

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



Community Wildfire Protection Plan

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

Banks County

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



SEPTEMBER 2022

The following report is a collaborative effort between various entities. The representatives listed below comprise the core decision-making team responsible for this report and mutually agree on the plan's contents.

County Representative(s):

Name Charles Turk Commission Chairman
Signature _____

Name Sammy Reece Member
Signature _____

Name Danny Maxwell Member
Signature _____

Name Keith Gardiner Member
Signature _____

Name Bo Garrison Member
Signature _____

Local Emergency Services Representative(s):

Name Steve Nichols Fire Chief
Signature _____

Name Scotty Mathis E911 / EMA Director
Signature _____

Local Georgia Forestry Commission Representative(s):

Name Doug Andrews Chief Ranger Hall Banks unit
Address GA Forestry Commission 5707 Lula Road Lula, Georgia 30554
Phone Number (770)869-3641
Signature _____

Name Mark Wiles Wildfire Mitigation Specialist
Address 1884 Coldwater Road. Elberton, Georgia 30635
Phone Number 706 988-6856
Signature _____

Local USDA Forest Service Representative:

Name Mike Davis Assistant Fire Management Officer
Address US Forest Service Chattahoochee-Oconee NF Gainesville, GA 30501
Phone Number 770-297-3034

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1) OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Banks County. The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect this county and its essential infrastructure. Prioritized activities to educate the public are included. It also includes a plan for wildfire suppression. Specifically, the plan includes community-centered actions that will:

- Educate citizens on wildfire, its risks, and ways to protect lives and properties,
- Support fire rescue and suppression entities,
- Focus on collaborative decision-making and citizen participation,
- Develop and implement effective mitigation strategies, and
- Develop and implement effective community ordinances and codes.

This plan should become a working document that is shared by local, state, and federal agencies that will use it to accomplish common goals. An agreed-upon schedule for meeting to review accomplishments, solve problems, and plan for the future should extend beyond the scope of this plan. Without this follow up this plan will have limited value.

2) COUNTY BACKGROUND AND EXISTING SITUATION

Banks County



Banks County, in northeast Georgia, is the state's 129th county, comprising 233 square miles. The county was created from portions of [Franklin](#) and [Habersham](#) counties in 1858 and was named for Richard E. Banks (1794-1856), a circuit-riding surgeon who treated white settlers and Indians in the area, developing a good reputation among the [Cherokees](#) for treating [smallpox](#). The land that became Banks County was originally held by the Cherokees, forming a border territory between the Cherokee Indian Nation and the newly formed United States of America. The western border of Georgia (from the top of Currahee Mountain to the southernmost branch of the Oconee River) was marked by a strip of felled trees, twenty feet wide, established with the Cherokees by the Treaty of Augusta in 1783. The northern boundary was the Chattahoochee National Forest.

The county seat is Homer.

Its first courthouse was built in 1863, reportedly with \$6,600 in Confederate currency; it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Saved from destruction by a campaign to restore the old building initiated by a Banks County High School student, it now serves as a museum and community meeting hall, after a new courthouse was built in 1987. Homer, which replaced New Lebanon as the county seat, was incorporated in 1859, and is reported to have been named after Homer Jackson, an early settler.



[Banks County Courthouse](#)

Parts of other incorporated towns lie in the county: Alto (once known as Lulah), Baldwin, Gillsville, Lula, and Maysville. According to the 2010



U.S. census, the population of Banks County is 18,395, an increase from the 2000 population of 14,422.

Commercial forestry has given way to small [poultry](#) farms in recent decades, although much of the workforce is employed in the manufacturing sector, mostly in [textiles](#) and apparel production.

[Covered Bridge](#)

Well-known former residents include Georgia [governor Allen D. Candler](#), major-league baseball champion [Ty Cobb](#), and Zach S. Henderson, former president of Georgia Teachers College (later, [Georgia Southern University](#)).

Places of interest include Nails Creek Baptist Church, the Old Banks County Jail, Fort Hollingsworth, and the Atlanta Dragway. Annual events include the Banks County Festival in the fall, the Annual North Georgia Folk Potters Festival in June, and in Homer the "World's Largest Easter Egg Hunt."

The above material is courtesy of the New Georgia Encyclopedia

The Wildland-Urban Interface

There are many definitions of the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), however from a fire management perspective it is commonly defined as an area where structures and other human development meet or intermingles with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. As fire is dependent on a certain set of conditions, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group has defined the wildland-urban interface as a set of conditions that exists in or near areas of wildland fuels, regardless of ownership. This set of conditions includes type of vegetation, building construction, accessibility, lot size, topography and other factors such as weather and humidity. When these conditions are present in certain combinations, they make some communities more vulnerable to wildfire damage than others. This “set of conditions” method is perhaps the best way to define wildland-urban interface areas when planning for wildfire prevention, mitigation, and protection activities.

There are three major categories of wildland-urban interface. Depending on the set of conditions present, any of these areas may be at risk from wildfire. A wildfire risk assessment can determine the level of risk.

1. “Boundary” wildland-urban interface is characterized by areas of development where homes, especially new subdivisions, press against public and private wildlands, such as private or commercial forest land or public forests or parks. This is the classic type of wildland-urban interface, with a clearly defined boundary between the suburban fringe and the rural countryside.

2. “Intermix” wildland-urban interface areas are places where improved property and/or structures are scattered and interspersed in wildland areas. These may be isolated rural homes or an area that is just beginning to go through the transition from rural to urban land use.

3. “Island” wildland-urban interface, also called occluded interface, are areas of wildland within predominately urban or suburban areas. As cities or subdivisions grow, islands of undeveloped land may remain, creating remnant forests. Sometimes these remnants exist as parks, or as land that cannot be developed due to site limitations, such as wetlands.

(courtesy *Fire Ecology and Wildfire Mitigation in Florida* 2004)

Banks County is typical of a county that is undergoing a gradual transition from an isolated rural county to county influenced by multilane transportation corridors connecting it to large metropolitan areas. It is also influenced by its proximity to recreation areas. It contains mixtures of both boundary and intermix interface.

Wildland Urban Interface Hazards

Firefighters in the wildland urban interface may encounter hazards other than the fire itself, such as hazardous materials, utility lines and poor access.

- **Hazardous Materials**
Common chemicals used around the home may be a direct hazard to firefighters from flammability, explosion potential and/or vapors or off-gassing. Such chemicals include paint, varnish and other flammable liquids; fertilizer; pesticides; cleansers; aerosol cans, fireworks, batteries and ammunition. In addition, some common household products such as plastics may give off very toxic fumes when they burn. Stay OUT of the smoke from burning structures and any unknown sources such as trash piles.
- **Illicit Activities**
Marijuana plantations or drug production labs may be found in wildland urban interface areas. Extremely hazardous materials such as propane tanks and flammable/toxic chemicals may be encountered, as well as booby traps.
- **Propane tanks**
Both large (household size) and small (gas grill size) liquefied propane gas (LPG) tanks can present hazards to firefighters, including explosion. See the "LPG Tank Hazards" discussion for details.
- **Utility lines**
Utility lines may be located above and below ground and may be cut or damaged by tools or equipment. Don't spray water on utility lines or boxes.
- **Septic tanks and fields**
Below-ground structures may not be readily apparent and may not support the weight of engines or other apparatus.



