

USFWS Virtual Public Meeting for the Red Wolf Program

Virtual Public Meeting Transcript

May 10, 2023, 6:00-8:00 PM Eastern Time

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Hello, everyone! I'd like to welcome you all to the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Virtual Public Information Meeting for the Red Wolf recovery program updates.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: We're going to give folks a few minutes here to join the meeting, and then we'll begin the PowerPoint presentation shortly, so please stay tuned.

00:00:23.150 --> 00:00:34.830

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 you are using the zoom web portal or zoom app on your computer.

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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 Webinar. So please stay tuned, and we'll start the presentation shortly.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Again, I do want to know that closed captioning is available by selecting the 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: Hello, everyone, 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.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: My name is Megan Stone with Environmental Management and Planning Solutions, Inc., a contractor for the US Fish and Wildlife Service and I'm going to be one of your meeting facilitators tonight.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Additionally, I have several members of the US Fish and Wildlife Service with me on the meeting today, who will be introduced in a moment.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: So, on the screen you can see our expected agenda for the evening.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: I'll first go over some brief ground rules for today's meeting.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: The US Fish and Wildlife Service will provide a PowerPoint presentation on the Red Wolf management program updates.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Then the US Fish and Wildlife Service will hold a question-and-answer session to respond to participants questions. The US Fish and Wildlife Service will then provide closing remarks, and we'll close out the meeting around 8 pm Eastern time.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Next slide, please. 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

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: and a recording will be posted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service website. Second, your microphones and videos will be turned off for the duration of the meeting tonight. We will unmute you only if needed, during the question-and-answer session.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: Questions will be addressed during the question-and-answer session after the PowerPoint presentation.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: As of right now, we're going to first go through our list of questions that were submitted upon registration that are within the scope and ability of the US Fish and Wildlife Service to respond to at this time.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: If we have time remaining on 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: We will do our best to address the questions in the order they come in

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: to allow everyone an opportunity to voice their questions tonight. If you would like to ask a question at any point, you can type your question in the zoom chat feature at the bottom of your Zoom screen.

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EMPSi - Megan Stone: So with that, I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to John Tirpak, who is the deputy Assistant Regional Director and he's going to do some introductions.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: Alright. Thank you, Megan, and good evening, everybody.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: My name is John Tirpak. I'm the Deputy Assistant Regional Director for Ecological Services here in the southeast region.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: On the behalf of the entire US Fish and Wildlife Service, I welcome you to this virtual public information meeting on Red Wolf recovery.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: It's exciting to see so many people online. I know at last count, we had more than 200 folks that had registered and we already have more than 100 online here,

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John Tirpak - USFWS: with representation from not only around the country, but even around the world as a number of international participants have joined us and so welcome all.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: Today we'll talk about some recent developments in the Red Wolf program and some of the work ahead.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: What we've achieved to date, and what we may realize in the future, comes not only from the hard work of the team that you will hear from tonight,

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John Tirpak - USFWS: but also from many of you that have joined us online that have directly and indirectly supported these efforts.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: Notably, I hope we all recognize the many private landowners in eastern North Carolina,

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John Tirpak - USFWS: many of whom are hosting red wolves on their lands, despite never asking for them.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: If not for the tolerance and contributions,

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John Tirpak - USFWS: red wolves would not have a place to be red wolves, and recovery would not be possible. So thank you to you all.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: Before I turn it over to Emily and team, I just want to remind everybody that

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John Tirpak - USFWS: the recovery of a species, particularly a large carnivore, is a long game. I'm encouraged by recent developments, but that is tempered with the knowledge that there will be setbacks.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: But know this. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is in it for the long haul

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John Tirpak - USFWS: and we want and need you to be there with us.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: Again, I appreciate the interest of everyone in Red Wolf recovery as evidenced by the turnout tonight.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: But I also recognize that everyone includes many different perspectives. Regardless of your opinion, we must hear it. For only by working together can we collectively realize success.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: With that, let's start by introducing the Red Wolf recovery program team.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: Next slide.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: First, we have Emily Weller, our Red Wolf recovery program Coordinator. Actually not on the slide there. But, Emily, you could put your camera on, kind of give a wave to everybody.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: There you go. We also have Joe Madison, the North Carolina program manager for the Red Wolf program.

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John Tirpak - USFWS: We have Ryan Nordson and Morgan Lewis, both wildlife biologists with the Red Wolf recovery program

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John Tirpak - USFWS: and Luke Lokies, our private lands biologist. And with that Emily, I'll turn it over to you to get us all started.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Thank you, John.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Good evening, everybody. I'm happy to be here with you this evening. I thought that I would just start out

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Emily Weller - USFWS: this presentation with some information on the recovery program as a whole, the broad Red Wolf recovery program, before I pass it on to Joe, who will cover what's been going on in North Carolina.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Let's see, did we- Yeah, you're on the right side. Thank you.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: When we were putting this presentation together, we really structured it around the questions that we get frequently, whether that's on the ground in meetings,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: media questions, and then, of course, the questions that were submitted in preparation for the in person meeting last night, and this meeting tonight.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: So to get started.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: The mission of the Red Wolf recovery program is to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance the endangered Red Wolf.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: The key words there really are work with others. The Service is committed, like John said, to recovering the Red Wolf, and we're committed to working collaboratively to get there.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: It's the only way to be successful. We want to move beyond the litigation and establish a broader connection to the community and in the needs of the community, and that's not just in North Carolina, but anywhere Red Wolf populations will be.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: So, the key components of the Red Wolf Recovery program are done so under this umbrella of collaborative conservation, and those 4 key components when working together, give the Red Wolf the best chance of recovery.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Those components are the captive population, wild populations, communications, and research.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: And then I added, under this umbrella the recovery plan as it touches on each of these areas. It's a collaborative effort, and it's a product that we currently have in the works.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Next slide, please.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: So as you may know, in 2021, we convened a new recovery team comprised of 51 members that includes representatives, some 7- from 7 State wildlife agencies, including the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: researchers, private citizens, wildlife, biologists, natural resource managers, zoo biologists and others. And that team is tasked with updating the Red Wolf recovery plan.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Just in the interest of time, I'll go through the general strategy, the recovery strategy that's outlined in the recovery plan. For all the details, you can obtain a copy of that draft recovery plan and on a couple of the Services websites, or you can request it by mail or email.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: The first part of the strategy is to expand distribution of the species.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: That is establishing additional populations in areas of adequate habitat that are ideally different habitat, that will support multiple packs. At this time we don't have additional population locations identified,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: but a population viability analysis is currently being developed by the recovery team that will provide insights into population characteristics of a viable population, and that will help us identify sites that could potentially support a viable red wolf population.

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

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Emily Weller - USFWS: To do that, we need a robust captive population to support releases and pup fostering and maintain gene diversity long time- long term.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Establishing and growing populations will also likely require translocation of wild red wolves within and among wild populations, and then propagation sites, and then adaptive management.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: For red wolf populations to ultimately be viable or successful, they must not be reliant on extensive human interventions, which we define as annual or frequent releases, fostering, translocations, and placeholder management.

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

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Emily Weller - USFWS: And then the third part of the strategy: implementing collaborative conservation. This was a major focus of the recovery team.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: For any species, but particularly this one, effective recovery will require participation and involvement of all parties. That's State agency agencies, other federal agencies, private landowners, local communities, local governments, tribal governments, NGOs, and in academia.

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

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

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Next slide, please.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: In September 2022. We put the draft revised recovery plan out for public review and comment for 30 days.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: During a comment period, we've received comments stating that the criteria and actions were not sufficiently detailed and should be revised to include more measurable metrics based on the upcoming final PVA: the population viability analysis.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: So in light of those comments, we decided to seek an extension so that we can incorporate those results of the PVA into the final recovery plan.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: The recovery team has been working since February on the development of that PVA model, and we're expecting that to be complete at the beginning of June. At that time, the team will then use the PVA to update the recovery plan, the recovery criteria, and the recovery actions.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: The new due date for the final recovery plan is September the 29th, 2023.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Now, once the team has completed work on the recovery plan, it will be again working on the recovery Implementation strategy.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: This document will include the step-down activities needed to carry out and implement the actions identified in the recovery plan.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: This is the playbook that all partners, stakeholders can pull from.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: I'll look at this document as a means to spark more collaborative efforts,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: reduce redundancy or inefficiencies, and really focuses on those activities that will have the greatest impact in moving is towards recovery.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: This document is flexible and can be modified at any time to incorporate new information or adapt to changing circumstances on the ground.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: But that is not the final step in recovery. The recovery plan and the recovery implementation strategy are overarching guidance documents. The recovery plan outlines what recovery looks like for the species through the criteria, and then provides the broad actions that are needed to reach those criteria.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: The implementation strategy steps down those actions into the on the ground activities that are needed to carry out those actions. Both of these are developed by the recovery team, but recovery goes beyond our recovery team.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Planning and carrying out those recovery efforts, those step-down activities, will be a collaborative effort with the greater group of stakeholders: a process to engage the community. Other agencies, NGOs other stakeholders,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: to give those affected by decisions, a say in those decisions, and that'll be put in place for not only the population in North Carolina, but any other Red Wolf population.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Next slide please.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: The captive population of red Wolves is an essential component of the Red Wolf recovery. It's the foundation.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Without it, we would not have had red wolves to start a population in the wild or red wolves to establish new populations. Releases and fostering from the captive population, help the Eastern North Carolina red will population reach a peak of 120 animals in 2012,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: and they are the current source of red wolves for efforts to create new level of breeding pairs.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Captive population is overseen by the Association of Zoo and Aquarium's red wolf SAFE program, that's saving animals from extinction. It's formerly known as the species survival program, or SSP, as you've probably heard us refer to it before.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: The goal of the SAFE program is to support conservation efforts for this species by maintaining a healthy and viable population of Red Wolf under human care, growing education and awareness efforts, aiding research vital to supporting recovery,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: and working to support and see to conservation. And they are setting up subcommittees to support that goal. I know there's a husbandry subcommittee, population management, education, research subcommittees, and I believe there may be a couple of others that are in the works.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: There are approximately 278 red wolves, and 49 SAFE facilities across the country that includes 43 puppies among 15 litters this year. This is the highest the population has ever been in program history.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: With the captive population being the foundation of recovery, maintaining a population suitable for release is critical.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: That's having genetically, demographically, and behaviorally appropriate red wolves, and in having a population suitable for release, we increase success of releases.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: So we are working with SAFE and other partners to ensure that we meet that standard.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: First, we need to increase the captive population. As I said before, a robust captive population is needed to not only maintain genetic diversity, but support growth and establishment of wild populations,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: through releases and fostering without negatively affecting the captive population.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: One of the highest program- priorities for the program is increasing space capacity, so that breeding capability can increase, and thus the population increases.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: The current goal is 330 red wolves in the SAFE population. It was estimated that 50 new enclosures are needed to accommodate that growth. In the last few years, 36 of those 50 needed enclosures have been funded or constructed.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: And we are already seeing the impacts or the progress that that growth has provided with this milestone: the highest population in in SAFE history that they just reached

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Emily Weller - USFWS: The Service and SAFE program will also be working on a control propagation plan for the Service's control propagation policy. The captive population has been managed well maintaining 12 lineages and maintaining genetic diversity. A control propagation plan will just assist in optimizing reproduction, reducing mortality and sustaining a healthy population long term.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: We're also working together on a husbandry assessment. The Service coordinates regularly with the SAFE program 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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Emily Weller - USFWS: And while human contact is minimized, there have been some behavioral issues that have made successful releases challenging. This has been true not only for red wolves, but also Mexican wolves. So both programs the Red Wolf and Mexican wolf programs, the Service and SAFE programs,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: we're all working together to develop an evaluation of Husbandry practices

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Emily Weller - USFWS: to determine if there are changes that can or need to be made to address those behavioral issues that have been experienced by both species. And we're also working on an assessment to better evaluate potential release candidates.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Excuse me. We are also currently working with partners to identify and establish a pre-release site.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: A pre-release site is a larger enclosed area: 5, 10, 20 acres, with human or vehicle interactions minimize to very little, if any.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: They're fed whole prey, and they're held for a greater length of time, or until a certain predetermined criteria remit. This is to help us better prepare these red wolves for life in the wild.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: I just want to note that the institutions that are part of the SAFE program bring resources and expertise that go beyond breeding. They are particularly experienced with education programs and outreach to the community. They often are the first source of information or awareness for the public, and are a trusted messenger of wildlife conservation and environmental issues.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Many of these institutions are also conducting vital research to improve the health of the captive population.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Next slide please.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Our next key component, the wild populations. Currently there is one wild red wolf population. We continue to manage and grow that population, which Joe will speak to, and he'll cover some of the changes in adaptations that have been made and other actions we're taking that are different than maybe the years past.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: With only one population, we know that other populations are needed for species viability or recovery.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: We have not yet identified any potential sites for future red wolf populations. That is a process that requires extensive upfront coordination with potential partners. However, it is one of the high priority recovery actions listed in the draft Recovery plan.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Information on identifying sites will come from several places. First, the forthcoming PVA will provide insight into parameters for a viable population. That information will help us identify sites that could potentially support a viable red wolf population.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Information from the PVA will be combined with various suitability studies that are available in literature and information within the recovery plan that'll be used as the basis of an evaluation of potential sites.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: However, the establishment of a red wolf population must be a collaborative effort between the Service, State agencies, county governments, local governments, tribal governments, and other federal agencies, private landowners, and the community at large.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: We cannot name specific sites without first taking time to have those crucial conversations early in the process, ensure a shared vision

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Emily Weller - USFWS: for potential reintroductions, and begin those collaborative efforts that will be vital to successful reintroductions.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Now, whether it's growing a population or establishing new populations, the path forward will focus on collaboration and community and partner engagement.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: What that looks like will probably vary between populations. But the recovery plan outlines actions that will support that.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: First, one of the recovery actions is organizing interagency management teams.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: That's Service, State, county, local, tribal governments, and other Federal agencies to jointly manage recovery of red wolves. Another recovery action is increased stakeholder involvement in management and recovery planning processes.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: And then another is developing population-specific adaptive reintroductions with the interagency management teams and the stakeholders.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Next slide. Please

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Excuse me.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Our next key component, communications, is just as important as the biological components.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: We can't move beyond litigation and connect to the needs of the community,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: without proper communication. We can't follow through with focusing on community and partner engagement and increasing transparency without proper communication. It's key to building the trust and relationships needed for program success and recovery of the species.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Now, communications covers a pretty wide spread. We have media:

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Emily Weller - USFWS: interviews, filming that Joe does a lot of, various social media. We have our website.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: There's outreach and educational programs at the Red Wolf Center, which are being expanded actually with the North Carolina Wildlife Federation and the National Wildlife Refuge Association. There's educational programs in schools. It's SAFE facilities. Teacher Ambassador program, which Joe will talk about, all of these are to improve awareness and tolerance of red wolves.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Communications also includes various materials like virtual and print brochures, fact sheets, hunter id cards. There are several documentaries that have been made over the years about various aspects of red wolves or the recovery program.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: One that's coming up later this year is one in which the Service partnered with the Cherokee nation.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: It focuses on the cultural importance of the Red Wolf to the Cherokee people. The tribal perspective has been missing from the Red Wolf story, and it needs to be incorporated into its recovery. And this is one of those first steps.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: These meetings, the in person and the virtual public information meetings, quarterly partnership coordination calls, annual SAFE planning meetings,

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Emily Weller - USFWS: phone calls: the field team takes phone calls day and night. I answer hotline calls, day and night.

