

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Red Wolf Recovery Program

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Update on the North Carolina Nonessential Experimental Population (NEP)

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- 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:
 - o 2 vehicle strikes
 - o 1 gunshot
 - o 1 suspected foul play
 - o 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:
 - o Building three acclimation pens (2 on Alligator River NWR and 1 on Pocosin Lakes NWR). Defenders of Wildlife paid for the majority of the materials to build the pens.
 - o 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.
 - o 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.
 - o 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 NC 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.