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Community Wildfire Protection Plan
An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and
Conservation of Natural Resources
BROOKS COUNTY



JULY 2018

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Brooks County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary (SWRA)

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 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

This Community Wildfire Protection 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 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.

SIGNATURE PAGE

Honorable James Maxwell, Chairman
Brooks Co. Board of County Commissioners

Date_____

Mike Smith
Brooks County EMA Director

Date_____

Kenneth Lee Weaver
Chief Ranger/ Forest Tech Brooks/Cook Unit
Georgia Forestry Commission

Date_____

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 phenomena - 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 herbs) 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.

CWPP CORE COMMITTEE

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

CWPP Core Committee/Fire Chiefs

Tommy Kerr Station #1 Pineview VFD
Wesley Lyles Station # 4 East Brooks VFD
Steven Smith Station #5 Morven VFD
Ralph Manning Station # 7 Tallokas VFD
James Bracher Station #8 Dixie VFD
Kenny Humphres Station #9 Sand Hill VFD

Jordan Smith (County Fire Chief) Station #10 Jackson Rd VFD
David Crosby Station # 11 Central VFD
Tom Eggers Station # 12 Barney VFD

Georgia Forestry Commission Representatives

Chief Ranger/Forester Technician, Kenneth Lee Weaver
CWPP Program Specialist, Jim Harrell (Initial Plan 2010)
Wildfire Prevention Specialist, Beryl Budd (Revised Plan 2018)

Meeting Dates

Initial Core Committee Meeting: July 27, 2010
Follow-Up Meeting #1: September 20, 2010
Follow-Up Meeting #2: May 16, 2011

The CWPP Core Committee contributed to the CWPP development by:

Initiation	Agreed on the need to develop a Community Wildfire Protection
Risk Assessment	Plan Assessed the wildfire hazard of "at risk" communities.
Fuels Reduction	Identified and prioritized areas for 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	Outlined a public education initiative to increase citizen awareness of residential wildfire protection (Firewise Communities Program).

II. 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 Brooks County.

There are three generally accepted types of interface areas:

1. **"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.
2. **"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.
3. **"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 Brooks 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

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan will be very important to Brooks 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 (i.e.; a 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 Brooks 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.

III. COMMUNITY & WILDFIRE HISTORY

Located just west of Valdosta in southwest Georgia, on the Florida border, Brooks is a county of moss-laden oaks and a long and honored history.



Brooks County Courthouse

In 1818 U.S. President Andrew Jackson made a treaty with the Spanish and the Native Americans and claimed the land that is now Brooks County for the United States. Settlers later came down the Coffee Road from middle Georgia in their covered wagons, ox-drawn carts, and buggies. These early settlers had three things uppermost in their minds: religion, education, and agriculture. Roads were projected to run from the courthouse to each part of the county.



Founded on December 11, 1858, Brooks County was created from portions of Lowndes and Thomas counties. The 494-square-mile county was named for Preston S. Brooks of South Carolina, an extremely popular young legislator known for his intensely southern sentiments and his zealous defense of southern rights. In 1853 Brooks was elected to Congress as a States' Rights Democrat and served until his death four years later, at the age of thirty-eight. A year later the Georgia legislature showed their appreciation of him by naming a county for him.

The largest town in Brooks County, Quitman, was named the county seat.

The first courthouse, a small, temporary building, opened in 1859. A permanent edifice was begun in the same year, but the Civil War (1861-65) delayed its construction. That courthouse, completed in 1864, is still in use today, although it has undergone remodeling and modernizing. Quitman is known as the Camellia City because of the plants grown there, and also because Betty Sheffield, developer of the well-known camellia variety of the same name, was a longtime resident. Other small towns in the county include Barney (famous for its peaches), Barwick, Morven, and Pavo.



According to the 2010 U.S. census, the population of Brooks County is 16,243, a decrease from the 2000 population of 16,450.

Betty Sheffield Camellia

Total land area is 444.4 square miles (284,416 acres) with 3.0 square miles (1,920 acres) of water. A forested acreage of 181,055 acres contributes \$3,940,000 to the county's economy each year and 457 farms (189,009 total acres) contribute \$92,142,000.

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. Forestry is important to the economy of Brooks County. It is the Georgia Forestry Commission's goal to protect this precious resource.

Local GFC Office

The Georgia Forestry Commission office serving Brooks County is located at: 18110 Adel Hwy Barney, GA 31625 Phone #- 229-775-4948

Personnel

Kenneth Lee Weaver, Chief Ranger

Gregg Barnes, Ranger

Brandon Chafin, Ranger

Jody Carl Meeler, Ranger

Robert Clinton Rogers, Ranger

James Walter Sirmans, Ranger

Wildland firefighting equipment

5- Tractor/Transports 2- CAT D-6 N's, 1- CAT D-5 N, 2- John Deere 650 G's

2- Type 7 Engines

1- Type 6 Engine

On a year-to-year basis, the leading cause of wildfires in Brooks County is escaped debris fires (all types), followed by wildfires caused by machine use (example: harvesting combine). Incendiary (arson) and lightning are other major causes of wildfires.

Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	2	8.30	1.00	2.39
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	1	0.21	1.60	5.03
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	2	3.44	0.60	0.69
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	6	61.79	4.00	24.64
Debris: Household Garbage	0	0.00	0.20	0.01
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	6	71.00	4.40	24.35
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	3	34.00	1.20	8.88
Incendiary	4	16.83	1.80	5.02
Lightning	0	0.00	0.60	1.40
Machine Use	4	8.72	2.60	6.65
Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	1	4.35	0.40	1.29
Miscellaneous: Other	0	0.00	1.60	9.65
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	0	0.00	0.80	2.08
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	1	5.05	0.60	1.05
Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	1	0.95	0.80	2.57
Railroad	0	0.00	0.60	2.09
Smoking	0	0.00	0.20	0.02
Undetermined	4	29.19	1.40	7.13
Totals for County: Brooks Year: 2017	35	243.83	24.40	104.96

The table above indicates wildfire activity in Brooks County during the last complete fiscal year, 2017 (July 1, 2016 thru June 30, 2017).

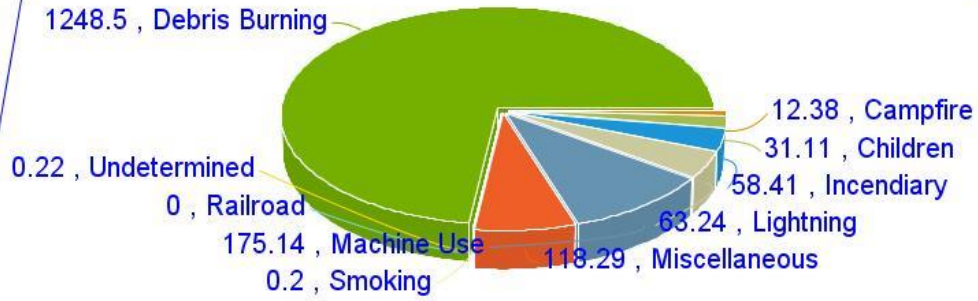
The following pages, 11-14, contain wildfire data over the last 10 years (FY2007-FY2016), covering number of fires, acreage burned, causes, and fire occurrence maps. The average size fire is also compared to the statewide average.

Acreage Burned /Number of Fires For Brooks County FY 2007-2016				
Year	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2007	408.67	75	5.45	18.64
2008	106.98	36	2.97	4.56
2009	182.38	48	3.80	3.90
2010	88.45	21	4.21	3.93
2011	468.91	102	4.60	17.56
2012	177.20	33	5.36	5.08
2013	179.22	53	3.38	4.53
2014	29.34	11	2.67	5.02
2015	37.79	16	2.36	4.42
2016	40.72	13	3.13	6.29

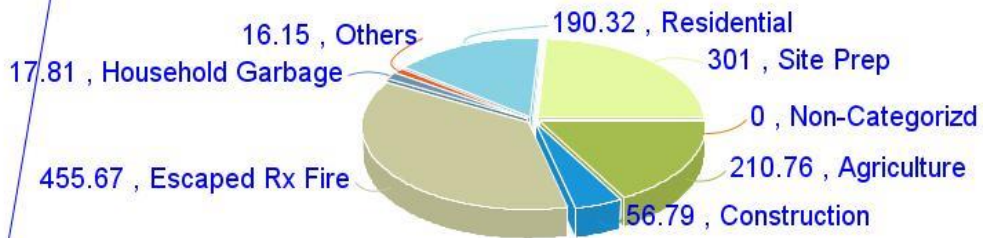
Number of Fires by Cause for Brooks County for FY 2007 to 2016

Year	Campfire	Children	Debris Burning	Incendiary	Lightning	Machine Use	Miscellaneous	Railroad	Smoking
2007	0	2	51	7	1	11	2	1	0
2008	0	1	23	0	3	8	1	0	0
2009	0	1	36	2	0	8	1	0	0
2010	1	2	13	0	0	5	0	0	0
2011	3	2	58	4	6	24	4	0	1
2012	0	0	24	0	3	6	0	0	0
2013	0	2	26	0	2	8	14	1	0
2014	1	0	5	0	0	2	1	1	1
2015	1	0	6	1	2	1	5	0	0
2016	0	0	7	4	1	0	0	1	0

