



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**WOLF CONSERVATION CENTER**  
**SOUTH SALEM, NEW YORK**



Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with the Wolf Conservation Center in the search for an Executive Director.

The Executive Director will lead the Wolf Conservation Center (the Center) in its next phase of accelerated growth. The Executive Director will work in partnership with the Board of Directors to provide strategic vision and leadership for the organization. The Executive Director will oversee advocacy, research, wolf husbandry, education, fundraising, communication, and administrative functions while developing a strategic and operational plan that furthers the mission and vision of the Wolf Conservation Center. The Executive Director will lead culture change at both the staff and Board levels. Immediate priorities for the incoming Executive Director include completing a \$14 million capital campaign, building a new education center, strengthening the governance capacity of the Board of Directors, assessing programs against a set of strategic priorities, and aligning staff and programs for the future.

In its first twenty years, the Wolf Conservation Center was born, developed its vision and educational and advocacy programming, and carved out a respected reputation in conservation, advocacy, and wolf expertise. In its next twenty years, the Center plans to make meaningful progress in growing the wolf population in the United States; advancing species knowledge globally; increasing local, state, and federal protections; and informing individuals about these rare species.

The Wolf Conservation Center envisions a world where wolves thrive. Its mission is to advance the survival of wolves by inspiring a global community through education, advocacy, research, and recovery. The Wolf Conservation Center is driven by its values of respect, community, and passion. It respects wolves, their complex ecological role, the landscapes they shape, the people who care about them, and the people who live among them. The Wolf Conservation Center is inspired by the pack. It brings people together, nurtures, educates, aids, protects, organizes, and defends—always stronger together. It also has a passion for wolves, for the shared landscapes, and for the work of protecting them. This passion drives the Wolf Conservation Center to learn, see the big picture, and be diligent and tenacious in the long-term work of saving wolves.

The Center is a 32-acre environmental education center with “Ambassador” wolves that are part of its education programs and almost 20 critically endangered wolves that are part of a national recovery plan. Furthermore, the Center offers distance learning programs through both webinar and virtual field trip format which were expanded through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, continuing to serve as critical educational communication vehicles both nationally and globally. The Center's education programs allow attendees to learn about North America’s wildest residents—wolves—during education sessions with Center wolf experts. Attendees are exposed to the history, ecology, and biology of wolves, and learn about the current challenges facing wolf recovery across the United States. An emphasis is placed on endangered species recovery programs for critically endangered red wolves and Mexican gray wolves.

The Wolf Conservation Center participates in the federal Species Survival Plan (SSP) recovery programs for the Mexican gray wolf and the red wolf, two of the rarest mammals in North America. Both species at one time were completely extinct in the wild. Since 2003 the Center has played a critical role in preserving and protecting these imperiled species through carefully managed breeding and reintroduction. To date the Center remains one of the three largest holding facilities for these rare species and seven wolves from the Center have been given the extraordinary opportunity to resume their rightful place on the wild landscape.

The Center is also home to the Wolf Conservation Social Ecology and Wildlife Research Lab (SEWRL), which has a mission to conduct research on the ecology, management, and conservation of mammalian carnivores focusing on the distribution and population dynamics of carnivores and assessing strategies used for population recovery. Led by Dr. Joey Hinton Ph.D. and research associate Sunny Murphy, the SEWRL develops high-quality research at the Center by conducting research on four broad topics: mechanisms that govern the distributions and population dynamics of carnivore species, addressing ecological and evolutionary questions at large spatial and temporal scales, assessing strategies used for population recovery, and the taxonomy and evolution of canids in North America. Scientists at SEWRL draw on their experiences in these disciplines and use existing research collaborations with partners to develop innovative ecological research. These topics have both theoretical and applied relevance and are well-suited for influencing conservation policies and engaging the public in advocacy.

Additionally, the Wolf Conservation Center is dedicated to dispelling myths and misinformation regarding eastern coyotes, one of the most maligned species in North America. A close cousin to the wolves the Center is dedicated to protecting, coyotes play an equally vital role in the local ecosystem as an apex predator. Coyotes are explorers, opportunists, and one of the most successful carnivores in North America because of their ability to cope, if not thrive, after decades of persecution at the hands of ranchers, landowners, farmers, and government agents. Learning more about the natural history of coyotes can help people understand their ecological role and how to successfully coexist with them. The Center is increasing awareness and access to accurate information regarding this dynamic keystone species in our own backyards.

The Wolf Conservation Center also offers grants to support projects and research that align with its mission. Through its Wildlife Conservation Award Program, the Center has supported the Voyageurs Wolf Project which is focused on understanding the summer ecology of wolves in and around Voyageurs National Park in the iconic Northwoods border region of Minnesota. Support has also been given to the Gulf Coast Canid Project. The red wolf is one of the most endangered canids in the world with less than 20 wild individuals persisting in an introduced population in North Carolina and approximately 200 individuals in a captive breeding program. Conservation efforts have focused exclusively on the reintroduced and captive populations which were assumed to be the only red wolves left in the world, but a recent discovery of red wolf hybrids along the Gulf Coast of Texas and Louisiana has changed this assumption. The discovery of ghost, or extinct red wolf genes, in hybrid coyotes demonstrates a real possibility that red wolf populations may continue to exist in Texas and Louisiana.

## REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Executive Director will report to the Board of Directors, led by President Martha Hunt Handler. The Executive Director will have five direct reports, the Chief Operating Officer and the leads of the Advocacy, Development, Education, and Research functions.

