



Red Wolf Recovery Program Public Information Meeting



Spring 2023





Red Wolf Recovery Program



Joe Madison,
NC Program Manager/
Wildlife Biologist



Ryan Nordsven,
Wildlife Biologist



Morgan Lewis,
Wildlife Biologist



Luke Lories,
Private Lands Biologist



Red Wolf Recovery Program

Mission

Work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance the endangered red wolf

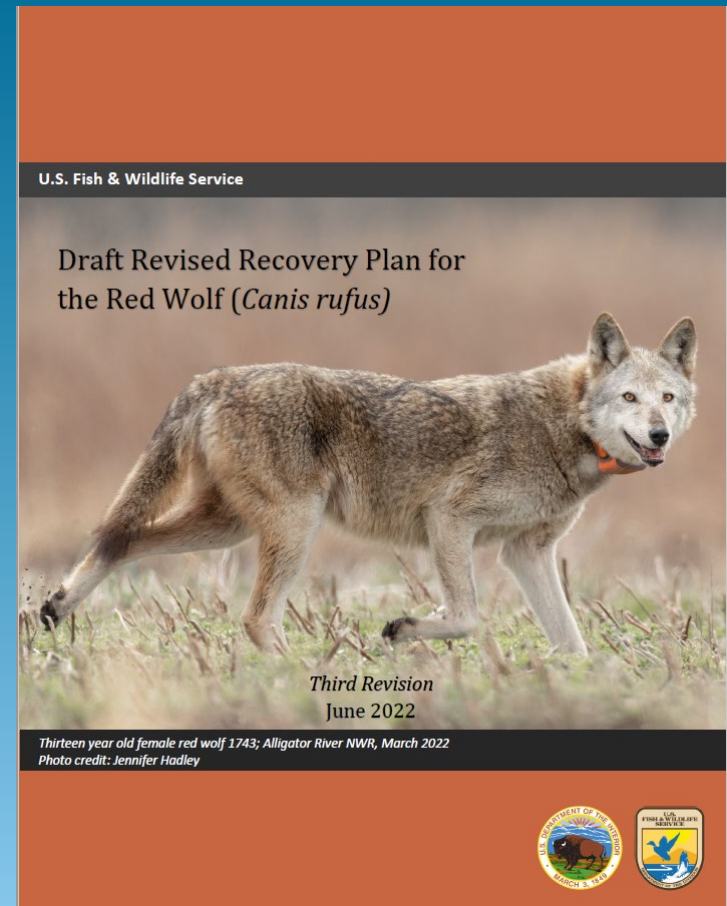




Red Wolf Recovery Program

Draft Recovery Plan

- Expand Distribution
 - Additional populations
 - Ideally different habitat types
 - Population Viability Analysis (PVA) will help characterize sites
- Increase Population and Maintain Genetic Diversity Long-term
 - Robust captive population
 - Releases/pup fostering/translocations/ adaptive management
 - Not reliant on extensive human interventions
 - Address threats
- Implement Collaborative Conservation
 - Engage stakeholders in management
 - Shared understanding of goals, roles/responsibilities, and expectations





