



## MEMORANDUM

November 20, 2013

TO: All Interested Parties

FROM: <sup>"for"</sup> Cynthia K. Dohner, Director, Southeast Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service *M. O'Connell*  
Gordon S. Myers, Executive Director, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission *GSM*

SUBJECT: Collaborative Conservation of Red Wolves and Other Canids on North Carolina's Albemarle Peninsula

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Recovery of the federally-listed red wolf has been a priority for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for more than 20 years and is focused in North Carolina on the Albemarle Peninsula (AP; i.e., Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington, Beaufort, and Dare counties). Comprehensive stakeholder involvement and collaboration with other management agencies is critical to successful recovery of any at-risk species. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) is a key collaborator in this regard, as it has jurisdiction over all state-trust wildlife resources in N.C.

Since 2009, the FWS and WRC have worked to broaden our collaboration in the conservation and management of all canid species (including red wolves) on the AP. As these efforts have solidified, specific actions have been jointly identified by our two agencies that will improve conservation outcomes. These actions are categorized into five areas; collaboration, research, outreach, regulatory, and enforcement. Specific action items are outlined and prioritized within each of these categories in Attachment A.

This memo establishes the FWS's and WRC's commitment to initiate, or to continue, the efforts outlined in Attachment A. The common goal in this effort is to establish clear expectations and accountability for collaboration regarding the action items on Attachment A, thus resulting in enhanced and seamless canid conservation and management on the AP. This approach provides the best opportunity to achieve recovery goals for red wolves, while at the same time managing other canids to balance biological variables with social expectations. The dynamics of these canid species are complex and offer unique opportunities for innovation. Appropriate staff from each agency is hereby tasked with immediately developing a timeline to implement these actions. Through this commitment, we will continue to advance our collective conservation goals.

## Attachment A

### **Action Items for Collaborative Conservation of Canids on North Carolina's Albemarle Peninsula (AP)**

*(Note: Action Items are prioritized within category.)*

#### **Collaboration**

1. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will formalize in writing the collaborative management of canids on the AP. This agreement should:
  - a. include a clear mission statement, goals, objectives, and implementation strategies (ask and answer the "Why?");
  - b. set a goal to define success regarding canid management on the AP;
  - c. espouse a philosophy of canid management operating within the context of a three-legged stool (i.e., federal and state governments and stakeholders);
  - d. as available, commit funding and staffing resources for field personnel to contribute to the conservation of the red wolf and management of coyotes;
  - e. as available, commit funding to conduct research pertinent to canid management on the AP;
  - f. establish policies and goals for developing a collaborative genetic archive for AP canids, a data sharing portal accessible by staff in both agencies, and reciprocal sharing of all historical data (including phenotypic and genotypic data and literature) of the red wolf;
  - g. establish a foundation for developing and implementing an adaptive approach to canid management on private lands on the AP;
  - h. initiate development of a collaborative canid research program;
  - i. describe plans to conduct the next five year Red Wolf Program review;
  - j. outline options for holding annual workshops with federal and state enforcement staff;
  - k. outline plans to hold semi-annual coordination meetings regarding canid management on the AP; and
  - l. develop milestones for future development of a management plan for all canids in the AP.
  
2. The FWS will initiate a review of the current Red Wolf Recovery Plan to determine if the state-of-our-knowledge or field conditions have changed such as to warrant its revision. Review and comments from the WRC will be considered in this evaluation.
  
3. The WRC, with support and participation of the FWS, will establish a "Canid Forum" (similar to that established for manatees in Florida) to facilitate communication and discussion regarding canid management and citizen science opportunities on the AP.

## Attachment A

### Research

1. The FWS and WRC will provide funding and logistical support for research identified by the Red Wolf Recovery Implementation Team, Red Wolf Program staff, other FWS staff, or the WRC that promote the conservation and recovery of the red wolf and other canids on the AP. Studies could include:
  - a. tests of the “placeholder theory” on the AP, including behavior of sympatric canids,
  - b. determining carrying capacity of canids on the AP,
  - c. determining genetic profiles of canid species on the AP,
  - d. evaluating predator-prey dynamics,
  - e. studies of canid habitat use,
  - f. epidemiology of diseases impacting canids on the AP,
  - g. development of stochastic simulation models of sympatric canid population dynamics and habitat use, and
  - h. canid dispersal dynamics
2. The FWS and WRC will conduct jointly-supported research to determine the attitudes and opinions of N.C. private landowners and other citizens concerning canids on the AP (i.e., human dimensions studies).

### Outreach

1. The FWS and WRC will collaborate with other partners to design and implement broad-based outreach and marketing programs with clear goals, objectives, strategies, and measurable outcomes, including development of consistent agency messages and educating the public about canids on the AP.

### Regulatory

1. The FWS and WRC will initiate a review and, if needed, subsequent rule-making to clarify concepts or rectify conflicts in current federal or state rules (including the current 10(J) rule).
2. The WRC will review and evaluate statutory requirements for listing red wolves as state threatened in the five AP counties.
3. As data demonstrating a relationship between coyote hunting and red wolf mortality become available, the FWS and WRC will evaluate, and if appropriate implement, adaptive approaches to regulate of take of coyotes that may result in incidental take of red wolves.
4. The WRC will evaluate the status, management, and regulation of Controlled Fox Hunting Preserves.

## Attachment A

5. The WRC will develop BMPs (due care provisions) for coyote hunting, trapping, and live sale.
6. The WRC will compile, compare, and contrast canid hunting and trapping regulations and programs in other states, including, but not limited to, other states with other species of wolves.

### **Enforcement**

1. The FWS and WRC will develop coordination strategies to improve enforcement of federal regulations protecting red wolves.