00:25:27.620 --> 00:25:34.610

Emily Weller - USFWS: I carry the hotline phone. I get calls from all over. But most of these are more

00:25:34.940 --> 00:25:47.600

Emily Weller - USFWS: one-way communications. It's a way for us to get information out there. These meetings are one directional. It's meant for us to provide you with the updates on what's going on, to answer your questions and concerns.

00:25:47.630 --> 00:26:07.380

Emily Weller - USFWS: We haven't really set it up as like a 2-way street to get feedback or input but we want to change that, like I say, community and stakeholder involvement is a major focal point of the recovery plan. It calls for increased formal participation of all stakeholders in management and recovery planning processes in each site.

00:26:07.560 --> 00:26:10.660

Emily Weller - USFWS: That's 2-way communication.

00:26:10.690 --> 00:26:12.200

Emily Weller - USFWS: What that looks like:

00:26:12.250 --> 00:26:15.930

Emily Weller - USFWS: we don't know. We need input from the community.

00:26:16.330 --> 00:26:26.270

Emily Weller - USFWS: And one of the ways that we're getting help with that: the Service has contracted the services of Francine Madden, of Conservation Conflict, LLC.

00:26:26.270 --> 00:26:36.530

Emily Weller - USFWS: She's helping us with conflict, transformation, taking conflict and transforming that energy from something that's destructive to collaboration and progress.

00:26:36.580 --> 00:26:55.280

Emily Weller - USFWS: And so, while we have hired her, she does not work for us. She works for everyone, the vast group of red wolf stakeholders. So one of the things she will be helping us with is developing a process or multiple processes with and by stakeholders to ID

00:26:55.280 --> 00:27:03.520

Emily Weller - USFWS: what they want to have a say in, and then engage stakeholders to give those that are affected by the decisions, a say in the decisions.

00:27:04.740 --> 00:27:06.380

Emily Weller - USFWS: Next slide, please.

00:27:07.980 --> 00:27:27.310

Emily Weller - USFWS: And last, but not least, research. Good science is needed to inform our decision making and management. The Service and our partners are helping to ensure we have that good science. Arkansas State University is the repository for all red wolf samples and specimens. This ensures proper pre-

00:27:27.310 --> 00:27:35.400

Emily Weller - USFWS: preparation, preservation, cataloging of samples and specimens for future research and educational purposes.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Over the last several years, study has been conducted to determine if Red Wolf ancestry still persists in wild canids in Southwest Louisiana and southeast Texas, where the last of the red wolves were captured to start the captive breeding program in the seventies.

00:27:52.840 --> 00:28:09.170

Emily Weller - USFWS: These studies have found that substantial red wolf ancestry persist in wild canids in this area. The information collected during these efforts will be used to determine taxonomy of those canids with comprehensive genetic and morphological analyses.

00:28:09.170 --> 00:28:15.760

Emily Weller - USFWS: Field work and data collection and analysis for these studies continues.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: Another study is developing ancestry informative markers to differentiate and measure a hybridization among all North American canid species.

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Emily Weller - USFWS: And additionally, we have several partners conducting research to improve health, care, management, of our captive red wolves, including studies on inflammatory bowel disease, assisted reproductive technologies and an inherited form of blindness.

00:28:43.140 --> 00:28:49.240

Emily Weller - USFWS: and we anticipate additional research needs will be identified through the recovery planning process.

00:28:49.750 --> 00:29:03.830

Emily Weller - USFWS: So to kind of finish out my portion here. We can't do this on our own. To be successful, we have to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance the endangered Red Wolf.

00:29:04.290 --> 00:29:07.370

Emily Weller - USFWS: And with that I will pass it on over to Joe.

00:29:14.960 --> 00:29:17.910

Joe Madison - USFWS: Thanks, Emily. You can go to the next slide.

00:29:20.150 --> 00:29:30.440

Joe Madison - USFWS: again. My name is Joe Madison. I'm the program manager here in North Carolina, and I will update you on the current status of the red wolves here in North Carolina, and all the various parts and pieces that

00:29:30.590 --> 00:29:34.910

Joe Madison - USFWS: are going into our current management here. Next slide.

00:29:39.120 --> 00:29:50.080

Joe Madison - USFWS: Just want to remind folks that we're currently continuing to operate under the 10 (j) rule that was last updated in 1995, in conjunction with applicable court decisions.

00:29:50.290 --> 00:30:00.780

Joe Madison - USFWS: One of those being the last one in January, 2021, where the US District Court issued a ruling that the Fish and Wildlife Service needed to draft a plan to release captive red wolves back into North Carolina.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: Subsequent to that ruling, the Fish and Wildlife Service has submitted and implemented Phase I, Phase II and Phase III release plans covering March 2021 through May 2023.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: And phase 3 is what we are currently in right now- in the middle of, and what we'll talk a lot about tonight, and is what I presented and talked about last fall of that previous meeting.

00:30:23.940 --> 00:30:24.910

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:30:27.320 --> 00:30:44.760

Joe Madison - USFWS: As part of that, we've hosted 3 public- 3 sets of public meetings, both in person and virtual, locally, over the past 15 months. And those were designed to increase interaction with stakeholders regarding the red wolf recovery plan that Emily talked about, upcoming and releases, coyote management in the Alburmar Peninsula,

00:30:44.890 --> 00:30:52.320

Joe Madison - USFWS: Prey for the Pack which Luke Lohies, the Private lands biologist will talk about in a little bit, and just generally increase community engagement.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: For this meeting in particular, we've contacted over 120 land owners and local stakeholders directly via phone calls and emails and texts, and posted over 60 flyers throughout this entire a 5 county area to really get as much participation, and folks involved in these meetings as much as we can, because, as we've talked about,

00:31:12.300 --> 00:31:21.370

Joe Madison - USFWS: the more interaction we have with folks the better- the better for all concerned, as well as we posted on numerous community websites throughout the area.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:31:25.780 --> 00:31:36.590

Joe Madison - USFWS: There's currently 15 known and by known I mean radio collared, adult sub-adult red wolves that we can track at any given point out there in the wild and there's also 6 pups, which are

00:31:36.730 --> 00:31:45.580

Joe Madison - USFWS: from- we'll talk about later, but that they're too young to be collared. So the known population, currently as we set right now is 15

00:31:45.650 --> 00:31:47.550

Joe Madison - USFWS: adult and subadult all red wolves.

00:31:48.220 --> 00:32:03.800

Joe Madison - USFWS: All of those known adults subadult red wolves has orange collars, which I'll also talk about a bit more. Eight of which are also GPS collars, so they're all VHF collars that we can track from the ground and from the air when we're able to get flights. But 8 of them have GPS collars

00:32:03.800 --> 00:32:10.350

Joe Madison - USFWS: that send us signals based on a set schedule that we can alter without having the animal in hand.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: Oftentimes people think the GPS collars give us real time data of where these Red wolves are. But that's not the case. We just get a set transmission every day or every 2 days. Whatever we have it set to, and I'll talk about that a little bit more with the- with the releases.

00:32:25.910 --> 00:32:36.010

Joe Madison - USFWS: The estimated total wild population right now is 23 to 25 animals, and that takes into account pups, but also potentially red wolves with non-functioning radio collars

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Joe Madison - USFWS: or areas where we think we might potentially have a red wolf based on sightings or remote camera footage, or those types of things.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: I'll also note that the population, the known population when we talked last October was 10.

00:32:52.700 --> 00:32:56.760

Joe Madison - USFWS: So there has been an increase in that number since that time.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:33:01.830 --> 00:33:06.680

Joe Madison - USFWS: There's been 3 mortalities in the wild since the last public meeting in fall 2022.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: All 3 of those were older red wolves, one of them was natural causes, a 13-year-old female, and two are currently unknown. One we're never going to be able to determine the cause of death because the carcass was too far gone by the time we located it.

00:33:20.840 --> 00:33:26.730

Joe Madison - USFWS: And one the necropsy results are currently pending. But he was, he was known to have some health issues.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: I noticed the question came in that you know, if we'd known he had health issues, why have- why didn't we go out and capture him and bring him in for vet care. But

00:33:39.500 --> 00:33:54.450

Joe Madison - USFWS: there's- that's a, that's a difficult prospect to do. It's not as easy to go out and do that, especially with these free ranging, wild animals, and it's- life is hard being a wild animal, and these are very resilient animals. So a lot of times, even if we know that they might potentially have an issue,

00:33:54.800 --> 00:34:02.620

Joe Madison - USFWS: you know they're still going to be out there surviving and doing what they do as a wild animal, and again he was an older male. Next slide.

00:34:05.250 --> 00:34:20.780

Joe Madison - USFWS: In addition to the SAFE program that Emily talked about, the St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge is a key component of the Red Wolf recovery program, and that is a- it's a Red Wolf Island propagation site off the Gulf coast of Florida that was established in 1990,

00:34:21.110 --> 00:34:29.070

Joe Madison - USFWS: and the intent of this island, it's about 12,000 acres, is to have an established Red Wolf breeding pair there in the wild.

00:34:29.230 --> 00:34:47.030

Joe Madison - USFWS: and when they have litters in the wild that are born there and grow up and raised. But They're in a somewhat controlled environment, meaning there's no paved roads there's no one that lives there. There's limited hunting and those types of things. So they grow up learning how to be wild and fin for themselves without some of the

00:34:47.030 --> 00:34:59.840

Joe Madison - USFWS: potential dangers of mainland. But when those young reach dispersal age, the 10 is to capture them and translocate them up into the eastern North Carolina Red Wolf population here in eastern North Carolina.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: and the currently there is one pair of red wolves on St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge. Some monitoring indicates that they may have had a litter in the spring, but it has not yet been confirmed.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: But St. Vincent does factor into part of the release plan for this year.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:35:24.330 --> 00:35:38.090

Joe Madison - USFWS: On April twentieth of this year, we confirmed that the Milltail pack on Alligator River National Wildlife, had a litter for the second consecutive year. It was comprised of 3 females and 2 males. They all seemed healthy.

00:35:38.180 --> 00:35:56.940

Joe Madison - USFWS: and I want to comment to you when we go to these den checks, we're there a very short amount of time. We go in we take a general health, take the sex of them, and we microchip them for future identification, and then we put them back in the wild den, and we leave so that the mother can return as quickly as possible. So

00:35:56.940 --> 00:36:04.450

Joe Madison - USFWS: the pups are with us for as short of time as possible when we do this, you know 20 minutes probably tops.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: All of these pups looked healthy. It was about day 9 when we were there, they were estimated to be born on April eleventh.

00:36:11.450 --> 00:36:22.580

Joe Madison - USFWS: Again we took genetic sample, general health check, and microchip them. And then, when these pups next January, when they're large enough to be collared, we will attempt to capture and collar them.

00:36:24.050 --> 00:36:24.920

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:36:28.690 --> 00:36:32.810

Joe Madison - USFWS: Now regarding our management actions for this previous fall, winter, and spring,

00:36:32.900 --> 00:36:50.810

Joe Madison - USFWS: we're in development of these- the phase 3 of the release plan. We're always constantly evaluating research and results from our past management actions and our experience regarding releases and the factors that seem to lead to a higher likelihood of success. Talking to others, you know other programs, those types of things, and always trying to incorporate that

00:36:52.890 --> 00:37:04.900

Joe Madison - USFWS: when we do that and for the releases, we'd look at evaluating places on National Wildlife Refuge that have adequate habitat security, but also provide sufficient prey for them to survive in the wild.

00:37:05.520 --> 00:37:06.410

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:37:09.700 --> 00:37:16.750

Joe Madison - USFWS: The red wolves selected for release are individually evaluated for their likelihood of success. There's a lot of factors that go into it,

00:37:16.810 --> 00:37:29.400

Joe Madison - USFWS: like age, and we try to get 2 to 4 years old from enclosures that are off public view, fed natural prey items, and that they won't negatively impact the genetic makeup of the captive population,

00:37:29.770 --> 00:37:34.190

Joe Madison - USFWS: and are also good genetic matches for the red wolves that are in the wild.

00:37:35.230 --> 00:37:40.490

Joe Madison - USFWS: One factor that potentially increases the chances that pairs will remain together after release,

00:37:40.580 --> 00:37:55.440

Joe Madison - USFWS: is the presence of pups. So in the past, we've released the pairs, particularly new pairs, when the female was in heat, because there's been some evidence that that would make it more likely to stay together because it's during the mating season.

00:37:56.280 --> 00:38:10.710

Joe Madison - USFWS: But we've looked at some other factors. We talked to the programs specifically the Mexican wolf program and they've had some success with leaving animals in pens longer, and allowing them to potentially have pups in a pen, and it's seemed to bond the pair even more-

00:38:10.780 --> 00:38:17.850

Joe Madison - USFWS: more tightly and potentially stay more in the area where they're released. So that was factored into the Release plan this year as well.

00:38:19.220 --> 00:38:32.810

Joe Madison - USFWS: All of these release plans and activities, management activities, are discussed with the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission. We have several monthly collaboration meetings that help both agencies stay on track with what we're doing and in tune and we have-

00:38:32.860 --> 00:38:42.070

Joe Madison - USFWS: we're- so they're in tune of what we're doing, and we're aware of their management activities in this area, and we're collaborating on all the things we got going on.

00:38:43.450 --> 00:38:44.330

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:38:46.250 --> 00:38:52.980

Joe Madison - USFWS: So I'm going to go through the goals of the plan and kind of where we're at on the various goals, phase the- goals of the phase 3 release plan.

00:38:53.200 --> 00:39:03.790

Joe Madison - USFWS: So the first one was to focus on pup fostering opportunities whenever possible, because pup fostering is seen as the one of the best ways to increase the genetic diversity and the numbers of the wild population.

00:39:04.030 --> 00:39:18.510

Joe Madison - USFWS: So and looking at that and the Miltail litter. On April 24th, we fostered a male pup, born at Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium in Tacoma into the wild litter on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, since she already had 5 pups

00:39:18.610 --> 00:39:22.820

Joe Madison - USFWS: from this litter, and there were still 5 yearlings in the area from last year.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: We felt comfortable adding an additional pup, especially since she's a proven mother that shows that you know she can do well raising pups. So yeah, we fostered him one pup.

00:39:33.820 --> 00:39:38.890

Joe Madison - USFWS: We did monitoring since we fostered him, and it suggests that the fostering was successful.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: But we don't go back in once we put this this pup into the wild litter. We won't know the results until much later on. We have remote cameras set up, but not right near the den, because we don't want to disturb or potentially cause abandonment of the pups closest cameras, probably a quarter to a half mile away.