Acreage Burned by Cause of Fire For Brooks County For FY 2007-2016

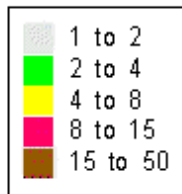
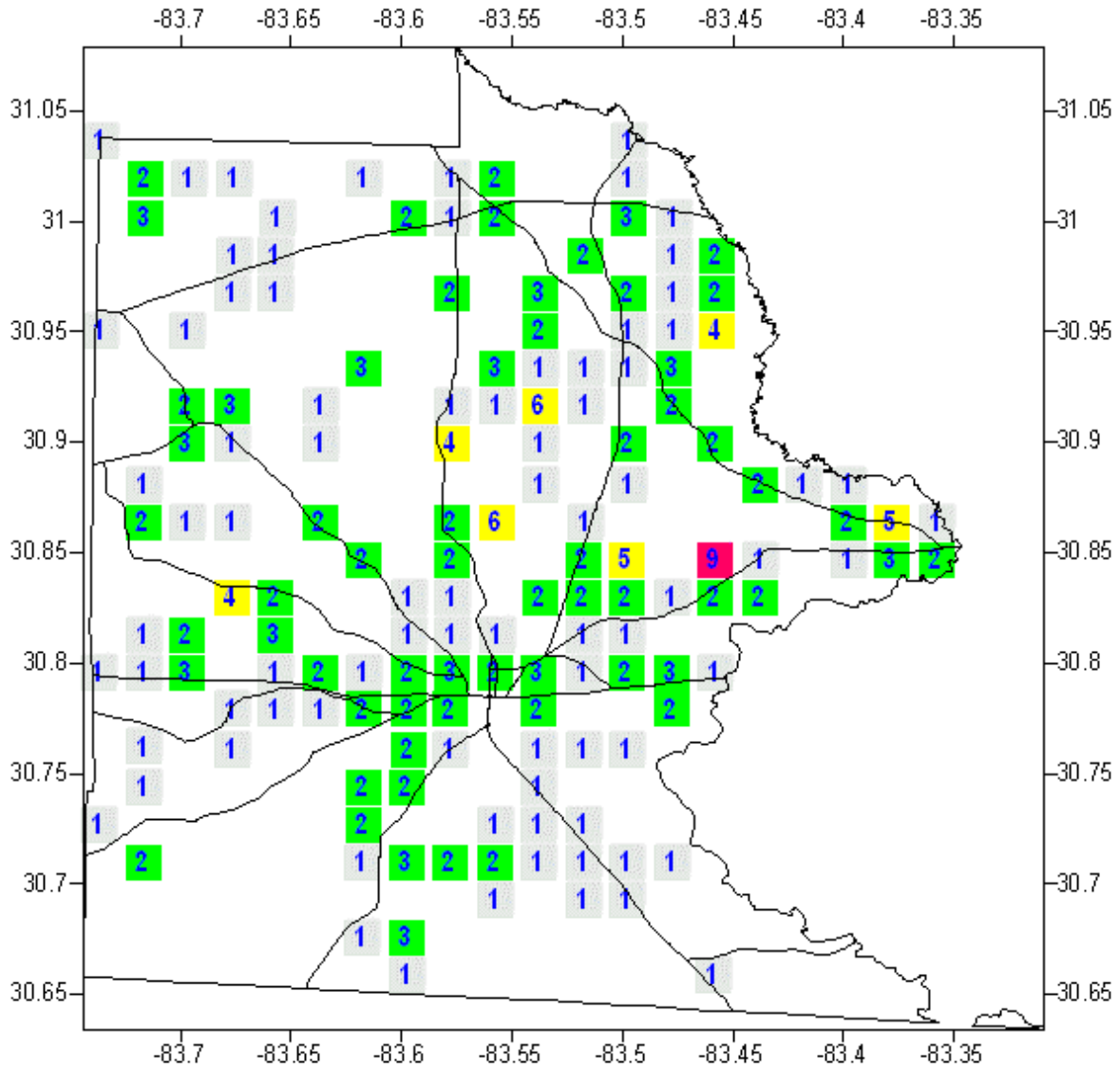