Liquefied Propane Gas (LPG) Tank Hazards

Liquefied Propane Gas (LPG) tanks are commonly found in the wildland-urban interface and present hazards to firefighters in that environment. LPG tanks may be found in a number of other environments such as motor homes, travel trailers, grills, camp stoves, lanterns, etc. Directly attacking LPG tank fires is a structural fire task involving hazardous materials and should only be attempted by trained personnel using full structural personal protective equipment and equipped with a volume of water adequate to safely attack the fire.

● Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapor Explosions (BLEVE)

- The most recognized hazard with LPG tanks is BLEVE (Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapor Explosions) or sudden complete failure of the tank. Some training courses have directed responders to approach the tank from the sides, believing that the force of the explosion will occur on the ends of the tank. However, this is not a guarantee that you will be safe from projectiles or missiles from the explosion, as they may travel in ALL directions up to 2,500 feet away. Leave the area immediately if you smell propane, hear a rising sound from venting safety devices or see discoloration or deformation of the tank. If you leave the area, get at least 2,500 feet away and do not go down wind or down slope of the leaking propane. BLEVEs are a major hazard to emergency responders!

● Fuel Reduction Around Tanks

- Wildland firefighters may take action to prevent direct flame impingement on LPG tanks by removing wildland fuels in the area. However, be aware that lines from the tank to structures may be above or below ground, and may be cut by tools or equipment. Propane gas is heavier than air, and may move along the ground at some distance, and may be ignited when it reaches open flame or another ignition source. Use extreme caution when doing fuel reduction around tanks, and flag any lines you encounter.

● Other Wildland Fire Considerations

- Do not position engines or other apparatus near LPG tanks or downwind / down slope from tanks.
- Do not deploy fire shelters near LPG tanks or downwind / down slope from tanks.

● Cooling Tanks

- In light fuels such as grasses, where any heat exposure to the tank will be very limited, rapid application of cooling water on the outside of the tank above the liquid level can reduce the likelihood of container failure by lowering the external temperature of the shell of the exposed tank. Water should not be directed at the valve safety devices, due to the potential of "icing" the valve closed.
- In heavy fuels where long duration heat exposure to the LPG tank is likely, evacuate all personnel and equipment 2,500 feet away and not down slope or down wind. NFPA says that direct flame impingement protection requires water flow of at least 500 gpm from an unmanned monitor nozzle. This is a situation for properly trained, equipped and supported structural firefighters.

References:

[Propane Safety Web Site](#)

[Natl. Institute for Occupational Safety & Health's Web Site](#)

[National Propane Gas Association's Web Site](#)

[National Fire Protection Association's Web Site](#)

Have an idea? Have feedback? Share it.

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[6 Minutes Home](#)

- New construction materials
Many new construction materials have comparatively low melting points and may "off-gas" extremely hazardous vapors. Plastic decking materials that resemble wood are becoming more common and may begin softening and losing structural strength at 180° F, though they normally do not sustain combustion once direct flame is removed. However, if they continue to burn they exhibit the characteristics of flammable liquids.
- Pets and livestock
Pets and livestock may be left when residents evacuate and will likely be highly stressed, making them more inclined to bite and kick. Firefighters should not put themselves at risk to rescue pets or livestock.
- Evacuation occurring
Firefighters may be taking structural protection actions while evacuations of residents are occurring. Be very cautious of people driving erratically. Distraught residents may refuse to leave their property, and firefighters may need to disengage from fighting fire to contact law enforcement officers for assistance. In most jurisdictions firefighters do not have the authority to force evacuations. Firefighters should not put themselves at risk trying to protect someone who will not evacuate!
- Limited access
Narrow one-lane roads with no turn-around room, inadequate or poorly maintained bridges and culverts are frequently found in wildland urban interface areas. Access should be sized-up and an evacuation plan for all emergency personnel should be developed.

Fire History and Existing Situation

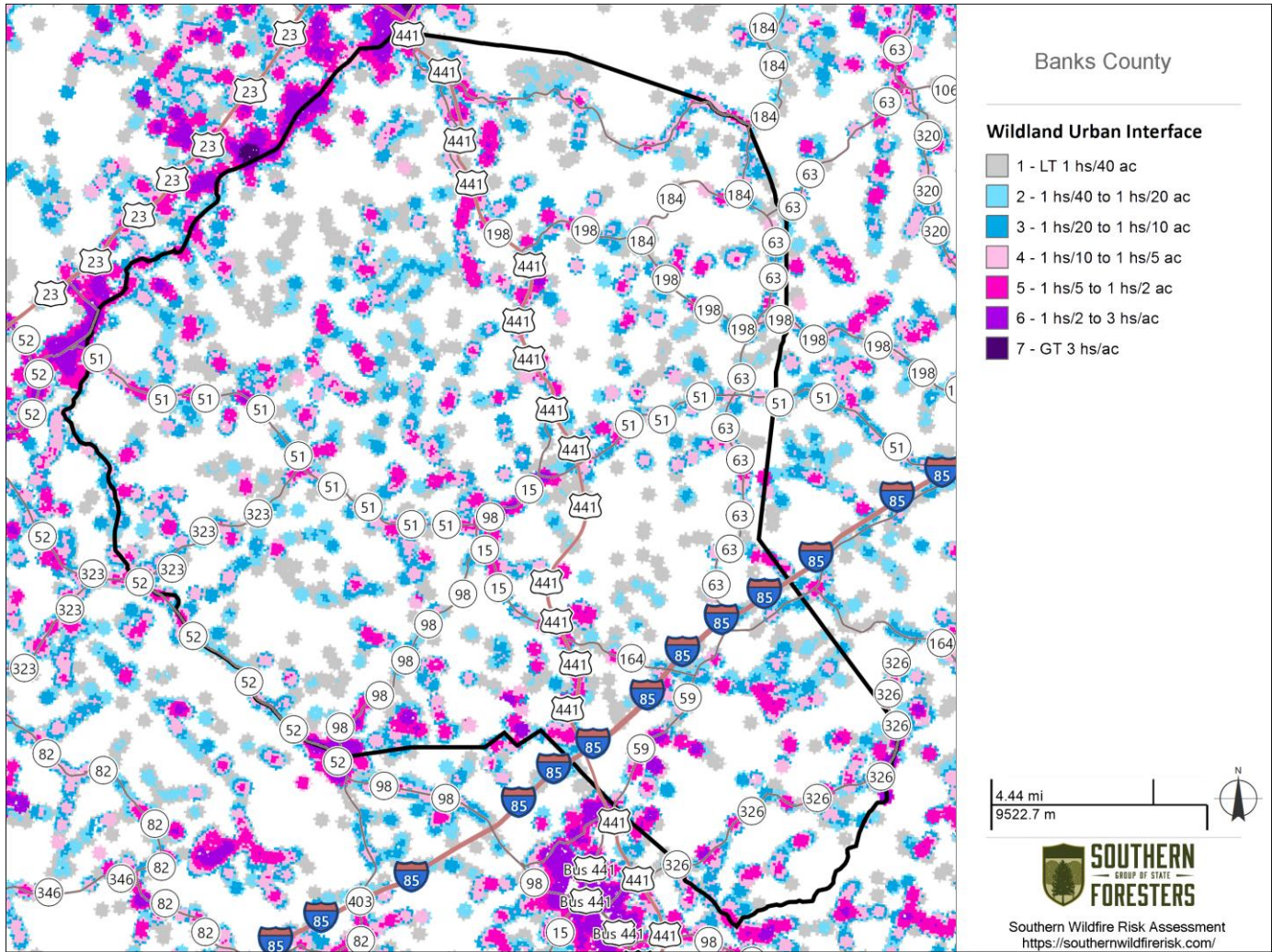
Wildland Fire has not been a serious problem in Banks County as regards number of occurrences and average size when compared to some counties in the state. This favorable situation can be attributed to rapid initial attack and excellent interagency cooperation. Fire activity for the past 5 complete fiscal years is outlined in the table below. These numbers are based on Georgia Forestry Commission records.