Red Wolf Recovery Program

Draft Recovery Plan

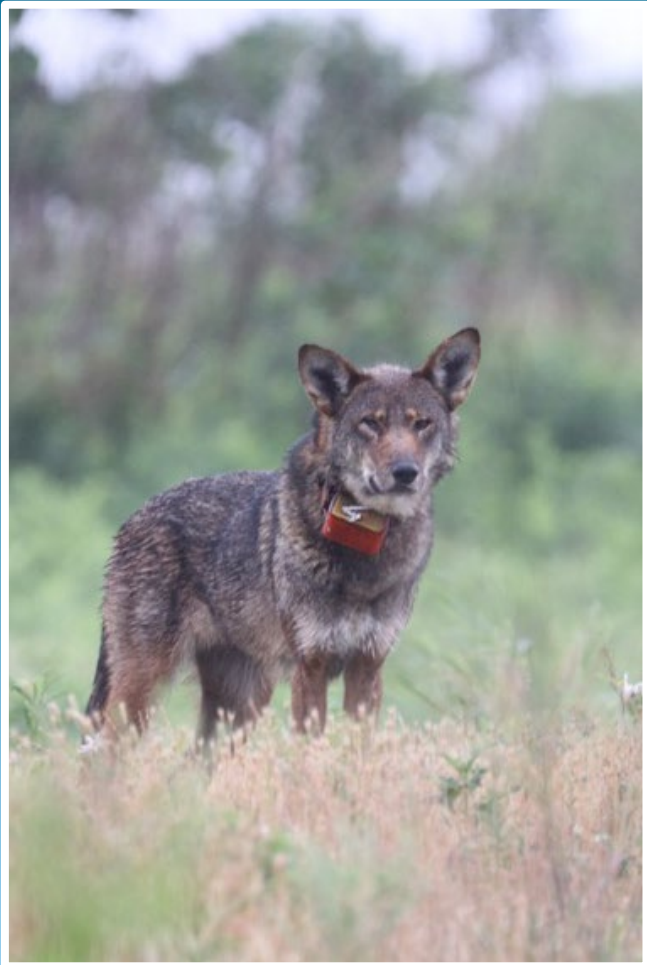


Photo courtesy of Leigh Gill

- Public Comment Period
 - Received 110 comments
- Substantial Comments
 - Recovery Criteria
 - Recovery Actions
- Extension on final Recovery Plan (fRP)
 - September 29, 2023
 - PVA
 - Update the fRP, incorporating results of PVA
- Recovery Implementation Strategy (RIS)
 - Activities stepped down from recovery actions
 - Flexible
 - Carrying out activities will be a collaborative effort



Red Wolf Recovery Program

Captive Population

- AZA SAFE Program
- 278 red wolves; 49 facilities nationwide
- Maintain a captive population suitable for release
 - Increase population*
 - Controlled propagation plan*
 - Husbandry Assessments
 - Behavior Assessments
 - Pre-release sites
- SAFE Program is more than just breeding



Photo courtesy of Kim Wheeler

*Recovery Action in dRP



Red Wolf Recovery Program

Wild Populations



Photo courtesy of Kirk Adams

- One wild population (ENC RWP)
 - Continue management
- New population sites*
 - PVA
 - Suitability studies in literature
 - Information in fRP
 - Stakeholder involvement
- Collaboration and community/partner engagement
 - Interagency Management Teams*
 - Stakeholder involvement*
 - Adaptive reintroductions*



Red Wolf Recovery Program

Communications

- Just as important as biological aspects
 - Trust
 - Relationships
- All forms
 - Media/social media
 - Website
 - Educational programs*
 - Cherokee Nation Documentary
 - Virtual/print resources
 - Meetings/phone calls
- Increasing formal participation of all stakeholders*
- Conservation Conflict Transformation



Photo courtesy of Jessica Suarez

Francine Madden
Constructive Conflict LLC
202-746-4421
francine@constructiveconflictllc.com

*Recovery Action in dRP



Red Wolf Recovery Program

Research



Photo courtesy of Kirk Adams

- Used to inform decision-making and management
- Red Wolf Repository
- Current Research
 - Red wolf ancestry in LA and TX
 - Hybridization
 - Inflammatory bowel disease
 - Assisted reproductive technologies
 - Inherited form of blindness
- Anticipate additional needs will be ID'd



Red Wolf Recovery Program

Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population (ENC RWP)



Photo courtesy of Eve Turek



Red Wolf Recovery Program

Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

RED WOLF COALITION v. United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Dist. Court, North Carolina 2018

RED WOLF COALITION, DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE, and ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE, Plaintiffs,

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, JIM KURTH, in his official capacity as Acting Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and MIKE OETIKER, in his official capacity as Acting Regional Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Region,

Defendants.

No. 2:18-CV-47-200

Court, E.D. North Carolina, Northern Division.

November 4, 2018.

Plaintiffs, represented by:
 - Plaintiff Welfare Institute, Southern Environmental Law Center, Jian Yi Zhang, Southern Environmental Law Center.
 Defendant as Acting Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, represented by:
 - Defendant Jim Kurth, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, William T. S.

Amended Plan to Release Red Wolves into the North Carolina Non-essential Experimental Population: Phase III



United States Fish and Wildlife Service
September 2022

General register

Thursday
April 15, 1995

Part IV

Department of the Interior

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

Endangered and Threatened Plants: Red Wolf

Rule

50

Summary

Proposed Rule:

... (text continues) ...