Acreage Burned By Debris Burning Sub Cause For Brooks County For FY 2007-2016

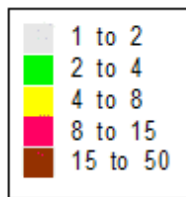
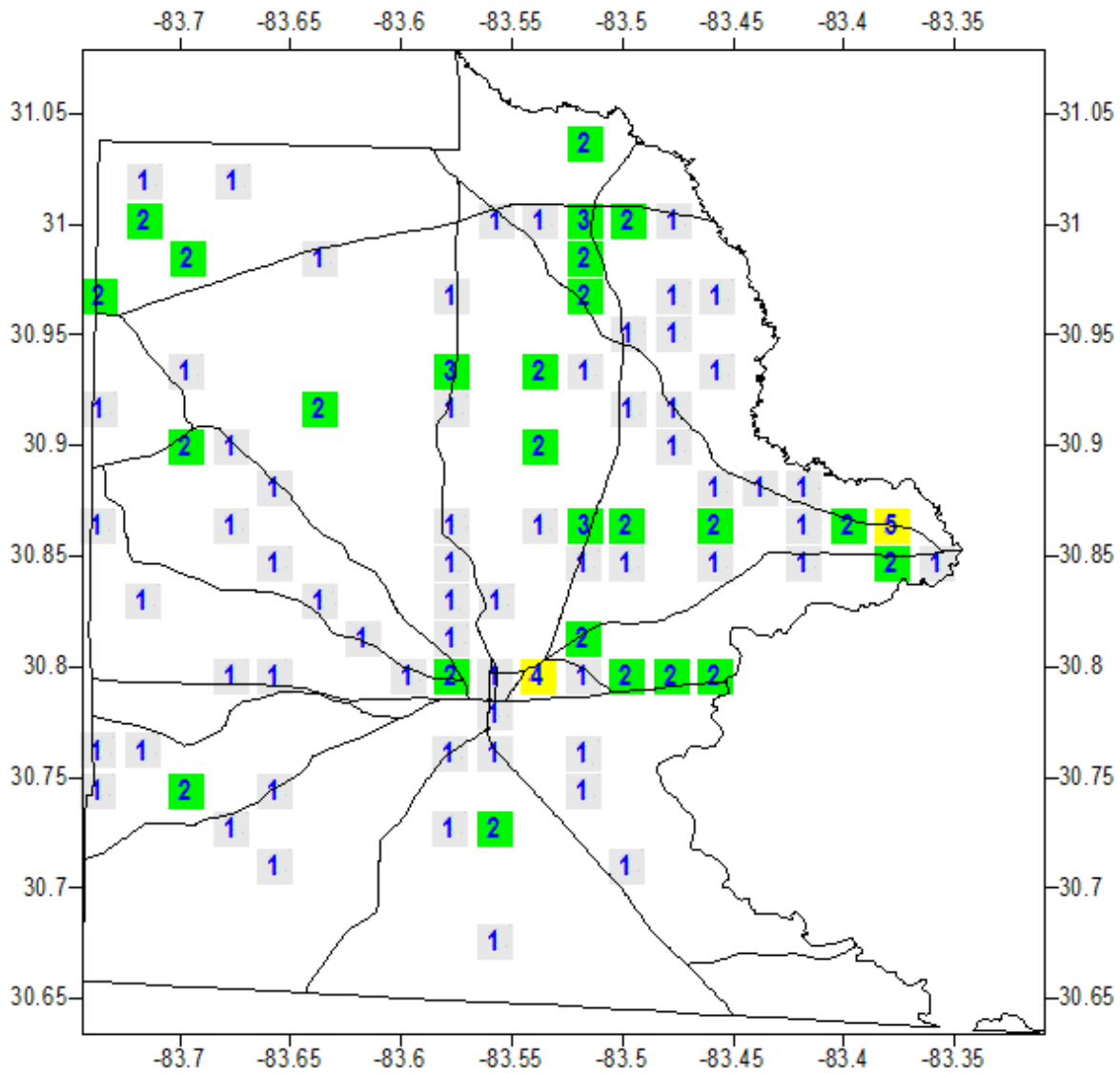