00:39:57.730 --> 00:40:10.170

Joe Madison - USFWS: But the general survival of pups is about 50 percent, whether they're wild born or fostered, so we'll know over the coming months the success of that litter and the success of the fostering.

00:40:11.550 --> 00:40:12.520

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:40:14.490 --> 00:40:30.420

Joe Madison - USFWS: Another goal of the phase 3 release plan was to increase the number of green pairs in the- in the Eastern North Carolina red wolf population, one of those reasons being so that we can switch back to focusing more on fostering as a way to enhance population rather than the release of

00:40:30.540 --> 00:40:36.440

Joe Madison - USFWS: of adult animals, which is, is a difficult process, as we've already talked about. It's on tonight.

00:40:36.880 --> 00:40:45.830

Joe Madison - USFWS: and one of the keys in doing that was to translocate the wild female red wolf from St. Vincent National Wildlife refuge to eastern North Carolina.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: So in November of 22 we captured that female on Alligator River- excuse me on State Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, and translocated here to North Carolina, and she was placed in an acclimation pen

00:40:59.310 --> 00:41:05.090

Joe Madison - USFWS: on Alligator River National wildlife refuge with a captive born male that came from the North Carolina Zoo.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: This is a picture of them and their acclimation pen as well. I have a slide that shows a bit more. But on this slide take note that you can see the reflective material, it's on the collar. How the infrared of the camera lights up that infrared, of course, when it's, you know, headlights that shows up as a bright orange.

00:41:23.890 --> 00:41:28.280

Joe Madison - USFWS: And we'll talk about that a bit as well in a minute. Next slide.

00:41:31.720 --> 00:41:51.450

Joe Madison - USFWS: Again, increasing number of breeding pairs is a key focus, and apart from bringing out a female from St. Vincent, we had 2 wild females, well we had more than 2. We have some wild females out there that we're not paired with wild males, so the intent was to

capture some of the females in the wild and place them in an acclimation pen with captive born males

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Joe Madison - USFWS: and attempt to create those new breeding pairs. There's evidence to suggest that when you've got a wild red wolf and you can place, you know.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: pair them with a captive born red wolf

00:42:03.770 --> 00:42:16.120

Joe Madison - USFWS: they're more likely, and if they stay together that that captive born one is more likely to be successful in the wild, because the wild one, especially within their territory, can kind of show them the ropes and help them with that transition to a life in the wild.

00:42:16.490 --> 00:42:35.560

Joe Madison - USFWS: So in November 2022, and again in February 2023, two of the wild females out on the landscape were captured, and they were both placed in acclimation pens within their territories with captive-born males. One of those males came from the Endangered Wolf Center, and one of those males came from Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:42:41.500 --> 00:42:53.300

Joe Madison - USFWS: The- one of the final goals of the release plan was the- to release a family group of 3 captive born red wolves on either Alligator River or Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife refuge, two adults and an offspring.

00:42:53.480 --> 00:43:05.460

Joe Madison - USFWS: And we- in December 2022, we placed the captive born family, and that came from the SAFE program, the Endangered Wolf Center, into an acclimation pen on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:43:12.320 --> 00:43:28.140

Joe Madison - USFWS: Okay, so big part of this is, you know the kind of, the chronological of how this works is, once we set those goals and to be able to get to where we are, we have to construct these acclamation pens, and these acclamation pens are- consist of these large chain link panels

00:43:28.140 --> 00:43:47.080

Joe Madison - USFWS: that we basically rector set together to create an enclosure that will hold them for several months without concern of escapes and release. There's an electrified line around the inside of the bottom to keep them from digging out, and then the white fencing you see on the outside is to protect it from bears

00:43:47.080 --> 00:44:08.910

Joe Madison - USFWS: being drawn to the you know, the food and climate over the fence, and these acclamation pens have been a pretty effective way of having, and they're put in place in remote areas. We only go to these once a week. One person once a week goes to these to feed, to give water and collect the camera cards because we have remote sensing cameras there to monitor

00:44:08.980 --> 00:44:13.400

Joe Madison - USFWS: their behavior. They're fed entirely natural prey diets of

00:44:13.440 --> 00:44:17.410

Joe Madison - USFWS: white-tailed deer, rabbits, nutria, things like that.

00:44:20.000 --> 00:44:20.900

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:44:24.030 --> 00:44:38.740

Joe Madison - USFWS: We collared all captive born red wolves with orange GPS VHF collars. And again they have the orange reflective material, so all of the newly released animals and their wild counterparts that we're in the pens with them all have GPS collars on,

00:44:39.820 --> 00:44:43.330

Joe Madison - USFWS: to identify them as a red wolf, and we'll talk about that as well.

00:44:43.800 --> 00:44:54.840

Joe Madison - USFWS: The pups are too small to be collared, of course, but and that- and that's when they're most vulnerable to being

mistaken for coyote, but as soon as they're large enough, then we capture and collar them as well.

00:44:55.710 --> 00:44:56.650

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:44:59.770 --> 00:45:10.970

Joe Madison - USFWS: From November through March we conducted capture, excuse me, we conducted trapping on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, as well as private land, where we had landowner permission.

00:45:11.280 --> 00:45:17.790

Joe Madison - USFWS: During that time we captured 21 wild canids, 8 red wolves, 12 coyotes, and one hybrid.

00:45:17.920 --> 00:45:24.370

Joe Madison - USFWS: The hybrid was euthanized as part of the current strategy on hybridization.

00:45:24.740 --> 00:45:38.040

Joe Madison - USFWS: And it- that- those captures and collaring also include the initial collaring of all 5 of the remaining red wolves born on Alligator River last spring. So they are all collared and counted in the known population now that they're collared.

00:45:39.950 --> 00:45:40.900

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:45:43.910 --> 00:45:57.940

Joe Madison - USFWS: Again, I mentioned a couple of times, but all red wolves will continue to be fitted with these bright orange collars, that's to identify them as separate from coyotes and identify them as a red wolf which is protected, federally protected, under the Endangered Species Act.

00:45:58.120 --> 00:46:01.790

Joe Madison - USFWS: Which is- means that they are illegal to kill or harm

00:46:02.620 --> 00:46:18.030

Joe Madison - USFWS: and the reflective material can help with that, too. But they don't all have the reflective material, because that process was started later. So not all orange collared wolves have

orange reflective material so that in and of itself is not a good key as to whether it's a red wolf or not. You need to look for the orange.

00:46:18.160 --> 00:46:24.680

Joe Madison - USFWS: and if you see orange of any sort, then it's a federally protected species, and don't shoot.

00:46:24.990 --> 00:46:28.530

Joe Madison - USFWS: and we will continue the outreach on what the orange collar means.

00:46:28.700 --> 00:46:39.800

Joe Madison - USFWS: One of the reasons orange was selected is because it's a hunter safety color, so it should be naturally engrained in all hunters, and the public in general, that orange is a safety color and not to shoot.

00:46:39.830 --> 00:46:42.380

Joe Madison - USFWS: So we will continue those outreach efforts.

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Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:46:48.300 --> 00:47:00.140

Joe Madison - USFWS: We also have 6 electronic mobile highway signs that we place closest to- on the major roads closest to release sites and we also move these signs around as we monitor red wolf use,

00:47:00.200 --> 00:47:05.560

Joe Madison - USFWS: based on where we know they're in close proximity to roads. We currently have 6 signs

00:47:05.580 --> 00:47:13.560

Joe Madison - USFWS: that were purchased between the- the Fish and Wildlife Service purchased some, the North Carolina Wildlife Federation purchase some, and the Red Wolf Coalition purchase some.

00:47:14.680 --> 00:47:16.740

Joe Madison - USFWS: But these...

00:47:17.060 --> 00:47:31.230

Joe Madison - USFWS: and when the reflective material also seems to have had an impact on reducing the vehicle strike mortality. Is doesn't necessarily eliminate it but there has been anecdotal evidence, and there it is very visible. So folks are seeing them,

00:47:31.320 --> 00:47:37.490

Joe Madison - USFWS: being able to see them and be more likely to stop with that, as a way to reduce the vehicle strike mortalities.

00:47:38.050 --> 00:47:54.820

Joe Madison - USFWS: But these signs, you know they've gone a lot further than just warning motorists about potential Red Wolf crossings. There's been communities that have told us that, you know they've raised their awareness of red wolves that they were even there, that they, you know folks that didn't realize they were anywhere but on the refuge.

00:47:54.870 --> 00:48:07.220

Joe Madison - USFWS: and so that they, the signs, have been surprisingly good at the community engagement, which we wasn't the original intent, but obviously is a, is a welcome use of the signs.

00:48:07.940 --> 00:48:16.000

Joe Madison - USFWS: We're also continuing to work with several entities. The Department of Transportation, we have a Red Wolf ecology study going on to look at ways to reduce

00:48:16.380 --> 00:48:34.520

Joe Madison - USFWS: vehicle strike mortalities. And we've talked about things such as crossings and fences. We're working with engineer students at North Carolina State University to look at ways to maybe advance advancement on collars, maybe could have brighter lights that come on when they're in close proximity to highways or those types of things. So it,

00:48:34.520 --> 00:48:52.470

Joe Madison - USFWS: you know, vehicle strike mortality is the second leading cause of mortality since reintroduction, and it can be even a little bit higher on the list of mortality causes for newly released red wolves. So we we're looking into a variety of ways to continue to try to reduce that vehicle strike mortality.

00:48:53.970 --> 00:48:54.880

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:48:58.600 --> 00:49:14.550

Joe Madison - USFWS: When red wolves are known to be spending time on private land, we contact the landowners to notify them that there are red wolves on their property, and to address any concerns they have

upfront. This is a key thing for us, you know we- this is something we've switched to a year or 2 ago.

00:49:14.550 --> 00:49:31.010

Joe Madison - USFWS: Because we want to be upfront and open with the folks, and we want to try to address their concerns, and to let them know that they're there so they're less likely to, you know, for a misidentification, or think it's a coyote, or to shoot, and you know, knowing that there's a red wolf on their properties, so,

00:49:31.080 --> 00:49:47.830

Joe Madison - USFWS: we can't necessarily tell every landowner that a red wolf runs through their property. But if we, through our monitoring, have- believe that they're spending any amount of time there, then we go out of our way to contact every land owner, and we encourage folks to contact us for any at any time with questions or concerns.

00:49:49.380 --> 00:49:50.980

Joe Madison - USFWS: And next slide,

00:49:51.340 --> 00:49:55.610

Joe Madison - USFWS: as Emily mentioned, there's a red Wolf hotline, and there's the number for it.

00:49:55.640 --> 00:50:02.440

Joe Madison - USFWS: We respond to that, and we respond to calls, texts, emails, with questions, sightings, potential issues.

00:50:02.470 --> 00:50:19.720

Joe Madison - USFWS: All of us, do, you know, and a lot of the folks we deal with have the certain biologists or someone that they want to talk to, which is fine, or we- but you know however you feel comfortable getting in contact with us, please do, with any concerns, questions and sightings, those types of things.

00:50:20.020 --> 00:50:28.480

Joe Madison - USFWS: We address time sensitive issue 24/7 whenever humanly possible and most of the time we are able to do that, despite that,

00:50:28.540 --> 00:50:31.640

Joe Madison - USFWS: the relatively small crew we've got covering this area.

00:50:31.910 --> 00:50:49.940

Joe Madison - USFWS: And this picture is an example of someone that had a red wolf hanging close to their property. They were concerned about their chickens. We temporarily loaned one of our electrified bear fencing to help appease their concerns until that and we hazed that animal out of there

00:50:49.940 --> 00:51:02.380

Joe Madison - USFWS: until they left the area. So this is a- we can't necessarily always do that, but it just an example of how we're trying to work closely with the community to engage and be responsive to red wolf needs and concerns.

00:51:05.630 --> 00:51:06.530

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:51:09.180 --> 00:51:25.390

Joe Madison - USFWS: Some status updates on the acclimation pens. So we have 4 acclimation pens. We have 3 on the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and 2 on Alligator River. Excuse me 3 on Pocosin Lakes and one Alligator River. Of those 4 pens, two of them had pups this spring.

00:51:26.310 --> 00:51:37.550

Joe Madison - USFWS: The pairs that did not have pups: we released them last week, so they've been out on the landscape for about a week now, one was from Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge and one from Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

00:51:37.560 --> 00:51:48.620

Joe Madison - USFWS: Both of those pens consisted of a wild female red wolf and a captive born male. One of them was the female from St. Vincent and the North Carolina Zoo male and the other one was a

00:51:48.710 --> 00:51:54.470

Joe Madison - USFWS: wild female that was actually fostered into a den 2 years ago, as a

00:51:54.670 --> 00:52:00.470

Joe Madison - USFWS: like 11-day old pup and the male from Defiance Point aquarium.

00:52:01.850 --> 00:52:10.100

Joe Madison - USFWS: The 2 pairs that are in acclimation pens that did have pups: we are going to wait to release them from acclimation pens until the pups are about 6 weeks old.

00:52:10.110 --> 00:52:11.550

Joe Madison - USFWS: So that will be

00:52:12.940 --> 00:52:15.670

Joe Madison - USFWS: approximately the end of May.

00:52:18.640 --> 00:52:19.570

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:52:21.410 --> 00:52:24.210

Joe Madison - USFWS: I'm gonna go back one. Sorry.

00:52:26.490 --> 00:52:28.540

Joe Madison - USFWS: I wanted to mention that

00:52:29.090 --> 00:52:36.840

Joe Madison - USFWS: for these, for these releases, you know, sometimes there's this thought that it's a big media event with lots of fanfare and all that. But really what it is,

00:52:37.020 --> 00:52:51.270

Joe Madison - USFWS: like the day, or at least the morning, prior to release, we go and remove the electric barriers and place some remote sensing cameras, so that we can capture that, we can get footage of them being released.

00:52:51.350 --> 00:53:05.170

Joe Madison - USFWS: And then at dusk, on the planned day of release, one person walks up, opens the door, and then leaves. And so those red wolves can come out of that enclosure, whatever they feel comfortable doing, so that- whether that's 2 minutes or 2 days.

00:53:05.340 --> 00:53:08.630

Joe Madison - USFWS: But that that's basically how the releases go.

00:53:08.740 --> 00:53:09.680

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:53:12.580 --> 00:53:22.510

Joe Madison - USFWS: We track and monitor every newly released Red Wolf on a daily basis. Since we have the ability to change the programming on the GPS collars, when we first release them,

00:53:22.520 --> 00:53:33.390

Joe Madison - USFWS: we set it to get a point, one point every day, and to transmit that point to us every day. Now, if we did that over the life of the collar the battery would die very quickly.

00:53:33.730 --> 00:53:36.590

Joe Madison - USFWS: But at least for, like the first 30 days,

00:53:36.730 --> 00:53:41.350

Joe Madison - USFWS: we want to be able to track them since they're likely going to move around.

00:53:41.990 --> 00:53:46.070

Joe Madison - USFWS: Now that point, it's supposed to come in at 8 o'clock every morning.