Causes of wildland fire in Banks County covers most all recognized cause categories. Examination of Georgia Forestry Commission records reveals that machine use, incendiary, and escapes from debris burning are the leading causes in most years. There is not a significant problem with incendiary.

The following table outlines fire numbers and cause categories for the most complete fiscal year (2022) on record.

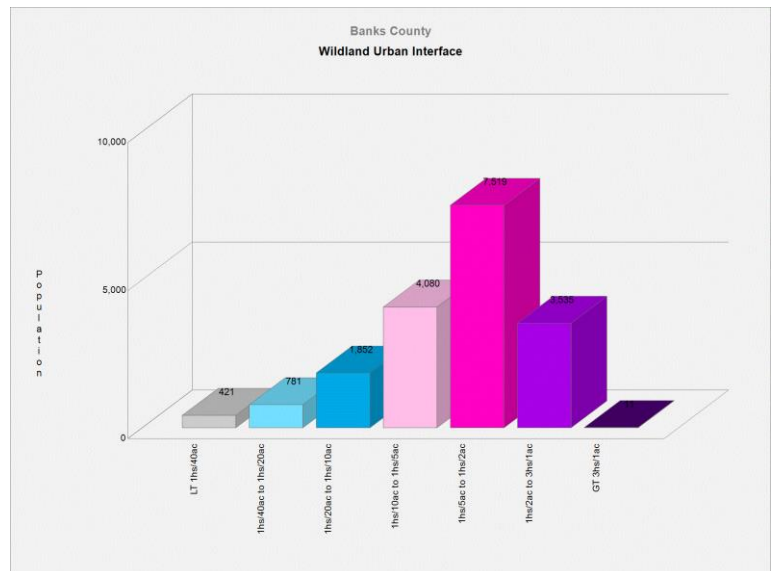
County: <input type="text" value="Banks"/> Year: <input type="text" value="2022"/> <input type="button" value="Generate List"/>					
Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	0		0.00	0.40	3.60
Debris: Household Garbage	1		1.62	0.20	0.32
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	0		0.00	0.60	0.87
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	2		1.39	0.40	0.28
Incendiary	0		0.00	0.20	0.02
Lightning	1		0.04	0.20	0.01
Machine Use	0		0.00	0.40	1.03
Miscellaneous: Other	1		0.29	0.20	0.06
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	0		0.00	0.40	1.15
Undetermined	0		0.00	0.20	0.73
Totals for County: Banks Year: 2022	5		3.34	3.20	8.07

