

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



A Program of the Georgia Forestry Commission
with support from the U.S. Forest Service

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

*An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation
and Conservation of Natural Resources*

Turner County, Georgia



APRIL 2023

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Executive Summary

The extreme weather conditions that are conducive to wildfire disasters (usually a combination of extended drought, low humidity and high winds) occur in this area of Georgia every 10-15 years. This is not a regular event, but, the number of homes that have been built in or adjacent to forested or wildland areas, can turn a wildfire under these weather conditions into a major disaster. Wildfires move fast and can quickly overwhelm the resources of even the best equipped fire department. Advance planning can save lives, homes and businesses.

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan includes an evaluation of the wildland fire susceptibility of wildland/urban interface "communities-at-risk", an analysis of fire service resources and training and an Action Plan to address the increasing threat of wildfire. The CWPP does not obligate the county financially in any way, but instead, lays a foundation for improved emergency response if and when grant funding is available to the County.

The plan is provided at no cost to the County and can be very important for County applications for hazard mitigation grants through the National Fire Plan, FEMA mitigation grants, and others. Under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003, communities (counties) that seek grants from the federal government for hazardous fuels reduction work are required to prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

The plan will:

- Enhance public safety
- Improve community sustainability
- Protect ecosystem health
- Raise public awareness of wildfire hazards and wildfire risk
- Educate landowners on how to reduce home ignitability
- Build and improve collaboration at multiple levels

The public does not have to fall victim to this type of disaster. Homes (and communities) can be designed, built and maintained to withstand a wildfire even in the absence of fire engines and firefighters on the scene. It takes planning and commitment at the community level BEFORE the wildfire disaster occurs --- and that is what the Community Wildfire Protection Plan is all about.

I. WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE FIRE DISASTERS

Fire influenced and defined the landscape we call the United States, well before the arrival of the first Europeans. Scientists, in fact, think that fires started by lightning or Native Americans occurred over most of the Southeast every 3 to 7 years. These were typically low intensity fires (because of their frequency) which kept the forests open and "park-like" in appearance and prevented heavy accumulations of dense underbrush. When communities became well established across the South, wildfires began to impact public safety and had to be controlled. State forestry agencies became established between 1915 and 1928 and the landscape was generally segregated into communities (or human habitations) and natural or wildland areas.

In the mid 1980's, following a new wave of development in what was previously forest or wildland areas, agencies across the country became aware of an increasingly common phenomenon - wildfires were more and more frequently impacting communities. In 1985, a milestone year, over 1400 homes nationwide were lost to wildfire. The catastrophes became known as wildland/urban interface fires and occur when the fuel feeding the fire changes from natural vegetation (trees, shrubs and grasses) and begins to include manmade structures (homes, outbuildings and vehicles). Wildland/urban interface fires can occur anywhere in the United States and can become major disasters when associated with extremes in weather (extended droughts, high winds and low relative humidity)

The public does not have to fall victim to this type of disaster. Homes (and communities) can be designed, built and maintained to withstand a wildfire even in the absence of fire engines and firefighters on the scene. But, it takes planning and commitment at the community level BEFORE a wildfire disaster occurs.

II. CWPP CORE COMMITTEE

The development of this plan was a collaborative effort for the people of Turner County. The individuals listed below made up the "CWPP Core Committee" and are responsible for much of the plan content.

CWPP Core Committee

Chief Randall Whiddon, Turner County Fire/Rescue

Chief Terry Peavy, Sycamore Volunteer Fire Department

Chief Brian Meadows, Ashburn Fire & Emergency Services

Brad Gregory, Chief Ranger, Georgia Forestry Commission

Georgia Forestry Commission Representatives

Brad Gregory, Chief Ranger

Jim Harrell, CWPP Program Specialist (Initial plan 2010)

Mark Wiles, Wildfire Mitigation Specialist (Revised plan 2023)

Meeting Dates

Initial Core Committee Meeting: August 18, 2009

Follow -Up Meeting #1: January 21, 2010

Follow -Up Meeting #2: May 27, 2010

The CWPP Core Committee contributed to the CWPP development by:

Initiation	Agreed on the need to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
Risk Assessment	Assesses Wildfire hazard risk and prioritized mitigation actions.
Fuels Reduction	Identified need for conducting fuel treatment projects.
Structure Ignitability	Identified strategies for reducing the ignitability of structures within the wildland/urban interface.
Emergency Response	Updated and improved strategies for coordinated wildland fire response.
Education and Outreach	Outlined a public education initiative to increase citizen awareness of residential wildfire protection (Firewise)

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

It is important that a collaborative approach be taken in the development of a successful Community

Wildfire Protection Plan. This means allowing for the involvement of interested parties in the CWPP Core Committee that develops the CWPP and providing the opportunity for other interested stakeholders in the community (county) to review and contribute to the CWPP. Collaboration is a requirement of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. During development of the Turner County CWPP, opportunities for collaboration were provided by:

Major stakeholders were invited to participate as members of the CWPP Core Committee.

A news release was placed in the local paper (*Wiregrass Farmer*) explaining the objectives of the Turner County CWPP, the planning process and the procedure for obtaining a draft copy for review and/or comment.



III. OBJECTIVE OF THE CWPP

The Wildland/Urban Interface is the presence of structures in locations in which the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) determines that topographical features, vegetation, fuel types, local weather conditions and prevailing winds result in the potential for ignition of the structures within the area from flames and firebrands from a wildland fire (NFPA 1144, 2008 edition).

The objective of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is to improve public safety and reduce structural losses from wildfire in wildland/urban interface areas of Turner County.

There are three generally accepted types of interface areas:

- **"Boundary" wildland/urban interface** areas are characterized by development where groups of homes, subdivisions or other structures create a distinct and easily identified border with public or private wildlands, forests or parks.
- **"Intermix" wildland/urban interface** areas are places where parcels of improved property and/or structures are scattered and interspersed within wildlands, forests or parks. Frequently, this is a subdivision that is not yet "built-out" with many undeveloped lots interspersed among occupied homes.
- **"Island" wildland/urban interface** (also called "occluded interface") are typically very small pockets of wildland or natural areas surrounded by development or even situated within an incorporated area. A park or greenspace within a city is an example of an island interface area.

This CWPP will provide Turner County with an evaluation of the wildland fire susceptibility of wildland/urban interface "communities-at -risk" and can be a valuable guide and action plan to address the increasing threat of wildfire. The plan will:

- Enhance public safety
- Improve community sustainability
- Protect ecosystem health
- Raise public awareness of wildfire hazards and wildfire risk
- Educate landowners on how to reduce home ignitability
- Build and improve collaboration at multiple levels

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan can be very important to County applications for hazard mitigation grants through the National Fire Plan, FEMA mitigation grants, and others. Under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003, communities (counties) that seek grants from the federal government for hazardous fuels reduction work are required to prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

The minimum requirements for a Community Wildfire Protection Plan as described in the HFRA are:

- **Collaboration:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must be collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties.
- **Prioritized Fuel Reduction:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at -risk communities and essential infrastructure.
- **Treatment of Structural ignitability:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.

This plan should be looked at as a working document/guide for local, state and federal agencies to reach common wildfire protection goals. A CWPP committee should meet on a continuing basis from year to year to review accomplishments, discuss impediments, revise outdated portions of the CWPP and develop new, meaningful wildfire protection goals for Turner County.



Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is described as the area where structures and other human improvements meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.

IV. HISTORY OF TURNER COUNTY & WILDFIRE HISTORY



Turner County, in central Georgia, is the state's 145th county and comprises 286 square miles. It was created in 1905 from Dooly, Irwin, Wilcox, and Worth counties, and named for Henry Gray Turner, a Confederate veteran, U.S. congressman, and justice on the Supreme Court of Georgia. The original inhabitants were Creek and Seminole Indians, who lost their land in the Seminole Wars. Many of the first white settlers in the area were of Irish or German heritage. The county seat is Ashburn, incorporated in 1890, when it was part of Worth County. First named Troupville Crossroads and then called Marion, Ashburn acquired its current name when the Georgia Southern and Florida Railroad surveyed the area in 1889. At the time, the railroad's just-finished line from Florida to Macon had generated interest in the area. A local landowner and bank president, W. W. Ashburn, facilitated a large number of real estate transactions, and it was deemed appropriate to name the town in his honor.



The current courthouse, built in 1907, is the county's only courthouse on the historical record. Other towns include Amboy, Rebecca, Sycamore, and Worth. Amboy, unincorporated, was named for the New Jersey City of that name, which in turn comes from an Algonquin word meaning "valley."

Turner County Courthouse

Sycamore, incorporated in 1891, was named for the trees in the area. Rebecca was incorporated in 1904, and Worth was incorporated from 1910 to 1943.



Shingler Home

Turner County's economy has always revolved around agriculture, and the most important crops are cotton, peanuts, and pecans. A satellite campus of Moultrie Technical College (later Southern Regional Technical College) is located in the county. Among the places of interest in the county are the Ashburn Commercial Historic District, which includes the courthouse and county jail; the Ashburn Heights and Shingler Heights historic neighborhoods; the Big Peanut monument, which symbolizes Ashburn's status as

the home of the world's largest peanut-processing plant; and Wesleyan Methodist Campground and Tabernacle. Ashburn also hosts the annual Fire Ant Festival each March.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, the population was 8,930, a decrease from the 2000 population of 9,504.

WILDFIRE HISTORY

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) is the state agency responsible for providing leadership, service, and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources. Commission professionals provide a wide variety of services including fire detection, issuing burn permits, wildfire suppression and prevention services, emergency and incident command system expertise, rural fire department assistance, forest management assistance to landowners and communities, the marketing and utilization of forest resources and nature services, and growing and selling quality tree seedlings for planting.

Forestry is a \$28.7 billion a year industry in the State of Georgia creating 128,000 jobs statewide. 69,421 acres or 37 .91% of the total land area in Turner County is devoted to growing timber. Forestry is a valuable component of the local economy in Turner County.