00:53:46.600 --> 00:54:02.110

Joe Madison - USFWS: But there's a lot of times it doesn't come in that early, so that 8 o'clock in the morning point, we may not get it till 8 at night. So if we don't get it first thing in the morning, then we're out there from the ground, like Ryan's doing in this picture, trying to track those individuals to keep tabs on them.

00:54:02.440 --> 00:54:07.370

Joe Madison - USFWS: And as they do their transition to the wild we strategically place supplemental food,

00:54:07.480 --> 00:54:14.230

Joe Madison - USFWS: rabbits, nutria, you know, white-tailed deer, that kind of thing to help the newly released red wolves with their transition into the wild.

00:54:15.210 --> 00:54:34.580

Joe Madison - USFWS: We also check all the other red wolves multiple times per week, and for new releases and their other ones once they've been out there a while and seem to be, you know, more established themselves, the GPS collar is switched to take a point about every, a little over every other 2 days, and transmit it to us.

00:54:34.580 --> 00:54:49.290

Joe Madison - USFWS: And it's not exactly every 2 days, because we want to get points around the clock. So over time you can get points for the various times of day and night of where they're active. We also model the population throughout the 5-county area, with over 50 remote sensing cameras

00:54:49.450 --> 00:54:54.740

Joe Madison - USFWS: that we use to see their movements, who they're with, any health issues, and those types of things.

00:54:56.500 --> 00:55:11.660

Joe Madison - USFWS: If the newly released red wolves are in an area where, an area of concern, or if they're hanging close to roadways and that type of thing, we take any opportunity we can to haze them, scare them off the roads, and try to make them more weary of people and vehicles and those types of things.

00:55:12.900 --> 00:55:13.810

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:55:17.580 --> 00:55:33.900

Joe Madison - USFWS: So, after all of the releases of the animals that are currently still in acclimation pens in conjunction with the releases we already did, and in conjunction with the birth of the litter, the population of known red wolves increased to 19 known adult sub-adult red wolves and 14 pups.

00:55:35.070 --> 00:55:49.160

Joe Madison - USFWS: And again all the known subadults and adults will have orange collars, and of the 19, 12 of them will be the GPS collars. And with these additional releases in a couple weeks the estimated total wild population,

00:55:49.210 --> 00:55:57.440

Joe Madison - USFWS: if you include the pups, will be in the 35-37 red wolf range, which is a substantial increase over what we've seen in recent years.

00:55:59.410 --> 00:56:00.620

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide, please.

00:56:02.230 --> 00:56:13.840

Joe Madison - USFWS: This shows the age and sex class of the Red wolves in the wild. The ones that are grayed are the ones that's still remain in pens. So once they're released,

00:56:14.000 --> 00:56:19.420

Joe Madison - USFWS: you know, you see kind of the structure, and it's an interesting- it's been an interesting shift

00:56:19.450 --> 00:56:33.450

Joe Madison - USFWS: because of the litter born last year and this year, and the litters and acclimation pens, there's been a strong shift from very- from an older age class. We had 4 or 5 that were kind of past breeding age, or on the brink of it last,

00:56:33.620 --> 00:56:37.740

Joe Madison - USFWS: and there's been a shift to a much younger population.

00:56:38.460 --> 00:56:50.730

Joe Madison - USFWS: Again, there it shows 14 pups, but pup survival first year about 50 percent, so although we, you know, prefer that all 14 of those pup survive, we'll have to see how that goes over the course of the next year.

00:56:51.900 --> 00:57:07.000

Joe Madison - USFWS: Monitoring to date indicates that there's no Red Wolf coyote hybrid litters in 2023. We track all known red wolf females extensively during the denning season to attempt to see if they localize and appear to be denning

00:57:07.100 --> 00:57:23.780

Joe Madison - USFWS: and our tracking indicated that none of them had hybrid litters in 2023. I'll also point out that that female up at the top, well, I'll get to her in a second. But there's- that female is 14 years old, which is extremely old for a wild red wolf.

00:57:23.860 --> 00:57:30.280

Joe Madison - USFWS: And I'll show you on the next slide where her- where she is on the distribution map. Next slide.

00:57:33.510 --> 00:57:36.940

Joe Madison - USFWS: So this gives you a general idea of where the wolf distribution is.

00:57:36.990 --> 00:57:44.750

Joe Madison - USFWS: You can see in the upper right-hand corner and on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, particularly with the release of the pair on West Milltail,

00:57:44.950 --> 00:57:56.570

Joe Madison - USFWS: and with the litter of pups and the 5 yearlings from last year, there's a substantial number of red wolves up in that area. The Milltail pack, with the foster and the litter, is currently 13 members strong.

00:57:57.040 --> 00:58:00.590

Joe Madison - USFWS: Which is rather large for a red wolf pack.

00:58:00.600 --> 00:58:06.850

Joe Madison - USFWS: You know, you would expect over time some of those yearlings will likely disperse from that area.

00:58:07.260 --> 00:58:14.670

Joe Madison - USFWS: And then to the south of that is the Gator female. That's the one- that's the 14 year old, that area she's in is the bombing range.

00:58:14.760 --> 00:58:19.470

Joe Madison - USFWS: And she spent, has spent most of her life down there. She was born up in the Milltail area.

00:58:19.690 --> 00:58:28.160

Joe Madison - USFWS: And she was, we would typically see her coming up back up into the fields of the Milltail area for a week or so, and then go back down the bombing range for a month.

00:58:28.400 --> 00:58:32.830

Joe Madison - USFWS: But she, she hasn't come up in a while, and whether that's because of

00:58:32.890 --> 00:58:45.300

Joe Madison - USFWS: of her advanced age, or because of the you know the strength of the Milltail Pack up there kind of keeping her out of there. We're not positive, but she hasn't been up there in a while that we've detected.

00:58:46.270 --> 00:58:56.770

Joe Madison - USFWS: And then a little further west is the northern female, a single female, and she uses a lot of- I'll show her distribution. And then the pungo to the far left,

00:58:56.820 --> 00:59:10.910

Joe Madison - USFWS: it shows 3 females and one male. That one male is the one that was released last week. The 3 females are wild females, that, the one female that's in that area, and the 2 that were fostered in 2 years ago, so they're wild females as well.

00:59:11.100 --> 00:59:27.100

Joe Madison - USFWS: And then again, later this spring, we will be releasing the breeding pair, a yearling female and 4 pups from an acclimation pen on Pocasin Lakes, and also from another acclimation pen a wild female, a male, and their four pups as well.

00:59:28.770 --> 00:59:29.780

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

00:59:31.790 --> 00:59:48.050

Joe Madison - USFWS: This just shows you the general distribution of the Milltail Pack. The blue dots are when we had the males collar fixed to get a point there every 13 hours. That's all of his points for the last year, so you can see he's got a pretty tight home range. They use mostly the open fields. They do a lot of rodent hunting.

00:59:48.160 --> 01:00:02.330

Joe Madison - USFWS: And their home range is about 10 to 15 square miles, which is actually a little bit smaller than what an average red wolf home range is. The yellow points are the female, but she does not have a GPS collar so those points are strictly day time points.

01:00:04.380 --> 01:00:09.210

Joe Madison - USFWS: The collars, the VHF collars and the GPS collars, the VHF function-

01:00:09.730 --> 01:00:19.300

Joe Madison - USFWS: typically, when they're established in landscape, we haven't it turned off at night time to save battery life and VHF collars with those settings can last, you know, 8 plus years out there on the landscape.

01:00:20.690 --> 01:00:26.990

Joe Madison - USFWS: Again, with the VHF on the new releases, we leave that on 24 hours a day, so we're able to track them at night time, if need be.

01:00:28.310 --> 01:00:29.270

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

01:00:30.690 --> 01:00:40.800

Joe Madison - USFWS: This is again is the distribution of the wild female. Again she's tied closely to farm fields and the adjacent forested areas, early successful forest habitat,

01:00:40.840 --> 01:00:42.570

Joe Madison - USFWS: both on and off refuge.

01:00:43.180 --> 01:00:55.060

Joe Madison - USFWS: And her home range is about 10 square miles. That's not a scientific home range. That's just basically the area that her points for the year covered. I should clarify that. Next slide.

01:00:57.210 --> 01:01:09.720

Joe Madison - USFWS: And again, this is a wild female out of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge that I just show generally, like they're using the open farm fields, both on refuge and off refuge and forested areas adjacent to those farm fields.

01:01:10.300 --> 01:01:11.220

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

01:01:14.370 --> 01:01:31.070

Joe Madison - USFWS: The adaptive management strategy was developed in the late nineties and implemented here in the year 2000 as a method of controlling interbreeding and hybridization, and it was based on research conducted locally in Eastern North Carolina to some degree, and it was subsequently

01:01:31.210 --> 01:01:41.210

Joe Madison - USFWS: determined to be effective, based on research conducted locally here in Eastern North Carolina. It entails removing some coyotes upon capture and sterilizing

01:01:41.510 --> 01:01:54.880

Joe Madison - USFWS: and rereleasing other coyotes. And that's based on location, where they're captured in relation to where we have Red Wolf presence, and where we- where there is an established red wolf pack, or where we're trying to establish red wolves

01:01:54.990 --> 01:01:56.630

Joe Madison - USFWS: and that type of thing.

01:01:56.760 --> 01:02:10.440

Joe Madison - USFWS: Coyotes that are sterilized and released act as placeholders in areas that currently don't have red wolves, and they they'll keep out other coyotes, and their food needs are less because they don't have litters of pups. But if you leave them hormonally intact,

01:02:10.540 --> 01:02:19.570

Joe Madison - USFWS: meaning you don't just spay a neuter, but you sterilize them, then they will continue to defend their territory and exclude other coyotes from moving in

01:02:21.750 --> 01:02:35.930

Joe Madison - USFWS: within established red wolves territories there's a lower number of canids overall, and it's made up mostly and sometimes entirely of red wolves. In areas where there's no red wolves, you're going to have a higher density of total number of canids that's made up of

01:02:35.970 --> 01:02:37.350

Joe Madison - USFWS: coyotes

01:02:37.370 --> 01:02:46.500

Joe Madison - USFWS: because they have smaller home range sizes. So a lot more coyotes can fit in the same area that a red Wolf

01:02:46.650 --> 01:02:48.080

Joe Madison - USFWS: territory would cover.

01:02:48.240 --> 01:02:59.830

Joe Madison - USFWS: So they're at much higher densities. And with that much higher density they also can have bigger impacts on prey because of their higher prey need, and they have also have a more diverse prey-

01:03:01.550 --> 01:03:10.020

Joe Madison - USFWS: prey range, I should say. They tend to take a few more birds than red wolves, and they have higher prey needs because they're higher densities.

01:03:10.260 --> 01:03:19.820

Joe Madison - USFWS: And a lot of the research in here and in other areas shows that if you remove a coyote from a landscape, 2 or 3 are going to take its place rather quickly.

01:03:19.910 --> 01:03:27.510

Joe Madison - USFWS: But if you again, if you can capture them and sterilize them and re-release them, then they'll hold that territory keeps them from

01:03:27.730 --> 01:03:33.480

Joe Madison - USFWS: from reproducing and can locally reduce coyote numbers to some degree. Next slide.

01:03:37.480 --> 01:03:48.980

Joe Madison - USFWS: This capture season, I said- like said earlier, we captured 12 coyotes. 9 of those were euthanized, based on the location where they were within, and immediately adjacent to red wolves or where red wolves were present.

01:03:49.770 --> 01:04:00.130

Joe Madison - USFWS: 3 additional coyotes were sterilized, collared, and re-released back, where they were captured to act as placeholders or hopefully it's a potential future red wolf home ranges.

01:04:00.570 --> 01:04:12.420

Joe Madison - USFWS: So with those addition of 3, and we've had some mortality of sterilized coyotes, we currently have a total of 30, excuse me, 26 sterilized coyotes within the Eastern North Carolina population area.

01:04:14.310 --> 01:04:20.190

Joe Madison - USFWS: The sterilization is performed by Dr. Ford at the Chowan Animal Hospital. Next slide.

01:04:23.230 --> 01:04:36.420

Joe Madison - USFWS: Coyote sterilization is done at no cost to the landowners or to the Fish and Wildlife Service for the actual sterilization and the Red Wolf Coalition pays for all of the coyote sterilizations.

01:04:36.680 --> 01:04:40.820

Joe Madison - USFWS: All the sterilized coyotes are radio collared. They're released back where they're captured.

01:04:40.980 --> 01:04:57.120

Joe Madison - USFWS: They now are being- we're putting white collars like the one on the upper picture. We started that last year, and we're going to continue doing white collars, so it'll be more visible, and again help distinguish them from red wolves, but in the past they were- sterilized coyotes had black collars so,

01:04:57.120 --> 01:05:12.500

Joe Madison - USFWS: there's still quite a few sterilized coyotes out on the landscape that have black collars, but over time that will decrease, of course, and we'll continue moving forward with white collars. But if you see an animal on landscape with a black or white collar that is a sterilized coyote.

01:05:14.610 --> 01:05:20.870

Joe Madison - USFWS: Again, and the research done here, it shows that it is an effective way to reduce interbreeding

01:05:20.880 --> 01:05:33.250

Joe Madison - USFWS: and can potentially reduce population locally. It could benefit land managers and their land management goals, you know, if they're- if they're looking to reduce coyote populations, this is one way that they can potentially do that.

01:05:33.330 --> 01:05:39.840

Joe Madison - USFWS: It can keep other coyotes from moving in, and of course it benefits Red Wolf recovery and in a multiple ways.

01:05:41.300 --> 01:05:42.320

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

01:05:45.920 --> 01:05:53.450

Joe Madison - USFWS: I also want to mention that the Red Wolf Coalition developed a depredation compensation program. It's administered and funded by the Red Wolf coalition

01:05:54.210 --> 01:05:58.010

Joe Madison - USFWS: and it reimburses landowners for the loss of livestock by red wolves.

01:05:58.300 --> 01:06:12.920

Joe Madison - USFWS: Now, there haven't been a lot of depredation of livestock in pets by red wolves over the course of the program. In fact, it's only occurred 9 times. That's been documented, and most of the time when it's investigated, it ends up being some other type

01:06:13.110 --> 01:06:26.760

Joe Madison - USFWS: of incidence- domestic dogs is actually a lot of them, foxes, coyotes, those types of things, but it's all- it's still a concern for landowners in the area where there are red wolves, so to help address that and the Red Wolf Coalition developed this program

01:06:26.850 --> 01:06:39.880

Joe Madison - USFWS: to hopefully be valuable assurance to them that if their livestock is taken by red wolves that they get reimbursed to hopefully increase tolerance and/or support of the Red Wolf Recovery Program.

01:06:40.020 --> 01:06:48.020

Joe Madison - USFWS: And as part of the stipulation of that you need to contact the Fish and Wildlife Service within 24 hours if you believe that you might have a red wolf depredation.

01:06:49.150 --> 01:06:50.050

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

01:06:52.180 --> 01:07:01.020

Joe Madison - USFWS: We also have a trapper reimbursement program. It's funded by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, and the purpose of this is for trappers that are already out there trapping.