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

*I have been deeply connected to the Wolf Conservation Center since its inception in 1996. First as a friend, next as a volunteer, donor, and Board member, and over the last decade as Board President. We grew slowly but steadily in our first decade as we found our footing and established ourselves in the wolf conservation world. Our initial handful of dedicated volunteers were involved in everything from animal care to site development to education. The next decade saw us progressing from volunteers to highly qualified paid staff, recruiting professionally accomplished Board members, preparing more sophisticated financials, formalizing human resources and various business practice policies, and further honing our messaging via education—onsite, offsite, and virtually—outreach and social media platforms.*

*In 2013 we began to think bigger. By this time, we'd become the preeminent facility for the captive breeding and pre-release of two endangered wolf species, and unique in the wolf world because we also educate, advocate, and do research. However, we soon realized that our facilities and infrastructure didn't match our ambitions. Over the last nine years, the staff and Board have worked together to formalize our dreams into a workable plan that includes upgrading our current campus and building a state-of-the-art education pavilion.*

*Our new Executive Director will be someone who appreciates our steady growth and is excited by the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead as we further establish ourselves as leaders in the field of wolf survival, while building out our campus and increasing our staff to meet our growing needs. Our staff and Board are eager to work with our new Executive Director to ensure a smooth transition and provide continued support as together we realize our dreams and make the Wolf Conservation Center the best it can be.*

—Martha Hunt Handler, President, Board of Directors

### PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Director will

- oversee the Center's vision and strategy, advocacy, research, wolf husbandry, education, fundraising, communication, and administrative functions;
- work with the Board of Directors to develop a strategic plan that furthers the Center's mission and vision;
- serve as the primary organizational liaison to the Board of Directors and support the Board in its governance functions and strategic priorities;
- work with senior management to develop and monitor multi-year plans designed to achieve mission, vision, and organizational objectives;
- ensure that appropriate resources, controls, risk management, and oversight are in place;
- manage the fiscal health of the Center, including regular financial monitoring and reporting, annual audits, ongoing cost controls, and earned and contributed income;
- observe and enforce fiscal policies and controls;

- serve as chief spokesperson for the organization, communicating with the media, the public, and major donors;
- articulate compelling messaging tied to advocacy, education, research, and development;
- fulfill the role of fundraiser in chief, including the solicitation of major gifts; and
- collaborate with key stakeholders and partners to advance conservation and advocacy efforts across a network of trusted partners.

## **LEADERSHIP**

### **Martha Hunt Handler**

#### **President, Board of Directors**

Martha Hunt Handler joined the Wolf Conservation Center's Board of Directors in 2001 and is currently serving as its Board President. After graduating from the University of Colorado in 1981, Martha worked as a private environmental consultant for the EPA, NRC, and Department of Energy in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and Los Angeles. During this time Martha specialized in community relations at various Superfund sites across the country and wrote regulations and provided oversight in the areas of nuclear waste, oil refinery production and waste, and asbestos removal from public buildings. In addition, she worked with the EPA and the insurance industry to prepare detailed financial responsibility requirements for underground storage tanks which were subsequently presented to Congress. Martha has been an environmentalist, philanthropist, and community activist for many years. While living and attending school in the West, she learned about the plight of the wolves and the misguided beliefs of many of the ranchers and others concerning how vital the wolves as a top predator are to the overall health of the environment. When her family moved East and she learned there were wolves literally “living in her backyard,” she jumped on the opportunity to get involved to not only spread the word about the importance of the wolves but also about overall environmental stability. Since joining the Board, Martha has remained one of the Center's most ardent and enthusiastic supporters. In addition to serving on the Center's Board, Martha has also served on the boards of the Lewisboro Land Trust and the Lewisboro Library. Most recently, she has turned her attention to writing and is currently working on a novel and various other fiction and non-fiction projects.

## **PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS**

The Wolf Conservation Center seeks an Executive Director with a passion for its conservation mission and experience leading a rapidly growing nonprofit organization in the conservation arena. The Executive Director will have an ability to create visibility, lead organizational change, and raise contributed revenue. The Executive Director will be responsible for taking the Center and its talented team to the next level of organizational capacity in advancing wolf conservation, research, advocacy programs, and fundraising.

Furthermore, the Wolf Conservation Center seeks an Executive Director with

- a commitment to the mission of the Wolf Conservation Center—to protect and preserve wolves and through wolves, teach the broader message of conservation, ecological balance, and personal responsibility for improved human stewardship of the world;
- excellent management skills, including an ability to lead an organization and a diverse team of professionals, followers, and volunteers through the growth phase of nonprofit development;
- experience developing, implementing, and serving as the face of fundraising, advocacy, research, and education programs at an organization of similar, or larger, size and scope;

- experience raising funds in a nonprofit organization, especially through major gift and direct response channels;
- capital campaign experience (preferred);
- strong verbal and written communication skills, including an ability to articulate messages, persuade audiences, and listen to competing points of view;
- a history of developing strong relationships with diverse partners and leveraging those relationships effectively; and
- a highly collaborative work style that engages all points of view and navigates conflict with humor, grace, and confidence.

A bachelor's degree or an equivalent combination of education and experience and at least six years of nonprofit leadership experience at an organization on a similar growth trajectory is preferred for this role. The Wolf Conservation Center will consider candidates with a broad range of backgrounds. If you are excited about this role and feel that you can contribute to the Center, but your experience does not exactly align with every qualification listed above, we encourage you to apply.

#### **SALARY AND BENEFITS**

The salary range for this position is \$140,000 to \$150,000 annually.

#### **LOCATION**

This position is in South Salem, New York.

#### **APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of the Wolf Conservation Center as well as the responsibilities and qualifications presented in the prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To apply for this position, visit: [Executive Director, Wolf Conservation Center](#).

To nominate a candidate, please contact Gregory Leet, [gregoryleet@aspingleadershipgroup.com](mailto:gregoryleet@aspingleadershipgroup.com).

*All inquiries will be held in confidence.*