Fire Cause

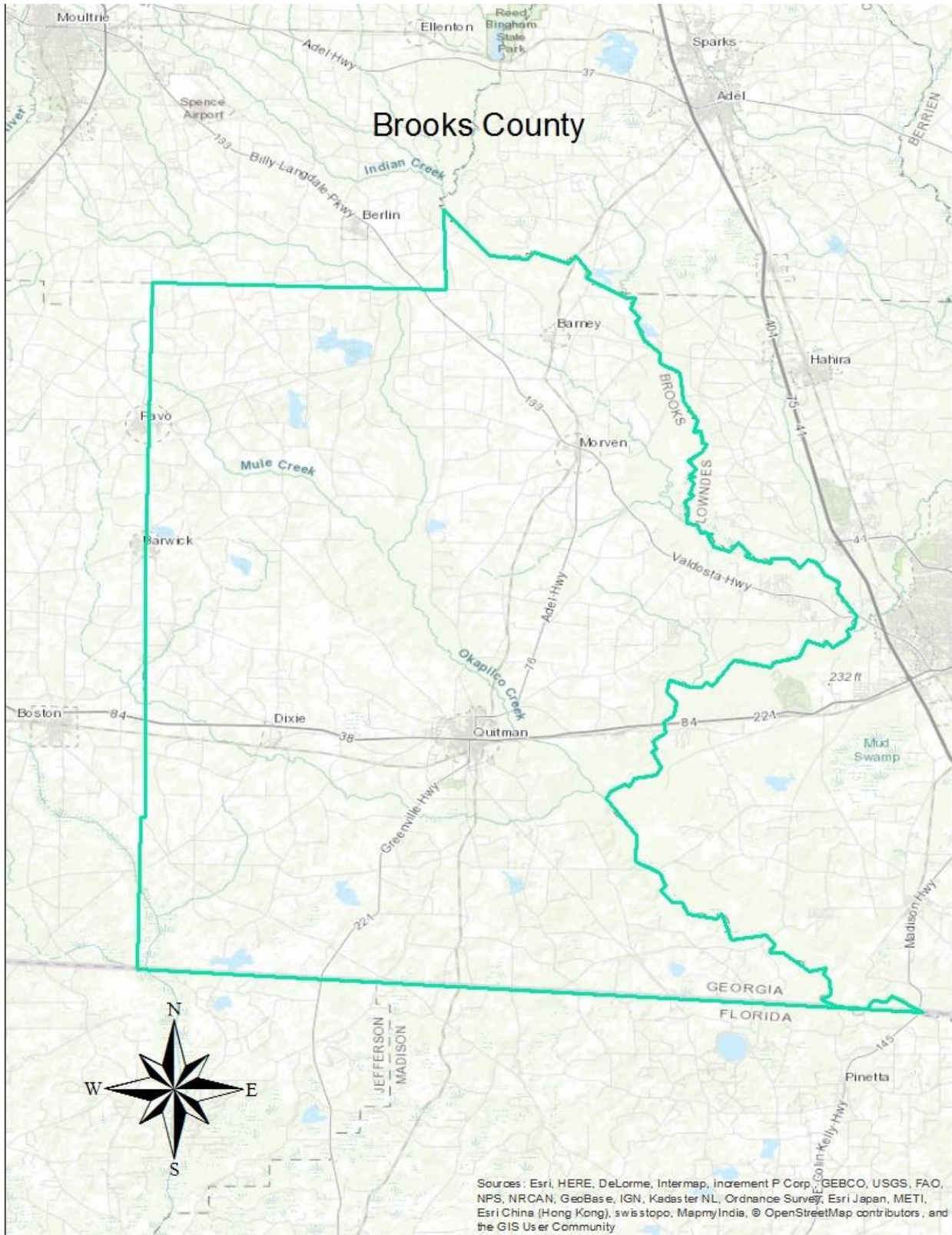
Fire Occurrence Map for Brooks County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011