Comments:

... (text continues) ...

Summary:

... (text continues) ...

- Continuing to operate under 10(j) rule updated in 1995, in conjunction with applicable court decisions.
- In January 2021, the U.S. District Court issued a ruling for USFWS to “draft a plan to release captive red wolves” in NC.
- FWS subsequently submitted and implemented Phase I, Phase II and Phase III release plans covering March 2021 through May 2023.



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population Management Update

- Hosted 3 sets of public meetings locally over the past 15 months
- Designed to increase interaction with stakeholders regarding:
 - Red Wolf Recovery Plan
 - Upcoming releases
 - Coyote Management
 - Prey for the Pack (P4P)
 - Increasing community engagement
- Directly contacted over 120 landowners/local stakeholders, posted over 60 flyers throughout the area, as well as posting on numerous community websites





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Existing Condition

- Currently 15 known (radio-collared) adult/sub-adult red wolves and 6 pups in the wild.
- All known adults/sub-adults have orange collars, 8 of which are also a GPS collar.
- Estimated total wild population of approximately 23 - 25 red wolves, including pups.





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Existing Condition

- 3 mortalities since public meeting in Fall 2022
- All were older red wolves
- 1 natural causes (13 year old female)
- 2 unknown causes –
 - 1 necropsy results pending (9 year old male) – known health issues
 - 1 necropsy not possible (10 year old female)





St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge

Red Wolf Island Propagation Site



- Established as a propagation site off of the Gulf Coast of Florida in 1990 to maintain a pair of breeding red wolves in a somewhat controlled environment, so offspring are raised in the wild
- When young reach dispersal age they are captured and translocated to the ENC RWP
- Currently a pair of red wolves on SVNWR
- Monitoring indicates that they may have had a litter this spring but it has not been confirmed



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Existing Condition

- April 20 - confirmed that the Milltail Pack on ARNWR had a litter for the second consecutive year (3F, 2M)





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

Fall/Winter/Spring 2022-2023 Management Actions

- Constantly evaluating research, results of past management and experience regarding releases to factor in actions leading to the highest likelihood of success
- Led to development and implementation of Phase III Release Plan



Photo courtesy of Leigh Gill



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

Fall/Winter/Spring 2022-2023 Management Actions

- Red wolves selected for release were evaluated and selected to increase likelihood of success
- One factor that potentially increases the chance of pairs remaining together after release is the presence of pups
- Potential red wolf pairs were in pens for longer and through when pups would be born



Photo courtesy of Woody Sandy



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

Fall/Winter/Spring 2022-2023 Management Actions

Phase III Release Plan - Goal

- Focus on pup fostering opportunities, whenever possible

Status

- On April 24, fostered a male pup born at the Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium in Tacoma, WA into the wild litter on ARNWR
- Monitoring to date suggests the fostering was successful





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

Fall/Winter/Spring 2022-2023 Management Actions

Phase III Release Plan - Goal

- Increase number of breeding pairs in the ENC RWP
 1. Translocate wild female red wolf from SVNWR to ENC RWP

Status

- November 2022 – captured and translocated 1 adult wild female red wolf from SVNWR into an acclimation pen on ARNWR with a captive born male





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

Fall/Winter/Spring 2022-2023 Management Actions

Phase III Release Plan - Goal

- Increase number of breeding pairs in the ENC RWP
 2. Attempt to pair captive born red wolves with unpaired wild red wolves within their territory

Status

- In Nov 2022 and Feb 2023 – wild females captured and placed in acclimation pens within their territories on PLNWR with captive born males



Photo courtesy of Neil Jernigan



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

Fall/Winter/Spring 2022-2023 Management Actions

Phase III Release Plan - Goal

- Release of a family group of 3 captive born red wolves (2 adults and a pup) on ARNWR or PLNWR

Status

- In December 2022 placed a captive born family group of 3 from the SAFE program in an acclimation pen on PLNWR





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

- Fall/Winter – Constructed acclimation pens on ARNWR and PLNWR





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

- Collared all captive born red wolves to be released with orange GPS/VHF collars with orange reflective material.





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*



Photo courtesy of Eve Turek

- Conducted trapping November through March on ARNWR and PLNWR, as well as private land with landowner permission.
- Captured 21 wild canids (8 red wolves, 12 coyotes and 1 hybrid)
- Included the initial collaring of all 5 remaining red wolves born on ARNWR last spring.