Personnel

The Georgia Forestry Commission office serving Turner County is located at 2990 GA Highway 112 East, Ashburn, Georgia. Personnel assigned to this office include:

- Al Potts, Chief Ranger
- Bruce Free, Ranger
- Jacob Elliott, Ranger
- Justin Coleman, Ranger

Wildland Firefighting Equipment

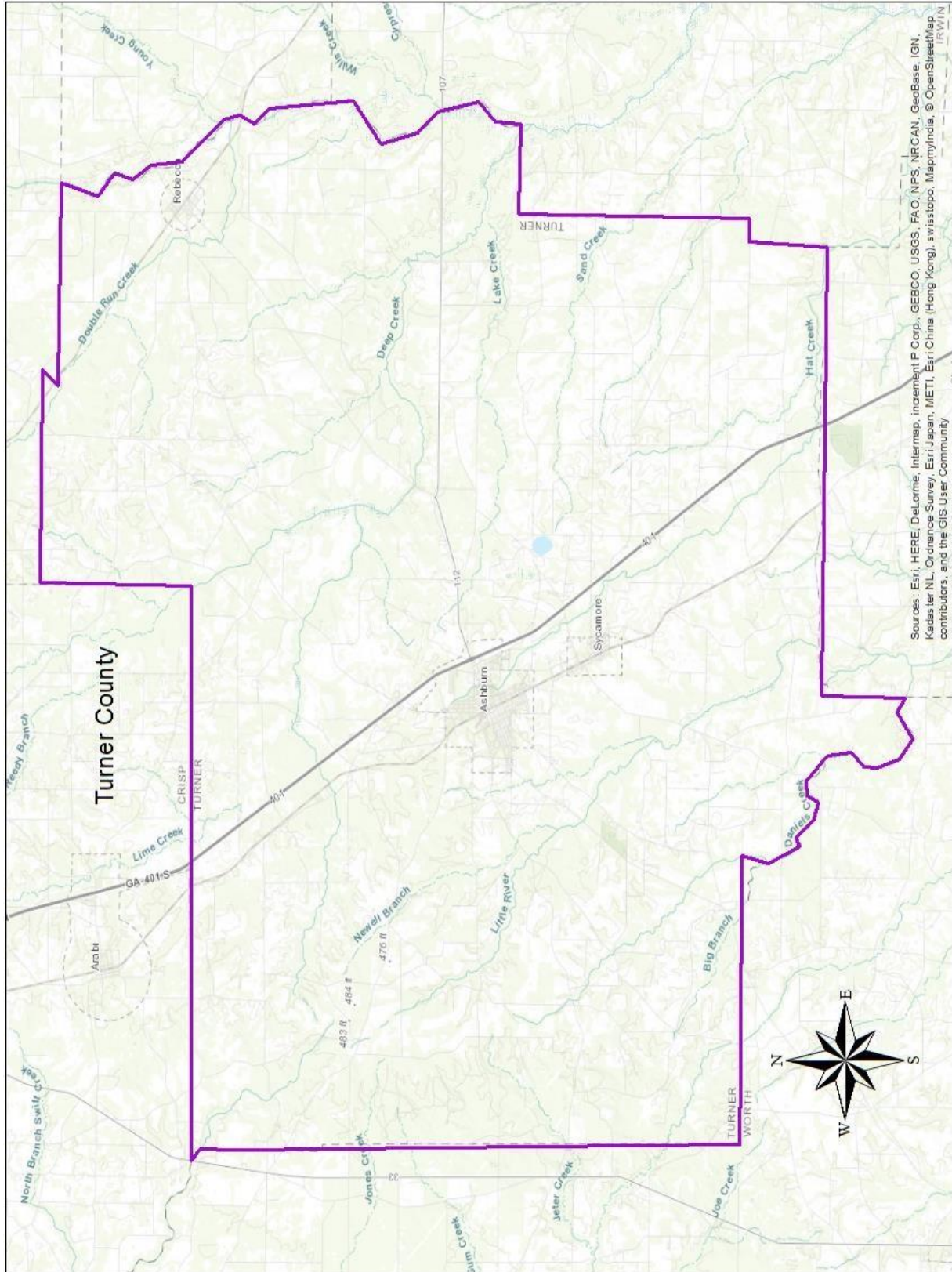
- 2 Tractor/Transports with Crawler Tractors and fire plows
- 1 Pick-Up Truck with 150-gallon water tank

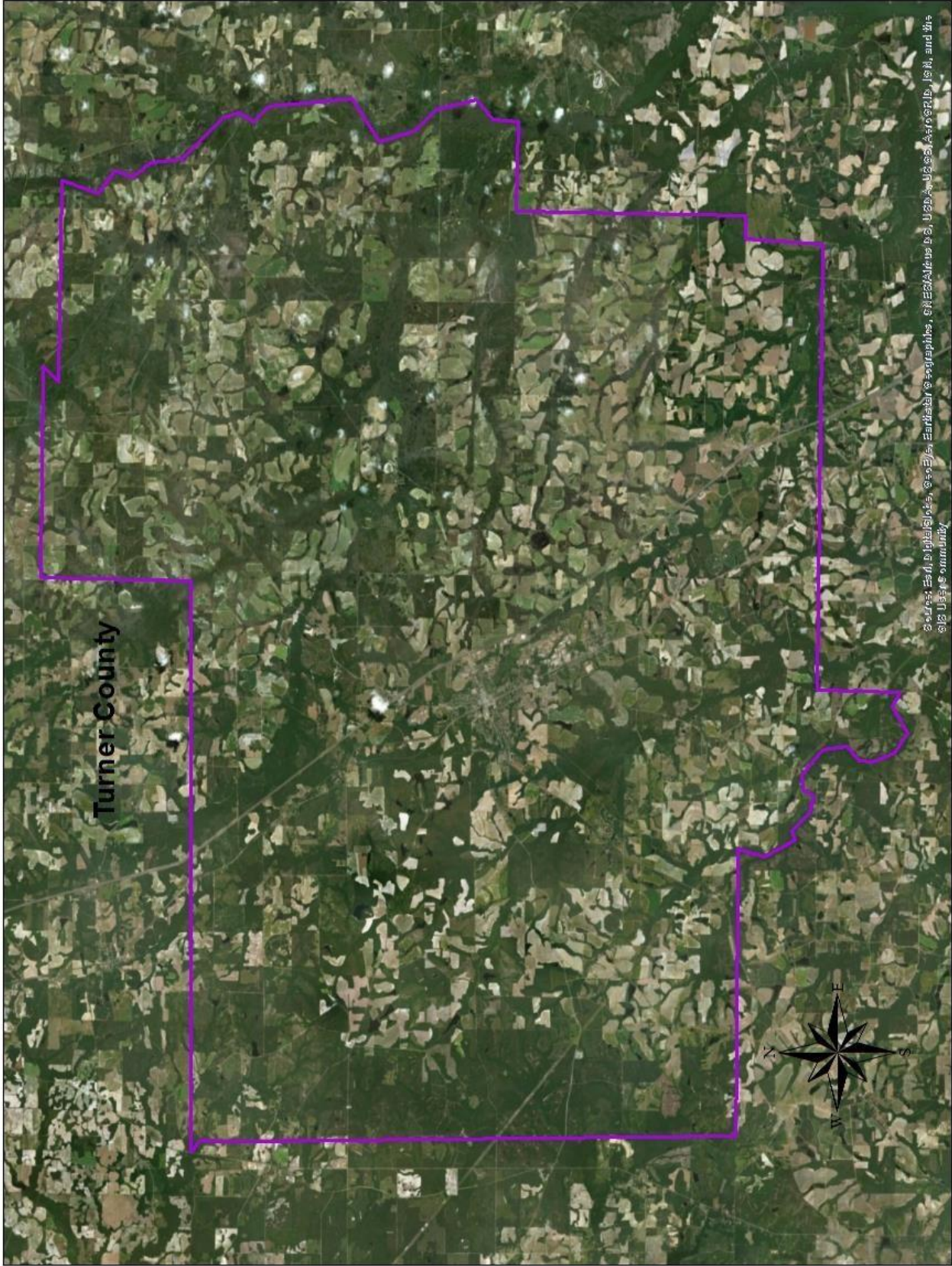
The number of wildfires and acres burned by cause for the last complete Fiscal Year (FY 2022) and the 5-Year Averages are in the table on the following page. Fire data for the previous 10-year period (FY2012 – FY2022) is located below. During these years the leading cause of wildfires was from Debris Burning, which accounted for 50% of these fires and 53% of the acreage burned. The 2nd leading cause was from Machine Use causing 29% of the fires and 17% of the acreage burned. During the ten-year period the County averaged 25 wildfires annually and averaged 82.28 acres burned annually.

