the lower half, and it's able to

00:40:11.450 --> 00:40:13.880

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh keep wolves inside.

00:40:13.950 --> 00:40:15.419

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide, please,

00:40:17.830 --> 00:40:25.610

USFWS - Joe Madison: And early February, during our cap - capture operations we caught a wild female on private land, where we were trapping with landowner permission.

00:40:25.620 --> 00:40:41.749

USFWS - Joe Madison: She was the last wild, last known adult, wild Red Wolf that had a black collar at that point. And so we- she was an opportunity to change that to an orange collar, but it was also an opportunity to try and pair her with a Red Wolf male, and she wasn't currently repaired with a male.

00:40:41.760 --> 00:40:51.959

USFWS - Joe Madison: So coordinating with again with WRC about what our intensions were, and with the management team for the red wolves under human care.

00:40:51.970 --> 00:41:04.780

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, we determined that we will bring in an additional male to try to pair with her in an acclimation pen within her territory, and that brought the number of planned releases within the Eastern North Carolina population area to the ten for this year.

00:41:04.940 --> 00:41:06.100

Next slide.

00:41:09.490 --> 00:41:27.299

USFWS - Joe Madison: Before release of any of these captive-born red wolves, they were all fitted with orange GPS VHF collars like you see there in the picture, and uh, one of the strategies to reduce vehicle

strike mortality was to place orange reflective material on, in different six different locations on the

00:41:27.310 --> 00:41:32.590

USFWS - Joe Madison: sides, in front and back of different parts of the radio collar to make it more visible at nighttime.

00:41:32.920 --> 00:41:41.169

USFWS - Joe Madison: And so, uh with the placement of that and that other female we got, like, I said, all known red wolves now have the orange collars.

00:41:41.230 --> 00:41:54.740

USFWS - Joe Madison: The pups are too small to be collared because they have, you know, we don't put a radio collar on an animal unless we - we don't want to exceed four percent of body weight with these radio collars. So we're not able to collar pups

00:41:54.750 --> 00:42:08.199

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh, so they're vulnerable to a mistaken identity, particularly with coyotes, because there's more overlap in the size we have talked about and talked with different folks about potentially some method of uh

00:42:08.210 --> 00:42:24.580

USFWS - Joe Madison: identifying pups of the red wolf. Perhaps some sort of expandable collar that could be tested. That's orange in color that doesn't have any sort of uh telemetry opportunities or anything on it, but just as an identifier. But where we've got a long way to go, and before we would do anything like that in the wild.

00:42:25.000 --> 00:42:26.200

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:42:28.810 --> 00:42:46.289

USFWS - Joe Madison: So I just want to emphasize that all red wolves will continue to be fitted with these bright orange collars, and with the reflective material, and that's to help the public distinguish them from coyotes, and an effort to both help with identification, but specifically to help reduce gunshot mortality from misidentification.

00:42:46.300 --> 00:43:01.889

USFWS - Joe Madison: And, uh, the reflectors will help with that too particularly in low light. That doesn't mean that every red wolf excuse me that doesn't mean that a canid without an orange collar

isn't a red wolf, but every red wolf that has been released or captured will have an orange collar identifying as such,

00:43:01.900 --> 00:43:12.020

USFWS - Joe Madison: and we will continue outreach such as this, and our efforts with hunters and materials and outreach programs, that kind of stuff to get the word out: the orange means red wolf,

00:43:13.090 --> 00:43:27.050

USFWS - Joe Madison: and just a reminder to folks that are out there on the landscape that red wolves are federally protected under ESA, and that killing or harming them is illegal, and that orange collar is one way that they are identified that they're protected under ESA.

00:43:27.100 --> 00:43:31.290

USFWS - Joe Madison: So look closely for an orange collar and if you see orange don't shoot.

00:43:32.140 --> 00:43:33.430

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:43:36.210 --> 00:43:55.550

USFWS - Joe Madison: As I mentioned, the vehicle strike mortalities were the largest cause of mortality in 2021 for those captive releases, and it's actually been the second leading cause of mortality for red wolves over the thirty-five-year life of the program. So uh, we were really wanting to reduce that and talking with folks about ways that we could reduce that.

00:43:55.560 --> 00:44:05.600

USFWS - Joe Madison: One way to do that is the reflective material which has been quite effective, and motorists mentioned to us numerous times that they saw

00:44:05.640 → 00:44:27.259

USFWS - Joe Madison: the orange reflected material, and we believe that led to a lower percentage of vehicle mortality this year. Um, it doesn't, didn't eliminate it, of course, but it's one tool that we found helps eliminate that. The other one is these highway signs that you see pictured here. We now have six of these mobile highway signs. They - they're pretty big signs, the sign are about seven feet by eleven feet.

00:44:27.270 --> 00:44:40.610

USFWS - Joe Madison: We have six of them between the ones that were purchased by the red wolf recovery program, as well as our partners in North Carolina Wildlife Federation and the red wolf that each purchase signs for us to use for revival purposes. These signs,

00:44:40.900 --> 00:44:50.419

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh, are placed along stretches of road that are in closest proximity to the release pens. Now these pens are not in close, you know they even get them as

00:44:50.430 --> 00:45:02.900

USFWS - Joe Madison: far away from roads as we possibly can. But we place these signs on both sides of the highway in closest proximity to where these releases would occur to alert motorists that it's a potential red wolf crossing

00:45:03.640 --> 00:45:12.530

USFWS - Joe Madison: and then we moved these signs after release when uh monitoring on a daily basis showed that red wolves were actively using an area around

00:45:12.580 --> 00:45:18.150

USFWS - Joe Madison: a road, whether it be wild red wolves, or the newly released captive-born red wolves.

00:45:18.920 --> 00:45:37.379

USFWS - Joe Madison: We also found, uh, that not only did it help with the motorists, but also help to our community engagement efforts, which has been a great side benefit quite honestly, because it alerted communities that there may be red wolves in that area, in areas that the folks might not otherwise think that red wolves were in that area. Or

00:45:37.390 --> 00:45:49.450

USFWS - Joe Madison: you don't think they were only in other areas, and it allowed us to put messages on there, on areas where we wanted to talk to landowners that had any potential questions or concerns. But we had um -

00:45:49.890 --> 00:46:05.429

USFWS - Joe Madison: but we had difficulty in contact with the input and find phone numbers of those types of things. So we were able to put a phone number on these signs in certain areas, and that increased our ability to engage with the public over time. So that's been a great side benefit of these signs.

00:46:05.800 --> 00:46:29.550

USFWS - Joe Madison: We're also working with multiple entities on ways to look at uh vehicles - reducing vehicle strike mortalities for red wolves and wildlife in general, and that includes the North Carolina Department of Transportation that we've worked really closely with over the last year. Uh and the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources who has been heavily invested in that particular

00:46:29.560 --> 00:46:33.190

USFWS - Joe Madison: aspect of red wolf recovery management, as well as researchers.

00:46:33.240 --> 00:46:39.040

USFWS - Joe Madison: Several NGOs that have been looking at ways to reduce vehicle strike mortality,

00:46:39.160 --> 00:46:46.499

USFWS - Joe Madison: and we continue to explore ways both short-term and long term to try to reduce that mortality factor.

00:46:47.680 --> 00:46:48.910

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:46:52.080 --> 00:47:11.599

USFWS - Joe Madison: We also, prior to release, we contacted all landowners in closest proximity to the release sites, to let them know that red wolves are going to be released. Um, and again, these weren't, you know, right up against private land or anything. But since we know wolves can travel long distances, we wanted to get the word out that these releases were occurring.

00:47:11.610 --> 00:47:21.029

USFWS - Joe Madison: We want to be open again and transparent about what we're doing and what, where we're doing it so that the folks, if they have questions or concerns, they can come to us.

00:47:21.170 --> 00:47:49.760

USFWS - Joe Madison: And in addition after the release of these red wolves, we contacted landowners anytime we knew that red wolves were using their land for any length of time if we found through monitoring, they were on their lands. Then we were calling that landowner to let them know and address any potential concerns, or just usually had regarding red wolves; and after that we, you know, in

addition to additional notifications, we encourage them to contact us any time for any questions or concerns that we could address regarding red wolves.

00:47:51.210 --> 00:47:52.390

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:47:54.820 --> 00:48:04.839

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh after the release, and at any time, we respond to all calls and texts, emails with questions, concerns and sightings and potential issues. We have the red wolf hotline,

00:48:04.850 --> 00:48:23.310

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh, which is, as Emily said, is we kind of revitalized that hotline. And, as I said last night it, you know it had become a bit of a lukewarm hotline at times, but now it is a hotline that is readily addressed and manned, and we get the messages in a really short timeframe,

00:48:23.320 --> 00:48:39.570

USFWS - Joe Madison: and we address those questions in the timeframe as needed, and we throughout the uh, spring and winter we address some 24/7, including several times we went out overnight to address concerns by landowners about wolves and activity.

00:48:39.700 --> 00:48:57.999

USFWS - Joe Madison: But this picture that I'm showing here, there was a red wolf remaining in close proximity to this farm. No depredations occurred on this farm, but they have livestock there, and they were concerned about the presence of this red wolf in close proximity. Uh, so we went out there, and we set up our Fish and Wildlife Service -

00:48:58.010 → 00:49:22.209

USFWS - Joe Madison: we have solar powered electric fencing that we get that we can use. We set that up around their livestock to give them peace of mind, and we work to alleviate their concerns, and uh work with that to move that wolf out of the area until he was no longer in the area, and then the fencing could be taken down. But it's just an example of ways that we were trying to be receptive and open, and working with landowners and others that had

00:49:22.220 --> 00:49:27.189

USFWS - Joe Madison: concerns or issues regarding red wolves, next slide.

00:49:29.810 --> 00:49:46.909

USFWS - Joe Madison: We also worked with several local, regional, and national media outlets this year to get the word out about red wolf recovery in general, and the revitalization of the program, but also to let folks know about the upcoming releases, so they would be as widely known as possible that our actions and what we were doing, and where we were doing them.