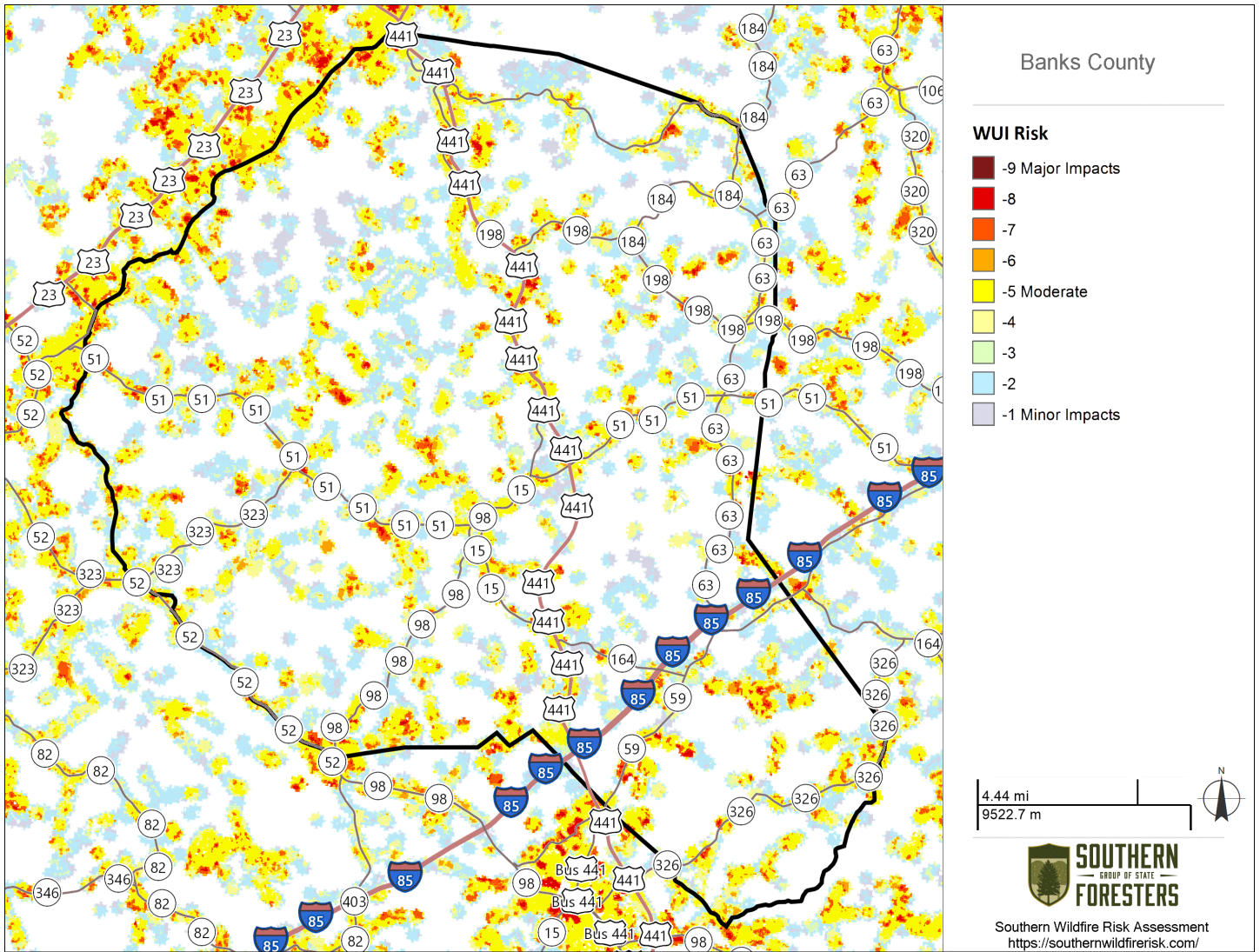
2) Community Risk Assessment Maps



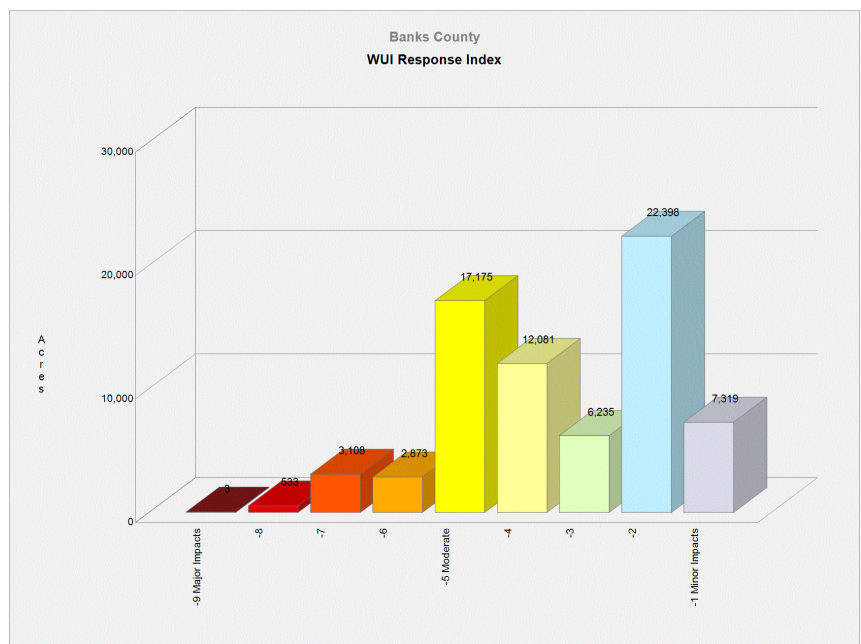
The South is one of the fastest growing regions in the nation, with an estimated population growth of 1.5 million people per year. The South also consistently has the highest number of wildfires per year. Population growth is pushing housing developments further into natural and forested areas where most of these wildfires occur. This situation puts many lives and communities at risk each year.

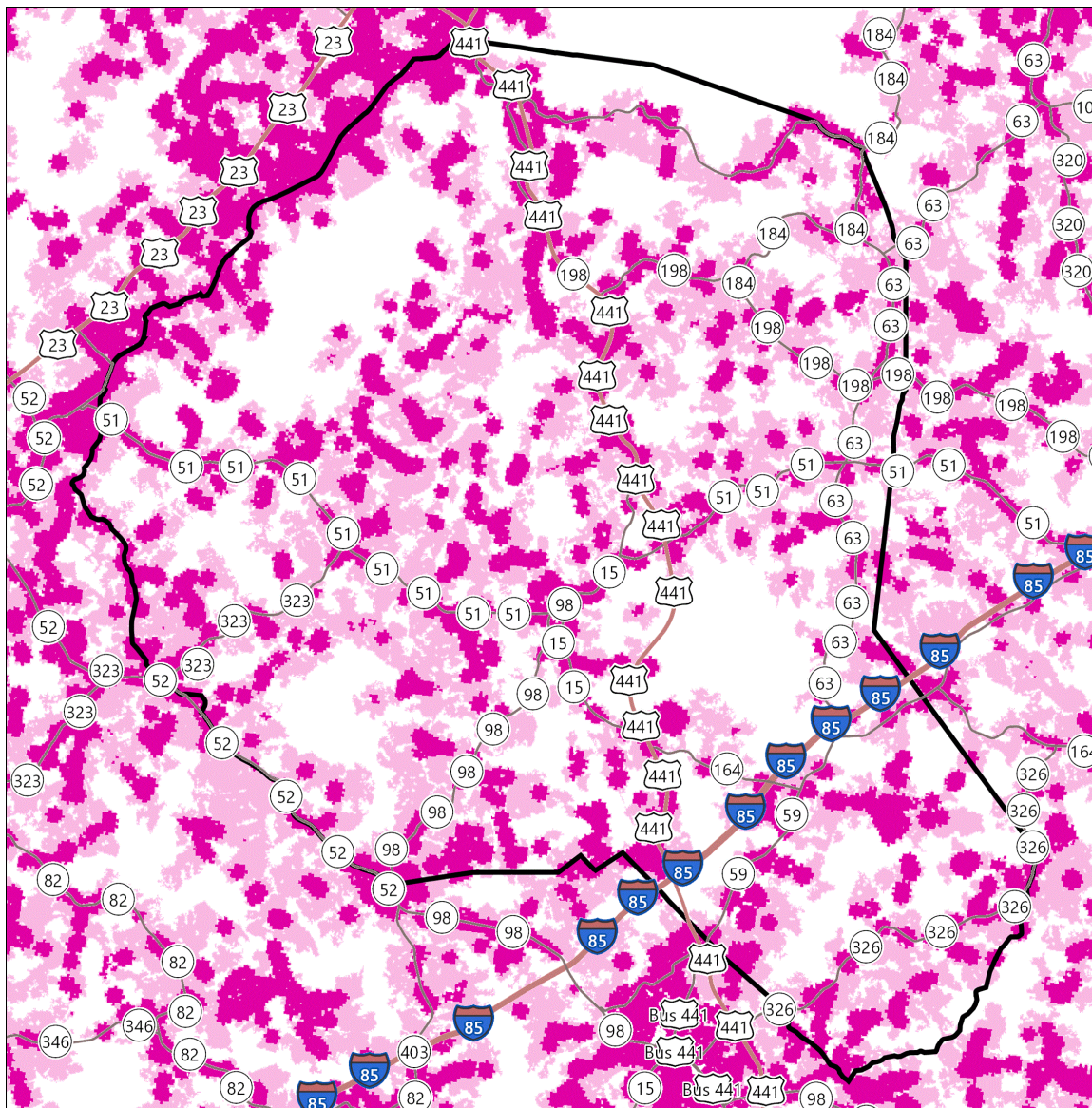
For the **Banks County** project area, it is estimated that **18,199** people or **99.1 % percent** of the total project area population (**18,366**) live within the WUI.





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.