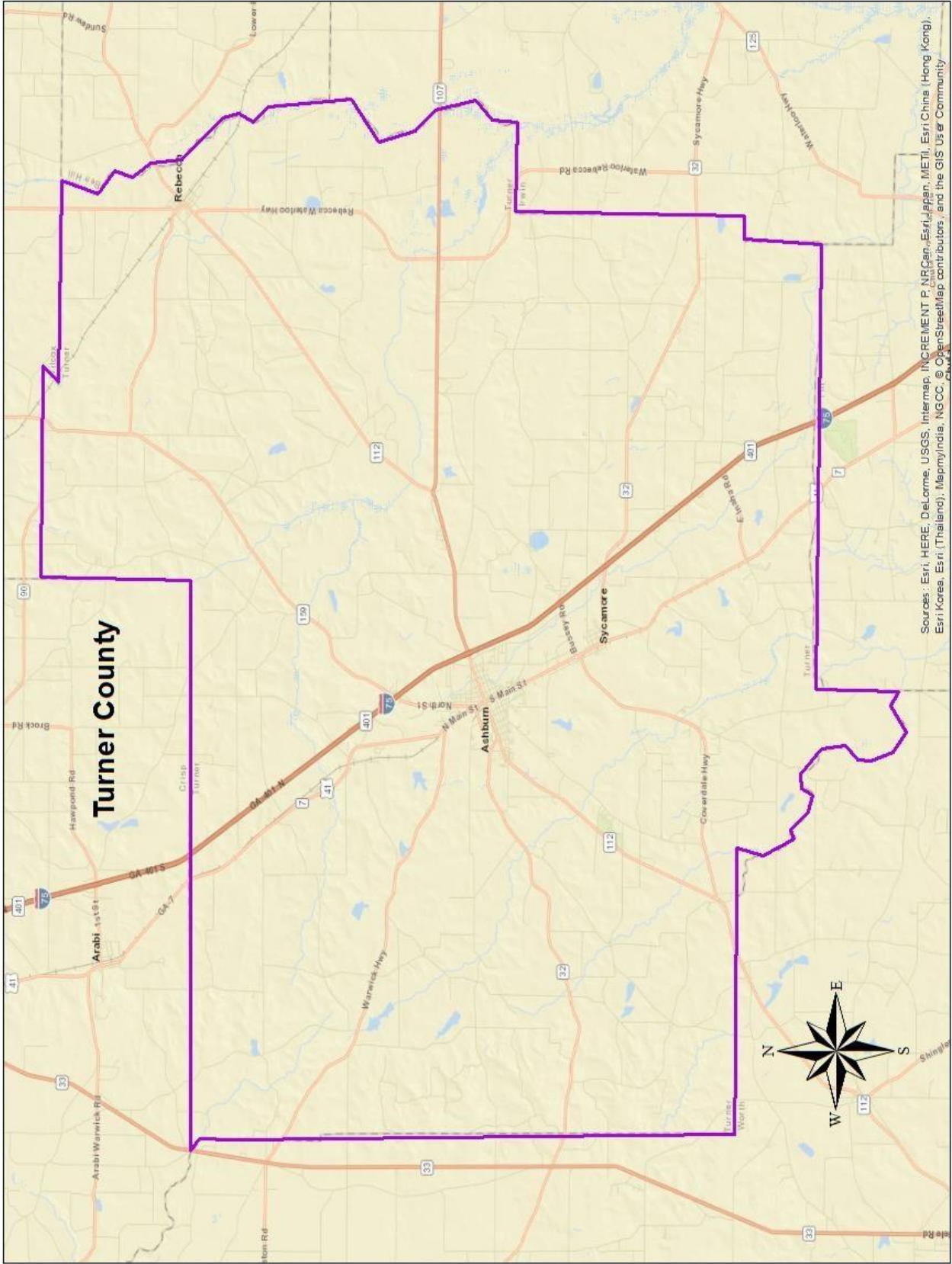
County: <input type="text" value="Turner"/> Year: <input type="text" value="2022"/> <input type="button" value="Generate List"/>				
Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	3	33.57	2.00	17.25
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	0	0.00	0.20	0.00
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	3	71.38	4.80	29.15
Debris: Household Garbage	2	8.01	1.00	2.59
Debris: Other	1	0.79	1.20	1.46
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	6	38.59	3.60	11.49
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	0	0.00	3.00	5.26
Incendiary	4	4.72	1.20	1.28
Lightning	1	2.94	0.60	3.79
Machine Use	4	66.50	3.40	26.47
Miscellaneous: Other	0	0.00	0.20	0.08
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	1	1.80	1.20	1.24
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	2	0.84	0.60	0.62
Smoking	1	0.02	0.20	0.00
Undetermined	1	1.95	2.00	1.17
Totals for County: Turner Year: 2022	29	231.11	25.20	101.86

Acreage Burned /Number of Fires For Turner County For FY 2012-2022		
Year	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires
2012	81.36	45
2013	139.81	24
2014	29.91	14
2015	32.04	21
2016	35.37	11
2017	94.25	37
2018	131.27	43
2019	21.66	20
2020	74.26	23
2021	56.96	23
2022	219.19	22
Average	83.28	25

V. COUNTY BASE MAPS







VI. WHAT ARE COMMUNITIES AT RISK?

Communities-at-risk are locations where a group of two or more structures in close proximity to a forested or wildland area places homes and residents at some degree of risk from wildfire. Other characteristics of the "community" such as the closeness of structures, building materials, accumulated debris near the structures, access in and out and the distance from the nearest fire station or a permanent water source (pond or dry hydrant) for fire suppression may contribute to the risk.

In Turner County, there are many individual (isolated) homes and outbuildings on farms and small properties that could be damaged or destroyed in the event of a major wildfire. On these properties, the owner(s) must assume be educated so they can assume a greater responsibility for wildfire protection - - - by making improvements to the landscape and structures that will provide some wildfire protection until the fire services can arrive. This can only be accomplished is rural residents know how to make their homes and properties "Firewise".

Improvements to the community infrastructure (roads, utilities, etc.) may be beyond the capabilities of the homeowners. However, widening the entrance right-of way(s), creating "Hammerhead-T's" or other ways for fire trucks to turn around and operate safely and clearly identifying residences with reflective "911 addresses" will improve response time by emergency services and enhance wildfire protection.

Modifications in and around individual residences may need to be budgeted by the residents over time (for example, making a roof more fire resistant may have to wait until it is time to replace the existing roof covering). Moving firewood away from the home, skirting raised decks and keeping roofs free of accumulated flammable debris are improvements that are within most family budgets.

In most instances, communities-at-risk will benefit from (vegetative) fuel reduction within 100 feet of homes and outbuildings through prescribed burning or by mechanical means. Fuel management with the home ignition zone (within 100 feet of the home) either by removing highly flammable vegetation or by replacing the vegetation with fire resistant plant species will significantly improve wildfire safety.

Communities at Risk

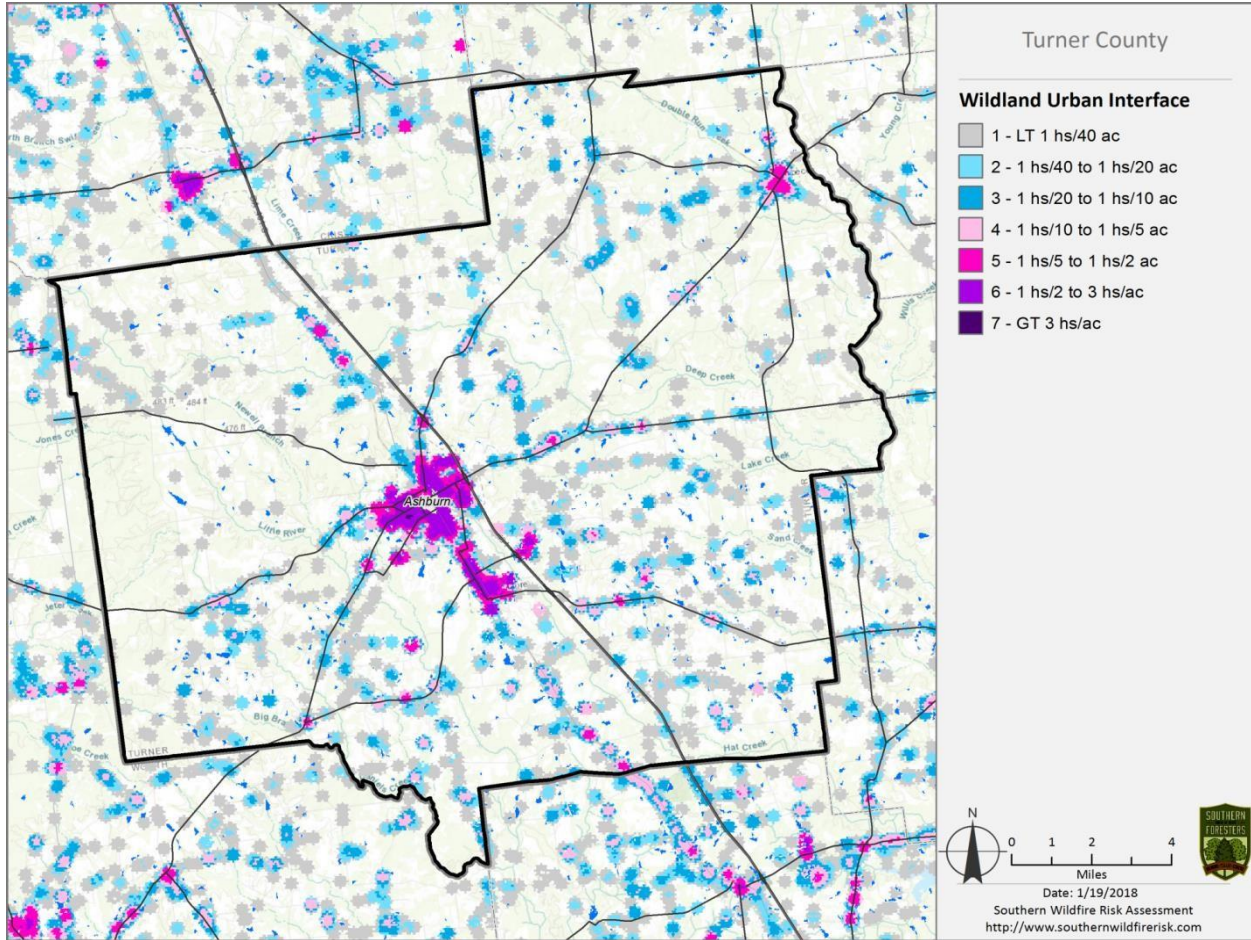
Unincorporated Areas	Score	Hazard Rating
1. Shiver Road	128	Extreme Hazard
2. Wanee Lake Subdivision	114	Very High Hazard
3. Freeman Rd . & Brady Rd.	102	Very High Hazard
4. Ellerbee Whiddon Rd. & Hobby Rd.	97	High Hazard
5. Jeanette Ave. & Mason Dixon Line	86	High Hazard
6. Legg Road	84	High Hazard
7. Sugar Hill	64	Moderate Hazard
City of Ashburn		
8. Byrd & Brown St.	89	High Hazard
9. Old North Main St . N. End Ave.	87	High Hazard
10. Josella Road	87	High Hazard
11. 2nd Street & Taylor	82	High Hazard
12. Goss Drive	77	High Hazard
13. Hodge King Drive	75	High Hazard
14. Pine Knot Road	74	Moderate Hazard
15. Hudson Ave. From Evans St.	71	Moderate Hazard
16. Industrial Dr. (From Whittle Cir .)	70	Moderate Hazard
17. Cedar Drive (from McClendon)	69	Moderate Hazard
18. Jefferson & Story Street Area	67	Moderate Hazard
19. North Main {Hill to Interstate 75}	63	Moderate Hazard
20. Gorday Dr. to Cedar	62	Moderate Hazard
21. Sylvia Dr. {from Whittle Cir .}	60	Moderate Hazard
22. Jackson Avenue (from Gordon East)	46	Low Hazard
23. Pine Hill	36	Low Hazard

These hazard ratings were completed by Fire Chief Brian Meadows, Ashburn Fire & Emergency Services and Turner County volunteer firefighters during the months of December, 2009 and January, 2010. The Georgia Forestry Commission's Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Scoresheet was used. This assessment procedure evaluates communities (groups of homes) based upon four criteria: community access, surrounding vegetation, fire protection, utilities and additional rating factors. The quantitative wildfire hazard ratings range from a low wildfire hazard rating of 50 total points to an extreme hazard rating if over 120 points.