00:49:47.210 --> 00:49:48.319

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:49:51.690 --> 00:49:59.329

USFWS - Joe Madison: Now I'm going to talk about the releases themselves, and this is a picture of the breeding female from the central of Coastal Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

00:49:59.690 --> 00:50:00.830

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:50:03.010 --> 00:50:06.700

USFWS - Joe Madison: First, I wanted to, you know, there's sometimes mis-

00:50:06.780 --> 00:50:08.450

USFWS - Joe Madison: misinformation

00:50:08.790 --> 00:50:17.259

USFWS - Joe Madison: about how these releases go there. We don't stay for these releases. We want them to be as natural as possible

00:50:17.380 --> 00:50:29.190

USFWS - Joe Madison: under the circumstances. So we, while we set up a bunch of remote sensing cameras. Uh, we open the pen door, and then we leave. So there's nobody present when these red wolves come out of the pen.

00:50:29.210 --> 00:50:41.630

USFWS - Joe Madison: They could come out in two minutes or two days. That's entirely up to the - to the individual behavior of the red wolf, so that they're more likely, the only entire intention is for them to feel comfortable staying in that area where they are released.

00:50:42.080 --> 00:50:54.839

USFWS - Joe Madison: And then the release has occurred, like I said, based on the timing and the in the individual aspects of the pairs of being released. On February 8<sup>th</sup>, we released the red wolf pair on North Alligator River.

00:50:54.850 --> 00:51:05.190

USFWS - Joe Madison: On March 15<sup>th</sup> we released the red wolf pair on South Alligator River, and on March the 31<sup>st</sup>, we released that family group of five red wolves on central Coastal and Lakes that I told you about.

00:51:05.660 --> 00:51:06.850

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:51:08.700 --> 00:51:19.899

USFWS - Joe Madison: On April 4<sup>th</sup>, we released the wild female red wolf from the captive-born male that we had placed in an acclimation pen within her territory on east the eastern part of the Coastal Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

00:51:20.020 --> 00:51:37.470

USFWS - Joe Madison: And then, on June 6<sup>th</sup> we re-released the male that was originally released on North Alligator River. He got injured in the wild and we recaptured him, and after a period of time after surgery and recovery at the North Carolina State University School of Veterinary Medicine, where he recovered

00:51:37.480 --> 00:51:41.830

USFWS - Joe Madison: we re-released him back into the wild on South Alligator River.

00:51:43.190 --> 00:51:44.399

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:51:46.550 --> 00:51:50.400

USFWS - Joe Madison: These newly released red wolves were tracked on a daily basis.

00:51:50.540 --> 00:52:01.540

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, we had the GPS collar set upon their initial release to send a point - to take a point and send a point every day. But sometimes that point, even though it's a morning point

00:52:01.690 --> 00:52:15.949

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh sometimes we would not get that point to late afternoon, or even in the nighttime. So while that point was helpful in creating maps of where they had been, it wasn't helpful on a day-to-day management standpoint, necessarily. So, we were on the ground,

00:52:15.960 --> 00:52:26.870

USFWS - Joe Madison: tracking them from the ground the VHF portion of their collar a daily basis. Uh starting in the mornings and finding each of the ten released red wolves,

00:52:27.030 --> 00:52:35.010

USFWS - Joe Madison: and if they were not in good areas when they were found, and we would attempt to scare them out of those areas and haze them back into more natural settings.

00:52:35.220 --> 00:52:48.090

USFWS - Joe Madison: When the opportunities arose on national wildlife refuges, we provided supplemental food by way of natural prairie items like, such as roadkill, deer, and those types of things uh to help them with their transition to the wild.

00:52:49.210 --> 00:52:50.390

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:52:51.870 --> 00:53:00.939

USFWS - Joe Madison: In addition to tracking just the newly released red wolves, we also continue to track all wild red wolves as well multiple times a week,

00:53:01.000 --> 00:53:20.219

USFWS - Joe Madison: So that we know where they're at from the ground and from the air when possible, so we could get points and track their use over time and monitor the population, who's with who, and the health of the population, those types of things. We also routinely use remote sensing cameras. We have over forty remote sensing cameras now that we use throughout the

00:53:20.230 --> 00:53:29.289

USFWS - Joe Madison: population area, on national wildlife refuges, and on private land to landowner permission, or by land, on a request, for we have agreements to do so.

00:53:30.510 --> 00:53:39.099

USFWS - Joe Madison: In addition, we also conduct trapping during the cooler months from November through March, or sometimes a little earlier, if it's cold enough,

00:53:39.130 --> 00:53:56.800

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh where we can do it safely, and trapping is conducted to collar individual red wolves to be able to model the pair to form new breeding pairs. Uh, if we feel we need to move some around within the population area to sterilize coyotes. And

00:53:56.810 --> 00:54:00.149

USFWS - Joe Madison: again, just to be able to monitor the population. Next slide.

00:54:03.550 --> 00:54:18.559

USFWS - Joe Madison: The past trapping season, we captured twenty wild canids within the eastern North Carolina population area, and we also had four more canids that were transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service private trappers for genetic testing.

00:54:19.020 --> 00:54:29.059

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, and of those individuals we sterilized and collared and released an additional twelve coyotes under a WRC permit, allowing us to do so for coyotes.

00:54:29.170 --> 00:54:35.300

USFWS - Joe Madison: And so with those twelve additional ones, we now have twenty-four sterilized coyotes on the landscape.

00:54:35.970 --> 00:54:48.199

USFWS - Joe Madison: Coyote sterilization, is done again on national wildlife refuges and on private land with annual permission, and by request under agreements that Luke will speak to a bit in a minute.

00:54:48.780 --> 00:54:56.690

USFWS - Joe Madison: The sterilization is paid for by the Red Wolf Coalition, and it's performed by Dr. Ford and his staff at the Chowan Animal Hospital.

00:54:58.310 --> 00:54:59.500

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:55:00.970 --> 00:55:08.859

USFWS - Joe Madison: Coyote sterilization as a management tool was developed in the late 90s early 2000s by a group of scientists as part of an adaptive management strategy.

00:55:09.290 --> 00:55:27.709

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, and one, you know, one of the one of the things that, one of the reasons it was developed, within established red wolf territories - well established red wolf territories You have a lower amount of total canids, and it's made up of mostly red wolves. They don't, they won't necessarily completely exclude coyote. But there's a much

00:55:27.880 --> 00:55:39.960

USFWS - Joe Madison: much lower coyote population within a well-established renewal territory in areas where there are no red wolves, there's a much higher total density of canids made up of coyotes because they have much smaller home range sizes.

00:55:39.970 --> 00:55:49.839

USFWS - Joe Madison: They also, may have, you know, two, three, four home range sizes, a home ranges of coyotes within what would typically be a red wolf range.

00:55:49.960 --> 00:56:02.000

USFWS - Joe Madison: Coyotes also have a larger diversity of prey items, and including many bird species that go after, and a lot of that and higher prey needs as well, because of that higher numbers population

00:56:02.050 --> 00:56:03.630

USFWS - Joe Madison: of the red wolves.

00:56:03.830 --> 00:56:22.899

USFWS - Joe Madison: If you move a coyote from the landscape, it's quickly replaced by multiple coyotes. Typically, um, you know, even when we're doing our trapping, if we hold an animal for a week or more for it to be sterilized before it be released, we can see actively that that area begins to be filled in by other coyotes.

00:56:23.900 --> 00:56:42.540

USFWS - Joe Madison: However, if you - if you capture that coyote and you sterilize it, and you leave it hormonally intact, and re-release that coyote it will continue to hold and defend their territory. But of course they can't breed. So they have a lower population numbers

locally, typically, and they have lower prey needs because they don't have litters to feed.

00:56:43.900 --> 00:56:45.180

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:56:47.610 --> 00:56:52.069

USFWS - Joe Madison: Again, coyote sterilization is done at no cost to landowners,

00:56:52.250 --> 00:57:10.279

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh, and all sterilized coyotes are released back to their original capture site. We used to use black coyo- excuse me- use black collars on coyotes, but we've recently switched to using white collars like you see in the upper picture there, because it increases the visibility uh,

00:57:10.290 --> 00:57:19.829

USFWS - Joe Madison: over the black ones for landowners to be able to identify that the coyote they are seeing has been sterilized um and can be a benefit to be left on the landscape because it's not reproducing.

00:57:20.520 --> 00:57:38.490

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, research conducted within the Eastern North Carolina red wolf population area has shown that coyote sterilization is a successful management tool on the landscape, and it reduces hybridization with red wolves, and can, again lower the coyote population in local areas,

00:57:38.500 --> 00:57:46.169

USFWS - Joe Madison: and it can be of benefit to landowners and their lands. Management goals for many of the reasons I described, and it obviously benefits red wolf recovery.

00:57:48.010 --> 00:57:49.180

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:57:50.730 --> 00:57:57.189

USFWS - Joe Madison: Now, I'm going to talk about release updates and the challenges we faced with this year with the releases.

00:57:57.740 --> 00:57:58.879

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

00:58:01.550 --> 00:58:18.040

USFWS - Joe Madison: So this map is just one example of the movement after the release of captive - born red wolves. This was a pair that was released on South Alligator River. The blue line depicts the movements of the male red wolf after release, and the red line depicts the movements of the female red wolf.

00:58:18.050 --> 00:58:31.910

USFWS - Joe Madison: Of course these lines are straight lines in between points. They don't depict the actual movement of the animal, but it is a straight line between daily points in most cases on days that we, the point was able to receive by satellite

00:58:32.260 --> 00:58:33.879

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh for these animals.

00:58:34.040 --> 00:58:43.870

USFWS - Joe Madison: It's - one of the main challenges we had is that bonded pairs did not stay together after release, and that includes the family group here that had had two prior litters.