01:07:01.040 --> 01:07:12.860

Joe Madison - USFWS: For landowners, they're on their own land, their licensed trappers, and they're legally trapping. If they happen to catch a red wolf or an animal they believe is the red wolf or radio-collared canid, regardless of what species it is,

01:07:12.960 --> 01:07:27.070

Joe Madison - USFWS: or a wild canid that might be of management value like a coyote that could potentially be sterilized and be released, if they contact us and turn that animal over to us, transfer it alive and in good condition, they can be reimbursed.

01:07:27.480 --> 01:07:34.000

Joe Madison - USFWS: and they need to contact the Fish and Wildlife Service as soon as possible after capture for all that to occur.

01:07:34.500 --> 01:07:35.800

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide, please.

01:07:40.070 --> 01:07:44.560

Joe Madison - USFWS: I'm going to turn it over to Luke Lokies for a few moments to talk about the Prey for the Pack program.

01:07:47.160 --> 01:07:53.920

Luke Lokies - USFWS: Evening everybody. My name is Luke Lokies. Again, I'm the private lands biologist. So, think of me as the

01:07:53.930 --> 01:08:11.450

Luke Lokies - USFWS: the habitat person as it relates to landowner engagement. I'm gonna talk about the Prey for the Pack program that I oversee and the Prey for the Pack program is funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. It's a voluntary call share program

01:08:11.820 --> 01:08:15.000

for habitat improvement on private lands.

01:08:15.320 --> 01:08:23.540

Luke Lokies - USFWS: It's a partnership between the US Fish and wildlife Service, the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, and private land owners who voluntarily sign up.

01:08:24.040 --> 01:08:40.370

Luke Lokies - USFWS: The whole idea is that I meet with the landowner. I'll go out on their property. We'll see what their objectives are, what kind of management they're already implementing, and see how we can approve upon that to follow their, you know already-

01:08:40.370 --> 01:08:46.380

Luke Lokies - USFWS: their ideas and management goals and objectives that are already in place.

01:08:47.200 --> 01:09:01.770

Luke Lokies - USFWS: The program really fits great, as far as habitat goes, because a lot of the land owners that I engage with are interested in managing and improving habitat for species, such as a deer, quail, turkey, bear,

01:09:01.770 --> 01:09:13.779

Luke Lokies - USFWS: that kind of thing, and the habitat for that is, is great for the program and the landowner. So we're hoping that it's really a win for both wolves and the landowner.

01:09:13.779 --> 01:09:27.790

Luke Lokies - USFWS: And I'll meet with those landowners, you know, as often as they want. You know I go out several visits. It's very thorough. It's not like I go out there one time and meet with them, and then and then write something up. It's very customized, and

01:09:27.840 --> 01:09:38.910

Luke Lolies - USFWS: a joint effort between myself and the landowner. There's agreements, they have projects, the habitat improvement projects can be funded up to 80%.

01:09:39.240 --> 01:09:46.090

Luke Lolies - USFWS: It depends. There's 3 different call share tiers that the landowner can choose based on their comfort level.

01:09:46.090 --> 01:09:59.480

Luke Lolies - USFWS: If the landowner decides to sign up for the program in exchange for the call share for the habitat improvement, the landowner also agrees to allow Red wolves to be present on their lands,

01:09:59.480 --> 01:10:06.760

Luke Lolies - USFWS: allow some sort of monitoring based on their preference, and that goes to the different call share tiers,

01:10:06.880 --> 01:10:14.570

Luke Lolies - USFWS: and up to the land owners comfort level, to allow the use of the adaptive management plan on their land.

01:10:15.140 --> 01:10:16.160

Luke Lolies - USFWS: So

01:10:16.190 --> 01:10:19.310

Luke Lolies - USFWS: after that I'm gonna turn it back over to Joe.

01:10:32.890 --> 01:10:34.930

EMPSi - Taylor Bartlett: Hey, Joe, you're on mute.

01:10:37.050 --> 01:10:39.230

Joe Madison - USFWS: You're probably better off I was, but I'm not now.

01:10:40.650 --> 01:10:48.290

Joe Madison - USFWS: I just- maybe I didn't catch this loop, but I want to let folks know we also have another part of this program, that's the zero cost

01:10:48.360 --> 01:11:03.890

Joe Madison - USFWS: part of the Prey for the Pack. So if you don't, if you're not looking for financial assistance, but you have land in the 5-county area, and basically just want to say that you know,

you're- you want to support red wolf recovery or allow red wolves on your property, you can sign up for that as well.

01:11:04.500 --> 01:11:06.060

Luke Lohies - USFWS: Yeah. Good point. Thanks, Joe.

01:11:07.370 --> 01:11:08.350

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

01:11:10.920 --> 01:11:24.110

Joe Madison - USFWS: Regarding community engagement, you know. Prey for the Pack is a big part of it, and Luke does a great job working with landowners, and like he- like he says he spends a lot of time trying to gear to what the landowner wants. That's the main point of Prey for the Pack.

01:11:24.300 --> 01:11:32.860

Joe Madison - USFWS: But another point of a key point of our community engagement is the Red Wolf Center, located just outside Columbia, North Carolina. The front part of the

01:11:32.990 --> 01:11:45.110

Joe Madison - USFWS: of the building is the Red Wolf. It has got a little bit of an interpretation center and does outreach on red wolf stuff, and that managed by Kate- Kat Ramos, excuse me of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation.

01:11:45.800 --> 01:12:01.210

Joe Madison - USFWS: And then in the back part is for Red Wolf field team work like collaring and health checks and those types of things. It's a key building for us. We also have 2 captive Red wolves that are in a public enclosure, that Kat and her programs take people back to see.

01:12:01.210 --> 01:12:13.260

Joe Madison - USFWS: and Kim Wheeler, who is a volunteer for Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge actually does the care and feeding of those red wolves, and has been doing that for a long time, and we really appreciate the efforts of that as well.

01:12:14.090 --> 01:12:24.200

Joe Madison - USFWS: And North Carolina Wildlife Federation has a live webcams on the red wolves that are in enclosures there, so you can go to their website listed here to see those live webcams.

01:12:25.210 --> 01:12:39.290

Joe Madison - USFWS: The building itself: I should, I said this last night, and I didn't do it between last night and tonight, but I really should have done a before and after picture, because this building was not the most attractive building in the world, and we wanted to beautify it. But we wanted to do it in a way that would

01:12:39.310 --> 01:12:52.820

Joe Madison - USFWS: fully involve the local community and help to build a sense of pride and ownership, and this building, and what it stands for and potentially, you know, help increase the tolerance or support of red wolf recovery program.

01:12:52.940 --> 01:12:57.610

Joe Madison - USFWS: So we collaborated with Weiler Woods for Wildlife and Matt Willey, the muralist.

01:12:57.740 --> 01:13:04.640

Joe Madison - USFWS: and Kat Ramos from North Carolina Wildlife Refuge, excuse me- from North Carolina Wildlife Federation,

01:13:04.760 --> 01:13:17.530

Joe Madison - USFWS: to do this Red Wolf mural. And even though that picture makes it look like it's Photoshop, that is real, it's in place it, and it looks that good. We were very thrilled with how this turned out. It was a long road to get there.

01:13:17.530 --> 01:13:25.530

Joe Madison - USFWS: But it's been a- it's been a really good thing for local community. The town of Columbia and the Terrell County has supported the effort.

01:13:25.760 --> 01:13:40.550

Joe Madison - USFWS: And there was a very long list of volunteers that worked a lot of hours on this building to get it to where it is. And there was an apprentice muralist that worked with Matt Willey to really make this come to life. And we're pretty proud of this building, and

01:13:40.780 --> 01:13:48.180

Joe Madison - USFWS: and feel like it has increased our ability for community engagement with the folks in that area. Next slide.

01:13:50.080 --> 01:14:02.380

Joe Madison - USFWS: Emily mentioned this in her talk, but we're going to try a pilot program this year, called the Red Wolf Teacher Ambassador program. It's a collaboration with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and the North Carolina Wildlife Federation.

01:14:02.460 --> 01:14:19.000

Joe Madison - USFWS: And the goal is to have area teachers from local high schools. Well, the two this year are local high schools, both the science teachers and they'll work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service Red Wolf field team to help us monitor the population, both remote sensing cameras and doing radio telemetry for us.

01:14:19.030 --> 01:14:36.360

Joe Madison - USFWS: But they'll also conduct outreach on the National Wildlife Refuges in areas where we have high red wolf use or and high public presence and interest in those red wolves, so they'll talk to folks about Red wolves, and they'll have, you know, like pelts with them, and those types of things, and

01:14:36.360 --> 01:14:40.850

Joe Madison - USFWS: conduct outreach ad hoc along the roads along the Refuge when and where needed.

01:14:41.170 --> 01:14:48.680

Joe Madison - USFWS: And they'll also help us to have the Red Wolf Center open more days a week, so that we can- we can bring more people through there.

01:14:49.260 --> 01:14:55.230

Joe Madison - USFWS: But the main part of that for these teachers is beyond helping us, which it will be definitely be help to us.

01:14:55.260 --> 01:15:09.360

Joe Madison - USFWS: It will give them a chance to be immersed in Red Wolf outreach and management with the Red Wolf Recovery Program, and they'll be able to take that valuable firsthand experience and knowledge back to their students and back to their classrooms and their fellow teachers.

01:15:09.470 --> 01:15:27.050

Joe Madison - USFWS: And really, you know, pay that information forward, and as part of it they'll develop lesson plans that can be used by other teachers that are associated with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, and it will be made available to other teachers throughout the State of North Carolina and beyond.

01:15:27.250 --> 01:15:33.400

Joe Madison - USFWS: So we're looking forward to for that to that program as well, and then another way to engage with the community.

01:15:34.270 --> 01:15:35.280

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

01:15:37.360 --> 01:15:45.820

Joe Madison - USFWS: Ways that you can get involved. As I've mentioned multiple times, contact us directly if you have questions, issues, concerns, related to red wolves.

01:15:45.980 --> 01:16:00.160

Joe Madison - USFWS: We are available to work with you, to address any concerns you have, and talk to you about your thoughts and feelings, and you know, issues or non-issues, support for the red wolves out on the landscape.

01:16:00.790 --> 01:16:01.740

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

01:16:05.780 --> 01:16:21.800

Joe Madison - USFWS: Another way you can help is to not shoot collared canids. As I've mentioned, it is illegal to shoot red wolves. They have the orange collars, and it's likely to your benefit, especially, you know, depending on your land management goals to not shoot the sterilized coyotes, which is the canids out there with the white or black collars.

01:16:21.950 --> 01:16:36.860

Joe Madison - USFWS: Drive with caution, and in areas where there could be red wolves, which is pretty much, you know, throughout the 5 county areas. Of course there's concentrated areas, but you- one can be- could be anywhere, especially after releases. So drive, drive with caution around the 5-county area.

01:16:37.270 --> 01:16:54.180

Joe Madison - USFWS: And engage in Red Wolf management efforts, attend public meetings such as this one tonight, provide comments on recovery plans, participate in the- whatever strategy and process I mean, like Emily was talking about, to gauge, to have the two way conversation,

01:16:54.180 --> 01:17:00.090

Joe Madison - USFWS: you know, be part of that. That's- that would be a great way to be involved. Next slide.

01:17:03.890 --> 01:17:10.040

Joe Madison - USFWS: And another great way to be involved: especially if you own habitat or if you own habitat in the five-county areas, to become a Prey for the Pack participant.

01:17:10.170 --> 01:17:16.890

Joe Madison - USFWS: You know you can receive funding and technical assistance from Fish and Wildlife Service to work toward your land management goals.

01:17:18.470 --> 01:17:19.490

Joe Madison - USFWS: Next slide.

01:17:22.150 --> 01:17:34.590

Joe Madison - USFWS: And as I've mentioned the Fish and Wildlife Service, Red Wolf team is committed and available to work with you to address your questions, concerns, hear about your support and love for the species and all that. Here's the contact information

01:17:34.610 --> 01:17:40.240

Joe Madison - USFWS: for the folks that have talked tonight, and you know there's others too. If you know

01:17:40.280 --> 01:17:52.760

Joe Madison - USFWS: Morgan or Ryan, then obviously, that's your kind of contact and feel free to contact them with your- with your comments, questions, concerns. And then one last slide I believe.

01:17:54.760 --> 01:18:07.710

Joe Madison - USFWS: If you have questions after tonight's meeting that don't get answered, as I've been talking, I've seen a lot of questions coming through chat. We got a lot of pre-questions in the pre registration, so I know we're not going to be able to get through all of them

01:18:07.950 --> 01:18:09.110

Joe Madison - USFWS: tonight.

01:18:09.300 --> 01:18:18.210

Joe Madison - USFWS: But you can email questions to Red Wolf at fws.gov. And we will provide answers via email response and posted on the website.

01:18:18.560 --> 01:18:23.860

Joe Madison - USFWS: and, as always for additional information and updates, you can look at the Red Wolf recovery program website.

01:18:24.150 --> 01:18:32.260

Joe Madison - USFWS: It always has the latest information available to the public, and on our Facebook Post or Facebook page, you'll see latest posts.

01:18:32.770 --> 01:18:34.530

Joe Madison - USFWS: and with that I will turn it

01:18:34.600 --> 01:18:37.430

Joe Madison - USFWS: back over to Megan?

01:18:38.020 --> 01:18:43.170

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Yep, thanks, Joe, and thank you everyone for those updates.

01:18:43.370 --> 01:18:57.190

EMPSi - Megan Stone: We're gonna go ahead and get started with the question-and-answer portion of tonight's meeting. So again. My name is Megan Stone, with EMPSi, and I'll be the moderator for the Q&A session tonight. Excuse me.

01:18:57.800 --> 01:19:12.630

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.

01:19:13.010 --> 01:19:24.790

EMPSi - Megan Stone: If you submitted a question when registering for this meeting, there is no need to resubmit the question tonight. We have a list of these questions, and we'll do our best to address these questions.

01:19:25.000 --> 01:19:31.400

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Again, only questions within the scope and ability of the Service will be responded to tonight.

01:19:31.800 --> 01:19:49.520

EMPSi - Megan Stone: After we've worked our way through as many of these questions as we can, if we have time remaining, we'll 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.

01:19:50.000 --> 01:19:55.830

EMPSi - Megan Stone: If you would like to ask a question via the chat, you can see those instructions on the screen

01:19:55.870 --> 01:20:06.130

EMPSi - Megan Stone: for how to do so. If you are joining by phone, you can see instructions on the right. You'll press *9 to raise your hand to let us know you have a question.

01:20:06.540 --> 01:20:12.620

EMPSi - Megan Stone: We only have one phone caller on tonight. But again that's *9

01:20:12.720 --> 01:20:17.460

EMPSi - Megan Stone: if you'd like to raise your hand, and we do that just because

01:20:17.560 --> 01:20:20.810

EMPSi - Megan Stone: those joining by phone don't have access to the chat.

01:20:22.310 --> 01:20:26.690

EMPSi - Megan Stone: All right, so we'll leave these instructions up on the screen.