VII. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

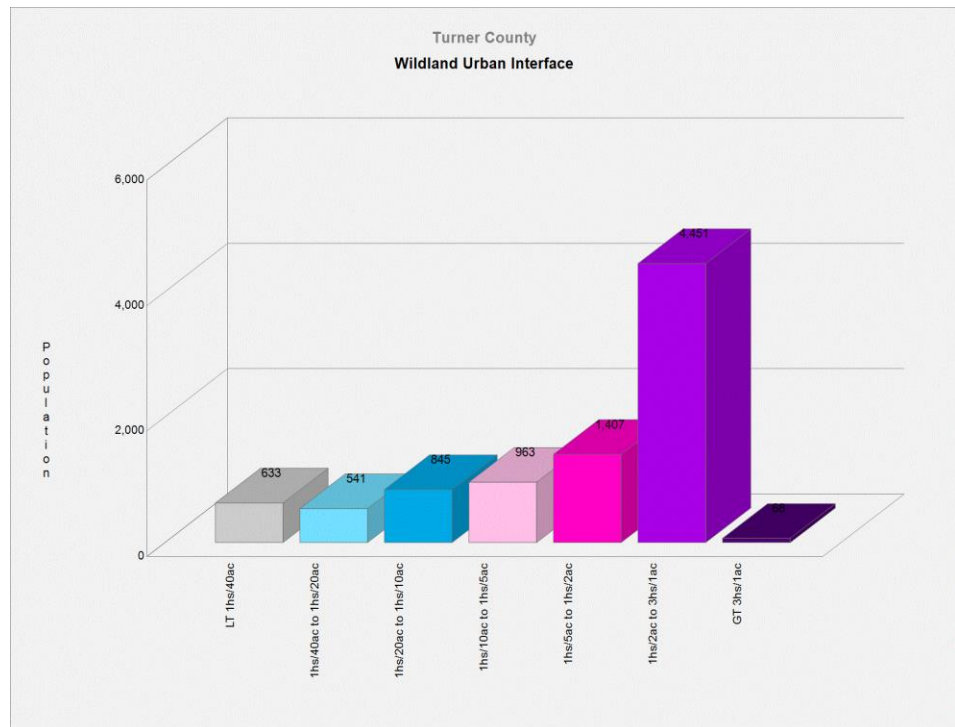
The Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment tool, developed by the Southern Group of State Foresters, was released to the public in July 2014. This tool allows users of the Professional Viewer application of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA) web Portal (SouthWRAP) to define a specific project area and summarize wildfire related information for this area. A detailed risk summary report is generated using a set of predefined map products developed by the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment project which have been summarized explicitly for the user defined project area. A risk assessment summary was generated for Turner County. The SouthWRAP (SWRA) products included in this report are designed to provide the information needed to support the following key priorities:

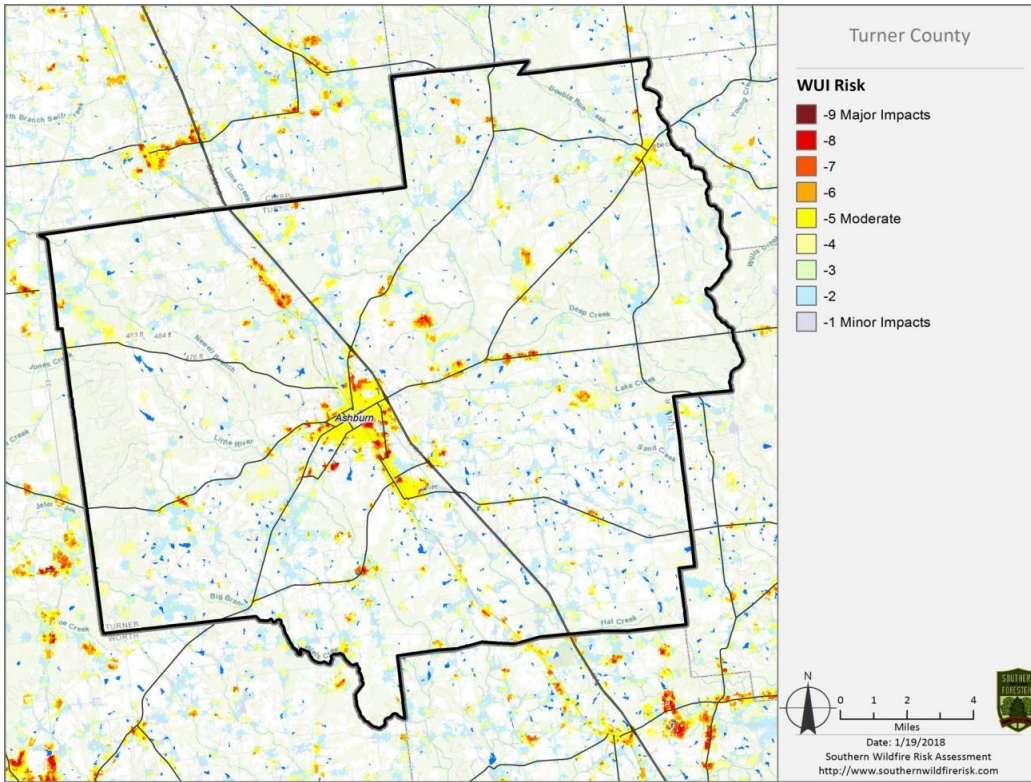
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire.
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning.
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests.
- Allow agencies to work together to better define priorities and improve emergency response, particularly across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Define wildland communities and identify the risk to those communities.
- Increase communication and outreach with local residents and the public to create awareness and address community priorities and needs.
- Plan for response and suppression resource needs.
- Plan and prioritize hazardous fuel treatment programs.



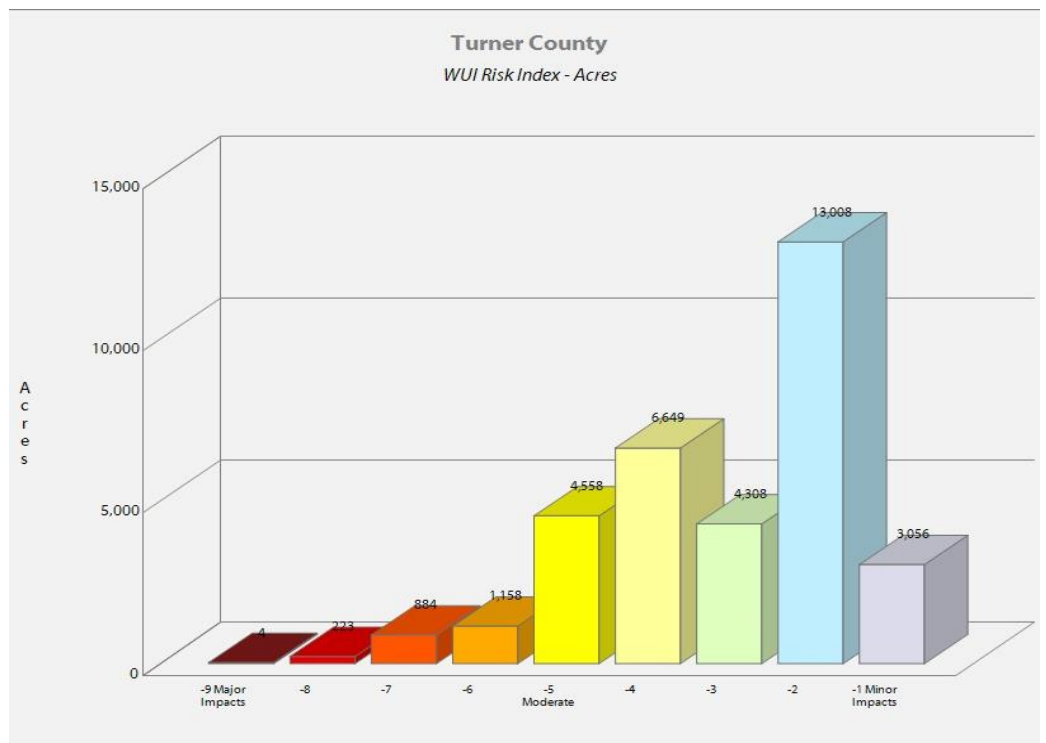
The WUI is described as the area where structures and other human improvements meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. Population growth within the WUI substantially increases the risk from wildfire.