00:58:43.880 --> 00:58:59.329

USFWS - Joe Madison: And so that was at least somewhat unexpected. It happens, and it has happened in the past. But uh bonded pairs, typically ones that have had successful breeding uh, typically will stay together. But as you can see in that map that that pair did not stay together either.

00:58:59.540 --> 00:59:03.090

USFWS - Joe Madison: So that obviously was a was a significant challenge for us.

00:59:03.650 --> 00:59:07.849

USFWS - Joe Madison: Another significant challenge for these releases with it, some of the released red wolves,

00:59:07.910 --> 00:59:18.709

USFWS - Joe Madison: captive born released red wolves were way too complacent around developed areas which we don't typically see with wild red wolves that are very secretive and elusive, and tend to avoid

00:59:18.770 --> 00:59:30.200

USFWS - Joe Madison: more developed areas. But we had several red wolves that were released that were too complacent in human areas which led to concerns over their ability to survive in the wild.

00:59:30.760 --> 00:59:45.280

USFWS - Joe Madison: We also had some released red wolves that were actually transitioning well to the wild that still, uh, became mortalities, including some human-caused, or mostly human-caused and natural incidences, so that that ended up being a challenge as well.

00:59:46.690 --> 00:59:56.219

USFWS - Joe Madison: And we also, like I said before, we seem to have at least a slighting reduction in vehicle strike mortalities particularly from a percentages standpoint

00:59:56.230 --> 01:00:10.680

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh, and I think that it can be attributed to several factors, including the reflective material, the highway signs. And we did increase hazing on the highways and roadways when we have the opportunities.

01:00:10.720 --> 01:00:11.959

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:00:15.260 --> 01:00:27.619

USFWS - Joe Madison: Three red wolf captive born released wolves that were released were returned to captivity again, based on the complacency around developed areas and human leading concerns about their ability to survive in a while. So April 11<sup>th</sup>,

01:00:28.400 --> 01:00:44.969

USFWS - Joe Madison: the sub adult male that was released on Coastal Lakes, national wildlife refuge was recaptured and returned to captivity. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, the breeding male from the, that family group released on Coastal Lakes, was recaptured, returned to captivity, and then on June 22<sup>nd</sup> the male that had been re-released

01:00:44.980 --> 01:00:49.809

USFWS - Joe Madison: on South Alligator River was captured and placed back in captivity.

01:00:50.080 --> 01:00:51.309

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:00:53.180 --> 01:01:02.539

USFWS - Joe Madison: On May 12<sup>th</sup>, excuse me, on March 11<sup>th</sup> we received a mortality notification for a female that was released on North Alligator River.

01:01:02.890 --> 01:01:11.309

USFWS - Joe Madison: On April 20<sup>th</sup>, the yearling male that was released from the Coastal Lakes National Wildlife Refuge was reported as a mortality by gunshot

01:01:11.370 --> 01:01:15.929

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh in that county and close to Coastal Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

01:01:16.550 --> 01:01:17.720

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:01:19.970 --> 01:01:30.709

USFWS - Joe Madison: On April 15<sup>th</sup>, during routine, daily monitoring, we found the male that would have had been in the acclimation pen with the wild female red wolf. We found him in mortality mode,

01:01:30.850 --> 01:01:38.919

USFWS - Joe Madison: and his cause of death was gunshot to the spine which led to him collapsing in a muddy area, and he

01:01:39.140 --> 01:01:40.840

USFWS - Joe Madison: died of suffocation.

01:01:41.030 --> 01:01:55.529

USFWS - Joe Madison: There's currently a 25-thousand-dollar reward for information leading to the prosecution of those responsible for his mortality. And you can see the contact information for uh Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement, if you have the information regarding that.

01:01:55.760 --> 01:02:12.279

USFWS - Joe Madison: This particular male, like I said he was in the acclimation pen with the wild female um, and he was one of the ones that appeared to be transitioning well into the wild. He was staying away from paved roads. He was not entering developed areas, and he seemed to be acclimating well into the wild.

01:02:12.290 --> 01:02:19.370

USFWS - Joe Madison: But he wasn't given, you know, a large opportunity to be able to be a successful transition in the wild because of the gunshot mortality.

01:02:20.970 --> 01:02:22.189

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:02:24.890 --> 01:02:36.729

USFWS - Joe Madison: On May 8<sup>th</sup>, we received mortality notification for the breeding female from the Coastal Lakes National Wildlife. She's one of the ones that appears to be a vehicle strike mortality, but the necropsy is pending.

01:02:37.160 --> 01:02:42.760

USFWS - Joe Madison: On June, the 14<sup>th</sup> we received mortality notification for the sub-adult female from the family group,

01:02:43.140 --> 01:02:55.219

USFWS - Joe Madison: and on June 27<sup>th</sup> during routine daily monitoring, we found uh the male released on south Alligator River and mortality mode doing daily tracking.

01:02:55.510 --> 01:03:04.669

USFWS - Joe Madison: He's another one that was doing well of transitioning into the wild and had somewhat assimilated himself into the area where there was other wild red wolves.

01:03:04.860 --> 01:03:08.630

USFWS - Joe Madison: So he was definitely an unfortunate mortality, as they all were.

01:03:09.900 --> 01:03:11.129

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:03:13.490 --> 01:03:33.179

USFWS - Joe Madison: On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, we receive report of a red wolf along a highway, and when we went and tracked in that area, we tracked her to that in this particular red wolf in that area the female that was reduced on South Alligator River. We actually got a visual on her as well, and she did not appear to be injured or have any visual sign of injury.

01:03:33.190 --> 01:03:48.920

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, we tracked her for multiple hours throughout that day, trying to get a closer look and monitor her, and get a

sense, for if she had been hit by a vehicle or something like that, but she continued to move, uh, you know, ahead of us as we continued to track her.

01:03:48.930 --> 01:04:07.430

USFWS - Joe Madison: And then so once we broke off and left from that area, the next morning we received the GPS point, for her that same general area. But since that time, which was April 3<sup>rd</sup>, we have not received any GPS location or been able to find her with VHF, using aerial or ground telemetry searches multiple times,

01:04:07.460 --> 01:04:10.309

USFWS - Joe Madison: so her fate is currently unknown.

01:04:12.080 --> 01:04:13.260

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:04:16.370 --> 01:04:33.050

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, now on to at least a little more of the successful stuff that has happened during our capture operations. As I mentioned, we caught two of the pups that were fostered into a wild den in May of 2021. They are both females, that's them pictured here, and you can see,

01:04:33.060 --> 01:05:03.049

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh, you know that's them in the middle when we fostered them. So you can see what a difference not even the year made in the size, and particularly the leg length of these individuals. And so with survival of pups in the wild, regardless of whether they've been fostered or natural born is around fifty percent. So you know, if there is only two of the four out there, then, you know, we've pretty much been right with what the science shows; there is the potential that there's an additional foster out there, and we sometimes, on our remote sensing

01:05:03.060 --> 01:05:11.430

USFWS - Joe Madison: cameras and sightings of the private landowners in that area there is potentially an additional uncollared

01:05:11.460 --> 01:05:22.819

USFWS - Joe Madison: red wolf out there that was likely, could have been a foster. But we have not verified that we will be trapping in that area again in this winter, and uh, potentially, you will be able to determine if that's the case or not.

01:05:23.570 --> 01:05:34.949

USFWS - Joe Madison: And as I've mentioned, both of these fosters are currently operating within the territory of their mother, um, but they're quickly approaching dispersal age, when they may set on their own.

01:05:35.940 --> 01:05:37.080

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:05:40.250 --> 01:05:51.049

USFWS - Joe Madison: And again, as I've mentioned, we did confirm a wild red wolf litter on April 19<sup>th</sup> of this year. It's six pups - four females, two males, and it's the first, wild wolf litter born

01:05:51.060 --> 01:06:08.980

USFWS - Joe Madison: in Eastern North Carolina, since 2018, and it said it was as a result of a combination of management factors. So just translocating the male up from St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, and then the red wolves themselves doing what red wolves do by displacing the coyote bonding and then having a litter.

01:06:09.380 --> 01:06:15.919

USFWS - Joe Madison: As recently as early September we've confirmed that all six pups were still alive.

01:06:16.050 --> 01:06:32.869

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, it's a large litter for a first-time mom, and it's, and it's a pretty high survival rate. So that's good on both accounts. Um, when the pups are large enough to collar them, then we'll attempt to capture and put orange collars on them. Typically, we don't even attempt to collar

01:06:32.880 --> 01:06:47.589

USFWS - Joe Madison: red wolf pups until January of the year following, when they were born, again to, because we don't want to put a radio collar on a too small of an animal. So we will monitor these pups. And uh when we feel like they're large enough

01:06:47.600 --> 01:07:03.030

USFWS - Joe Madison: to collar, then we'll attempt to catch them. We probably, again, we won't even think about it until January, and the looks we've gotten these pups, they're getting to be where they're kind of close to the height of their parents, but they are a lot more lanky still than their parents.

01:07:04.180 --> 01:07:05.359

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:07:07.990 --> 01:07:21.979

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, when we estimate, you know, when the pups are about ten years old, based on our telemetry monitoring of the adult females when she's isolated in this in the same spot for multiple days on a road, and we know that she is likely whelped.

01:07:21.990 --> 01:07:41.680

USFWS - Joe Madison: And then we calculate about the ten-day old range, and we go into the dens, and we do cheek swabs for genetic analysis and general physical exam with the pups and the count and sex them, and that type of thing, and then we might microchip them. So that, uh subsequent captures or mortalities, we're able to identify the individual.

01:07:42.130 --> 01:07:43.300

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:07:47.160 --> 01:07:53.730

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh this, if you can play the video that it's just a really quick video of the pups when they were about a month and a half old.

01:07:57.400 --> 01:07:59.110

USFWS - Joe Madison: I don't know if it's playable,

01:08:15.340 --> 01:08:21.859

USFWS - Joe Madison: and that was back in May, so they're quite a bit larger now. And the question slide, there's a picture. Well, there's still.