01:20:27.330 --> 01:20:33.610

EMPSi - Megan Stone: The Service had much information to deliver and aimed to be as thorough as possible tonight

01:20:33.780 --> 01:20:40.420

EMPSi - Megan Stone: and they are committed to getting questions answered in a timely fashion. So, if not addressed tonight

01:20:40.740 --> 01:20:47.580

EMPSi - Megan Stone: for any of those questions, to the extent possible, the Service will follow up and answer.

01:20:47.810 --> 01:20:55.320

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And answers will be posted on the program website. So with that, we'll start with our first pre-registered question.

01:20:55.330 --> 01:21:08.500

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Again after we've worked our way through as many of these as we can, if we have time remaining, we'll move on to questions received via the zoom chat feature to allow participants to submit follow up questions.

01:21:09.490 --> 01:21:12.800

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Alright. Our first question is:

01:21:13.250 --> 01:21:22.670

EMPSi - Megan Stone: What are ways that the Service can reduce the greater than 30% mortality rate over the past 2 years, and we'll turn that over to Joe.

01:21:24.710 --> 01:21:35.210

Joe Madison - USFWS: So a lot of that was talked about at various points in the presentation. But I'll touch on some of the things that we've changed over the last couple of years to try to reduce mortality. The various causes of mortality-

01:21:35.220 --> 01:21:39.560

Joe Madison - USFWS: gunshot mortality and vehicle strike mortality specifically,

01:21:39.770 --> 01:21:54.310

Joe Madison - USFWS: but the orange collars themselves is a key change that has- that factors into that, and the orange reflective material on the collars is also help, ways to reduce mortality, and the outreach that goes along with that. So folks know what orange collars mean.

01:21:54.360 --> 01:21:59.390

Joe Madison - USFWS: And the highway signs along the roadways. So they know Red Wolf are present

01:21:59.480 --> 01:22:05.200

Joe Madison - USFWS: so they can do it, you know their actions can hopefully lead to a decrease in mortalities.

01:22:05.310 --> 01:22:14.540

Joe Madison - USFWS: Pairing a captive-born male with a wild, excuse me, a captive born Red Wolf with a wild red wolf, is expected to help them transition into the wild.

01:22:14.570 --> 01:22:29.040

Joe Madison - USFWS: We've left them in acclimation pen longer. I actually didn't address that on my one slide about the acclimation pens, we've increased the period in acclimation pens this time across the board. Most of them were in there about 6 months,

01:22:29.080 --> 01:22:37.780

Joe Madison - USFWS: which is a couple of months longer than typical, part of that was to allow for the potential for pups to be born, and part of that was to allow for an additional bonding period.

01:22:37.980 --> 01:22:54.520

Joe Madison - USFWS: The shortest one that was there was in acclimation pen was about 2 and a half months, but that's because of the later date at which the female was captured from the wild. But that wild male that she was put with was in the acclimation pen, and in- within her territory where she was-

01:22:54.520 --> 01:23:00.660

Joe Madison - USFWS: where she was raised for 4 months prior to her being placed with him. So his presence was known.

01:23:01.850 --> 01:23:13.640

Joe Madison - USFWS: And again, just the fact that we left them in acclimation pens long enough to potentially have pups and increases their chances that the pair remain together and in that remote area where the pen is, at least initially.

01:23:14.230 --> 01:23:25.010

Joe Madison - USFWS: We also reevaluated the factors for the individuals selected for release, like I talked about in the slide. Selecting individuals that had not been on public display, fed enough prey items, in

01:23:25.120 --> 01:23:32.980

Joe Madison - USFWS: their age range, and those types of things, the factors that tend to lead to a higher likelihood of success.

01:23:33.810 --> 01:23:45.650

Joe Madison - USFWS: We're continuing to haze individuals off of roadways and in areas where they well, they shouldn't be. When opportunities present themselves, or through our monitoring, we find them in those areas, that will help reduce

01:23:45.760 --> 01:23:54.210

Joe Madison - USFWS: rates of mortality. And there's a lot of ongoing research on vehicle strike mortality as a way to reduce it. I talked about them previously.

01:23:55.770 --> 01:24:04.910

Joe Madison - USFWS: And we've got a road ecology study going, wildlife crossings, talking with folks about that. There's various non-governmental organizations looking into that as well

01:24:05.020 --> 01:24:11.500

Joe Madison - USFWS: to try to find ways to help reduce vehicle strike mortalities of red wolves and a lot of other wildlife species as well.

01:24:13.530 --> 01:24:19.940

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe. All right. Moving on. Our next pre-registered question is:

01:24:20.000 --> 01:24:29.190

EMPSi - Megan Stone: how diverse are genetics in the wild red wolves? Are they as imperiled as the Mexican gray wolf, and we'll turn that over to Emily.

01:24:29.730 --> 01:24:31.810

Emily Weller - USFWS: Thanks, Megan. Sure, that's a

01:24:31.820 --> 01:24:47.370

Emily Weller - USFWS: good question. So the latest number that I could find is from our 2016 PVA that showed that the Eastern North Carolina red wolf population had retained 85.4 percent of its founder genetic diversity.

01:24:47.370 --> 01:24:53.840

Emily Weller - USFWS: This upcoming PVA that we are working on will provide an updated estimate of that.

01:24:54.110 --> 01:25:14.060

Emily Weller - USFWS: The red wolf population or the Red Wolf Captive breeding program started with 14 founders, of which 12 are still represented. The Mexican will program started with 7 founders. I don't have the current genetic diversity for the wild Mexican wolf program to really speak about how imperiled

01:25:14.060 --> 01:25:21.360

that is, but improving or maintaining gene diversity or key components of both the Red Wolf and Mexican

01:25:21.380 --> 01:25:26.410

Emily Weller - USFWS: wolf recovery programs and their plans to ensure long term viability.

01:25:31.620 --> 01:25:37.860

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Emily. All right. Moving on. Our next question is:

01:25:38.170 --> 01:25:45.920

EMPSi - Megan Stone: what will be happening beyond 2023? Will the wolves be moved to a more remote location for safety?

01:25:45.990 --> 01:25:47.950

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And we'll turn that over to Joe.

01:25:49.390 --> 01:25:59.210

Joe Madison - USFWS: So that second part of that question, if they're referring to the introduction of Red wolves into a new area, that'll be addressed in a- in a different question. But

01:25:59.370 --> 01:26:15.430

Joe Madison - USFWS: with respect to what's gonna be happening beyond 2023, both here and in other areas, you know, there, there's too many factors in play at this point to really know the specifics. We need to be adaptable to the situation on the landscape and in the captive population.

01:26:15.890 --> 01:26:26.830

Joe Madison - USFWS: But the Recovery Red Wolf recovery planning revision, and the PVA, the population viability assessment, will help inform and guide those future actions, so particularly other release areas.

01:26:27.870 --> 01:26:36.250

Joe Madison - USFWS: And well, you know, it's possible that future for red wolves from Eastern Northern Carolina will be translocated to other populations to increase

01:26:36.510 --> 01:26:48.400

Joe Madison - USFWS: overall numbers and genetic diversity similar to what we do from St. Vincent and up to here. You know, there's not, there's not- just in case this is what this question is getting at, there's not any

01:26:48.490 --> 01:26:53.870

Joe Madison - USFWS: plan to move the Red Wolf population from Eastern North Carolina to a different area.

01:26:55.220 --> 01:27:03.770

Joe Madison - USFWS: We're also continuing to reduce efforts, excuse me continuing efforts to reduce causes of mortality here in Eastern North Carolina, like we've talked about on multiple fronts

01:27:03.900 --> 01:27:09.620

Joe Madison - USFWS: and including efforts to continue to foster acceptance of red wolves here in the local communities

01:27:09.710 --> 01:27:13.090

Joe Madison - USFWS: to allow conditions that are more conducive to their survival.

01:27:15.130 --> 01:27:24.310

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe. We've got another one for you here. What can forest managers do to ensure the recovery of red wolves?

01:27:25.330 --> 01:27:34.850

Joe Madison - USFWS: So, in general forest managers- management practices that maintain a variety of different habitat types, you know, early successful, some late successful

01:27:36.720 --> 01:27:52.090

Joe Madison - USFWS: habitats, or early successional, with wooded blocks adjacent to them that can support a variety of different prey species for red wolves, and provide denning and then rearing habitat, particularly if there's adequate security, such as it being somewhat free of human disturbance during key times,

01:27:52.220 --> 01:27:56.340

Joe Madison - USFWS: that will greatly benefit the recovery of red wolves in those areas.

01:27:56.530 --> 01:28:09.740

Joe Madison - USFWS: and you know, for forest managers providing information on red wolves and their use of the property to folks that may lease it for various reasons, it can greatly increase support, you know it helps in support of the red wolf recovery program.

01:28:09.980 --> 01:28:24.860

Joe Madison - USFWS: and if you're so inclined as a forest manager, then you may consider entering into land use agreements with the Fish and Wildlife Service to allow some additional monitoring and potential capture operations you know those types of things, that would further show support for the red wolf recovery program.

01:28:26.450 --> 01:28:29.290

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you again for that response.

01:28:29.660 --> 01:28:41.140

EMPSi - Megan Stone: All right. Next question is: what is expected of those of us who love the photographing the wildlife in Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge.

01:28:42.320 --> 01:28:49.840

Joe Madison - USFWS: Yeah. And I'm sure that question is partially posed because of what's occurred over the last year in Alligator River, because there was a lot of pressure

01:28:49.910 --> 01:29:01.180

Joe Madison - USFWS: put on the pups in that pack from folks just wanting to be out there to love the Red wolves, and there can be some detrimental effects to that. With respect to habituation of the pups

01:29:01.210 --> 01:29:08.580

Joe Madison - USFWS: which may not seem like an issue on the Refuge. But we've seen in the past, and it's almost certain to happen this time,

01:29:08.590 --> 01:29:27.020

Joe Madison - USFWS: some or all of those pups born there will disperse off of the Refuge, and likely down south of the Refuge on private land, and they need to be as leery as people as they can in general on the refuge as well, and to help us do that,

01:29:27.020 --> 01:29:38.050

Joe Madison - USFWS: people out there on the Refuge need to keep a minimum distance, a minimum of 100 yards away from Red Wolves, and that means maintaining that distance. If they're coming towards you, you continue to move yourself so you maintain that

01:29:38.160 --> 01:29:43.000

Joe Madison - USFWS: 100 yards, and that will help, that in of itself will help prevent habituating humans.

01:29:43.060 --> 01:29:54.370

Joe Madison - USFWS: Also don't stay with an animal or animals throughout the entire day, or for too long as your presence, whether you sense it or not, can disrupt their normal animal behavior.

01:29:54.560 --> 01:29:58.320

Joe Madison - USFWS: And if they're looking at you, even if they're always away,

01:29:58.450 --> 01:30:02.080

Joe Madison - USFWS: then you're affecting their natural behavior to some degree.

01:30:02.720 --> 01:30:18.060

Joe Madison - USFWS: And if your presence is causing them to alter their movements or behavior like you know, that they appear to want to go a certain route, but it's a great place for you to get, you know, to see them, and it's not just photographers. This is specific to all of us out there trying to enjoy this species.

01:30:18.240 --> 01:30:25.650

Joe Madison - USFWS: But if your presence is causing wildlife to alter those movements, then you need to move yourself, increase that distance and move to a different location.

01:30:25.770 --> 01:30:29.860

Joe Madison - USFWS: Never pursue the animal to get a closer look or a closer picture.

01:30:30.110 --> 01:30:44.190

Joe Madison - USFWS: Abide by road closures. There are currently temporary road closures on Alligator River National Wildlife refuge for the protection of this pack to help limit some of the concerns or some of the effects that we had last year on this year's litter.

01:30:44.570 --> 01:30:48.290

Joe Madison - USFWS: You know these have been put in place to protect these animals that we all love.

01:30:48.350 --> 01:31:00.780

Joe Madison - USFWS: So we need to abide by those and don't do anything to attract Red wolves, or any wildlife in general, such as throwing out food or putting down lure, anything like that- that would that would draw them closer to you.

01:31:02.600 --> 01:31:06.860

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe. All right. We've got a two-part question here:

01:31:07.240 --> 01:31:16.410

EMPSi - Megan Stone: How many red wolves do you plan to release over the next 5 years? Will there be an increase in release locations and frequency.

01:31:18.870 --> 01:31:28.130

Joe Madison - USFWS: So this is similar to what we talked about previous- before- the number that we're going to release over the next 5 years,

01:31:28.920 --> 01:31:46.760

Joe Madison - USFWS: it needs to factor in the existing condition on the ground, the existing condition in the captive population, to see what the needs on the ground are, and what we have on the ground as the- as it goes year by year. So it's too soon to say we're going to release this many red wolves over the next 5 years.

01:31:46.980 --> 01:31:51.160

Joe Madison - USFWS: You know, specific needs of the Eastern North Carolina population,

01:31:51.460 --> 01:32:11.060

Joe Madison - USFWS: it will be based on the population of what we have and have year to year. How many cap- how many breeding pairs we have, how many territories we have where there aren't red wolves that we could potentially place them and factors such as that. So there's not a set number. We need to be adaptive to what is occurring on the landscape as we move along.

01:32:11.350 --> 01:32:27.840

Joe Madison - USFWS: With respect to other release locations and frequency. That is all, as Emily described, that's all part of the red wolf recovery planning process, and the population viability assessment that will help, and inform and guide that as we move through that process.

01:32:30.390 --> 01:32:38.760

EMPSi - Megan Stone: All right, and you've touched on the orange collars a little bit already in the presentation. But this question is:

01:32:38.910 --> 01:32:44.400

EMPSi - Megan Stone: will collaring wolves help prevent them from being shot by hunters as coyotes.

01:32:45.840 --> 01:32:57.020

Joe Madison - USFWS: Yeah, we can't touch on this too much. Orange collars with orange reflective material along with the important outreach component of that, so that folks know what that means,

01:32:57.190 --> 01:33:19.290

Joe Madison - USFWS: is, is a key piece in letting people know it's a protected species to reduce the chances of misidentification. So they, as you know, as a coyote, and for it to be shot. So that orange collar is a key to look at, to look for, to know that it's out there, and it's your due diligence, anybody that's gonna

01:33:19.400 --> 01:33:27.930

Joe Madison - USFWS: do anything, to know what it is that you're shooting at, or harming, or whatever, and that orange collar is a key piece of

01:33:27.940 --> 01:33:29.790

Joe Madison - USFWS: being able to do that.

01:33:31.560 --> 01:33:38.430

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Alright. Next question is: where is Red Wolf likely to be encountered in the wild?

01:33:39.800 --> 01:33:52.520

Joe Madison - USFWS: So there you saw the distribution map that I put up earlier. You know, there's Red wolves throughout the 5 counties. Some of them move a lot, as these younger ones get a little older, they're gonna just start dispersing all over the place. So

01:33:52.570 --> 01:34:00.520

Joe Madison - USFWS: pretty much anywhere within the 5-county area, you know, outside of developed areas you could expect- you could potentially see a red wolf.

