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## Letter from the Executive Director of the Red Wolf Coalition

by Kim Wheeler



“**W**hat does the Red Wolf Coalition do?” I am frequently asked that question, and there’s no better way to begin an answer than with the organization’s mission statement: *The Red Wolf Coalition advocates for the long-term survival of red wolf populations by teaching about the red wolf and by fostering public involvement in red wolf conservation.* Seems clear to me, but what exactly is an advocate? What does an advocate do?

The dictionary says an *advocate* is one who speaks or writes in support or defense of a person or a cause. The Coalition advocates through education—teaching people about red wolves and engaging them in the work of conserving wildlife and habitat. Our programs, informational materials and curricula are science-based, and our advocacy is grounded in truth and fact. We rely on our partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)



Kim Wheeler

Red Wolf Recovery staff to offer up-to-date and accurate information about the recovery program and to give a firsthand account of the work being done in the field. The result is an increasing number of requests for red wolf programs from private citizens, schools, community groups and private organizations. It’s good to be popular!

In celebration of our 10th anniversary, the Coalition has brought the International Wolf Center’s new world-class exhibit “*Wolves and Wildlands in the 21st Century*” from its home in Minnesota to red wolf country in Columbia, North Carolina. This exhibit has enabled us to teach visitors and local residents alike about the wolves of North America and about the challenges of coexisting

with these fascinating and complex predators. As the 21st century evolves, more land will be developed and the human population will increase. Can we leave room on the landscape for wolves and other large carnivores? *Will we?*

The Red Wolf Coalition renews its commitment to advocate for the long-term survival of red wolf populations in this, our 10th anniversary year and in the 20th anniversary year of the red wolf’s return to its wild home in North Carolina. We will broaden our audiences, expand our programs and Web site, cultivate new partners including state and federal agencies and government entities, encourage new members to support our work, bring people to red wolf country—and swat mosquitoes at our popular howling safaris. And one day, our vision of a Red Wolf Center will become a reality!

We are proud of what we do, and we are grateful for the partnerships that have made us a stronger, more focused organization. Those include our partnership with the International Wolf Center. We hope that this issue of *International Wolf* will encourage others throughout the nation and the world to join us in our efforts to keep the red wolf forever wild in the southeastern United States. ■