01:08:22.080 --> 01:08:25.299

USFWS - Joe Madison: I don't know if I have a picture of what they look like now. But next slide.

01:08:34.729 --> 01:08:41.070

USFWS - Joe Madison: Now I'm going to start talking about our plans for this fall, winter and spring as part of phase three.

01:08:41.660 --> 01:08:52.180

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, and again we looked, as always, we looked really closely at the research and the past management actions over

the life of the program that have resulted in the highest likelihood of success.

01:08:52.220 --> 01:09:07.389

USFWS - Joe Madison: It doesn't, you know this is a difficult activity we're undertaking, and I think that's very well understood. But there are, you know, trends and management actions that have had a higher success than some others, and we try to focus on those, of course.

01:09:07.399 --> 01:09:12.609

USFWS - Joe Madison: And we've also incorporated lessons we've learned over the past two years, and what has occurred on the landscape,

01:09:12.729 --> 01:09:25.630

USFWS - Joe Madison: and the result of that, and the look and the collaboration and discussing with folks is the phase three release plan um, which really focuses on building on the existing space, existing pieces that we have on the landscape

01:09:25.640 --> 01:09:34.949

USFWS - Joe Madison: such as the yearlings and the wild females that are out there now, and those types of things, and what occurs on Saint Vincent's National Wildlife Refuge.

01:09:35.149 --> 01:09:41.800

USFWS - Joe Madison: As always, the focus is on fostering opportunities. We didn't end up having any pup fostering opportunities this past spring.

01:09:41.910 --> 01:09:50.960

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, we don't typically foster with first-time moms, just because they're still, you know, figuring out how to be a mom, and we don't want to stress them out. Additionally, and of course she had six

01:09:50.970 --> 01:10:08.539

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh pups, so we definitely didn't want to add any pups to her, and in addition, the timing has to match really well with when pups are born in captivity, the pups really need to be within two to three days of each other, age wise, for it to be successful, and that did not occur. So we're hoping this next spring,

01:10:08.550 --> 01:10:15.600

USFWS - Joe Madison: um the one red wolf female that is highly likely to have a litter as well as the others, that if they

01:10:15.750 --> 01:10:16.969

USFWS - Joe Madison: um,

01:10:17.170 --> 01:10:20.460

USFWS - Joe Madison: we might have some additional pup fostering opportunities.

01:10:23.000 --> 01:10:34.470

USFWS - Joe Madison: But fostering is the preferred method of increasing the genetic diversity and the numbers of the wild population just because of the, you know, the survival rates, and then being raised in the wild from a young age.

01:10:34.870 --> 01:10:35.990

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:10:39.260 --> 01:10:51.009

USFWS - Joe Madison: We're also trying to continue to increase the number of breeding pairs from Eastern North Carolina red wolf population, uh, just from a pure number standpoint, but also from to increase our opportunities for pup fostering. As we move forward

01:10:52.140 --> 01:11:04.530

USFWS - Joe Madison: one of the pieces of that is to translate - translocate a wild female from St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge to the Eastern North Carolina red wolf population. I'll talk a little bit more about her in a bit.

01:11:04.920 --> 01:11:21.239

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um. We also want to attempt to pair capture born red wolves with wild red wolves, which increases our likelihood of success. If those animals bond, that wild red wolf, if they're within their territory, they can help that that capture-born red wolf establish and kind of

01:11:21.250 --> 01:11:34.460

USFWS - Joe Madison: teach them the, you know, how to transition to the wild from a prey species standpoint, and uh, stay in our developed areas and those types of things, and it has led to great success in the past.

01:11:35.890 --> 01:11:44.759

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, the red wolves that are being selected for release have been individually evaluated and selected for the things that increase their likelihood success.

01:11:44.770 --> 01:11:58.950

USFWS - Joe Madison: And we've spent a great deal of time working with the caretakers and the folks of the that are, you know, the red wolves that are under human care to identify these individuals based on the criteria and the research and lessons learned and those types of things

01:11:58.960 --> 01:12:11.630

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh to try to identify these animals generally. They'll be in the two to four years old range, and from enclosures that are away from the public larger enclosures of possible fed natural play, natural prey,

01:12:12.300 --> 01:12:24.110

USFWS - Joe Madison: and their genetics work well with the genetics that is present in the wild population, but also, won't have a negative impact on the viability or the genetic makeup of the captive population.

01:12:24.430 --> 01:12:30.820

USFWS - Joe Madison: So we try to be very precise in the individual that we're choosing for a myriad of reasons. Next slide.

01:12:33.030 --> 01:12:52.249

USFWS - Joe Madison: I want to talk about St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge uh for a moment, because it's- it's a key piece of the Red Wolf Recovery Program. It's an island propagation site off the coast of Florida that was established, as an island propagation site, because it allows us to maintain a breeding pair of red wolves in the wild

01:12:52.260 --> 01:13:09.670

USFWS - Joe Madison: but in a somewhat controlled environment, since it's an island and their offspring are born the wild and raised in the wild. And so uh it - it provides a source of wild red wolves for us to capture when those you know get to around this dispersal age,

01:13:09.680 --> 01:13:25.209

USFWS - Joe Madison: capture him at St. Vincent National Wildlife, and then we can bring him up to eastern North Carolina to be released into

this population, and potentially paired with resident wild red wolves up here. But it's again, it's a key piece of this puzzle.

01:13:25.560 --> 01:13:26.790

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:13:29.020 --> 01:13:45.559

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh before this past winter, there was not, there was no longer a breeding pair on St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge because of natural mortalities of the individual. There, there were two female red wolves on the island that were born on the island and remained there.

01:13:45.570 --> 01:13:52.040

USFWS - Joe Madison: So last fall, we translocated a male from the captive population

01:13:52.080 --> 01:14:04.390

USFWS - Joe Madison: to Saint Vincent National Wildlife Refuge into an acclimation pen on the island. None of, neither of the females on the island were captured and placed in the pen with him, but similar to how I described up here in Alligator River,

01:14:04.400 --> 01:14:18.769

USFWS - Joe Madison: those females knew he was there, and they were visiting him through the pen, and then we timed his release at a good opportunity, based on the location of the females and prey, availability, and uh, and in proximity

01:14:18.830 --> 01:14:33.779

USFWS - Joe Madison: to the reproductive cycle, and once he was released, he was quickly, he quickly paired with one of those resident females, and is typically with that resident female. That picture is them together, uh, from February, shortly after his release

01:14:33.840 --> 01:14:45.919

USFWS - Joe Madison: and remote camera footage indicated that they had made it. There hasn't been any confirmation of red wolf pups on my island to date, but during capture operations this winter we hope to

01:14:46.560 --> 01:14:51.479

USFWS - Joe Madison: verify that, or see that, you know., see if that was the case, if there was a litter born,

01:14:51.720 --> 01:15:06.400

USFWS - Joe Madison: The younger female that is not paired with him is on the island, and she's the one that we have uh would like to capture and bring to North Carolina. We have attempted to capture her in the past, and she has eluded capture quite well, honestly

01:15:06.410 --> 01:15:13.860

USFWS - Joe Madison: but because she's an important piece of this winter's management actions, and the phase three recovery of the phase three release plan,

01:15:13.870 --> 01:15:27.120

USFWS - Joe Madison: we are going to increase and have concerted efforts on catching that female and try some different approaches, so that we are, uh have a higher likelihood of catching her and moving her up to eastern North Carolina this winter.

01:15:29.080 --> 01:15:30.720

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide, please.

01:15:31.980 --> 01:15:41.880

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, I also want to talk about another aspect of, that's occurred recently, and that is that the Red Wolf Coalition has developed a depredation compensation program.

01:15:41.970 --> 01:15:51.869

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, the program is administered and funded by the Red Wolf Coalition, and its intended purpose is to reimburse landowners for the loss of livestock due to red wolves.

01:15:52.100 --> 01:16:05.779

USFWS - Joe Madison: But as part of that, I wanted to remind folks or to tell folks that there's only been nine documented incidences of red wolf depredation over the thirty-five years since reintroduction into Eastern North Carolina. So it's an extremely rare occurrence.

01:16:05.860 --> 01:16:19.299

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, typically, when we, when we investigate or look into the depredations that are attributed to red wolves, we find that it's typically domestic dog or coyote, fox, bear, or raccoon, or other species

01:16:19.310 --> 01:16:38.800

USFWS - Joe Madison: besides red wolves. But because of that concern that we want to address with landowners and Red Wolf Coalition wanted to address the landowners that have concerns over the potential red

wolf depredation on livestock. They developed this program to be, to provide a valuable assurance to those landowners,

01:16:38.810 --> 01:16:47.940

USFWS - Joe Madison: um, regarding livestock depredation, and hopes that they will increase tolerance of red wolves and or garner more support regarding red wolves in Eastern North Carolina.

01:16:48.500 --> 01:16:59.550

USFWS - Joe Madison: It's important to note as part of that program, that if you have a suspected depredation from red wolves that you contact the Fish and the Wildlife Service within twenty-four hours of that occurrence.

01:17:00.910 --> 01:17:02.120

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:17:04.160 --> 01:17:08.170

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, now we talk about ways that you can help or get involved in the program.

01:17:08.280 --> 01:17:28.129

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, and one of them is, you know, to contact the Fish and Wildlife Service red wolf team directly, if you have any questions, concerns, or issues related to red wolves, and that you know, particularly if your landowner in the area that has these types of concerns or issues, so we that we can help address those and work with you um, to address those concerns and talk about things.

01:17:28.500 --> 01:17:46.199

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, at the end of the slide, I'll provide at the end of the program. Excuse me, I'll provide a slide that has our contact information of ways to get a hold of us both the red wolf hotline, but numbers for myself and Emily and Luke Wallace, as the private lands biologist on the program.

01:17:48.200 --> 01:18:06.680

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, we're always available to work with you and address your concerns. Um, people probably get sick of me saying this, but I'm - I'm going to be talking about red wolves 24/7, and my kids would love it if I was talking to somebody else about it, not them. So I- I'm happy to talk about issues, concerns, questions whenever we're able to, um, because that just

01:18:06.690 --> 01:18:12.169

USFWS - Joe Madison: that helps all of us to be directly engaged in addressing concerns and issues as we go through this.