Banks County

Community Protection Zones

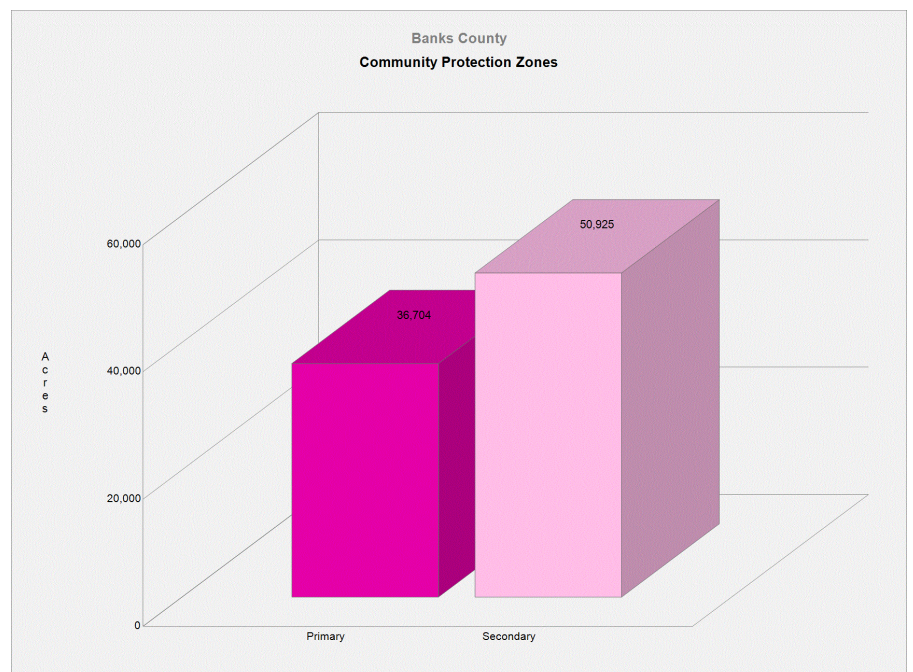
- Primary
- Secondary

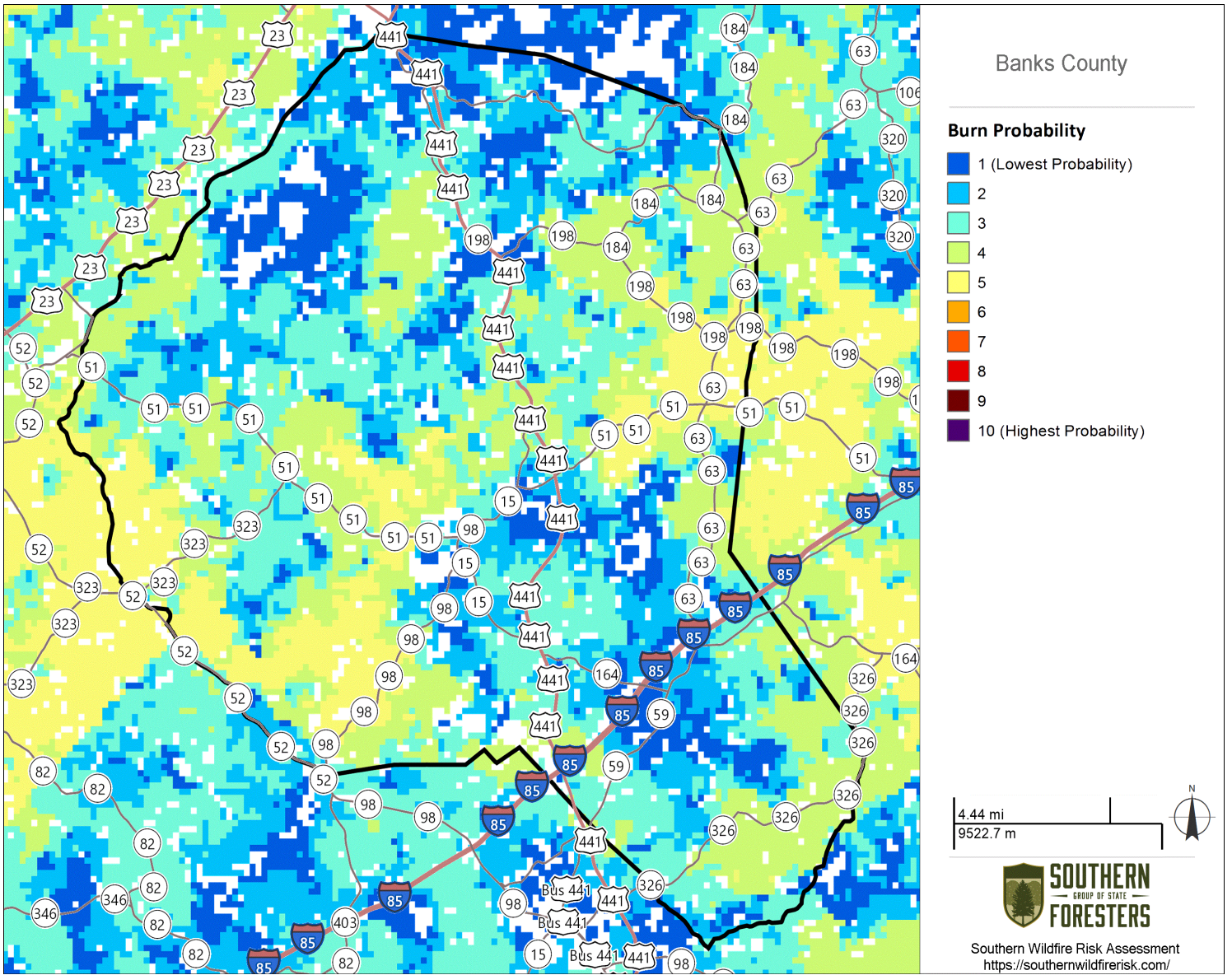
4.44 mi
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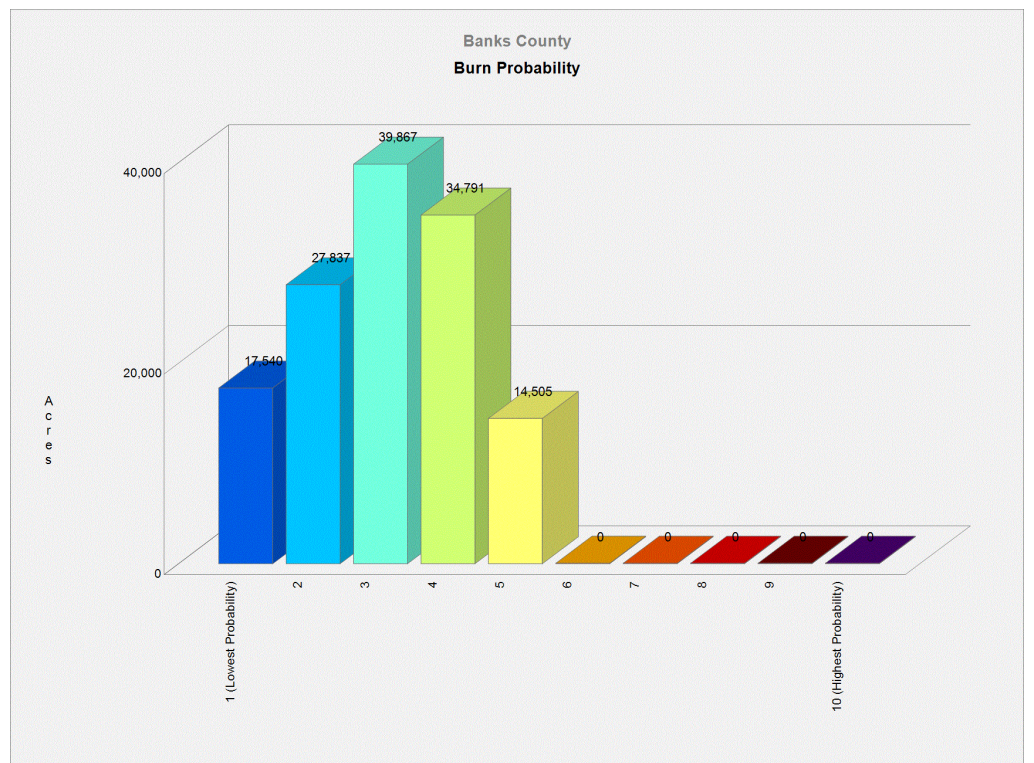
Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment
<https://southernwildfirerisk.com/>