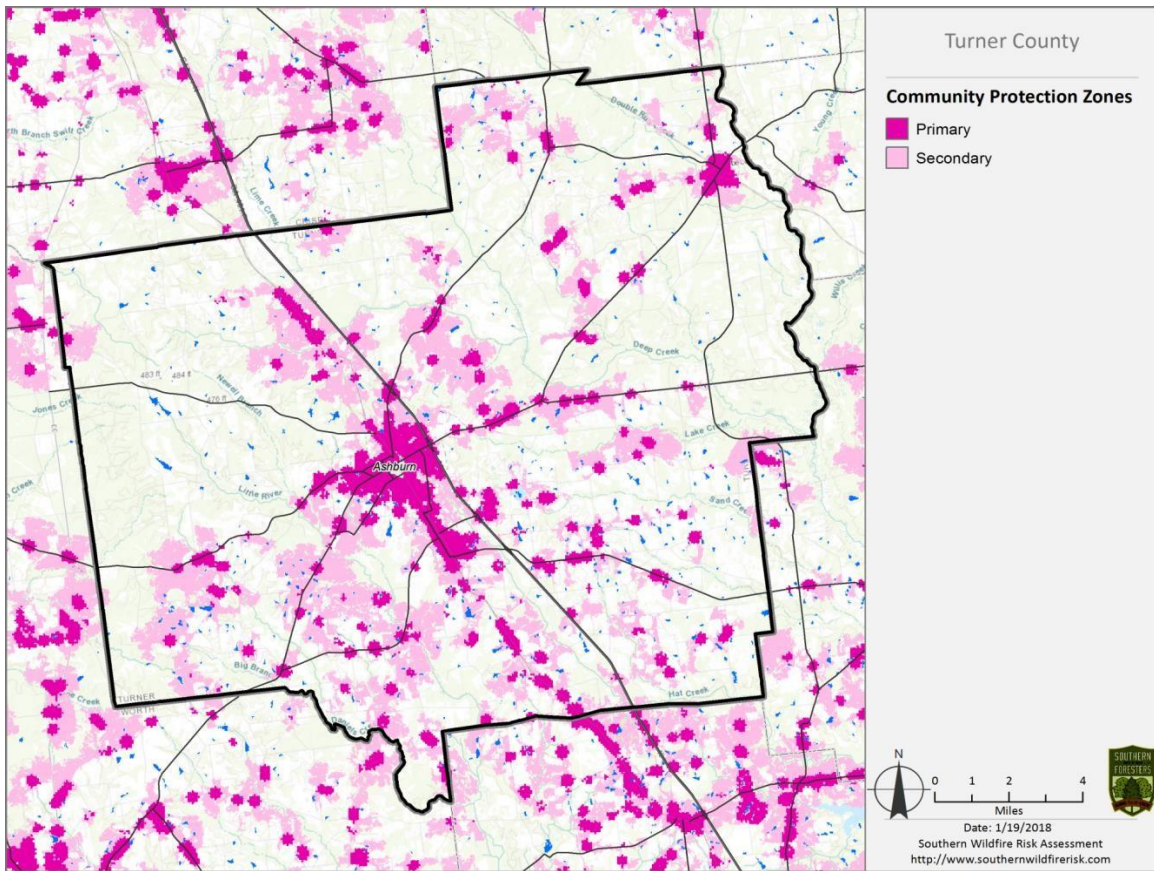
For the Turner County project area, it is estimated that 8,908 people or 97.8 % percent of the total project area population (9,113) live within the WUI.



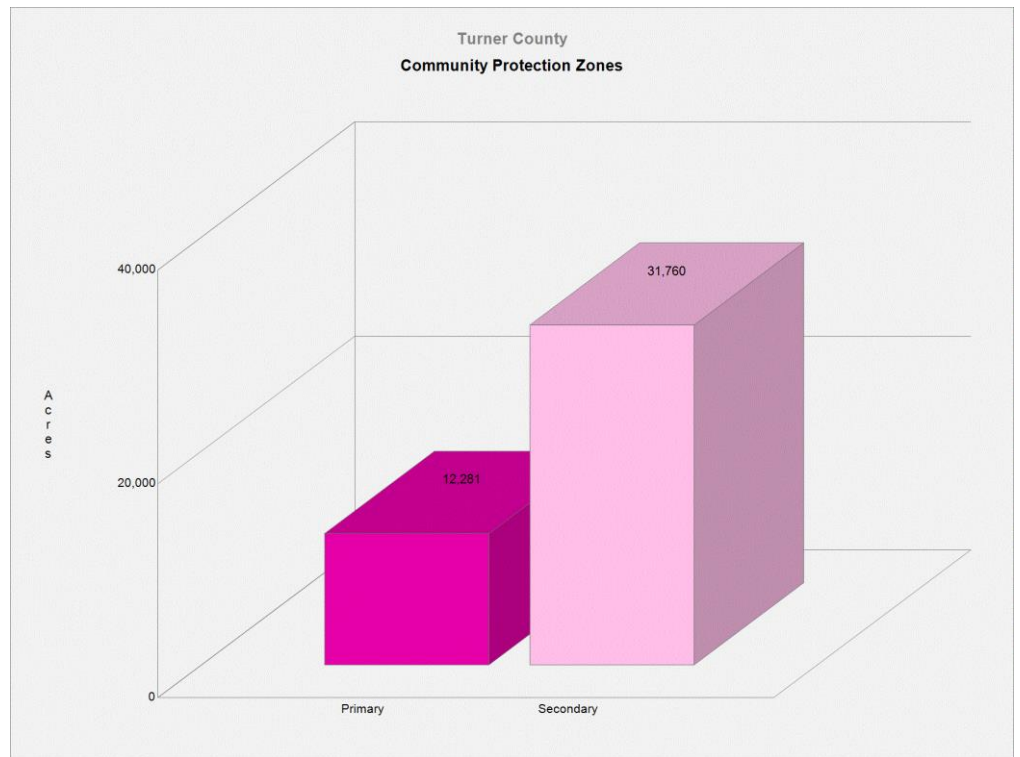


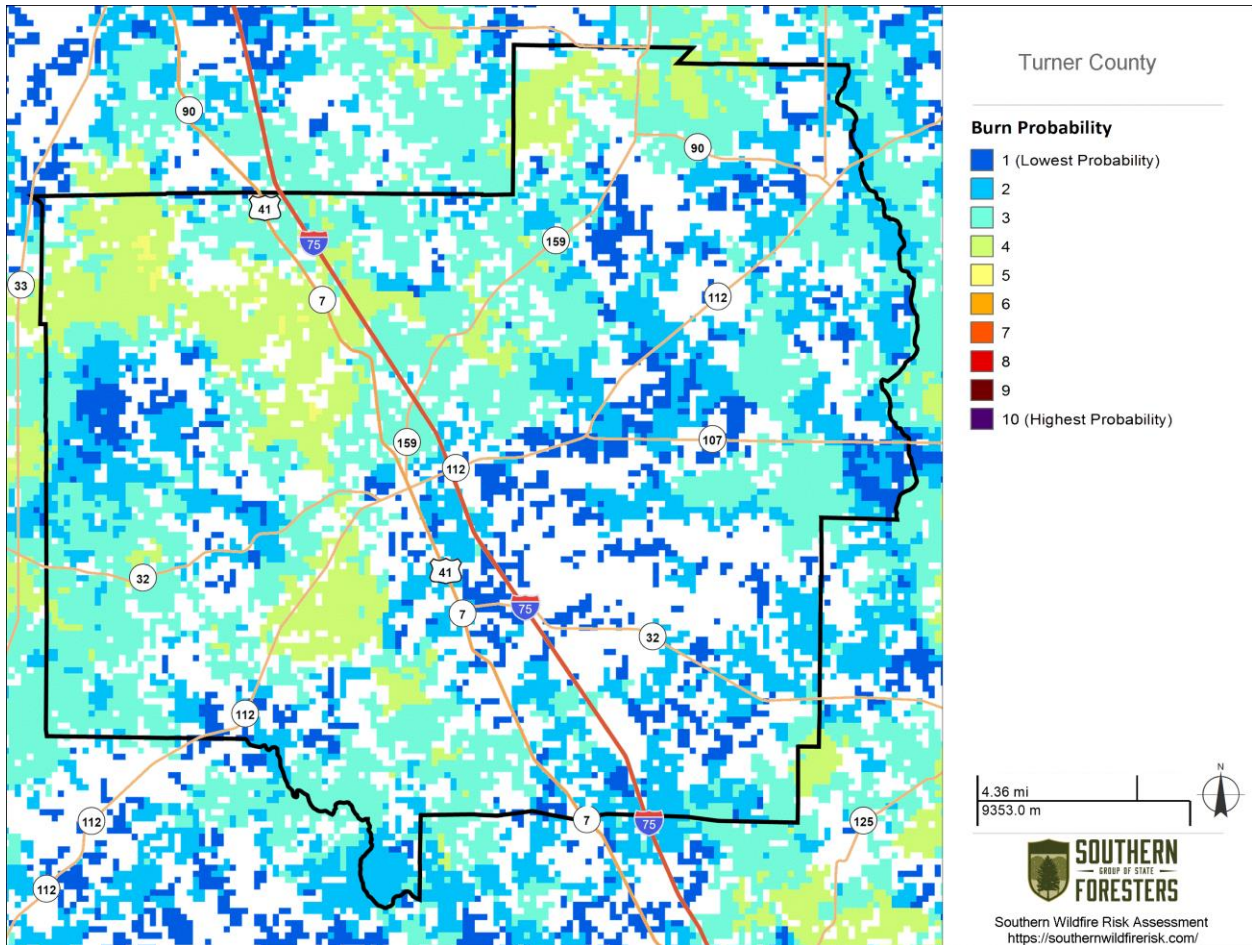
The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk Index layer is a rating of the potential impact of a wildfire on people and their homes. The key input, WUI, reflects housing density (houses per acre) consistent with Federal Register National standards. The location of people living in the Wildland Urban Interface and rural areas is key information for defining potential wildfire impacts to people and homes.