01:18:12.780 --> 01:18:13.980

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:18:15.590 --> 01:18:34.040

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh and other ways you can help is not to shoot collared wolves, or collared canids. In general. It's illegal to shoot red wolves, as I've mentioned, and they have the orange collars. So that's a that's a giveaway that they're illegal to shoot and it's your benefit, particularly as a land manager, a landowner to not shoot a sterilized coyote

01:18:34.050 --> 01:18:38.500

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, they used to have black collars. They're not accepted now. We're strictly going to be

01:18:38.640 --> 01:18:50.169

USFWS - Joe Madison: putting white collars on sterilized coyotes, so you will be able to identify it as a sterilized community um over time. You know, they'll all be white collars, but it'll take some time to get there.

01:18:51.020 --> 01:19:08.559

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, also drive with caution in areas with red wolves whether you live here or you're visiting here. Be aware that red wolves do use roadways as do a lot of wildlife, and from a human health and safety standpoint, and a red wolf recovery standpoint, use caution as you're driving these roadways. There's a lot of narrow

01:19:08.570 --> 01:19:18.600

USFWS - Joe Madison: roadways that are lined with canals, so there's not a lot of room for wildlife to maneuver off of the roadway if they are there, so I just encourage you to drive with caution.

01:19:18.950 --> 01:19:28.950

USFWS - Joe Madison: And you can engage in recovery efforts such as attending public meetings such as this or providing comments on recovery plans such as Emily discussed in her portion of the presentation.

01:19:29.460 --> 01:19:30.700

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:19:32.240 --> 01:19:48.940

USFWS - Joe Madison: Another way you could get involved here locally is that we have the Red Wolf Center just outside Columbia, North Carolina, that's operated in the partnership with the North Carolina Wildlife Federation and the National Wildlife Refuge Association. It's - it was closed for a while, but now it's been back up for uh what,

01:19:48.950 --> 01:19:54.260

USFWS - Joe Madison: coming up on three and a half, maybe getting close to four years, that it's been back open. So we encourage you to

01:19:54.270 --> 01:20:12.519

USFWS - Joe Madison: take advantage of that facility. There are red wolves there in the public viewing pen, and there's also onsite programs at the Red Wolf Center as well as North Carolina Wildlife Federation has installed webcams in those enclosures, so that you're able to see the red wolves that are there. There was a red wolf pair in that pen.

01:20:12.530 --> 01:20:28.519

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, but the female that was there had a high genetic value from the captive population standpoint, so we have transferred her to a different facility, where she'll be part of a breeding pair, and we are actually going to be moving two four-year-old males into that pen

01:20:28.690 --> 01:20:35.609

USFWS - Joe Madison: within the next week, so they'll be there available for the webcam and for public viewing.

01:20:36.990 --> 01:20:45.329

USFWS - Joe Madison: And the red wolf center is one of many ways that we're gonna - that we use to continue to expand outreach and education opportunities with partners,

01:20:45.340 --> 01:21:00.000

USFWS - Joe Madison: um and conduct school programs, and they're available for community events. And they've set up tables at festival and those types of things. So it's just another way to get the message out about red wolves and what's going on with red wolves.

01:21:00.010 --> 01:21:13.470

USFWS - Joe Madison: And there's also opportunities to volunteer at the Red Wolf Center or on refuges in general, and one way you can find out about those opportunities is to contact Katerina Ramos, who manages the outreach and education portion of the Red Wolf Center.

01:21:13.480 --> 01:21:31.189

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, part of the red wolf centers also, we use for the biological aspect of red wolf management. But Katerina manages the front portion, which is an interpretation center, and the public viewing of the red wolves, and her contact information is on the screen.

01:21:32.680 --> 01:21:42.740

USFWS - Joe Madison: And then Luke is going to speak to the Prey for the Pack program, which is also one of our main ways that you can get involved and help with red wolf recovery.

01:21:43.230 --> 01:21:44.389

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:21:49.270 --> 01:22:03.659

USFWS - Luke Lories: Thanks, Joe. Hey, everybody. Yup, I'm going to talk about Prey for the Pack program. It's a voluntary habitat improvement program, a cost share program and partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which is me,

01:22:03.670 --> 01:22:10.440

USFWS - Luke Lories: the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, and the landowner who was interested in signing up for the program.

01:22:10.880 --> 01:22:26.189

USFWS - Luke Lories: The habitat we can choose to improve. We can tailor that towards landowner objectives. It's going to benefit the wolves, but also a lot of times landowners are interested in providing habitat for species, such as deer, quail,

01:22:26.200 --> 01:22:37.900

USFWS - Luke Lories: turkey, bears, rabbits - whatever the interest might be, we can look at focusing in on that, and it'll be a win-win for both the red wolves and also the landowner species objectives.

01:22:39.040 --> 01:22:50.019

USFWS - Luke Lories: We can cover up to eighty percent of the cost depending on the landowner participation. There's three different participation options that determine

01:22:50.030 --> 01:23:05.740

USFWS - Luke Lokies: the cost share that we cover, and those participation options are related to monitoring which include things like telemetry tracking, trail cameras, trapping, entity sterilization.

01:23:06.400 --> 01:23:15.960

USFWS - Luke Lokies: Some of the habitat improvement projects specifically can be things like mulching to create wildlife openings, prescribed burning when appropriate,

01:23:16.250 --> 01:23:20.680

USFWS - Luke Lokies: planting native warm season grasses and herbaceous vegetation.

01:23:22.350 --> 01:23:30.459

USFWS - Luke Lokies: Landowners in exchange will allow red wolves on their property, which is already their legal obligation.

01:23:31.330 --> 01:23:46.100

USFWS - Luke Lokies: And you know it's not just, I'm gonna come out there one time, we're going to sign you up, and then that's going to be the end of it. I'm gonna be very involved. I can come out there as many times until the landowner is comfortable. We can go look at the property.

01:23:46.110 --> 01:23:55.139

USFWS - Luke Lokies: We can talk through anything they want to talk through until they're comfortable to the point of signing up for the program, and if it turns out you're not interested,

01:23:55.150 --> 01:24:06.949

USFWS - Luke Lokies: that's totally fine. I'm here, I wanna help the community. Um, I love to talk habitat. So even if you decide not to sign up. I'm happy to help you with your property in any way I can. I live locally,

01:24:06.960 --> 01:24:25.669

USFWS - Luke Lokies: so if you're a landowner that's interested in the program, or if you know somebody who has property in the area that might be interested, please give me a call. Reach out. Talk to me anytime. We can get more details about the program, and I'd be happy to come out and walk the land with you. So thanks for being here tonight,

01:24:26.540 --> 01:24:29.580

USFWS - Luke Lokies: and I think it's back to Joe.

01:24:30.200 --> 01:24:32.999

USFWS - Joe Madison: Thanks, Luke. And as Luke

01:24:33.010 --> 01:25:02.799

USFWS - Joe Madison said this is great, but I just - I just want to emphasize that the key to this program is working closely with landowners to craft these agreements to their comfort level, and what their land management goals is. It's not about our goal, our goal to increase tolerance of red wolves. But these agreements are based on what you want to do with your property and your comfort level with what you want to do on your property and that, so I appreciate Luke. He does great work with landowners, and we hope to increase the use of this program as

01:25:02.810 --> 01:25:04.239

USFWS - Joe Madison: time goes on.

01:25:04.420 --> 01:25:07.479

USFWS - Luke Lokies: And I forgot one thing, Joe. I just wanted to-

01:25:07.490 --> 01:25:27.440

USFWS - Luke Lokies: I mentioned. I forgot to mention that privacy also. You know we're not going to release your information if you're a landowner. Um, unless you give us permission to, you know, tell other people that you're in the program, or anything like that. We're very serious about privacy. So no, no worries there, all right, that's all. I just forgot. Thanks, Joe.

01:25:27.470 --> 01:25:45.850

USFWS - Joe Madison: Yeah, that's good. I also want to add that we're developing sort of a subset of Prey for the Pack. If you don't have habitat you want to do work on, but you still want to kind of pledge your support for red wolves or allow their presence on your property, we're going to have, you know, you can still sign up for Prey for the Pack

01:25:45.860 --> 01:26:01.030

USFWS - Joe Madison: and become part of that, and you're not required to do habitat work, or receive funding or technical assistance to those types of things. So uh if that's something also that you're

interested in, then you could contact Luke, and we'll develop those as we go along as well.

01:26:01.880 --> 01:26:03.120

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:26:05.490 --> 01:26:19.590

USFWS - Joe Madison: So I just want to, I want to re-emphasize that we are extremely committed. Uh, we have a, it's a kind of a small team here in East North County, but we are- we live red wolves, and we want to make this work for you guys as well as for red wolves, so

01:26:19.600 --> 01:26:26.560

USFWS - Joe Madison: we are committed and available to work with you, to address your questions and your concerns and your issues. And this is, you know,

01:26:26.570 --> 01:26:42.899

USFWS - Joe Madison: four ways right here that you can get it. Actually, it's five cause its got a website, and we've got the red wolf hotline. We've got a red wolf email address that's checked daily, and you've got Emily's contact information as the program coordinator, mine is the program manager, and a biologist here in eastern North Carolina

01:26:42.910 --> 01:26:54.359

USFWS - Joe Madison: and Luke as the private lands biologist Prey for the Pack as well as a wildlife biologist, and as well, you know, and you can reach out to anyone your comfortable reading out with Morgan or Ryan, if that's who you've worked with,

01:26:54.370 --> 01:27:05.770

USFWS - Joe Madison: or others that you know are involved. We're here to work with you, to address your issues, to relay information as we can, and keep you engaged in and knowing what's going on.