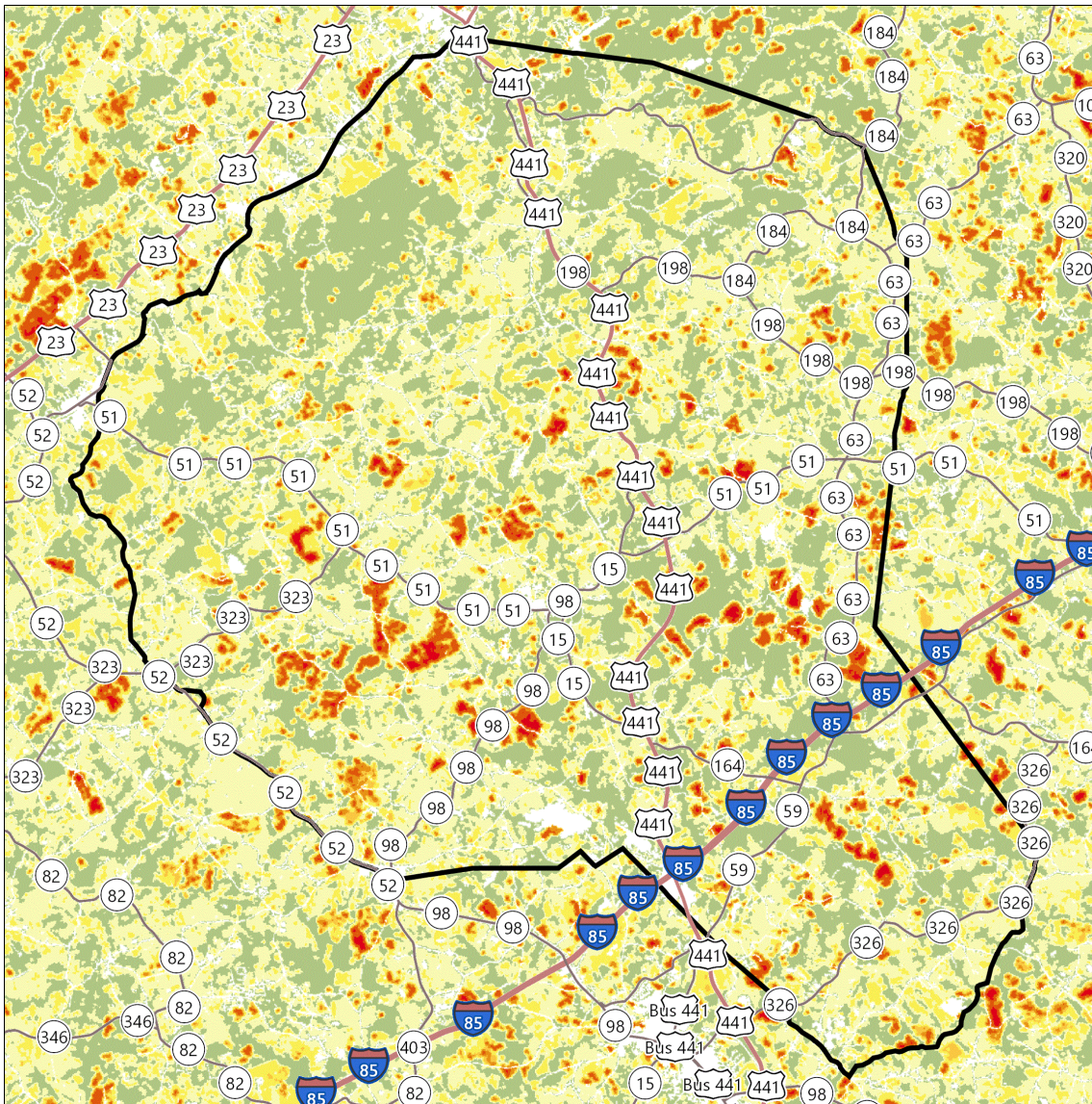
Community Protection Zones (CPZ) represent those areas considered highest priority for mitigation planning activities. CPZs are based on an analysis of the Where People Live housing density data and surrounding fire behavior potential. Rate of Spread data is used to determine the areas of concern around 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.

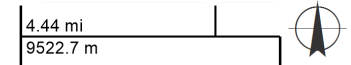




Banks County

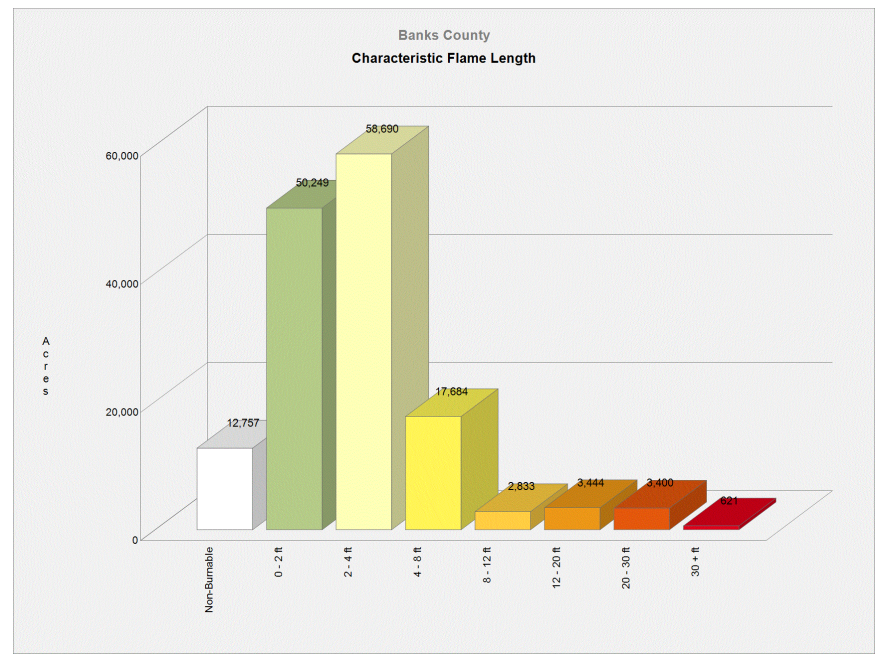
Flame Length

- 0 - 2 ft.
- 2 - 4 ft.
- 4 - 8 ft.
- 8 - 12 ft.
- 12 - 20 ft.
- 20 - 30 ft.
- 30+ ft.



Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment
<https://southernwildfirerisk.com/>

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.