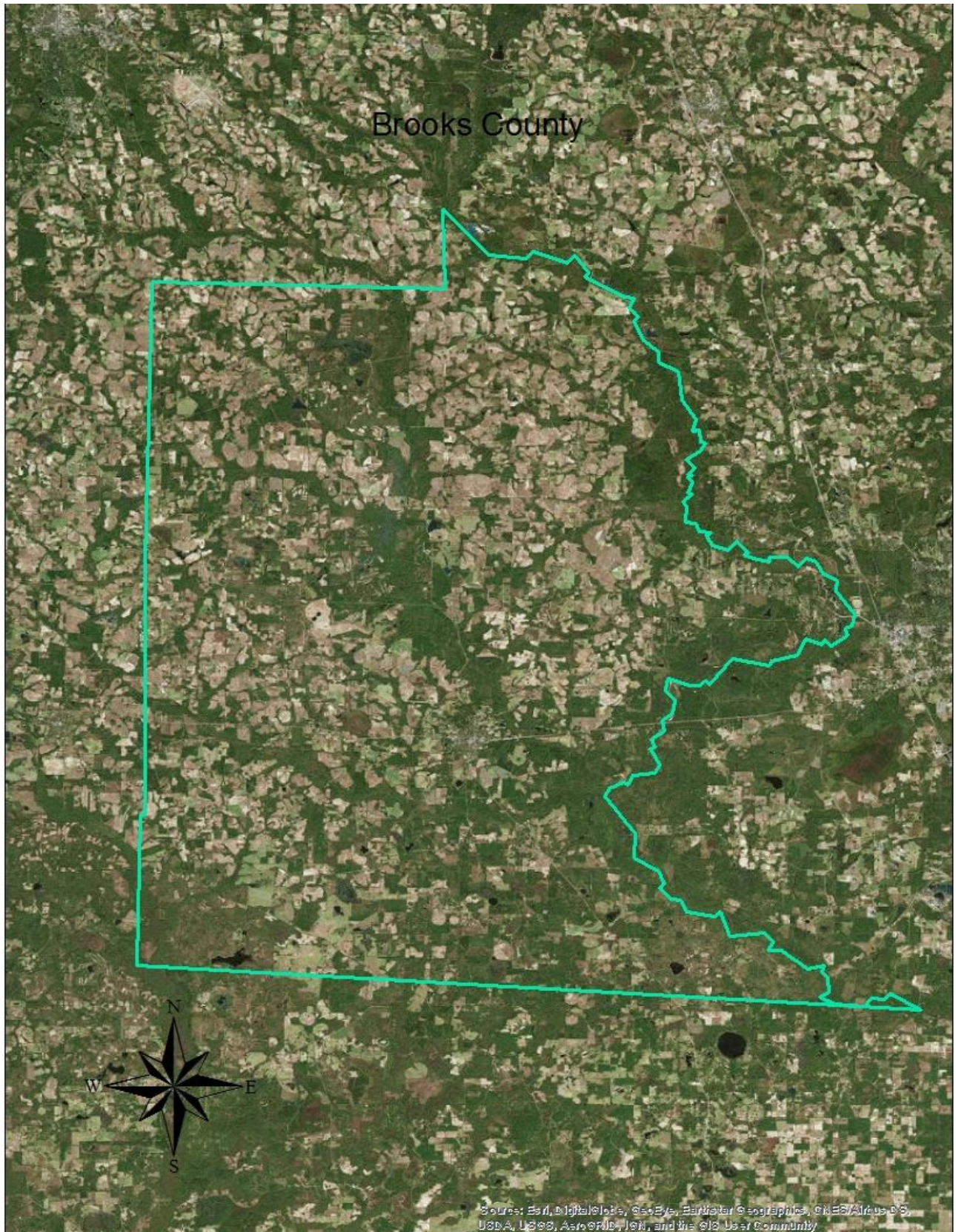


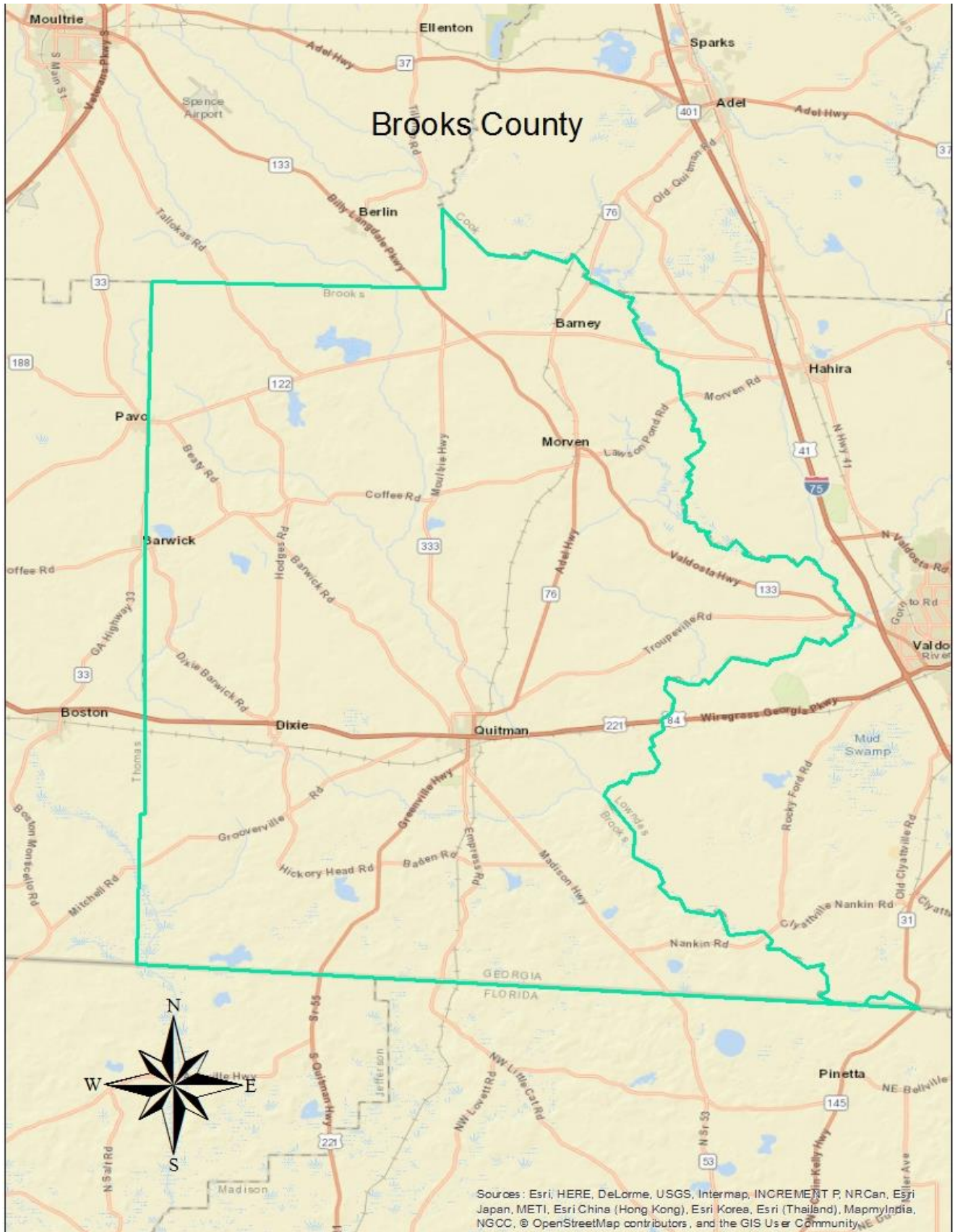
Fire Occurrence Map for Brooks County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