01:27:05.850 --> 01:27:17.889

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, so I just want to re-emphasize one last time our availability and desire to work with you uh towards common ground and figuring out solutions to just using concerns with respect to red wolves.

01:27:18.470 --> 01:27:20.139

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, next slide.

01:27:21.490 --> 01:27:41.439

USFWS - Joe Madison: If you have questions after this evening's presentation that, they come up later, or you'll think of, you can send them to us at the at that email, or one of us directly to our email addresses, or uh and responses that we get that we don't or aren't able to address tonight, or we get after the fact that it'd be posted on the red wolf recovery program website that's listed there on the bottom.

01:27:44.990 --> 01:27:46.189

USFWS - Joe Madison: Next slide.

01:27:47.540 --> 01:27:51.529

USFWS - Joe Madison: And that, that's the pups, and I think that's from

01:27:51.930 --> 01:28:06.209

USFWS - Joe Madison: June or July. I'm not positive. But uh, that's another look at the pups, and you can see those long legs that are distinctive of red wolves, even at that age, and those massive ears that are seem too big for their head size at that point. But they'll grow into them.

01:28:06.620 --> 01:28:10.830

USFWS - Joe Madison: And with that I'll turn it back over to the facilitator.

01:28:13.320 --> 01:28:29.350

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe, and thank you everyone for that great information. My name is Megan Stone, with EMPSi and I'm going to be the moderator for the question-and-answer session tonight. We are going to now begin the Q and A portion of this meeting.

01:28:29.360 --> 01:28:43.509

EMPSi - Megan Stone: The intent of this question-and-answer session is to first respond to questions that were submitted by participants upon registration that are within the scope and ability of the Service to respond to tonight.

01:28:43.520 --> 01:28:54.979

EMPSi - Megan Stone: If you submitted a question upon registration, there's no need to resubmit that question tonight. We have a list of these questions, and we'll do our best to address them tonight.

01:28:55.160 --> 01:29:01.519

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Only questions within the scope and ability of the Service to answer will be responded to tonight.

01:29:01.670 --> 01:29:20.460

EMPSi - Megan Stone: After we've worked our way through as many of these pre-registered questions as we can. If we have time remaining, we will move on to questions received via the Zoom chat feature to allow participants to submit follow up questions to the Service's responses provided during the meeting tonight.

01:29:21.000 --> 01:29:33.190

EMPSi - Megan Stone: If you would like to ask a question via the chat, you can see the instructions on the screen for how to do that. If you're joining by phone, you can see instructions on the right of the screen,

01:29:33.340 --> 01:29:52.210

EMPSi - Megan Stone: and we will only be unmuting phone callers if and when they're unmuted during the question-and-answer session, as they're not able to access the chat feature. All other questions will be submitted electronically. So we'll leave these instructions here for anyone to look at.

01:29:52.220 --> 01:30:08.049

EMPSi - Megan Stone: With that, the Service had a lot of great information to deliver tonight and aim to be as thorough as possible. The Service is committing to - committed to getting these questions answered in a timely fashion, if not addressed tonight

01:30:08.100 --> 01:30:18.229

EMPSi - Megan Stone: and again for any questions that are not answered tonight, to the extent possible, the Service will follow up, and answers will be posted on program website.

01:30:18.240 --> 01:30:33.289

EMPSi - Megan Stone: With that, we'll go ahead and get started with our pre-registered questions. Again, after we've worked our way through as many of these questions as we can, if we have time remaining, we'll move to questions received via the chat feature.,

01:30:33.590 --> 01:30:37.279

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And with that we'll go to our first

01:30:37.600 --> 01:30:39.000

EMPSi - Megan Stone: question.

01:30:39.750 --> 01:30:58.820

EMPSi - Megan Stone: The first question was: The work so far for red wolves is amazing. It does take money, and my question is, where does it come from so far? And where will it come from in the future? Do you believe the red wolves will have this type of support in the next ten years? And we'll turn that over to Emily

01:30:58.920 --> 01:31:00.250

EMPSi - Megan Stone: to answer.

01:31:02.340 --> 01:31:14.660

USFWS - Emily Weller: Alright, thanks. Um, so the funding for red wolves comes from the Service, but then also numerous partners that have supported

01:31:14.670 --> 01:31:44.649

USFWS - Emily Weller: red wolf recovery actions, whether that's the purchase of you know the signs, or funding research and other actions. For the Service, we receive funding recovery dollars as congress appropriates to us, so then the red wolf funding comes from those recovery dollars. We have committed funds to red wolf recovery for many years decades now, and we anticipate

01:31:44.660 --> 01:31:46.589

USFWS - Emily Weller: that to continue

01:31:49.480 --> 01:32:08.290

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Great. Thank you so much, Emily. We'll move on to our next question. We had a number of questions that touched on the same theme. So those questions all were asking: Are you considering, or are there plans for reintroduction of red wolves in other locations,

01:32:08.300 --> 01:32:16.240

EMPSi - Megan Stone: such as Texas, Louisiana, Virginia, and Smokey? And again we'll go ahead and turn that over to Emily.

01:32:16.250 --> 01:32:46.169

USFWS - Emily Weller: So yeah, at this time we don't have additional population locations identified in the draft recovery plan. That includes the evaluation and identification of potential reintroduction sites as a high priority, and the recovery team is currently working on a population viability analysis, that will help characterize sites

that could potentially support viable red wolf populations. But at this time,

01:32:46.180 --> 01:32:49.259

USFWS - Emily Weller: no specific sites have been identified.

01:32:50.470 --> 01:33:07.490

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Great, Thank you, Emily. Our next two questions are going to go over to Joe, and those questions are: Is studying red wolves part of the North Carolina public school curriculum? If so, in what capacity? If not, could this be incorporated?

01:33:07.540 --> 01:33:13.079

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And the second question is, what can the average person do to help red wolves?

01:33:13.530 --> 01:33:15.640

EMPSi - Megan Stone: We'll give that one to Joe.

01:33:16.060 --> 01:33:33.190

USFWS - Joe Madison: Thanks. So for that first question, the red wolves are not currently part of the public-school core curriculum in North Carolina. However, there's numerous partners: Fish and Wildlife Service, NGOs, various other partners that do programs on red wolves in public schools

01:33:33.200 --> 01:33:39.339

USFWS - Joe Madison: particularly in Eastern North Carolina, and those and, we also provide materials to educators that are doing that.

01:33:39.400 --> 01:33:56.550

USFWS - Joe Madison: I also want to point out that the rental recovery program. Specifically, it works closely with the North Carolina and Museum of Natural Sciences, and specifically their teacher Educators associated with them who train North Carolina public school teachers uh on red wolves and other species.

01:33:56.560 --> 01:34:15.399

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um! And just this year the Fish and Wildlife Service through the North Carolina coastal program provided funding for that program to expand it, particularly the revenue portion of it. So more teachers to be trained on red wolves as part of their restore program and restore stands for rescuing endangered species through outreach restoration and education.

01:34:16.070 --> 01:34:27.579

USFWS - Joe Madison: So we're always looking for ways to expand our use of the classroom and in school kids in North Carolina, and this, particularly in a local area. And again, a lot of our partners are key in this

01:34:27.710 --> 01:34:35.480

USFWS - Joe Madison: this process. Uh, to the second question regarding what the average person can do. I spoke to some of that within the presentation

01:34:35.490 --> 01:34:50.489

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh, but there's also on our website at the very bottom, there's something called the uh how you can help America's Red Wolf document, and that goes into other ways you can do it, you know and some of the ways are to visit and support wild places and spaces where red wolves are found.

01:34:50.770 --> 01:35:06.870

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, and you can volunteer time- those types of things or visit one of the facilities within the uh captive population that house red wolves and support those and the Red Wolf Center is one way to do that. Becoming a Prey for the Pack partner is a big one.

01:35:06.880 --> 01:35:19.649

USFWS - Joe Madison: Report sightings or share your photos with others and us is one way that you can do that, and driving cautiously and carefully, is around here. So, um, if you want, you can check out that specific document on our website.

01:35:22.080 --> 01:35:24.200

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Perfect. Thank you.

01:35:24.330 --> 01:35:34.609

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Our next question is, what penalties are there for landowners or others who knowingly kill red wolves? And again, we'll turn that over to you, Joe.

01:35:35.740 --> 01:35:37.090

USFWS - Joe Madison: Awesome. Thank you.

01:35:38.290 --> 01:35:51.249

USFWS - Joe Madison: So, as I talked about, red wolves are a federally protected species under ESA and killing them, a red wolf, can result

in civil or criminal penalties that may include fines, or forfeiture any property used in the crime.

01:35:51.460 --> 01:36:10.180

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, the Service and it's law Enforcement Division work closely with local law enforcement to investigate suspected illegal take of red wolves. Additionally, the Service will be working, and we continue to work with the community and hunters and landowners to avoid accidental shootings, such as using orange collars and the education about

01:36:10.190 --> 01:36:24.200

USFWS - Joe Madison: orange collars and um, the reflective material and acknowledging with- or educating that, you know, young red wolves are not going to have those orange collars, not every you know red wolf will but attempting to put orange collars on all of them.

01:36:24.490 --> 01:36:42.620

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um and species identification hunter cards like I talk about. We pass those out to as many people as we can, and we provide those to the Hunter Education folks of the Wildlife Resources Commission to pass out at their programs as well, and all of our information will program to address that also.

01:36:45.150 --> 01:37:05.120

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you. Our next question. We have two questions that touch on the same theme. The first is, what are the prospects for using gene editing technology to infuse ghost alleles from Southwest Louisiana and/or Galveston? And the second question we have

01:37:05.130 --> 01:37:16.709

EMPSi - Megan Stone: that's similar is: are there any plans to use Galveston populations with bread, wolf, genetics to help Red Wolf genetic variation? And we'll turn that over to Emily.

01:37:17.330 --> 01:37:41.590

USFWS - Emily Weller: Great Thank you. At this time there are no plans for that. We're still learning about the cadence in Southwest Louisiana and Galveston. I mean any decision or approach to addressing genetic diversity long term um needs to really be well informed and carefully thought through. So not at this time.