01:34:00.700 --> 01:34:12.360

Joe Madison - USFWS: They're very, typically very elusive and secretive animals. But as we've talked about a little bit, the family group on Alligator River is seen by the public quite a bit.

01:34:14.730 --> 01:34:16.750

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Alright, thank you, Joe.

01:34:17.000 --> 01:34:23.840

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And our next question is: will the Department of Agriculture Policies for forest management

01:34:24.010 --> 01:34:32.910

EMPSi - Megan Stone: work the Red Wolf to ensure that their habitat is protected. And we'll turn that over to Emily.

01:34:32.980 --> 01:34:51.780

Emily Weller - USFWS: Yeah. So Joe spoke a little bit about some forest management practices that could benefit red wolves. As far as the specific Department of Agriculture Policies, I don't have enough information about those policies to be able to answer that question.

01:34:53.540 --> 01:34:54.830

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Emily.

01:34:55.330 --> 01:35:03.240

EMPSi - Megan Stone: All right. Next question is: how many wolves can Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge alone support.

01:35:03.330 --> 01:35:05.300

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And we'll turn that over to Joe.

01:35:06.510 --> 01:35:14.210

Joe Madison - USFWS: There are so many variables and factors, and they're all changing over time that play into the answer to that question.

01:35:14.270 --> 01:35:31.610

Joe Madison - USFWS: So there's not one set number, but you know, and it ebbs and flows depending on births and dispersals and deaths and habitat management, those type of things. But based on the habitats that we've seen, red wolves use successfully over the life of the program,

01:35:31.610 --> 01:35:35.230

Joe Madison - USFWS: and the way that you know the population numbers both past and present,

01:35:35.310 --> 01:35:43.870

Joe Madison - USFWS: we would anticipate that Alligator River would likely potentially be able to support 20 to 25 red wolves, but that's a very general

01:35:44.000 --> 01:35:46.850

Joe Madison - USFWS: estimate of what we expect.

01:35:48.780 --> 01:35:50.120

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe.

01:35:50.860 --> 01:36:01.560

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Alright. This next question is asking if you can speak to Federally recognized tribe support and outreach, and we'll turn that over to Emily.

01:36:01.810 --> 01:36:02.770

Emily Weller - USFWS: Sure.

01:36:02.870 --> 01:36:20.580

Emily Weller - USFWS: So outreach to federally recognized tribes, I will say, has been somewhat limited. We did reach out to federally recognized tribes for participation on the recovery team, and I am happy that we have representation from the Cherokee Nation,

01:36:20.580 --> 01:36:35.180

Emily Weller - USFWS: the upper Mattaponi tribe, and the Monica Indian nation. We also reached out to the federally recognized tribes within the historic range of the Red Wolf to review and comment on the draft recovery plan.

01:36:35.200 --> 01:36:45.520

Emily Weller - USFWS: We've worked with the Cherokee nation in the past, on Grant opportunities involving the Red Wolf, and most recently, as I mentioned the documentary

01:36:45.710 --> 01:36:59.160

Emily Weller - USFWS: like I said. Tribal perspective is a piece of the red wolf story that has been missing, and while we're starting to get that piece in place and incorporating it into recovery, there's more to be done.

01:36:59.220 --> 01:37:10.390

Emily Weller - USFWS: So we will be working on that, having that tribal perspective represented on the team or in any kind of recovery planning process will just

01:37:10.410 --> 01:37:18.890

Emily Weller - USFWS: ensure that we're taking a more holistic approach, and it'll only enhance our recovery recommendations for the Red Wolf.

01:37:20.610 --> 01:37:24.520

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Emily. We've got another question for you here.

01:37:24.950 --> 01:37:33.840

EMPSi - Megan Stone: How are relations with community members in the 5-county radius being improved? Is there quantitative or qualitative data?

01:37:34.880 --> 01:37:54.300

Emily Weller - USFWS: Sure. So Joe touched a little bit on things that are being done on the ground to improve those relations. Kind of a theme throughout this this presentation is that we recognize that we can't recover the Red Wolf alone. And we're really trying to increase our focus on collaboration and community and partner engagement

01:37:54.310 --> 01:38:06.420

Emily Weller - USFWS: to recover this species, and we're working to provide landowners in North Carolina and other stakeholders by increasing engagement, communications, and transparency in all of our actions.

01:38:06.570 --> 01:38:26.160

Emily Weller - USFWS: You know, for example, the draft Recovery plan calls for increased formal participation of stakeholders in management and recovery planning processes. But again, what that looks like we don't know. Francine's work is going to help us to develop that process, to give stakeholders a say in decisions

01:38:26.160 --> 01:38:28.100

that affect them, and

01:38:28.620 --> 01:38:52.410

Emily Weller - USFWS: the transformation of that conflict and collaboration and progress will improve community relations as well. We don't have data at this time. The Service is planning an upcoming collaborative study to test communication and messaging approaches through which we are intending to see community members input.

01:38:52.410 --> 01:39:01.480

Emily Weller - USFWS: This study will help inform recommendations for future messaging related to red wolves, which will also help improve relations with the community.

01:39:02.540 --> 01:39:03.910

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Emily.

01:39:04.650 --> 01:39:12.410

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Next question is: what is being done to protect the red Wolves from intrusive behavior of park visitors.

01:39:12.520 --> 01:39:14.510

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And we'll turn that over to Joe.

01:39:15.020 --> 01:39:20.700

Joe Madison - USFWS: So I touched on that a little bit, but just to reiterate some of the points, not the whole list, but

01:39:20.710 --> 01:39:30.750

Joe Madison - USFWS: what's being done is refuge road closures to help protect that pack, especially during sensitive time periods, and enforcement of those closures.

01:39:30.890 --> 01:39:37.720

Joe Madison - USFWS: Also posted tips to follow to help us prevent habituation of wildlife to humans. And I ran through a lot of those tips earlier.

01:39:38.040 --> 01:39:48.150

Joe Madison - USFWS: And another component of that is the Red Wolf Teacher Ambassador Program to talk to folks directly, one on one, or in groups along the way, out there on the refuge to

01:39:48.270 --> 01:39:53.010

Joe Madison - USFWS: help reduce or eliminate those types of behaviors out there.

01:39:54.810 --> 01:39:58.240

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe. We've got another one for you.

01:39:58.510 --> 01:40:03.320

EMPSi - Megan Stone: The question is, why can't you let coyotes and red wolves breed.

01:40:04.520 --> 01:40:15.060

Joe Madison - USFWS: So we don't let- we try to reduce the number of breeding events between coyotes and red wolves to limit the coyote gene introgression into the wild red wolf population,

01:40:15.250 --> 01:40:25.870

Joe Madison - USFWS: which has been shown through research conducted Eastern North Carolina to be an effective way to manage the adverse effects of hybridization on the wild red wolf genome.

01:40:26.050 --> 01:40:29.910

Joe Madison - USFWS: Basically, it's, you know, a way to preserve the species.

01:40:31.520 --> 01:40:32.720

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you.

01:40:33.540 --> 01:40:43.130

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Next question is, are you considering better suited reintroduction sites with lower coyote density or less human traffic.

01:40:43.220 --> 01:40:45.280

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And we'll turn that over to Emily.

01:40:46.010 --> 01:41:05.260

Emily Weller - USFWS: Yeah. So we are definitely looking for additional sites. We know that's necessary for recovery. We'll use the PVA suitability studies that are already available and information from the draft recovery plan or the final recovery plan to assist in identifying those sites, but

01:41:05.350 --> 01:41:21.210

Emily Weller - USFWS: I think there might be a little bit of a misconception that there's a better place within the historic range of the Red Wolf. There are going to be few places that have lower coyote densities and smaller human populations, or less traffic.

01:41:25.060 --> 01:41:26.470

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Emily.

01:41:27.060 --> 01:41:37.550

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Next question is: I would be interested to hear your thoughts on the release environment now versus the '90's especially related to coyote density.

01:41:37.590 --> 01:41:39.620

EMPSi - Megan Stone: And we'll turn that over to Joe.

01:41:41.030 --> 01:41:57.900

Joe Madison - USFWS: Yeah, it's recognized now that the presence of coyotes is higher than it was when the original reintroductions occurred. However, management strategies such as the adaptive management strategy we've talked about, were successful in growing the red wolf population, even in the presence of coyotes, and even as that coyote population was growing.

01:41:58.430 --> 01:42:04.140

Joe Madison - USFWS: The population viability assessment that's being done as part of the recovery plan

01:42:04.240 --> 01:42:13.700

Joe Madison - USFWS: revision is evaluating both the existing condition in Eastern North Carolina and Red wolf habitat in general, with the with respect to the presence of coyotes,

01:42:13.880 --> 01:42:30.070

Joe Madison - USFWS: modeling the different impacts, the different types of management strategies, or, or, you know, allowing all coyotes and those types of things, will have on the on the population growth of red wolves in the future. So when that's completed that will provide the best available science to help inform

01:42:30.330 --> 01:42:35.340

Joe Madison - USFWS: and guide the development of strategies to manage both Red Wolf and coyote populations.

01:42:37.130 --> 01:42:38.530

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe.

01:42:38.790 --> 01:42:47.840

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Next question is: what are penalties for killing a red wolf, either on one's private property or elsewhere. And we'll turn that to Emily.

01:42:49.270 --> 01:43:07.710

Emily Weller - USFWS: Thanks. Yeah. So red wolves are a federally protected species under the Endangered Species Act. So killing or harming a red wolf can result in civil and or criminal penalties that may include fines, or forfeiture of any property used in the crime.

01:43:10.090 --> 01:43:11.520

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Emily.

01:43:11.870 --> 01:43:21.670

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Next question is, do you anticipate adding more pups born under human care to the wild population in the next season/few years.

01:43:21.680 --> 01:43:23.570

EMPSi - Megan Stone: We'll turn that over to Joe.

01:43:23.990 --> 01:43:38.710

Joe Madison - USFWS: Yeah, I mean every year, as I've talked about, one of the key focuses is on the ability of pup foster. We see it as a key way to increase numbers and genetic diversity. So every year we will assess opportunities to pup foster and pursue those opportunities whenever they prove feasible.

01:43:38.710 --> 01:43:48.200

Joe Madison - USFWS: You know, but it- it's not- it's not always feasible, based on a variety of factors that you know, and I think I'm actually going to touch on in a question later on.

01:43:49.950 --> 01:44:05.600

Joe Madison - USFWS: It's based on a variety of factors include the presence of a wild litter within the wild population, and the availability captive born pups that are of similar age as the wild that are, and to be able to access the well den, and you have to be able to find it, you know more than once to be able to foster so.

01:44:05.640 --> 01:44:09.000

Joe Madison - USFWS: But yes, we will pursue those opportunities whenever we're able to.

01:44:11.000 --> 01:44:15.010

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you for that response. I might

01:44:15.250 --> 01:44:24.160

EMPSi - Megan Stone: get this counting name mispronounced. But the next question is: is it possible that there are Red Wolf in Guilford county.

01:44:24.200 --> 01:44:25.940

EMPSi - Megan Stone: We'll turn that over to Joe.

01:44:26.580 --> 01:44:40.710

Joe Madison - USFWS: Yeah, I'll probably butcher as well. There, we have no current or past documented, or confirmed evidence or reason to believe that there is the presence of red wolves in that county. It's- It's substantially farther

01:44:40.710 --> 01:44:49.430

Joe Madison - USFWS: west than the current population. There's currently only one small population of red wolves, as we've discussed here in the far eastern portion of North Carolina,

01:44:49.440 --> 01:44:59.530

Joe Madison - USFWS: consisting of Beaufort, Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell and Washington Counties. So I never say never. But it's very, very unlikely that there would be a red wolf in that county.

01:45:01.100 --> 01:45:04.510

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe. Next question is:

01:45:04.790 --> 01:45:15.440

EMPSi - Megan Stone: does the Service plan on increasing staffing capabilities and budget to ensure the Red Wolf Conservation efforts are successful, and we'll turn that over to Emily.

01:45:16.250 --> 01:45:31.670

Emily Weller - USFWS: Yeah. So we continue to assess the needed staffing capacities to manage this very complex recovery program. So as funds become available and needs are identified, we hope to further staff the program.

01:45:33.900 --> 01:45:35.310

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Emily.

01:45:36.010 --> 01:45:44.670

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Next question is: realizing this is 2 years out, does the Service plan to release potential mates for last year's litter?

01:45:44.690 --> 01:45:49.090

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Can 2 packs share territory? And we'll turn that over to Joe.

01:45:50.830 --> 01:46:02.040

Joe Madison - USFWS: Yeah. So as I've talked about in the presentation, trying to- as we're trying to establish more breeding pairs in the wild, and therefore increase pup fostering opportunities.

01:46:02.190 --> 01:46:11.370

Joe Madison - USFWS: It will be, likely be, a key part of that strategy to try to pair wild red wolves with captive red wolves to increase the number of breeding pairs,

01:46:11.690 --> 01:46:15.020

Joe Madison - USFWS: since there's such low population numbers in the wild currently.

01:46:15.040 --> 01:46:32.180

Joe Madison - USFWS: And their likelihood of finding a mate in the wild is lower. So yes, it is very likely that that will be part of the release strategy in the future. It says 2 years out, but one of the females or 2 of the females that we paired with captive born males this year,

01:46:32.180 --> 01:46:44.310

Joe Madison - USFWS: they are- they just turned 2 years old, including one of the ones that had pups in a pen. So it's actually a part, it could be considered part of the strategy for next winter as well like we did this winter.

01:46:44.780 --> 01:46:54.390

Joe Madison - USFWS: However, as we've been saying, any future releases will be dependent on a lot of conditions on the ground: red Wolf presence, breeding, number of pairs, territories available,

01:46:54.560 --> 01:47:02.220

Joe Madison - USFWS: you know, suitable habitat conditions being available, those types of things so that will continue to adapt to what's occurring on the ground.

01:47:02.680 --> 01:47:04.710

Joe Madison - USFWS: To answer the second part of the question,

01:47:04.820 --> 01:47:14.300

Joe Madison - USFWS: the size of a territory is based largely on prey availability. So while 2 different red wolf packs from to be very unlikely to share a single territory,

01:47:14.400 --> 01:47:33.030

Joe Madison - USFWS: if prey density is high enough, then potentially portions of an existing territory, it could, in theory, be split between 2 adjacent territories. Like they would, they would occupy part of the same. It would become 2 territories, but they wouldn't be in the same territory, but one could potentially be split

01:47:33.030 --> 01:47:40.740

Joe Madison - USFWS: and they occupy part of that and adjacent, and you know this side of that ,and adjacent, so you wouldn't have two

01:47:41.020 --> 01:47:52.050

Joe Madison - USFWS: full wolf packs that literally use the same exact boundary. But if prey density is high enough they could potentially split off part of an existing territory if that makes sense.

01:47:52.220 --> 01:47:58.540

Joe Madison - USFWS: But you know, that's not typically what we'll see, especially in an area that has a well established

01:47:58.660 --> 01:48:00.350

Joe Madison - USFWS: wolf pack.