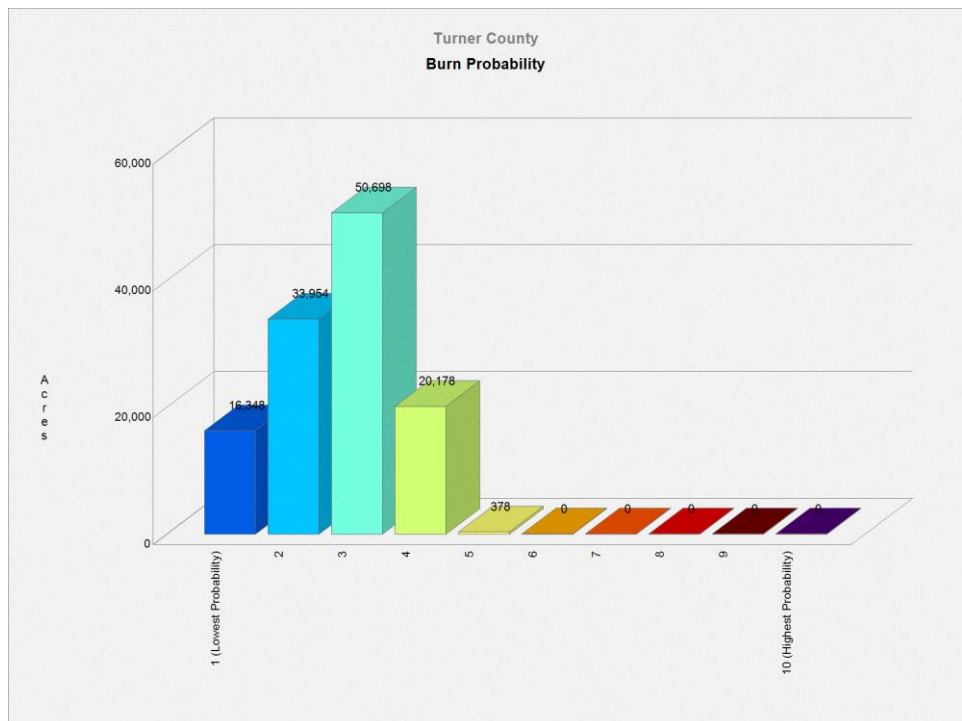


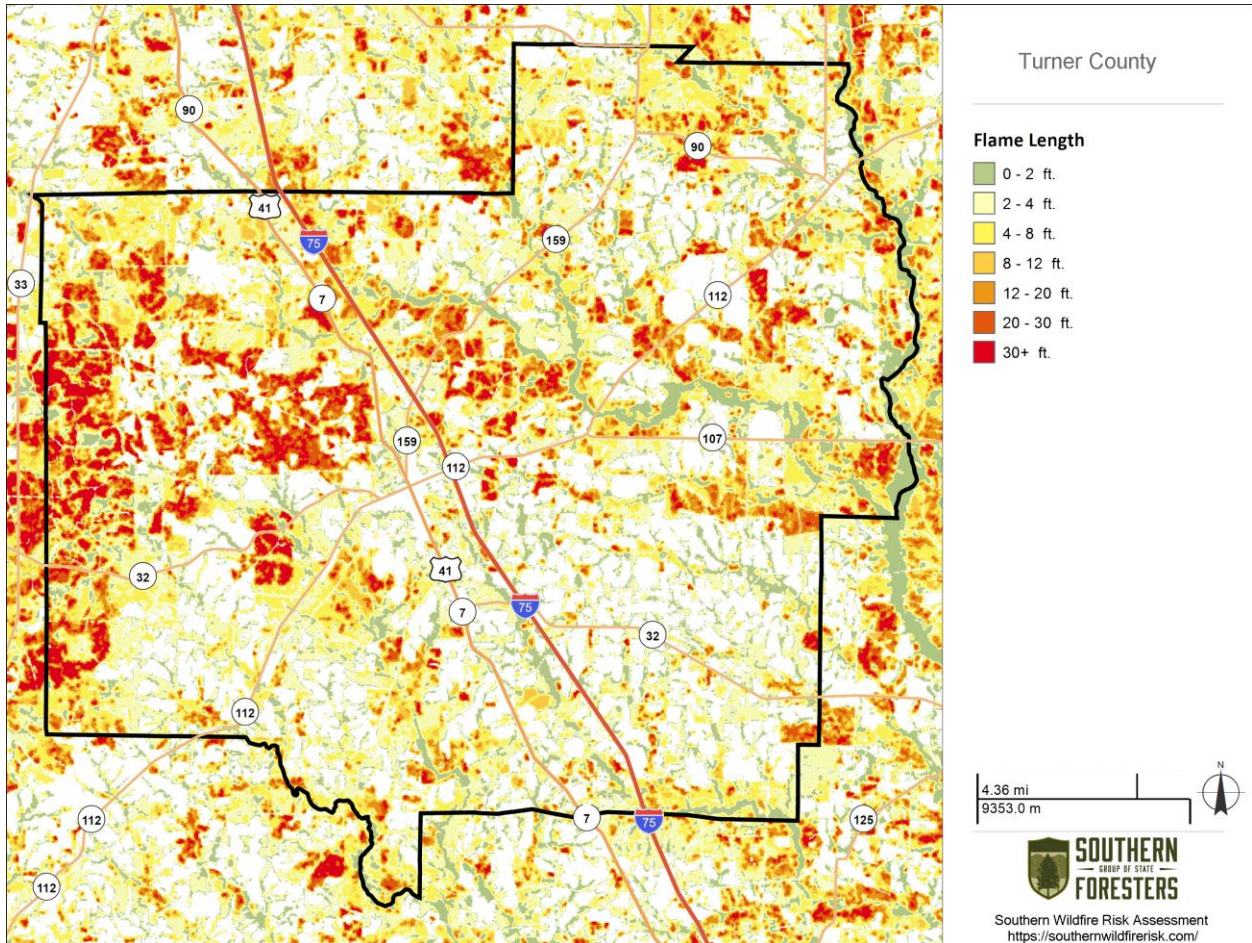
Community Protection Zones (CPZ) represent those areas considered highest priority for mitigation planning activities. CPZs are based on an analysis of the Where People Live housing density data and surrounding fire behavior potential. Rate of Spread data is used to determine the areas of concern around populated areas that are within a 2-hour fire spread distance. This is referred to as the Secondary CPZ.



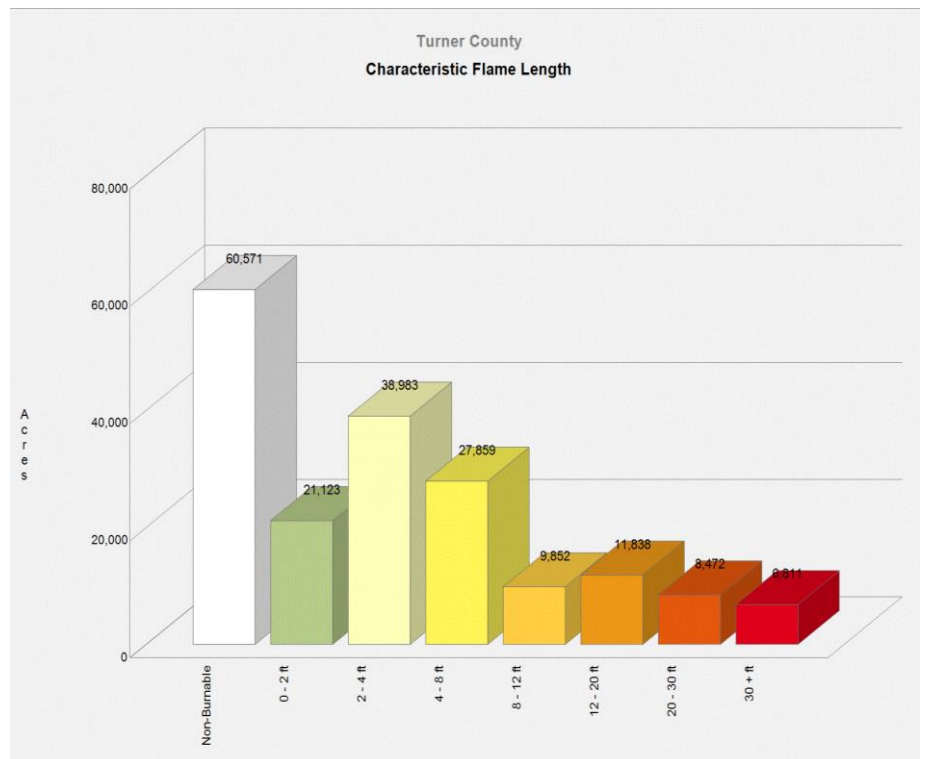


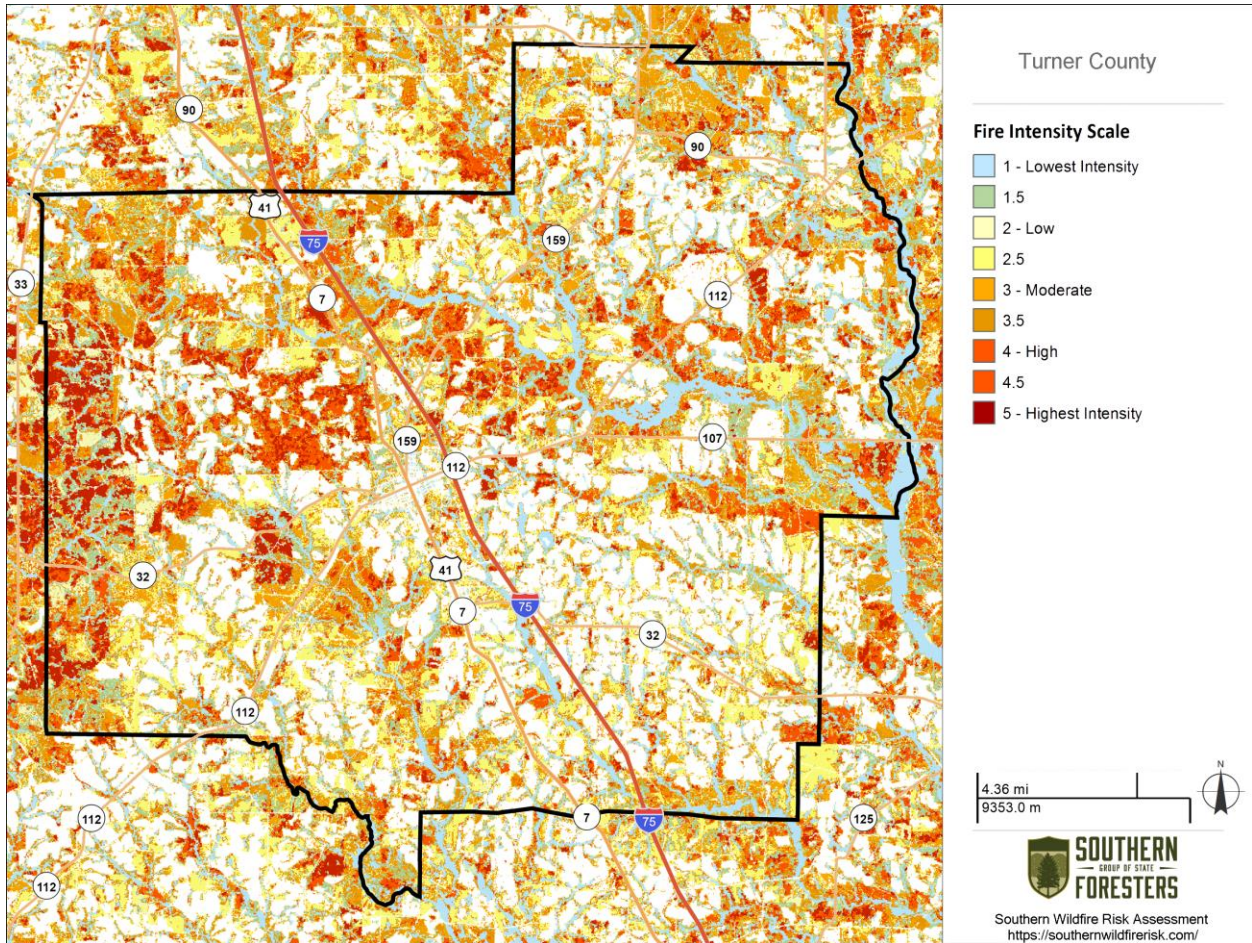
The Burn Probability (BP) layer depicts the probability of an area burning given current landscape conditions, percentile weather, historical ignition patterns and historical fire prevention and suppression efforts.