01:37:43.640 --> 01:37:45.749

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Great, thank you, Emily.

01:37:46.870 --> 01:37:49.739

EMPSi - Megan Stone: All right. Our next question is:

01:37:49.850 --> 01:37:58.849

EMPSi - Megan Stone: hunting season precautions to protect Wolf- Do members of the Red Wolf recovery team participate in field work on the ground?

01:37:58.880 --> 01:38:04.049

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And we'll go to Joe for that first part, and then Emily for the second one.

01:38:04.910 --> 01:38:34.639

USFWS - Joe Madison: So similar to what I talked about a minute ago, um, you know the orange collars are a main aspect of that precautions regarding protecting red wolves during hunting season, and getting the word out that orange means red wolf, orange means don't shoot, that plays right into the orange use for hunters that they're required to wear when they're out hunting, so it should, you know, it should signal to them that it's not something that's legally shoot, and could cause issues and getting the word out, the hunter distribution cards. The hunter education programs

01:38:34.690 --> 01:38:51.369

USFWS - Joe Madison: and speaking with landowners when we know that a red wolf is using their property to let them know one is there during hunting season specifically, but we do that year-round. That just lets them know that there's one there, and to be extra vigilant when they're out hunting.

01:38:55.610 --> 01:39:09.989

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And Emily let me know if you need me to repeat that second part of the question. Um, yeah. Why don't we go ahead just in case perfect. Yeah. Do members of the red wolf recovery team participate in field work on the ground?

01:39:11.170 --> 01:39:33.009

USFWS - Emily Weller: Sure um. So we have a pretty diverse um recovery team, which is by design. Um. First, the members are um representatives of different organizations; state agencies, um, federal agencies, tribal representatives, county government,

01:39:33.130 --> 01:40:03.120

USFWS - Emily Weller: academia, zoo, and wildlife conservation centers, NGOs, and they represent different expertise. Some of them have expertise directly related to red wolf, and some of them don't. Um, but they, their expertise is very much relevant to red wolf recovery. So, for example, we have some folks on the team that specialize in wildlife diseases and um, our deer biologists folks that are have experience, or

01:40:03.130 --> 01:40:29.729

USFWS - Emily Weller: expertise in modeling. So they don't have that direct field work. Um! But then we do have several representatives on the team that have bearing past and present participation and involvement in uh red wolf management, research, and conservation efforts within the Eastern North Carolina population.

01:40:29.810 --> 01:40:44.810

USFWS - Emily Weller: And again the - the members of the recovery team are found all over the country. So being involved in field work, or even being able to go out to the refuge, um. It would be a pretty big trip for some of them.

01:40:48.360 --> 01:40:50.750

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Perfect. Thank you, guys.

01:40:51.050 --> 01:41:05.399

EMPSi - Megan Stone: All right, our next question, which Joe got to a little bit in the presentation is how many red wolves have been released, how many are still alive, and are there any leads on the Red Wolf who was shot and died

01:41:06.070 --> 01:41:08.230

EMPSi - Megan Stone: and we'll turn that over to Joe.

01:41:08.500 --> 01:41:30.209

USFWS - Joe Madison: Yeah, so, and I'm not sure, based on that question, the timeframe that they're intending to cover with that question, because, you know I can. There's a myriad of questions but on the red wolf recovery program website there's a table that shows the complete history, over the thirty-five years of the program of all the releases that have occurred in Eastern North Carolina

01:41:30.220 --> 01:41:49.829

USFWS - Joe Madison: whether those be captive-born adult releases or pup fostering, or the translocation of red wolves from other areas to Eastern North Carolina. So that is available on the website. Um, I

suspect that what the question is referring to is the number of adults released over the past couple of years

01:41:49.850 --> 01:41:53.570

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, some of the specifics I talked about in tonight's presentation.

01:41:53.840 --> 01:42:00.260

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, but as a general summary there have been twenty red wolves released over the last two years, either from

01:42:00.410 --> 01:42:13.280

USFWS - Joe Madison: captivity or pup fostering or translocated. And of those uh, you know, based on the mortalities that I indicated in the- three of those have been put back into captivity, and three of those at a minimum are out on the landscape.

01:42:13.370 --> 01:42:32.869

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, but those three are key pieces, uh, because one of those three is the one that fostered that first litter of pups. So that's a key part of what we're doing and building the population, and we suspect that that that pair will have subsequent litters. So they're going to be a key part in building this, this the population back up.

01:42:32.880 --> 01:42:45.249

USFWS - Joe Madison: And also two of them are those fostered females. So they were, they're extremely high, uh highly valuable key pieces of this whole thing as pieces to help build to get to additional-

01:42:45.440 --> 01:43:03.139

USFWS - Joe Madison: additional breeding, breeding pairs on the landscape. So um, you know, was the level successful we wanted to know, it definitely wasn't, or we incorporate lessons learned and continue to focus on ways to be successful as we move forward and adapting to how we're moving forward.

01:43:03.150 --> 01:43:12.520

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh, absolutely, and it's just going to- It's a difficult process, but it at this point you know it really is the only way that can be done, and it's how it was done originally.

01:43:15.340 --> 01:43:17.349

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Perfect. Thank you

01:43:18.890 --> 01:43:30.520

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Our next question is, are there still coyotes at Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. If so, will you be removing them? And again, we'll turn that over to Joe.

01:43:31.580 --> 01:43:43.519

USFWS - Joe Madison: Yeah. So first I want to clarify that, you know, because there, there's a lot of -there's a common misconception sometimes that red wolves are only on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. It comes up quite a bit. Actually came up last night, comes up frequently.

01:43:43.530 --> 01:43:56.499

USFWS - Joe Madison: So while that was the original reintroduction site, in 1987, red wolves, as I showed on the maps, or over the five-county area that it's designated as the eastern North Carolina remote population. So

01:43:56.510 --> 01:44:06.539

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh specifically to answer that question, yes, there are coyotes on Alligator River National Wildlife, as well as coyotes throughout the Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf population.

01:44:06.550 --> 01:44:22.859

USFWS - Joe Madison: However, um in areas where there is a well-established red wolf territory pair, and now pups, the number of coyotes is much lower and historically, when the red wolf population was larger anywhere, there was a well established

01:44:22.870 --> 01:44:29.579

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh red wolf pair carry numbers were substantially lower, and that that plays out throughout the research

01:44:29.770 --> 01:44:33.519

USFWS - Joe Madison: and, as I mentioned when I was talking about coyote sterilization

01:44:33.570 --> 01:44:43.999

USFWS - Joe Madison: uh any coyotes that we capture on Alligator River, or Coastal Lakes, or private land with landowner permission that coyote will be sterilized and re-released to the original capture location.

01:44:47.050 --> 01:44:48.980

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you.

01:44:49.100 --> 01:44:50.340

EMPSi - Megan Stone: All right.

01:44:50.390 --> 01:45:03.329

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Our next pre-registered question is are there future protocols in place to limit releasing wolves - used to humans-used to humans. Sorry about that. And again, that's over to Joe.

01:45:03.890 --> 01:45:14.030

USFWS - Joe Madison: Yeah. And I talked about this a little bit, and I'll just kind of reiterate that the Service works collaboratively with the folks that manage the population of red wolves under human care.

01:45:14.110 → 01:45:32.600

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um, and use the criteria that some research and lessons learned that that gives you the um highest likelihood of success with the individuals you choose for release, um and those criteria are things such as the age of the individuals being off, exhibit

01:45:32.610 --> 01:45:46.960

USFWS - Joe Madison: fed natural prey, genetic relatedness to the wild population, and not having a negative impact on the viability or genetic makeup of the captive population. So um

01:45:47.190 --> 01:46:00.469

USFWS - Joe Madison: it - a lot of thought goes into what individuals will be selected, and lessons learned plays a big part in that, and using those specific criteria that research has shown give us the highest likelihood of success.

01:46:00.540 --> 01:46:09.430

USFWS - Joe Madison: The criteria, and the research, and all those are always being reviewed and improved upon, and we will continue to do that as we- as we move forward as well.

01:46:11.210 --> 01:46:20.749

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Perfect. Thank you. We'll move on to our last pre-registered question before we move over to questions submitted via the chat.

01:46:20.970 --> 01:46:30.569

EMPSi - Megan Stone: So that question is, how will the PVA differ from the site suitability analyses that have been done? And we'll turn that over to Emily.

01:46:37.840 --> 01:46:48.939

USFWS - Emily Weller: There now, I think I'm unmuted. Um. So the PVA that the recovery team is currently working on will not analyze specific sites.

01:46:48.950 --> 01:47:18.260

USFWS - Emily Weller: Um, it will provide insight into population characteristics, the biological, demographic, genetic characteristics needed for population viability. A range of potential population sizes and annual growth rates that could be expected to reach viability, and it will help identify sites that could potentially support a viable red wolf population.

01:47:20.490 --> 01:47:39.950

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Great. Thank you. All right, now we'll move into our questions that are coming in through the chat. We did have a lot of questions that were duplicates of some of those pre-registered questions. Um. So we'll move on from those, and our next question is,

01:47:39.960 --> 01:47:54.119

EMPSi - Megan Stone: if more red wolves are turned loose the Pocosin refuge, what can be done to keep them away from homes on Lake Phelps. In the earlier release this year we had several stay around the homes on the lake.

01:47:54.450 --> 01:47:58.039

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And we'll go ahead and turn this over to Joe.

01:48:01.290 --> 01:48:07.319

USFWS - Joe Madison: So I've largely addressed this already, and a big part of that is

01:48:08.030 --> 01:48:16.129

USFWS - Joe Madison: the selection of the animals that will be released, and the criteria that will be used to select those animals.