01:48:01.660 --> 01:48:17.390

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe, and we've got some more questions. But I did just want to answer one recurring question really quick. We've been asked if this recording will be shared, and it will, it will be posted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service website.

01:48:17.480 --> 01:48:27.000

EMPSi - Megan Stone: So that usually happens within a few weeks, because you need to make sure it's accessible for everyone.

01:48:27.570 --> 01:48:30.890

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Alright. With that, we'll move to the next question.

01:48:31.180 --> 01:48:43.380

EMPSi - Megan Stone: How does the Service plan to more aggressively counteract the prejudices and hatred of centuries of Old World myths around wolves, and we'll turn that over to Emily.

01:48:43.880 --> 01:48:55.140

Emily Weller - USFWS: Excuse me. Yeah, that's a good question. So wolves, all wolves, have long been depicted as these ferocious,

01:48:55.250 --> 01:49:03.900

Emily Weller - USFWS: you know, snarling evil animals. Think of the role that wolves play in stories and movies, little red riding hood to 3 little pigs,

01:49:03.920 --> 01:49:23.400

Emily Weller - USFWS: Frozen, Beauty and Beast, and then all of the werewolf stories. This misinformation has done real damage by shaping the public's understanding of wolves and creating fear and hatred. So the recovery planning calls for conducting outreach and education on Red Wolf conservation to improve

01:49:23.450 --> 01:49:32.390

Emily Weller - USFWS: public awareness and tolerance of red wolves. What that exactly looks like- we will consult with stakeholders during the development of the

01:49:32.570 --> 01:49:38.420

Emily Weller - USFWS: implementation strategy to determine specific actions that are necessary.

01:49:39.830 --> 01:49:49.890

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Emily. Next question is also for you. Are there plans to hand the recovery program over to State of North Carolina agencies.

01:49:50.790 --> 01:49:58.480

Emily Weller - USFWS: So if this species, the red wolf species, and not just the Eastern North Carolina

01:49:58.510 --> 01:49:59.890

Emily Weller - USFWS: population,

01:49:59.940 --> 01:50:07.220

Emily Weller - USFWS: were recovered to the point that it was no longer warranted listing as threatened or endangered under the ESA,

01:50:07.240 --> 01:50:23.020

Emily Weller - USFWS: the management would return to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources commission, and other State agencies with red wolf populations. But until then the Service will keep working collaboratively with State agencies to manage recovery of red wolves.

01:50:24.570 --> 01:50:26.040

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Emily.

01:50:26.490 --> 01:50:45.290

EMPSi - Megan Stone: All right. Our next question is: can the US Fish and wildlife Service ask the North Carolina Department of Transportation to implement and enforce a 40 mile per hour speed limit on US 64 through Alligator River National Wildlife refuge,

01:50:45.320 --> 01:50:49.210

EMPSi - Megan Stone: as a stop gap measure? And we'll turn that over to Joe.

01:50:50.560 --> 01:51:01.630

Joe Madison - USFWS: So as I've mentioned throughout the presentation in various spots, the Service has ongoing conversations with the North Carolina Department transportation, and others regarding ways to reduce vehicle strike for mortality.

01:51:02.090 --> 01:51:13.520

Joe Madison - USFWS: And the Service currently has a contract with Western Transportation Institute, who's conducting a Red Wolf Road ecology study to help inform and guide future actions and ways to reduce mortalities.

01:51:13.560 --> 01:51:25.870

Joe Madison - USFWS: And as part of that study, those researchers are meeting with department of transportation, to discuss various options, including but not limit to, wildlife crossings, underpasses, reducing speed limits, fencing, and those types of things.

01:51:26.510 --> 01:51:45.420

Joe Madison - USFWS: When those researchers have spoken to us, on the very general terms on speed limits, not specific to highway 64, or even specific to North Carolina, they've indicated that traffic research- based on traffic research, that speed limit reductions below the speed that a particular stretch of highway is designed for,

01:51:45.440 --> 01:51:51.130

Joe Madison - USFWS: which is 55 miles per hour in the case of highway 64, and the stretch that's being referred to,

01:51:51.410 --> 01:52:11.300

Joe Madison - USFWS: have not been shown to be effective, like, you know, and even with active enforcement. So basically, if the road can handle a higher speed based on the curvature and the pavement and the

width, then regardless of what the posted speed limit is, folks will drive at whatever speed the road can handle.

01:52:11.860 --> 01:52:23.740

Joe Madison - USFWS: So it, anyway. I'll leave it there, but it should be noted that for anybody coming to visit, or people that know that stretch of highway 64 through Alligator River

01:52:23.740 --> 01:52:36.600

Joe Madison - USFWS: has a substantial amount of speed law enforcement. I'm not sure I've ever seen a stretch of road that had as much law enforcement, check speed. as that stretch does, which obviously I am extremely grateful for a red wolf standpoint.

01:52:38.360 --> 01:52:39.790

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe.

01:52:39.850 --> 01:52:47.260

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Next question is: can you talk about the fostering of the one pup, and how that works and why that was done?

01:52:47.330 --> 01:52:51.770

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Have the parents accepted that pup? And we'll turn that over to Joe.

01:52:52.580 --> 01:53:06.150

Joe Madison - USFWS: Yeah, I'll kind of go more into depth on the pup fostering, and what it entails because I just kind of touched on it in the thing. And as I've said, pup fostering is shown to be a highly successful method of increasing the numbers of a wild population and genetic diversity.

01:53:06.300 --> 01:53:10.100

Joe Madison - USFWS: It was designed as part of the Red Wolf recovery program. You know the old tale

01:53:10.130 --> 01:53:14.640

Joe Madison - USFWS: used to be that if you touched a red wolf it would be,

01:53:14.930 --> 01:53:28.800

Joe Madison - USFWS: you know, it would be abandoned by its parents because it smelled or had been, you know, had humans. But that's not the case, and it was developed with the red recovery program, and the

captive population testing, fostering, and it was seen that it could be a key-

01:53:29.010 --> 01:53:33.010

Joe Madison - USFWS: a key way to increase the population and genetic diversity.

01:53:33.500 --> 01:53:38.690

Joe Madison - USFWS: And it's- so it's a method that we use to add one or more pups

01:53:38.840 --> 01:53:50.330

Joe Madison - USFWS: into the litter of hopefully an experienced red wolf breeding pair that have proven parental skills, which you know defines the Milltail pair to a T. You know they had 6 pups last year. That was her first litter.

01:53:50.350 --> 01:54:04.620

Joe Madison - USFWS: And that's a lot of pups for a first year mom. And yet 5 of the 6 survived, and even the one that didn't survive wasn't because of you know, some lack of mothering skills. It was- it was a vehicle strike mortality, unfortunately, on the highway 264.

01:54:05.620 --> 01:54:08.830

Joe Madison - USFWS: But so pup fostering works-

01:54:08.980 --> 01:54:24.550

Joe Madison - USFWS: when we use radio telemetry, we have females, radio collared, and we track them obviously, multiples times a week under general terms, but starting in early April, or even in late March, we'll start getting daily points on all females.

01:54:24.550 --> 01:54:38.750

Joe Madison - USFWS: And once they localize to a specific spot which is not normal, of course they're wide-ranging animals, then that's an indication of that they have likely dened and have either given birth that day or the next day.

01:54:39.760 --> 01:54:44.980

Joe Madison - USFWS: And then prior to that, or when we start seeing her localizing, then we start coordination with the

01:54:45.040 --> 01:54:49.450

Joe Madison - USFWS: the Red Wolf's SAFE folks with, you know, with the red wolves under human care,

01:54:49.480 --> 01:54:56.730

Joe Madison - USFWS: to see if there's been a wild, or excuse me, if the birth of the wild litter closely corresponds with the birth of one of the captive litters.

01:54:57.080 --> 01:55:10.840

Joe Madison - USFWS: And if there's a good match, then the pup fostering is initiated, and then this is after we've gone in the wild den to see and confirm there is a wild den, then see how many, the number of pups there are, the sex ratio of those pups.

01:55:11.020 --> 01:55:16.670

Joe Madison - USFWS: And so, if there's a good match with the captive population, then we, we initiate the pup fostering.

01:55:16.780 --> 01:55:34.200

Joe Madison - USFWS: And then we decide how many individuals, and what sex of individuals to bring. The decision to bring one pup- well, there's only one litter in the captive population at that point that, corresponding closely enough in birth

01:55:34.200 --> 01:55:47.620

Joe Madison - USFWS: to the age of the wild that are. You can't put pups that are of big age disparities, discrepancies together, because then they can potentially out compete. So you want them to be within 2 to 3 days age wise.

01:55:48.850 --> 01:56:08.450

Joe Madison - USFWS: So it was determined that we would do one, because she already has 5 litters, and there's still 5 yearlings in that area, and we didn't want to overstretch the breeding pair or the resources of that area, and we chose to bring one male pup because it would even out the sex ratio of the pups and the litter.

01:56:08.730 --> 01:56:15.530

Joe Madison - USFWS: And that one pup, that one litter born had the right timing, you know, ended up to be Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, which

01:56:15.780 --> 01:56:32.170

Joe Madison - USFWS: quite literally could not be any more farther away. It is the farthest away facility, but the folks from Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium actually brought that up on a commercial airline flight directly into Raleigh.

01:56:32.170 --> 01:56:37.620

Joe Madison - USFWS: And we picked them up, and that, and we they went with us, and we placed that-

01:56:39.130 --> 01:56:41.570

Joe Madison - USFWS: placed that pup into the wild den.

01:56:42.350 --> 01:56:50.870

Joe Madison - USFWS: We try to, we want to foster a mother within, you know, like a 10 to 14 day range, because that's when the mother's material instinct is very strong.

01:56:50.920 --> 01:57:06.530

Joe Madison - USFWS: And when we- and also the pups have limited mobility at that age, so they're like more likely to be able to stay in the den. Their eyes aren't open. They don't have enough movement yet so that they can wander off from a den before the female returns to nursing.

01:57:06.660 --> 01:57:13.140

Joe Madison - USFWS: But things have to happen pretty quickly, so that none of the pups are away from their mother

01:57:13.170 --> 01:57:17.760

Joe Madison - USFWS: for a very long time. The pup that was brought here from Point Defiance Zoo and aquarium, was

01:57:17.770 --> 01:57:27.790

Joe Madison - USFWS: tube fed a couple of times on the way over to make sure that they were- were still safely fed, and all of that. And then, when we place them in the den.

01:57:28.020 --> 01:57:32.500

Joe Madison - USFWS: We rub the foster pup, and actually

01:57:32.700 --> 01:57:45.890

Joe Madison - USFWS: get one of the wild pups to pee on the foster pup to help mask the scent a bit and kind of make them all blend together before we put them in the den. We put a microchip in them so that we can identify them later on.

01:57:46.960 --> 01:57:55.740

Joe Madison - USFWS: And that's what we do. We did that very quickly. The fostering: we were probably at the den less than I don't know, maybe 5 minutes, maybe a little over, and then we were out of there.

01:57:56.290 --> 01:58:04.040

Joe Madison - USFWS: And so these pups that are fostered in, before they're even 2 weeks old, they grew up learning to behave like a wild red wolf

01:58:04.050 --> 01:58:16.950

Joe Madison - USFWS: from their adoptive mother and their adoptive parents and siblings. And they are, it's shown to have basically the same survival rates as wild born pups.

01:58:18.510 --> 01:58:35.750

Joe Madison - USFWS: Since the placement of that pup, all monitoring has indicated, the female was back in there, we actually tracked her. I watched her from about, I don't know what, a half mile away. She went back to that den shortly after it was fostered, and has remained in that den, so all,

01:58:35.750 --> 01:58:40.550

Joe Madison - USFWS: all indications are that that pup was successfully fostered into that den.

01:58:42.620 --> 01:58:56.250

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe. We've only got a few more minutes left here. So we're going to try and answer this last pre-registered question. The question is: why do we not want to rebalance nature?

01:58:57.700 --> 01:59:05.100

Joe Madison - USFWS: So the Red Wolf recovery program is an example of doing just that, of attempting to restore the balance in nature.

01:59:05.380 --> 01:59:16.490

Joe Madison - USFWS: You know, red wolves are considered apex species, within their home range, probably defined as the Southeastern United States. They help maintain the balance of ecosystems that evolved with their presence.

01:59:16.530 --> 01:59:19.750

Joe Madison - USFWS: You know they- they help remove old and sick animals, and

01:59:20.020 --> 01:59:30.980

Joe Madison - USFWS: and they help maintain healthy populations of smaller predators like raccoons, and the effect that increasing populations of raccoons could have on other species like quail and

01:59:31.400 --> 01:59:33.260

Joe Madison - USFWS: and other species in turn

01:59:33.340 --> 01:59:38.360

Joe Madison - USFWS: you know, and which in turn reduces the impact on the other species from smaller predators.

01:59:38.720 --> 01:59:58.270

Joe Madison - USFWS: The absence of red wolves throughout their historic range has also allowed for the expansion of the range of species, such as coyotes, which likely wouldn't have occurred, or certainly not to the degree that it did, if there was a healthy red Wolf population throughout the historic range. So, just reiterating what I said, the red wolf recovery

01:59:58.270 --> 02:00:02.570

Joe Madison - USFWS: is a good example of attempting to restore the balance of nature.

02:00:04.380 --> 02:00:05.930

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Thank you, Joe.

02:00:06.060 --> 02:00:11.690

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Alright. We're getting close to 8 Pm.

02:00:11.920 --> 02:00:20.980

EMPSi - Megan Stone: Eastern time. So we've gotten through all of those pre-registered questions, and we've recorded all of the live questions that we've got. So

02:00:21.370 --> 02:00:30.810

EMPSi - Megan Stone: we got those all written down, and those can be followed up with later on. So with that I'll turn it over to John Tirpak to close us out.

02:00:31.970 --> 02:00:43.330

John Tirpak - USFWS: Thank you, Megan, and I want to thank everybody for your interest, attention, and curiosity during this session. I realize the limits of this platform for fostering robust discussion

02:00:43.440 --> 02:00:53.080

John Tirpak - USFWS: and I appreciate your patience with our efforts to engage as many of the public as possible. You all have incredibly busy lives. So, taking the time to join this Webinar,

02:00:53.180 --> 02:00:58.320

John Tirpak - USFWS: listen, and ask questions means so much to us, and to Red Wolf Recovery in general.

02:00:58.950 --> 02:01:01.530

John Tirpak - USFWS: Conservation does not happen without people.

02:01:01.910 --> 02:01:10.390

John Tirpak - USFWS: Whether you cheer on the red wolves from across the country, or you're managing your land in Eastern North Carolina in a way that supports these canids and their prey species.

02:01:10.500 --> 02:01:14.420

John Tirpak - USFWS: You're all important and critical for this effort. Thank you.

02:01:14.900 --> 02:01:24.210

John Tirpak - USFWS: We look forward to continuing to work to be better partners with you in the recovery of red wolves, while we ensure and engage the needs and values of the people involved.

02:01:24.610 --> 02:01:27.400

John Tirpak - USFWS: Thank you again. and have a wonderful evening.