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

- All red wolves will continue to be fitted with bright orange collars
- Red wolves are federally protected under ESA. Reminder that killing or harming them is illegal.
- Look closely for an orange collar. If you see orange, don't shoot!





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*



- Place mobile electronic highway signs on major roads closest to release sites prior to release.
- Move signs to different roads/areas where red wolf use is occurring based on monitoring.



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

- When red wolves were known to be spending time on private land, we contact the landowner to notify them of their presence and address concerns upfront
- Encourage folks to contact us anytime for questions or concerns





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*



Red Wolf Hotline
1-855-4-WOLVES
1-855-496-5837

- Respond to calls, texts or emails with questions, concerns, sightings and potential issues
- Address time-sensitive issues 24/7, whenever possible



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

Acclimation Pens Status

- Of the 4 red wolf pairs in acclimation pens, 2 had pups, both on PLNWR
- The 2 pairs that did not have pups were released the first week of May, one each on ARWR and PLNWR
- The 2 pairs that did have pups will be released when the pups are about 6 weeks old





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

- Track and monitor every newly released red wolf daily.
- Strategically place supplemental food, when/where feasible, to help newly released red wolves transition to the wild
- Track all other wild red wolves multiple times per week
- Monitor throughout the ENC RWP with over 50 remote sensing cameras.





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

Population After May Releases

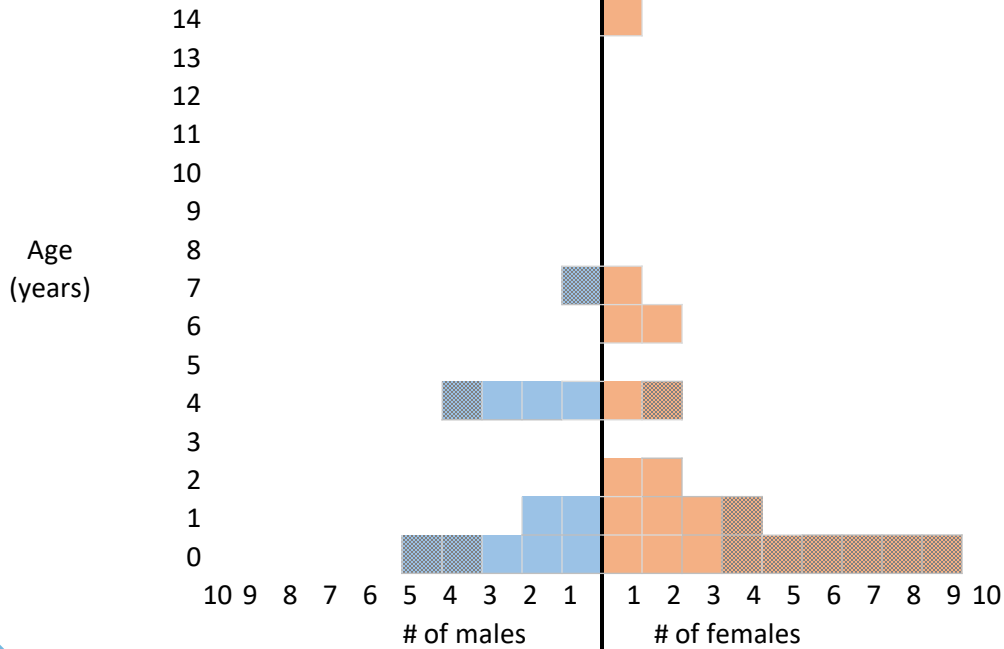
- 19 known (radio-collared) adult/sub-adult red wolves and 14 pups in the wild.
- All known adults/sub-adults have orange collars, 12 of which are also a GPS collar.
- Estimated total wild population of approximately 35 - 37 red wolves, including pups.



