

GENERAL UPDATES

Red Wolf Recovery Program

The U.S., Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Red Wolf Recovery Program is focusing on:

- 1) Updating the Red Wolf Recovery Plan
- 2) Increasing the captive populations to maintain the genetic health of the population and support future reintroductions
- 3) Management of the nonessential experimental population in North Carolina

The updated recovery plan will follow FWS's fairly new Recovery Planning Implementation Process (RPI). RPI is a 3-document approach consisting of:

- 1) Species Status Assessment (SSA) – this document evaluates species viability and provides the foundational biological information to develop and support a recovery plan.
 - a. The red wolf SSA was completed in April 2018
- 2) Recovery Plan – this recovery plan is more concise than what recovery plans have traditionally been in the past. They contain the Endangered Species Act statutorily required elements: recovery criteria, recovery actions, and time and cost estimates.
- 3) Recovery Implementation Strategy – this document itemizes the prioritized on-the-ground activities needed to implement the actions identified in the recovery plan.

To help ensure a transparent, joint stakeholder/agency/partner process based on the best scientific information, we will be contracting out facilitation and modeling services.

WILD POPULATION

North Carolina Nonessential Experimental Population (NEP)

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

The current known population of red wolves (e.g. radio-collared individuals) in the NC NEP is 12 red wolves and the estimated total population is approximately 20 red wolves.

2019 was the first year since the reintroduction of red wolves in North Carolina in 1987 that there were no documented red wolf pups born in the wild.

- Additionally, there are currently no breeding pairs of red wolves in the NC NEP.

There were 5 red wolf mortalities in 2019:

- 2 vehicle strikes
- 1 gunshot
- 1 suspected foul play
- 1 unknown cause of death

To increase the genetic diversity and sustain the wild red wolf population in the NC NEP, we are currently attempting to translocate red wolves to potentially create 3 new breeding pairs within

the NC NEP. All activities associated with this action are being conducted on Federal lands. Those activities include:

- Building three acclimation pens (2 on Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and 1 on Pocosin Lakes NWR). Defenders of Wildlife paid for the majority of the materials to build the pens.
- Conducting capture operations on Alligator River NWR, Pocosin Lakes NWR and St. Vincent NWR (red wolf island propagation site off of the coast of Florida and key component to red wolf recovery) since the beginning of December.
- When the appropriate red wolves are captured they will be put in pens together for up to thirty days in pairs that include one red wolf from the territory where the pen is located and a red wolf new to that territory. The hope is that the pair will bond to each other during that time and the red wolf new to that territory will be more likely to remain there when released.
- Conducted a public meeting on December 10 to inform the public, particularly the local stakeholders, on what actions we were taking.

So far we have mixed success in capturing the specific red wolves and there is currently one red wolf in each of the three acclimation pens. Decisions on who to have where once they are captured are re-evaluated as additional red wolves are captured to try and attain the best possible scenarios with regards to successful breeding pairs. Red wolves that have previously been captured are extremely trap savvy and difficult to re-capture.

In addition, the breeding male on St. Vincent NWR was killed in June 2019 so a male red wolf has been transferred from the North Carolina Zoo to St. Vincent NWR and will be released on the island when capture operations have concluded.

We are having two screenings of the film “Red Wolf Revival” free to the public in January. There was one screening on January 10, 2020 at the Pocosin Lakes NWR Visitor Center and there will be a second screening on January 24, 2020 at the Alligator River NWR Visitor Center, which will be followed by a Q & A and panel discussion with individuals associated with red wolf recovery from FWS, NGO’s, WRC and a local landowner.

COMMUNICATION/OUTREACH/EDUCATION

Biomaterial Request Protocol

On occasion, remains of wolves may be used to create wolf mounts, pelts, skulls, and/or skeletons for educational purposes (i.e., biomaterial). To help FWS and American Red Wolf Species Survival Plan (SSP) facilities track the location, availability and use of these materials, Craig Standridge (Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, SSP Education Advisor) has developed a Biomaterial Inventory Form. Additionally, to help make the best use of the materials we have, Craig developed a Biomaterial Request Form.

Facilities that want to have a biomaterial prepared or obtain an existing biomaterial for use in educational programs should submit a request to the SSP Education Advisor. The request form can be found at <https://forms.gle/MywoZbJ7MofQY17j9>

The Education Advisor will review the request, including whether the creation and/or use of the biomaterial benefits conservation of the species, and will forward his recommendation to the SSP Coordinator and Red Wolf Recovery Lead for approval and authorization.

Contact:

Craig Standridge, American Red Wolf SSP Education Advisor
Craig.Standridge@pdza.org
253-404-3690

RESEARCH

NAS Taxonomic Studies

FWS contracted the National Academy of Sciences to assist with taxonomic studies of the red wolf. The project includes two activities: 1) a review of applications to clarify the taxonomy of unidentified wild canids in southern Louisiana and other geographical areas, and 2) the development of a research strategy to examine the evolutionary relationships between ancient red wolves and contemporary red wolves.

A request for proposals was published on November 14, 2019; applications were accepted through December 3, 2019. NAS received 3 proposals. NAS will be sending FWS their review and ranking of these proposals shortly. Based on its review and the report from NAS, the Service will select a project and request a full proposal.

Research Request Protocol

To ensure research involving red wolves or its parts (e.g., blood/tissue samples) is conducted in accordance with regulatory requirements, a new research request protocol has been developed. All research, whether on live wolves or blood/tissue, whether in your possession or located elsewhere, has to be authorized, or in some cases, permitted. The following protocol (see diagram below) will help track the use of specimens and ensure the correct authorization or permit is obtained.

All research requests are to be submitted to the Red Wolf Recovery Coordinator. Proposals will first be reviewed by a committee consisting of: the FWS Red Wolf Recovery Lead and/or other Service employees with the Red Wolf Program, the American Red Wolf Species Survival Plan (SSP) Coordinator or delegate, and the Arkansas Center for Biodiversity Collections (ACBC) Collection Manager to determine if the proposed research is a benefit to the conservation of the species or a valid use of the specimen (i.e., enhances propagation or survival of the species). The committee will also ensure that the requested research will not result in unnecessary overlap or hardship on SSP institutions. ACBC will also weigh in on the availability of requested specimens to ensure rare specimens or all of a particular specimen/individual are not depleted.

If the proposed research benefits the conservation of the species, the FWS Red Wolf Recovery Lead will determine if a permit is needed to conduct the proposed research. If a permit is needed, the researcher will be contacted and directed to the application form and instructions for submitting the application to the FWS's Southeast Regional Office. The form can be found at <https://www.fws.gov/forms/3-200-55.pdf>. Note that application packages should be submitted at

least three months prior to the start of your proposed activities. If you are renewing or amending a permit, packages should be received by at least 30 days prior to the expiration of the valid permit.

If the approved research does not require a permit, but does request use of specimens already banked, the FWS Red Wolf Recovery Lead will provide, in writing, authorization for the transfer and use of specimens. See diagram below for research request protocol.