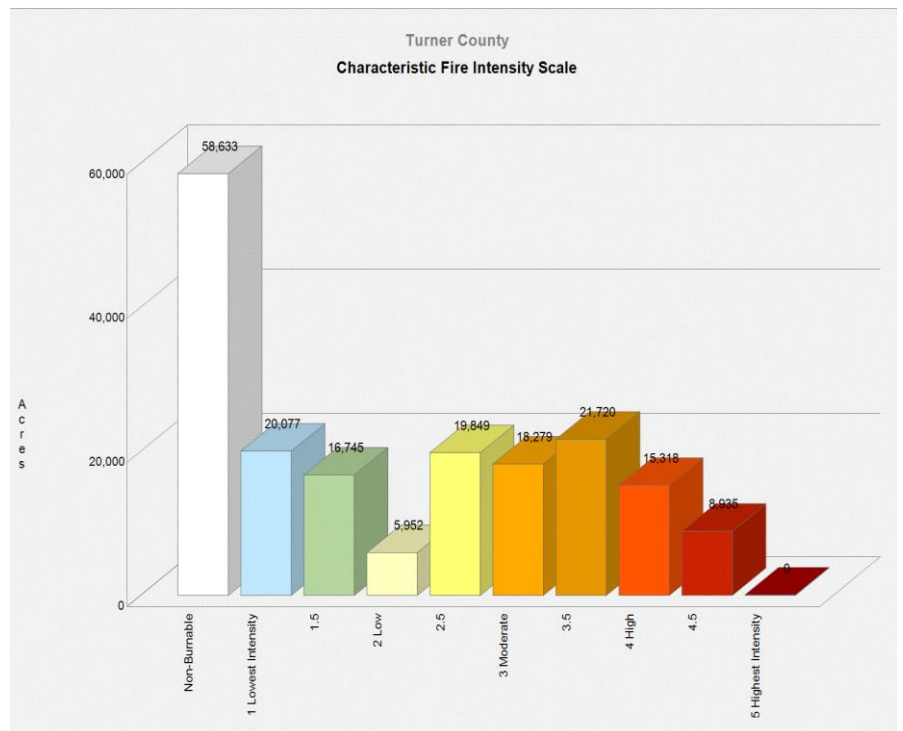


Characteristic Flame Length is the typical or representative flame length of a potential fire based on a weighted average of four percentile weather categories. Flame Length is defined as the distance between the flame tip and the midpoint of the flame depth at the base of the flame, which is generally the ground surface. It is an indicator of fire intensity and is often used to estimate how much heat the fire is generating. Flame length is typically measured in feet (ft). Flame length is the measure of fire intensity used to generate the response index outputs for the SWRA.





Characteristic Fire Intensity Scale (FIS) specifically identifies areas where significant fuel hazards and associated dangerous fire behavior potential exist based on a weighted average of four percentile weather categories. Similar to the Richter scale for earthquakes, FIS provides a standard scale to measure potential wildfire intensity. FIS consist of 5 classes where the order of magnitude between classes is ten-fold. The minimum class, Class 1, represents very low wildfire intensities and the maximum class, Class 5, represents very high wildfire intensities.



VIII. MITIGATION PLAN

Protecting Existing Structures

Critical Facilities

Critical facilities are unique structures which require special consideration in the event of an emergency such as a wildland/urban interface fire. Every county will have some critical facilities and some more urbanized counties will have many. Critical facilities include: a nursing home that may need special consideration because the smoke accompanying a wildfire may be hazardous to the health of elderly residents, a law enforcement dispatch center is a critical facility that will need special consideration to insure there is no disruption of emergency communications in the event of a disastrous wildfire. Other examples of critical facilities are ethanol plants, auto salvage yards and facilities that produce chemicals that could be hazardous to the local population if released into the atmosphere.

Owner/operators of critical facilities need to be aware of the hazards that an approaching wildfire could present. There may be immediate action that could be taken by owner/operators to lessen the impact of a wildfire in the immediate area (such as the elimination of encroaching wildland vegetation in and around the critical facility).

Critical Facilities

- Interstate Highway75 (smoke)
- Sycamore Pre-Release Center
- Personal Care Facilities
- Recreation Department
- Propane Storage Facilities (3)
- Auto Salvage Yards
- FAA Radar Site (Oak Grove Road)

RECOMMENDATION: Contact owner/operators of Critical Facilities in person or by letter to evaluate any wildfire hazard and suggest what owner/operators might do to mitigate any observed hazards and improve wildfire protection.

Public Education Needs

"Firewise" structures are homes and other buildings in the wildland/urban interface that have been built, designed or maintained to survive a wildfire event even in the absence of firefighters on the scene. Over the past fifty years, many Georgia residents have left the city or the suburbs to build homes in or adjacent to forested areas with a desire to be "close to nature". Unfortunately, this has resulted in neighborhoods or single-family dwellings with one way in and out, with long narrow driveways, no pressurized hydrants or draft source for water and so close to wildland fuel that even the best equipped fire department could not be successful in a severe wildfire event. Most of these homeowners don't understand the risk associated with living in the wildland/urban interface and expect to be rescued by the fire department in the event of a wildfire emergency.

The key to the reduction of structural losses in the wildland/urban interface cannot rest solely with improved response by the local fire services. There will never be enough fire trucks and firefighters to adequately protect homes in the wildland/urban interface. A major part of the solution to this problem lies with the homeowner - homeowners in the wildland/urban interface must become "partners" with the fire services and assume some responsibility for maintaining their home (structure) and landscape yard) so that ignitions in and around the home are less likely should a wildfire occur in the immediate area. This means a home with no debris on the roof and in the gutters, wood decks that are skirted underneath, chunky bark or lava rock mulch near the house instead of pine straw or cypress mulch and a 'lean, clean and green" landscape of less-flammable plants within 30 feet of the structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Initiate a community public education program for Turner County residents

- Host a wildfire prevention/ Firewise Workshop each year at a centrally-located facility with a meal and refreshments for those who attend. Ashburn would be a good location for the workshop as ignitions along Interstate Highway 75 and SR 107 immediately east of that community are 3X higher than most other areas of the county. The workshop focus should include prevention of machine use fires and escaped prescribed fires.
- Make Firewise Communities brochures available to the public at central locations such as: Farm Services Agency, Chamber of Commerce and the County Courthouse.
- Encourage neighborhoods/communities that qualify to apply for recognition as a Firewise Community/ USA.

Reduction of Hazardous Fuels

The accumulation of brush and other (mostly ground) vegetation can create conditions over extensive areas that could fuel a disastrous wildfire. Treatment of forested areas with prescribed fire can significantly reduce this hazard while improving pulpwood and sawtimber production and enhancing wildlife habitat. Prescribed burning, however, must be conducted by experienced personnel when weather conditions are conducive to a safe burn and when an authorization has been obtained from the local office of the Georgia Forestry Commission.

The Georgia Forestry Commission closely monitors the authorization of prescribed burns near Interstate Highway 75 to prevent a smoke issue that would create a hazard for motorists on that highway. A large wildfire close to I-75 could be a serious issue and there are large tracts of timber adjacent to I-75. Other ways to reduce wildland fuel (vegetation) include:

- Mechanical treatment
- Chemical treatment (herbicides) • Livestock grazing

The above alternatives to prescribed burning are more intensive and hence, costlier and generally suitable only for smaller acreages.

The goal for structural protection should be a "Firewise" landscape. A Firewise landscape is characterized by trees, shrubs and grasses that are carefully managed within 100 feet of structures - an area called the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ). Most critical is the space within 30 feet of a structure which is usually referred to as the area of Defensible Space. The Defensible Space should include a landscape of less flammable plants, coarse bark or lava rock as mulch adjacent the structure, tree limbs trimmed away from the structure and any decks skirted so leaves and other debris cannot accumulate underneath. The idea is to create a landscape that will prevent flames or fire brands (aerial borne embers) from igniting the structure.

RECOMMENDATION: Promote the use of prescribed burning in Turner County for wildland fuel reduction.

- Help landowners understand how to prescribe burn legally and safely.
- Educate the general public on the benefits of prescribed burning.
- Work with the Georgia State Patrol and local law enforcement to ensure motorists are alerted to smoke hazards on local roadways.

NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE

Site Plan Review

Growth pressure will undoubtedly increase new home starts in Turner County over the next 20 years. If farm and ranch land is conserved as a mainstay of the County's economy, new development will, by necessity, occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. The County will have an opportunity to significantly influence the wildland fire safety of new developments. It is important that new development be planned and constructed to provide for public safety in the event of a wildland fire emergency.

Over the past 20 years, much has been learned about how and why homes burn during wildland fire emergencies. Perhaps most importantly, case histories and research have shown that even in the most severe circumstances, wildland fire disasters can be avoided. Homes can be designed, built and maintained to withstand a wildfire even in the absence of fire services on the scene. The national Firewise Communities program is a national awareness initiative to help people understand that they don't have to be victims in a wildfire emergency. The National Fire Protection Association has produced two standards for reference: NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.

In 2012 the International Code Council developed the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC). This code was adopted in 2014 by the Georgia Legislature for counties to use in their development guidelines for building and zoning codes in rural areas. When new multi-unit subdivisions are built in rural areas (sometimes referred to as the Wildland/Urban Interface), a number of public safety challenges may be created for the local fire services: (1) the water supply in the immediate areas may be inadequate for fire suppression; (2) if the Development is in an outlying area, there may be a longer response time for emergency services; (3) in a wildfire emergency, the access road(s) may need to simultaneously support evacuation of residents and the arrival of emergency vehicles; and (4) when wildland fire disasters strike, many structures may be involved simultaneously, quickly exceeding the capability of even the best equipped fire departments.

RECOMMENDATION:

Strengthen the site plan review process for multi-unit residential development in rural areas subject to wildfires.