Photo courtesy of Ed Dailey



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*



Wild Red Wolf Age Structure

- Shift over the last year from mostly older red wolves to younger
- Pup survival to first year is generally 50%
- Monitoring to date indicates no red wolf/coyote hybrid litters in 2023



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Current Distribution

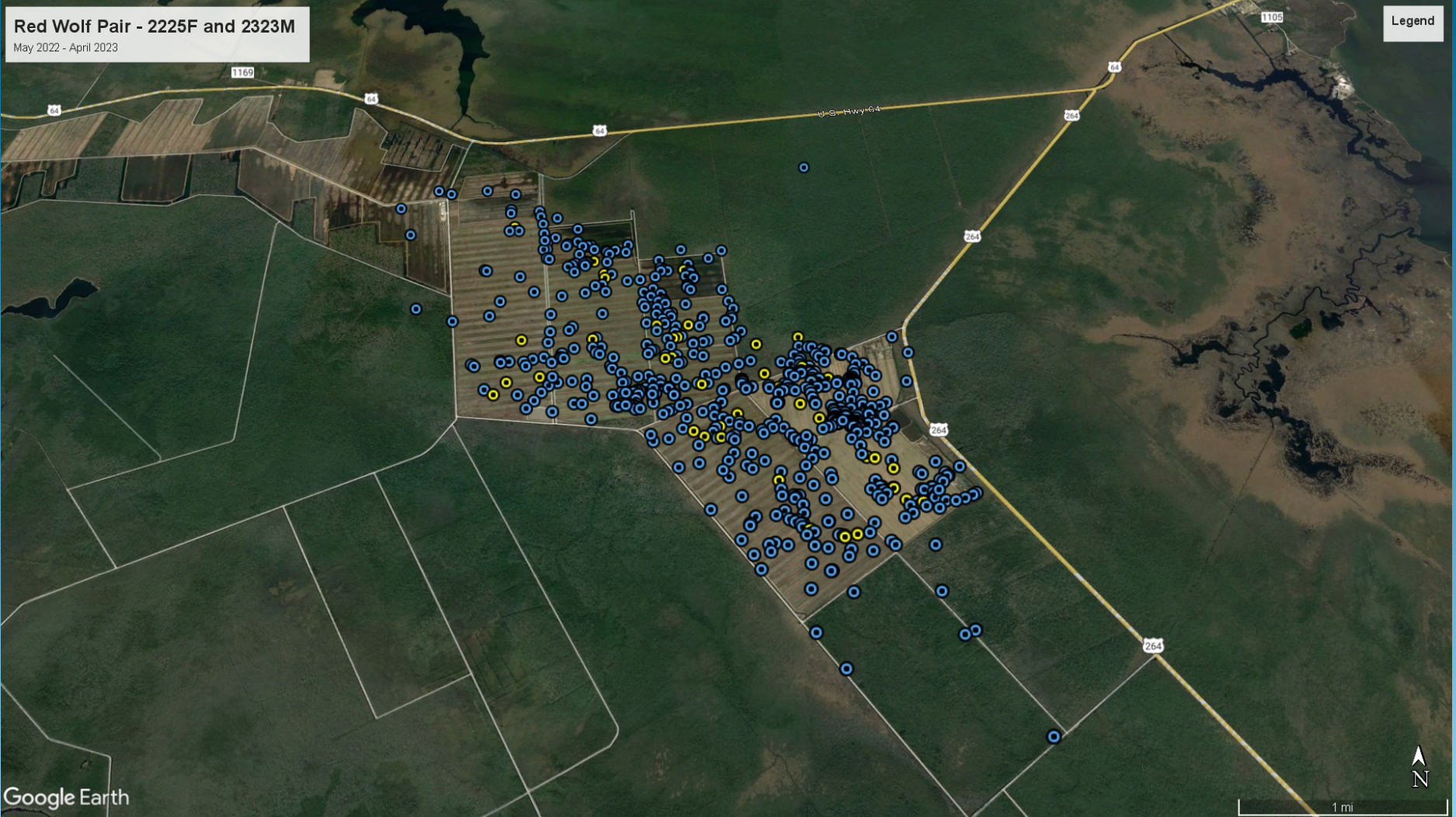




Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Current Distribution

2225F and 2323M – about 10 - 15 square miles





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Current Distribution

2280F – about 10 square miles





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Current Distribution

2197F – about 10 - 15 square miles

Red Wolf 2197F
May 2022 - April 2023





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Adaptive Management Strategy



- Developed in the late 1990's by a group of scientists to establish methods to control interbreeding
- Entails removing some coyotes upon capture and sterilizing other captured coyotes. Decision based on location and red wolf presence
- Sterilized and released coyotes act as placeholders in areas currently without established red wolves
- Sterilized coyotes continue to hold/defend their territory but can't breed