3) Risk Summary

Following an initial meeting on 10/13/2011 between the Georgia Forestry Commission and officials of the Banks County Fire Department, assessments were made of areas of concern in Banks County. These assessments were made by personnel of the Banks County Fire Services. Assessments were made using the Georgia Forestry Commission Form 140 for Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment. Areas selected for assessment were based on the communities at risk GIS layer from the Southern Fire Risk Assessment supplemented by local knowledge of potentially hazardous areas. Information from the assessment process is displayed in tabular form in the appendix. This table lists the community name, Map #, Lat / Long, number of homes, hazard rating, risk category, fire department jurisdiction, and the presence or absence of the area in the Southern Fire Risk Assessment. The original assessment documents contain detailed specific information relating to the particular hazards affecting the community and are retained by the Banks Hall office of the Georgia Forestry Commission. These documents would be valuable in mitigating specific hazards should they be able to be changed. These assessment areas are also represented on the Wildland Fire Susceptibility Index map. The colors for the symbols correspond to the colors on the risk summary table. Moderate risk communities are colored purple, and low risk communities are green.

Sixteen areas were assessed. Nine (9) areas were recognized as being at moderate risk, and seven (7) were classified as at low risk. It should be recognized that additional opportunities for assessment exist in all response jurisdictions. Principal hazards affecting communities classified as moderate were related to extreme slope of properties and driveways, poor access related to one-way access, narrow roads, unpaved roads on steep slopes, lack of defensible space, high structural ignitability factors, and dead end roads. Varying degrees of suppression difficulty exist due to heavy fuel loading and steep slopes. All jurisdictions experience these hazards to some degree. Numerous educational opportunities exist.



4) Prioritized Mitigation Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed during follow-up meetings with County and State fire response agencies. A priority order was determined based on which mitigation projects would best reduce the hazard of wildland fire to communities and infrastructure. The following priorities were considered.

- Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction
- Wildland Fuel reduction or modification
- Improvements to capabilities of Wildland response agencies
- Public Education regarding risk of wildland fire

Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

<u>Hazard</u>	<u>Mitigation</u>	<u>Method</u>
Lack of defensible space	Improve defensible space around structures in communities at risk	All departments should examine structures in communities at risk in their response areas. Improvements to defensible space as referenced in firewise guidelines should be conveyed to residents through media or direct contact.
Access problems for initial attack	Improve access problems	All County response agencies and the Georgia Forestry Commission should closely examine access in all communities identified to be at risk. When problems are identified corrective measures should be made.

Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

Hazard	Mitigation	Method
Structural Ignitability	Reduce structural ignitability	Citizens in communities at risk should be educated regarding methods to reduce structural ignitability as referenced in firewise guidelines. This can be accomplished through media or direct contact.
Local Codes and Ordinances	Improve and amend to codes and ordinances pertaining to infrastructure and community protection from wildland fire.	Examine all existing codes and ordinances for problems regarding direct conflicts to wildland safety or lack of needed codes or enforcement.

Proposed Wildland Fuel Reduction or modification Priorities

Hazard	Mitigation	Method
Fuel Hazards near Communities at risk	Prescribed Burning	Determine Communities at risk where Prescribed burning would be appropriate to use. Seek cooperation from adjacent landowners. Find funding to cover cost of burning. Prioritize burn compartments and execute.
Fuel Hazard in public or shared spaces	Fuel Modification or reduction	Determine where hazards exist. Determine appropriate method for modification or reduction. Chipping, raking and piling, County pick-up, Organized Community Clean-up days could be beneficial. Organized burning could be conducted on these days supported by local fire department personnel.

Proposed Improvements to capabilities of Wildland Response Agencies Priorities

Problem or need	Improvement or solution	Details
Lack of qualification or training	Provide training opportunities	Examine training records of all wildland responders to insure training and qualifications match expected duties. Insure that all wildland responders have Basic Wildland Certification. Locate and secure funding for enhanced training from state and federal agencies.
Equipment needs	Improve or acquire Wildland fire equipment	Determine specific equipment needs to bring all wildland response equipment to NWCG Standards. Provide appropriate PPE to all County wildland responders. Provide wildland hand tools to County departments. Investigate needs for improvements to all wildland water handing and supply (dry hydrants, brush trucks, hose, etc.)

Proposed Public Education Priorities

Educational Priority	Responsible party	Method
Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through direct contact	Federal, State, County, and municipal governments	Conduct Firewise meetings by each fire response jurisdiction assisted by Georgia Forestry Commission (state) and USDA Forest Service (federal). Conduct a door to door campaign in particularly hazardous communities
Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through use of media	County, State, and municipal governments	Use PSA's in local newspapers and local radio stations. Utilize Firewise displays in local post offices and banks. Seek use of local EMC newsletter for Firewise message. Create poster sized notices for use in common public places (stores, post offices, etc. adjacent to high hazard areas advising residents about the hazard and how to protect themselves and their property. Distribute public notices concerning Firewise at local sporting events and other public gatherings.
Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through formal certification and recognition	Federal, State, County, and municipal governments	Supported by the USFS and the Georgia Forestry Commission a goal of achieving Firewise status for at least one extreme or high risk category community should be realized before the end of calendar year 2013. The goal of adding at least one community annually should extend beyond this initial goal.

5) Action Plan, Timetables, and Assessment Strategy

GRANT FUNDING AND MITIGATION ASSISTANCE

- Community Protection Grant: U.S.F.S. sponsored prescribed fire program. Communities with “at-risk” properties that lie within ten miles of a national forest or Bureau of Land Management tracts may apply with the Georgia Forestry Commission to have their land prescribe burned free-of-charge.
- FEMA Mitigation Policy MRR-2-08-01: through GEMA – Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM).
 1. To provide technical and financial assistance to local governments to assist in the implementation of long term, cost effective hazard mitigation accomplishments.
 2. 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.
 3. With a complete a 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.
- FEMA – Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program
 1. Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG). The purpose of AFG’s is to award oneyear grants directly to fire departments and emergency medical services (EMS) organizations of a state to enhance their abilities with respect to fire and related hazards.
 2. Fire Prevention and Safety Grants. The purpose of these grants is to assist state, regional, national or local organizations to address fire prevention and safety. Emphasis of the program is on prevention of fire-related injuries to children.
 3. Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER). The purpose of SAFER is to award grants directly to volunteer, combination and career fire departments to help the departments increase their cadre of firefighters (enhance their ability for 24-hour response).
- Georgia Forestry Commission: Plowing and prescribed burning assistance can be obtained from the GFC as a low-cost option for mitigation efforts.
- Individual Homeowners:
 1. The elimination of hazardous conditions around a structure must ultimately be the responsibility of the community and the homeowner. They will bear the cost and reap the benefit from properly implemented mitigation efforts.
 2. GEMA: Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

5) Action Plan

Steps to implement Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Priorities

Hazard	Specific Action and Responsible Party
Lack of Defensible Space	Using the risk summaries referenced in section 3, each department should conduct inspections of communities at risk in their jurisdiction or area of response for lack of defensible space. Findings will be conveyed to residents and treatment methods will be recommended in accordance with Firewise principles. This would probably be best accomplished by approaching homeowners' associations or organizations. Ultimately, the message should reach individual homeowners in each community. Should local organizations not exist, the builder or developer could be contacted. Such contacts would also influence future projects or developments
Access problems	Using individual Communities at Risk maps for each station, the Georgia Forestry Commission and Banks County Fire officials should visit all identified communities at risk for the purpose of locating and resolving access difficulties. This inspection should extend into the wildland adjacent to the communities at risk looking for hindrances to suppression tactics
Structural Ignitability	Banks County Fire officials should examine structures for structural ignitability concerns at the time when the communities at risk are inspected for lack of defensible space. Using firewise guidelines for reducing structural ignitability, (a checklist could be formulated and used) structures should be assessed and findings conveyed to residents. This could be through use of media or by direct contact with residents or homeowners' associations.
Codes and Ordinances	Banks County and municipal Fire Marshalls should closely examine all codes and ordinances for gaps and oversights which could cause problems in the wildland fire arena. Examples include proximity of propane tanks to structures, accumulations of debris, lack of proper identification pertaining address or street names, set back distances from wildland fuels, road widths in new developments.