- Evaluate the wildfire hazard of proposed new development in rural areas as part of the site plan review process (utilize the GFC assessment scoresheet)
- Consider the "adoption by reference" of NFPA 1144 Standard for
- Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.
- Utilize the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) in the development of building codes and zoning ordinances.

FIRE SERVICES CAPABILITY

Structural fire protection in the County is provided by Turner County Fire Department. The Department has a Chief, Captain, 2 Lieutenant's, and 4 full time firefighters. Additionally, there are 55 volunteer firefighters, however, numbers may vary from year to year. Ashburn Fire & Emergency Services, the only municipal fire department in Turner County, may respond to a wildfire in support of the County and Georgia Forestry Commission. Ashburn Fire & Emergency Services, has 5 fulltime staff, 2 part -time staff and 26 volunteers.

Firefighting Equipment

- Turner County Fire Department:
 - 9 Fire Knockers
 - 8 Engines
 - Tankers
- Ashburn Fire & Emergency Services:
 - engines
- Sycamore Volunteer Fire Department:
 - engine

Status of Equipment and Training

- Countywide, a limited number (10 sets) of wildland personal protective equipment exist for use by volunteer firefighters, however, no fire shelters are available.
- Volunteer firefighters have completed the incident Management Training Courses (1-100 & 1-700), however, none (or very few) of the county's firefighters have had the basic wildfire training courses (S- 130, Standards for Survival and S-190, Basic Wildfire Behavior).

Fire Hydrants

- Pressurized fire hydrants exist throughout the incorporated area of Ashburn and there are 49 located in unincorporated Turner County.
- There is one dry hydrant and 43 draft points in the unincorporated areas of county.

Recommendation: Equipping the county's volunteer firefighters with personal protective equipment designed for use on forest and brush fires along with fire shelters should be a priority. The use of structural fire bunker gear on grass and brush fires increases the risk of overheating, exhaustion and heart attack. Another high priority should be providing basic wildland fire training for the firefighters to prepare them to safely function in and around brush and forest fires. Increasing the availability of water in remote areas of the county, either by adding dry hydrants or acquisition of a 2,000 - 3,000-gallon water tanker is crucial to the protection of homes and outbuildings in rural Turner County.

IX. ACTION PLAN

Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities have been developed to implement the action plan:

Role	Responsibility
Hazardous Fuels and Structural Ignitability Reduction	
Turner County WUI Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC officials, Turner County Fire department officials, a representative from the city and county government and the EMA Director for Turner County. Meet periodically to review progress towards mitigation goals, appoint and delegate special activities, work with federal, state, and local officials to assess progress and develop future goals and action plans. Work with residents to implement projects and firewise activities.
Key Messages to focus on	Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping Debris Burning Safety Firewise information for homeowners Prescribed burning benefits Fuel reduction practices
Communications objectives	Create public awareness for fire danger and defensible space issues Identify most significant human cause fire issues Enlist public support to help prevent these causes Encourage people to employ fire prevention and defensible spaces in their communities.
Target Audiences	Homeowners & Homeowner Associations Forest Landowners and users Civic Groups School Groups Hunting Clubs Forest industry
Methods	News Releases Radio and TV PSAs Personal Contacts Key messages and prevention tips Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters 6 Social media

Spring Clean-up Day (National Wildfire Preparedness Day)	
Event Coordinator	Coordinate day's events and schedule, catering for cookout, guest attendance, and moderate activities the day of the event.
Event Treasurer	Collect funds from residents to cover food, equipment rentals, and supplies.
Publicity Coordinator	Advertise event through neighborhood newsletter, letters to officials, and public service announcements (PSAs) for local media outlets. Publicize and post-event through local paper and radio.
Work Supervisor	Develop volunteer labor force of community residents; develop labor/advisory force from Georgia Forestry Commission, Turner County Fire Departments, and Emergency Management Agency. Procure needed equipment and supplies. In cooperation with local city and county officials, develop safety protocol. Supervise work and monitor activities for safety the day of the event.

Funding Needs

The following funding is needed to implement the action plan:

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
1. Create a minimum of 30 feet of defensible space around structures	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
2. Reduce structural ignitability by cleaning flammable vegetation from roofs and gutters; appropriately storing firewood, installing skirting around raised structures, storing water hoses for ready access, replacing pine needles and mulch around plantings with less flammable material.	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
3. Amend codes and ordinances to provide better driveway access, increased visibility of house numbers, properly stored firewood, minimum defensible space brush clearance, required Class A roofing materials and skirting around raised structures, planned maintenance of community lots.	No Cost	To be adopted by city and county government. International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC)
4. Spring Cleanup Day (National Wildfire Preparedness Day)	Varies	Community Business Donations. State Farm grant
5. Fuel Reduction Activities	\$100 / acre	FEMA & USFS Grants

X. GRANT FUNDING & MITIGATION ASSISTANCE

FEMA Mitigation Policy MRR-2-08-01: through GEMA – Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM).

- To provide technical and financial assistance to local governments to assist in the implementation of long term, cost effective hazard mitigation accomplishments.
- This policy addresses wildfire mitigation for the purpose of reducing the threat to all-risk structures through creating defensible space, structural protection through the application of ignition resistant construction and limited hazardous fuel reduction to protect life and property.
- With a completed registered plan (addendum to the State Plan) counties can apply for pre-mitigation funding. They will also be eligible for HMGP funding if the county is declared under a wildfire disaster.

Georgia Forestry Commission: Plowing and prescribed burning assistance, as well as forest mastication, can be obtained from the GFC as a low-cost option for mitigation efforts.

The Georgia Forestry Commission Firewise Community Mitigation Assistance Grants – Nationally recognized Firewise Communities can receive up to \$5000 grants to help address potential wildfire risk reduction projects. Grant submission can be made through local Georgia Forestry Commission offices or your Regional Wildfire Prevention Specialist.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and American International Group, Inc. (AIG) offer grants to assist local fire departments in establishing or enhancing their community fuels mitigation programs while educating members of the community about community wildfire readiness and encouraging personal action.

XI. GLOSSARY

Community-At-Risk – A group of two or more structures whose proximity to forested or wildland areas places homes and residents at some degree of risk.

Critical Facilities – Buildings, structures or other parts of the community infrastructure that require special protection from an approaching wildfire.

CWPP – The Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Defensible Space – The immediate landscaped area around a structure (usually a minimum of 30 ft.) kept “lean, clean and green” to prevent an approaching wildfire from igniting the structure.

Dry Hydrant - A non-pressurized pipe system permanently installed in existing lakes, ponds and streams that provides a suction supply of water to a fire department tank truck.

FEMA – The Federal Emergency Management Agency whose mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Fire Adapted Community – A community fully prepared for its wildfire risk by taking actions to address safety, homes, neighborhoods, businesses and infrastructure, forest, parks, open spaces, and other community assets.

Firewise Program – A national initiative with a purpose to reduce structural losses from wildland fires.

Firewise Community/USA – A national recognition program for communities that take action to protect themselves from wildland fire. To qualify a community must have a wildfire risk assessment by the Georgia Forestry Commission, develop a mitigation action plan, have an annual firewise mitigation/education event, have dedicated firewise leadership, and complete the certification application.

Fuels – All combustible materials within the wildland/urban interface or intermix including, but not limited to, vegetation and structures.

Fuel Modification – Any manipulation or removal of fuels to reduce the likelihood of ignition or the resistance to fire control.

Hazard & Wildfire Risk Assessment – An evaluation to determine an area’s (community’s) potential to be impacted by an approaching wildland fire.

Healthy Forests Initiative - Launched in August 2002 by President Bush (following passage of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act by Congress) with the intent to reduce the risks severe wildfires pose to people, communities, and the environment.

Home Ignition Zone (Structure Ignition Zone) - Treatment area for wildfire protection. The “zone” includes the structure(s) and their immediate surroundings from 0-200 ft.

Mitigation – An action that moderates the severity of a fire hazard or risk.

National Fire Plan – National initiative, passed by Congress in the year 2000, following a landmark wildland fire season, with the intent of actively responding to severe wildland fires and their impacts to communities while ensuring sufficient firefighting capacity for the future.

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) - An international nonprofit organization established in 1896, whose mission is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.

National Wildfire Preparedness Day – Started in 2014 by the National Fire Protection Association as a day for communities to work together to prepare for the approaching wildfire season. It is held annually on the first Saturday in May.

Prescribed Burning (prescribed fire) –The use of planned fire that is deliberately set under specific fuel and weather condition to accomplish a variety of management objectives and is under control until it burns out or is extinguished.

Ready, Set, Go - A program fire services use to help homeowners understand wildfire preparedness, awareness, and planning procedures for evacuation.

Southern Group of State Foresters – Organization whose members are the agency heads of the forestry agencies of the 13 southern states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Stakeholders– Individuals, groups, organizations, businesses or others who have an interest in wildland fire protection and may wish to review and/or contribute to the CWPP content.

Wildfire or Wildland Fire – An unplanned and uncontrolled fire spreading through vegetative fuels.

Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) - The presence of structures in locations in which the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) determines that topographical features, vegetation, fuel types, local weather conditions and prevailing winds result in the potential for ignition of the structures within the area from flames and firebrands from a wildland fire (NFPA 1144, 2008).

XII. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Publications/Brochures/Websites:

FIREWISE materials can be ordered at www.firewise.org

Georgia Forestry Commission www.georgiafirewise.org

Examples of successful wildfire mitigation programs can be viewed at the website for National Database of State and Local wildfire Hazard Mitigation Programs sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service and the Southern Group of State Foresters www.wildfireprograms.com

Information about a variety of interface issues (including wildfire) can be found at the USFS website for Interface South: www.interfacesouth.org

Information on codes and standards for emergency services including wildfire can be found at www.nfpa.org

Information on FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) can be found at www.firegrantsupport.com

Information on National Fire Plan grants can be found at <http://www.federalgrantswire.com/national-fire-plan--rural-fire-assistance.html>

Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment website SouthWRAP www.SouthernWildfireRisk.com

Fire Adapted Communities www.fireadapted.org

Ready, Set, Go www.wildlandfirersg.org

National Wildfire Preparedness Day www.wildfireprepreday.org

Appended Documents:

Turner County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Turner County Wildfire assessment scoresheets

All files that make up this plan are available in an electronic format from the Georgia Forestry Commission.



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