01:48:16.150 --> 01:48:30.219

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um. We worked extensively with the landowners along that that the area that they're talking about, and we will - we have them extensively, and we will continue to do that and increase that as needed,

01:48:30.230 --> 01:48:51.650

USFWS - Joe Madison: and work with those landowners. That was one of the areas where we had difficulty getting in touch with all of the landowners. So we put the sign up to have my cell phone number, so people could contact me directly, so we could increase our awareness. And, you know, monitoring that we were already doing there on a daily basis, and be uh directly receptive to uh work with those folks.

01:48:51.670 --> 01:48:54.089

USFWS - Joe Madison: Um so but there are -.

01:48:54.860 --> 01:49:01.460

USFWS - Joe Madison: I guess we've largely answered it with it's the selection of the animals that we're going to release, and how we're going to manage them after release.

01:49:03.830 --> 01:49:05.919

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Perfect. Thank you

01:49:06.770 --> 01:49:09.929

EMPSi - Megan Stone: All right. We'll move to our next question

01:49:10.390 --> 01:49:29.049

EMPSi - Megan Stone: With community relationships and educational initiatives being one of the priorities of the Red Wolf recovery program, what are some of the challenges you are facing within the community pertaining to support of red wolves on the landscape? And we'll go to Joe for that one uh sorry, Joe,

01:49:37.370 --> 01:49:44.550

USFWS - Joe Madison: So, sorry I'm trying to scroll to the right question. I was doing too much talking.

01:49:45.020 --> 01:49:46.360

USFWS - Joe Madison: Uh,

01:49:46.490 --> 01:49:48.040

USFWS - Joe Madison: so you know,

01:49:48.190 --> 01:50:01.969

USFWS - Joe Madison: it's working with the community. It's building relationships and trust for the community. There's a myriad of folks that we're working with, and they don't all have the same issues and

concerns regarding red wolves and the management of red wolves on the landscape.

01:50:01.980 --> 01:50:18.600

USFWS - Joe Madison: You know, um, oftentimes the perception is that people don't like red wolves, but it may not be that they don't like red wolves. It may not. It may be that over the course of the history of the program they didn't, they weren't comfortable with how the Fish and Wildlife Service was or wasn't engaging with those individuals.

01:50:18.610 --> 01:50:48.209

USFWS - Joe Madison: Meetings like tonight, and these, like last night, are key to trying to work together on specific issues, and how they affect these landowners. Oftentimes it's landowners feel like their rights are, you know, being infringed upon because there's a red wolf on their property, uh, and they're worried about, you know, concerns about what what's going to happen with the red wolf on their property. So it's about, you know, building those relationships and working with those folks, and making sure that we have a common understanding

01:50:48.310 --> 01:51:09.969

USFWS - Joe Madison: of the issues and concerns, so that we can address those as we move forward, and we hope that that being transparent and talking to folks about red wolves what - where red wolves are and what they're doing, and what our management activities are, and making ourselves available and actively reaching out to these landowners that we can help get past some of those hurdles

01:51:09.980 --> 01:51:20.549

USFWS - Joe Madison: And come to a place where, you know, red wolves are more tolerated. Um, and that's, you know, that's what we're striving for with all these efforts.

01:51:20.560 --> 01:51:50.110

USFWS - Joe Madison: It's not a one size fits all. Pray for the Pack is going to fit well with some landowners, or it may not be what some landowners- what they see as a way to make them comfortable. It may be being able to show that red wolves are, you know, can have an economic benefit to their community. It may be something entirely different. We talked about this a little bit last night. Um, you know, the question was raised to pay for presence was one of the things that was talked about and based on a specific, you know, surveys of the landowners in Eastern North Carolina

01:51:50.120 --> 01:52:13.290

USFWS - Joe Madison: Prey for the Pack didn't show up as one of the things that that many landowners' thought was a way to garner their support or tolerance of red wolves. So it's not something we've extensively explored, but we're always open to new ideas and ways to actively engage with the community to work towards a better understanding and a commonality, and our goals, and try to reach each other's goals as we move forward.

01:52:15.110 --> 01:52:17.190

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Perfect. Thank you, Joe.

01:52:17.510 --> 01:52:21.909

EMPSi - Megan Stone: All right. Our next question is,

01:52:22.440 --> 01:52:30.460

EMPSi - Megan Stone: has there been any consideration to creating wildlife crossings like what has been done for the Florida panther?

01:52:30.700 --> 01:52:34.449

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And again we'll move that question over to Joe,

01:52:42.510 --> 01:52:45.329

USFWS - Joe Madison: The short answer is yes.

01:52:45.340 --> 01:53:15.319

USFWS - Joe Madison: A lot of discussions are being had regarding vehicle strikes, as I mentioned in, and the presentation, with a lot of different entities and wildlife crossings are definitely one of the potential solutions. Of course, I think it's recognized that wildlife crossings are extremely expensive, and a long-term potential solution. And there's challenges to that based on the location of where the majority of uh of red wolf fatal strikes that happen. There's a stretch of highway sixty-four that goes along

01:53:15.330 --> 01:53:33.240

USFWS - Joe Madison: Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge that over the last thirty-five years has been one of the hotspots of red wolf vehicle strike mortality. That's a very narrow one lane road each way, and there's canals on you on one side or the other, or both in some cases.

01:53:33.250 --> 01:53:40.160

USFWS - Joe Madison: So it's a difficult stretch to even think about wildlife underpasses or overpasses,

01:53:40.170 --> 01:53:53.969

USFWS - Joe Madison: but that is being explored, and the infrastructure money, um, you know, is a potential opportunity to expand the use of wildlife traffic crossings. I will say

01:53:53.980 --> 01:54:06.490

USFWS - Joe Madison: as I mentioned that the North Carolina DOT has been great to work with over the course of last year. We talk about these issues, and with the assistance of the North Carolina Department of natural culture, resources.

01:54:06.500 --> 01:54:24.669

USFWS - Joe Madison: And a lot of folks, NGOs, you know, some on the call tonight are working closely on this effort as well. And there's existing research that has occurred here in Eastern North Carolina along that stretch identify potential crossing areas. But there's also ongoing research.

01:54:24.680 --> 01:54:36.930

USFWS - Joe Madison: There's uh researchers at different institutions that are working on ways to reduce vehicle strike mortality. It's not just by underpasses, and we've also Fish and Wildlife Service has contracted

01:54:36.940 --> 01:55:05.630

USFWS - Joe Madison: an organization that has done a road use ecology studies for wildlife throughout the United States. They're actually actively working on a study with red wolf road ecology. They're analyzing the data right now. They'll be here in December and uh part of what the recommendations that come out of that will be, you know, for these areas is crossings. What will ultimately be, you know, the best, or a combination of factors or those types of things. So

01:55:05.640 --> 01:55:22.480

USFWS - Joe Madison: um, I guess the clean answer is that is one of the many ways we are. We - things we are looking at now building wildlife crossings is outside the control direct control of Fish and Wildlife Service. But it is one of the many uh opportunities that we are looking into as ways to reduce vehicle strike mortality.

01:55:25.250 --> 01:55:27.339

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Perfect. Thank you, Joe.

01:55:27.350 --> 01:55:47.689

EMPSi - Megan Stone: It looks like we've reached the conclusion of the questions coming into the chat that are not duplicates, are in within the scope of this call, and the Fish and Wildlife Service is able to answer tonight, and we are also almost at our end time for this meeting.

01:55:47.700 --> 01:56:00.520

EMPSi - Megan Stone: So again, we do want to remind everyone that there was a lot of information to present tonight in an effort to be as thorough as possible, but the Service is committed to getting your questions answered.

01:56:00.530 --> 01:56:20.269

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Uh if they weren't addressed tonight. So for any questions that were not addressed tonight to the extent possible, the Service will follow up and answer, and answers will be posted on the website, and we can put that in the chat as well. So with that I think

01:56:20.290 --> 01:56:26.879

EMPSi - Megan Stone: we are about ready to turn it over to John Tirpak for some closing remarks,

01:56:28.470 --> 01:56:33.240

EMPSi - Megan Stone: so I'll go ahead, and we can go to the next slide.

01:56:35.810 --> 01:56:38.320

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And John? Perfect.

01:56:39.130 --> 01:56:43.329

USFWS - John Tirpak: Perfect.

01:56:43.440 --> 01:56:48.740

USFWS - John Tirpak: Well, thank you, everybody, and thank you, Luke, Joe and Emily and the entire red wolf team.

01:56:48.840 --> 01:56:53.060

USFWS - John Tirpak: Your work along with that of so many on this call over the past years

01:56:53.180 --> 01:56:59.480

USFWS - John Tirpak reflects a really impressive dedication to America's Red Wolf and is clearly making a difference to the species.

01:57:00.070 --> 01:57:02.750

USFWS - John Tirpak: We hope you found this meeting tonight informative,

01:57:02.810 --> 01:57:11.440

USFWS - John Tirpak: and know that we plan to continue these meetings regularly, to keep you aware of what is happening with our recovery efforts and provide additional opportunities for engagement.

01:57:11.940 --> 01:57:20.420

USFWS - John Tirpak: Openness, honesty, inclusion, and transparency are critical to the revitalization of the Red Wolf recovery program.

01:57:20.930 --> 01:57:28.609

USFWS - John Tirpak: Along that line, and as a reminder, we will be posting this presentation, including the transcript and recording on our website

01:57:28.960 --> 01:57:37.970

USFWS - John Tirpak: to the extent that we can. We will also be posting answers to the questions previously submitted as well as those submitted in the chat, many which we do not have time to cover tonight.

01:57:38.640 --> 01:57:44.570

USFWS - John Tirpak: Lastly, thank you to everyone who participated in our public information meetings both tonight and last night.

01:57:44.920 --> 01:57:54.919

USFWS - John Tirpak: And, as you can see, we have a lot going on, and we need you to be involved in shaping and implementing our shared and collective efforts to recover America's Red Wolves.

01:57:55.400 --> 01:57:59.820

USFWS - John Tirpak: As Joe said. We may be busy, but we are never too busy to talk with you.

01:58:00.260 --> 01:58:03.320

USFWS - John Tirpak: Thanks again, everyone, and have a great night.