IV. COUNTY BASE MAPS







V. COMMUNITY 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 such as a pond or dry hydrant may contribute to the risk.

While there may be relatively few groups of homes that fit the above description in Brooks County, that does not mean there is not a significant risk of structural damage during the severe weather conditions are conducive to a disastrous wildfire (severe drought, low relative humidity and high winds).

In Brooks County, there are many more individual (isolated) homes and outbuildings on farms and small properties that could be damaged or destroyed in the event of a disastrous wildfire. On these properties, the owners must assume a greater responsibility for wildfire protection - - - by making improvements to the landscape and structures that will provide some degree of wildfire protection until the fire department can arrive. This can only be accomplished if 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, if access by emergency vehicles can be enhanced by widening the entrance right-of-way(s), creating "hammerhead-T's" or other ways for fire trucks to turn around and operate safely and identifying residences with reflective "911addresses" wildfire protection can be greatly improved.

More extensive 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 current roof covering). Moving firewood away from the home, skirting raised decks and keeping roofs free of accumulated flammable debris are improvements that can be accomplished to reduce risk of ignition.

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 within 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.

HAZARD RATINGS FOR BROOKS COUNTY COMMUNITIES AT RISK

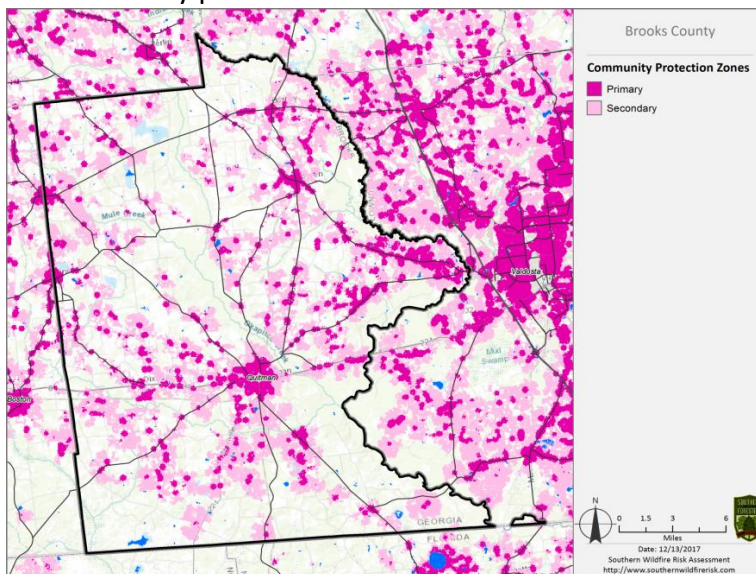
Community	Score	Hazard Rating
Pavo	49	Low
Barwick	36	Low
Peachtree Acres	66	Moderate
Redwood Lakes	73	Moderate
Dixie	100	Very High
Augusta Drive	113	Very High
Deer Creek	90	High
Fawn Heights	114	Very High
Heritage Drive & Hwy 133	136	Extreme
Noble Oak	137	Extreme
Shady Acres 1	98	High
Shady Acres 2	94	High
Ridgeland Road	48	Low
Cedar Hill	79	High

These hazard ratings were completed by Levy Rentz, Chief Ranger for Brooks County, Ronald Bryant, Ranger II and personnel of the volunteer fire departments from September to December, 2010. The Georgia Forestry Commission's Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Scoresheet was used. This document evaluates communities (groups of homes) based upon six criteria: Community Access, Surrounding Vegetation, Building Construction, Fire Protection, Utilities and Additional Rating Factors. The quantitative wildfire hazard ratings range from a low hazard rating of 0 to 50 points to an extreme hazard rating with over 120 points.

