



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ELDERLY RED WOLF DIES AT FRESNO CHAFFEE ZOO
Zoo is part of species recovery program**

Fresno, Ca. -- Fresno Chaffee Zoo's elderly male red wolf (*Canis rufus*) was euthanized today. The 14-year old wolf, known as "Chip", recently showed a rapid decline in health and numerous internal tumors were discovered during a preliminary necropsy.

Chip came to Fresno in November 2003 and in early 2005 he sired a litter of three puppies. Two of the offspring, both males, still live at Fresno Chaffee Zoo. The mother of the puppies and a third offspring, a female, were sent to the Point Defiance Zoo in Tacoma, Washington as part of the Species Survival Plan.

Once common throughout the southeastern United States, by the 1960s the red wolf population was decimated due to intensive predator control programs and loss of habitat. In the 1970s a small wild population was discovered in Texas and Louisiana and was rescued by biologists to establish a captive breeding program to increase the number of red wolves. Zoos and animal care centers worked in cooperation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to manage red wolves demographically and genetically to reestablish this federally endangered species in portions of its original range.

In 1980 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared red wolves extinct in the wild but by 1987 enough red wolves were bred in captivity to begin a restoration program. As of July 2007, there were 208 wolves at 39 zoos and other animal care facilities across the United States. Today more than 100 red wolves currently roam the wilds. Red wolves born at Fresno Chaffee Zoo in 1991 have contributed to the wild population.

The red wolf is one of two species of wolves in North America, the other being the gray wolf. Intermediate in size to gray wolves and coyotes, the average adult red wolf weighs 45-80 pounds. Red wolves are social animals that live in packs. Their diet consists primarily of small mammals such as rabbits and rodents but they will also eat insects, berries and occasionally deer. Most active at dusk and dawn, red wolves are elusive and generally avoid humans and human activity.

Fresno Chaffee Zoo is open every day of the year from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. General admission is \$7 for adults, \$3.50 for children 2-11 and seniors 62+. Children under 2 and Fresno Chaffee Zoo members are free. The mission of Fresno Chaffee Zoo is to provide a fun, unique and up-close experience that strengthens the bond between people and wildlife. The Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

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