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Adaptive Management Strategy

- Captured 12 coyotes this past trapping season
- 9 were euthanized based on location
- 3 additional coyotes were sterilized, collared and released where captured to act as placeholders
- 26 sterilized coyotes currently within ENC RWP





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Adaptive Management Strategy

- Done at no cost to landowners
- All sterilized coyotes are radio collared and released back where they were captured.
- Reduces hybridization and the coyote population locally
- Can benefit landowners and their land management goals
- Benefits red wolf recovery





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

Red Wolf Coalition (RWC) Depredation Compensation Program

- Administered and funded by RWC
- Reimburses landowners for loss of livestock by red wolves
- Depredations by red wolves are very rare
- Valuable assurance to landowners, with hopes to increase tolerance and/or support
- Contact USFWS within 24 hours





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population *Management Update*

Trapper Reimbursement Program

- Funded by North Carolina Wildlife Federation
- Reimburses licensed trappers for red wolves, radio-collared canids, and other wild canids of management value, captured during lawful trapping activities already occurring
- Canids must be transferred to USFWS alive and in good condition
- Contact USFWS as soon as possible after capture





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Community Engagement

- 1**
Select Habitat to Improve
- 2**
Develop a Habitat Project with Staff
- 3**
Sign Project Agreement
- 4**
Implement & Complete the Project
- 5**
Submit Receipts for Cost-share
- 6**
Reap The Benefits

Interested?

Luke_Lolies@fws.gov

- or -

(252) 256-3676

Prey For The Pack

A Habitat Improvement Program

- USFWS provides funding and technical assistance to landowners for habitat work to meet their land management goals
- Landowners agree to:
 - Allow red wolves to be present
 - Allow monitoring
 - And up to their comfort level allow for coyote sterilization



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Community Engagement

Red Wolf Center – Columbia, NC

- Front - red wolf outreach and education – managed by NCWF
- Back - red wolf field work – collaring, health checks, etc.
- Two captive red wolves in a public viewing enclosure
- Live webcams at ncwf.org





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Community Engagement

Red Wolf Teacher Ambassador Program

- Collaboration with North Carolina Museum of Natural Science and NCWF
- Area teachers will work with the USFWS Red Wolf Field Team on monitoring
- Conduct outreach on NWR's in areas with red wolf use and high public presence/interest
- Provide coverage at the Red Wolf Center
- Bring that experience and knowledge back to the classroom





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

How Can I Help and/or Get Involved?

- Contact the USFWS Red Wolf Team directly if you have any questions, concerns or issues related to red wolves
- We are available to work with you to address your concerns



Photo courtesy of Jessica Suarez



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

How Can I Help and/or Get Involved?

- Don't shoot collared canids
 - Illegal to shoot red wolves (orange collars)
 - Likely to your benefit to not shoot sterilized coyotes (white or black collars)
- Drive with caution in areas with red wolves
- Engage in red wolf management efforts (e.g., public meetings, providing comments on recovery plans, etc.)





Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

How Can I Help and/or Get Involved?

- Become a Prey for the Pack participant
- Receive funding and technical assistance from USFWS to work toward your land management goals

Prey for the Pack

Creating and improving habitat for wildlife!



www.ncwf.org



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Community Engagement

The USFWS Red Wolf Team is committed and available to work with you to address your questions and concerns regarding red wolves.

Who Should I Contact Regarding Red Wolves in Eastern NC?

- Red Wolf Hotline 1-855-4-WOLVES (1-855-496-5837) or redwolf@fws.gov
- Emily Weller, Red Wolf Recovery Program Coordinator at (337) 291-3090 or emily_weller@fws.gov
- Joe Madison, NC Program Manager/Wildlife Biologist at (252) 475-8259 or joseph_madison@fws.gov
- Luke Lolies, Private Lands Biologist and Prey for the Pack at (252) 256-3676 or luke_lolies@fws.gov



Eastern North Carolina Red Wolf Population

Community Engagement

Submit questions regarding this evening's presentation to:

- redwolf@fws.gov

Answers will be provided via:

- Direct email response and/or posted on the Red Wolf Recovery Program website



Visit our website for more information and updates:

<https://fws.gov/project/red-wolf-recovery-program>