In regard to priority, the above steps should first extend to the higher numbers in the extreme category from the risk summary as these communities are at a higher degree of risk. **Another means of reaching homeowners would be to distribute literature on Firewise principles through the building permit office. Checklists for Homeowners are available on the Georgia Forestry Commission public website <http://www.gfc.state.ga.us> . Look under Forest Fire – Wildland Urban Interface- Firewise**

5) Action Plan

Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

Hazard	Specific Action and Responsible Party
Hazardous Wildland Fuel Accumulations	The Georgia Forestry Commission will prioritize prescribed burning projects adjacent to Communities at risk where burning is determined to be appropriate. As Banks County is becoming more densely populated and communities are located in close proximity to transportation corridors burning will have more impact as regards smoke management. This will require changes in how these burns are carried out as regards logistics and technique.
Fuel Continuity between Wildland and Woodland Communities	In areas where the need exists and fuel reduction by burning is determined to be inappropriate, permanent or semi-permanent fuel breaks could be established. These breaks should be maintained annually prior to the arrival of prime burning times. Their locations should be mapped and made known to local, state, and federal response personnel. Residents of the Communities adjacent to these breaks should be advised of their purpose and their cooperation in protecting them should be gained. These breaks could be installed by the Georgia Forestry Commission.
Hazardous Fuel Accumulations in communities and hindrances to suppression	Using the risk summary in section 3, Fire departments could conduct community clean up days in communities at risk in their respective jurisdictions aimed at reducing hazardous fuels and hindrances to suppression in shared community space. Residents would be provided with guidance and access to disposal alternatives for materials removed.

Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

Improvement needed	Responsible Party and specific action
Improve training and qualification of Banks County Wildland firefighters	The Banks County Chief Ranger of the Georgia Forestry Commission and the Banks County Fire Chief should examine all training records for personnel under their supervision. All personnel should be certified Georgia Basic Wildland Firefighters or higher in qualification. Additional training and qualification should be sought for personnel identified in the Banks / Hall County Fire plan who are assigned specific Incident Command System (ICS) functions. Sources for available funds for training should be sought at State and Federal levels.
Improve or acquire wildland firefighting equipment	All stations for Banks County Fire Departments should inventory their present equipment relating to their wildland capability. Funding sources should be investigated from available grants or other sources. Needs for job specific wildland responses should be examined by the Chief Ranger for Banks County and the Banks County Fire Chief.

5) Action Plan

Steps to educate or inform the Public regarding wildland fire prevention and responsibilities

Opportunity	Responsible Party and Specific Action
Improve Public Education through direct contact	Prior to the onset of fire season(s) rangers of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Banks County Fire personnel should conduct firewise meetings in conjunction with normally scheduled fire department meetings. People living in or near extreme and high risk communities should be invited to these meetings by use of door to door campaigns or by mailbox flyers. Notices regarding these meetings could be placed in local post offices or stores near communities at risk. A Firewise display should be acquired and utilized at this meeting. This display would be retained by the Banks Hall Unit of the Georgia Forestry Commission and used for all Firewise meetings in Banks County. Local news media should be invited to these meetings. Goals for potential Firewise certified communities in Banks County could be considered after these meetings are completed.
Improve Public Education through use of media	Prior to the onset of fire season(s) or during periods of particularly high fire danger use of the media should be stepped up by personnel of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Banks County Fire Services. This should include use of all available media in the County. PSA's should be run weekly during periods of high to extreme fire danger. Signs or poster boards could be developed for display in public spaces near communities at risk advising residents that they live in areas that are susceptible to wildland fire and directing them to sources of information regarding wildland fire and their role in improving their own personal safety.
Improve Public Education through formal certification	Before the end of calendar year 2023 at least one community in the high or moderate risk category should be considered for formal certification as a Firewise community. Should this goal be realized it should be repeated in following years.

5) Action Plan

Timetables for Actions

Steps to implement Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Priorities

- Steps to examine communities at risk for defensible space and structural ignitability should take place during the late winter / early spring of 2023.
- Pre-planning to examine access and suppression problems should take place at any time during the current burning season.
- Codes and Ordinances should be examined as soon as possible in order for the legal workings of changes to take place.

Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

- Any identified prescribed burn projects should take place in late winter / early spring 2013. Any other priority burn projects or installation of pre suppression fuel breaks should take place during this same window.
- Steps to reduce fuels in communities at risk should coincide with steps to improve defensible space and reduce structural ignitability. Timing of these actions would be dependent upon Fire station availability during late winter / early spring 2023.

Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

- Cooperation between state and local wildland suppression forces regarding improvements to training and equipment should begin immediately.

Steps to educate or inform the Public regarding wildland fire prevention and responsibilities

- Direct contact with residents in Communities at risk should take place as soon as possible during early calendar year 2023
- The use of media should coincide with the above action.
- Certification of Firewise communities should follow the timetable associated with the action plan

5) Action Plan

Assessment of Actions

Reduction of Community hazard and structural ignitability

- Direct measurement of the number of communities assessed would be the appropriate measure of success
- Any meetings that result in cooperation between wildland departments should be logged along with minutes of those meetings. Goals should be set and reviewed after each meeting.
- Any changes to or additions to codes and ordinances would be an obvious measure of success.

Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

- Acres burned would be the appropriate measure for fuel reduction. A direct measure of linear feet of firebreaks would be an appropriate measure for pre suppression breaks.
- Fuel reduction in communities at risk would be measured by the number of communities affected and number of projects completed.

Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

- A direct measure of the number of capabilities or qualifications gained would be the appropriate measure of success.
- Any equipment acquired or any equipment brought up to national standards would be the appropriate measure of success.

Steps to educate or inform the Public regarding wildland fire prevention and responsibilities

- Direct measurement of the number of persons contacted, literature distributed, public notices posted, news articles published, radio programs aired, etc. would be the best measure of success. The number of communities that achieve Firewise status would be an obvious measure of success.

7) County Base and Hazards Maps

Maps of the Surface Fuels and Fire Occurrence areas are included in this plan. As was mentioned in the risk summary, a map of the Wildland Fire Susceptibility Index with points relating to the assessment areas is also included. The surface fuel and fire occurrence maps do not show assessment areas to preserve continuity of displayed information. The surface fuel map is based on the 13 fuel models recognized by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG).

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



**P. O. Box 819
Macon, GA 31202
1-800-GA-TREES
GaTrees.org**

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