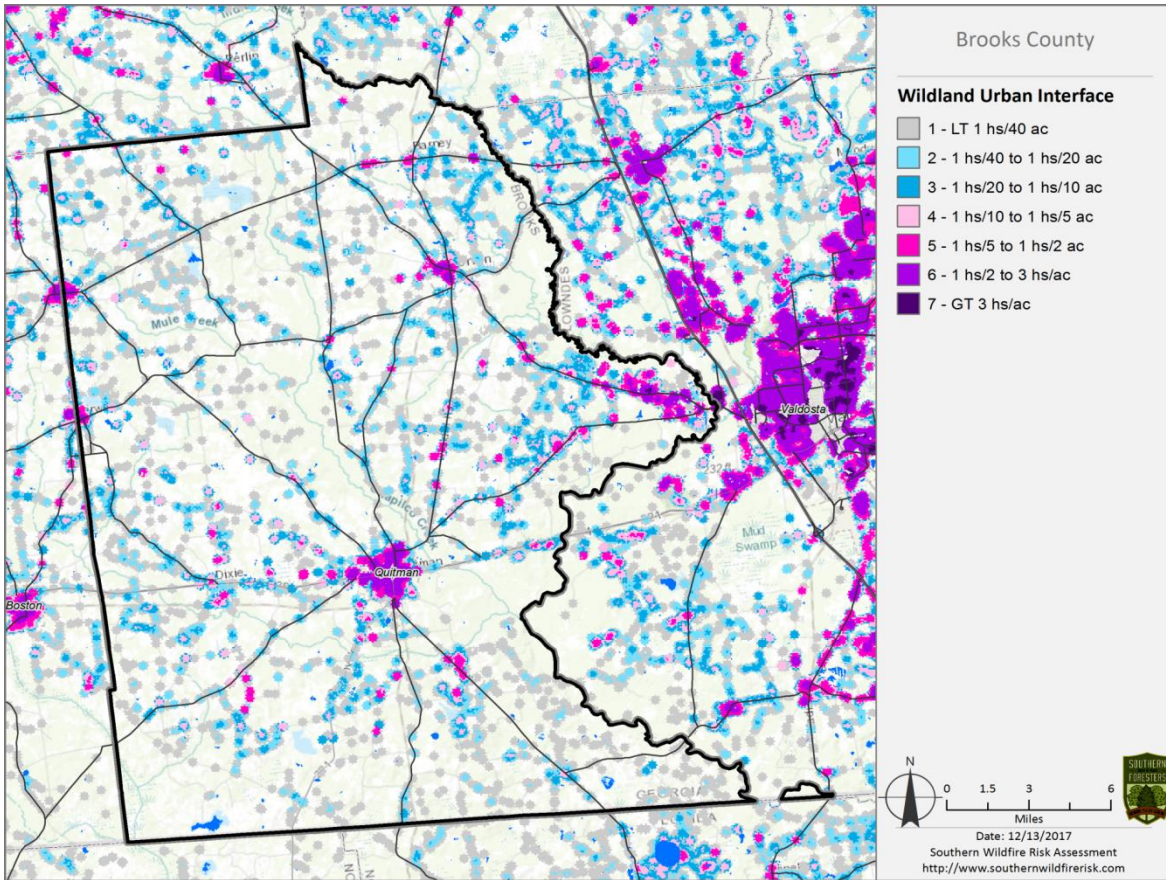
VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

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 Brooks 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.
- Increase communication and outreach with local residents and the public to create awareness and address community priorities and needs.

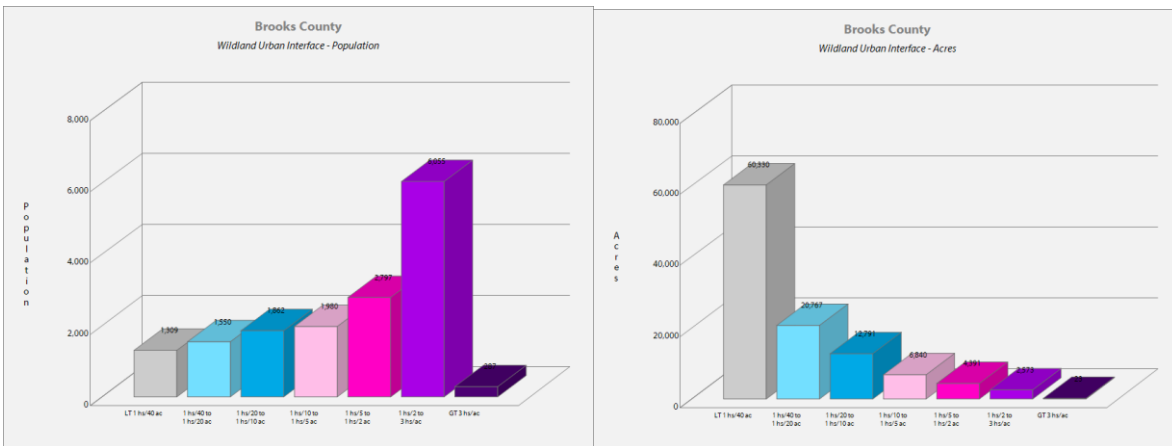


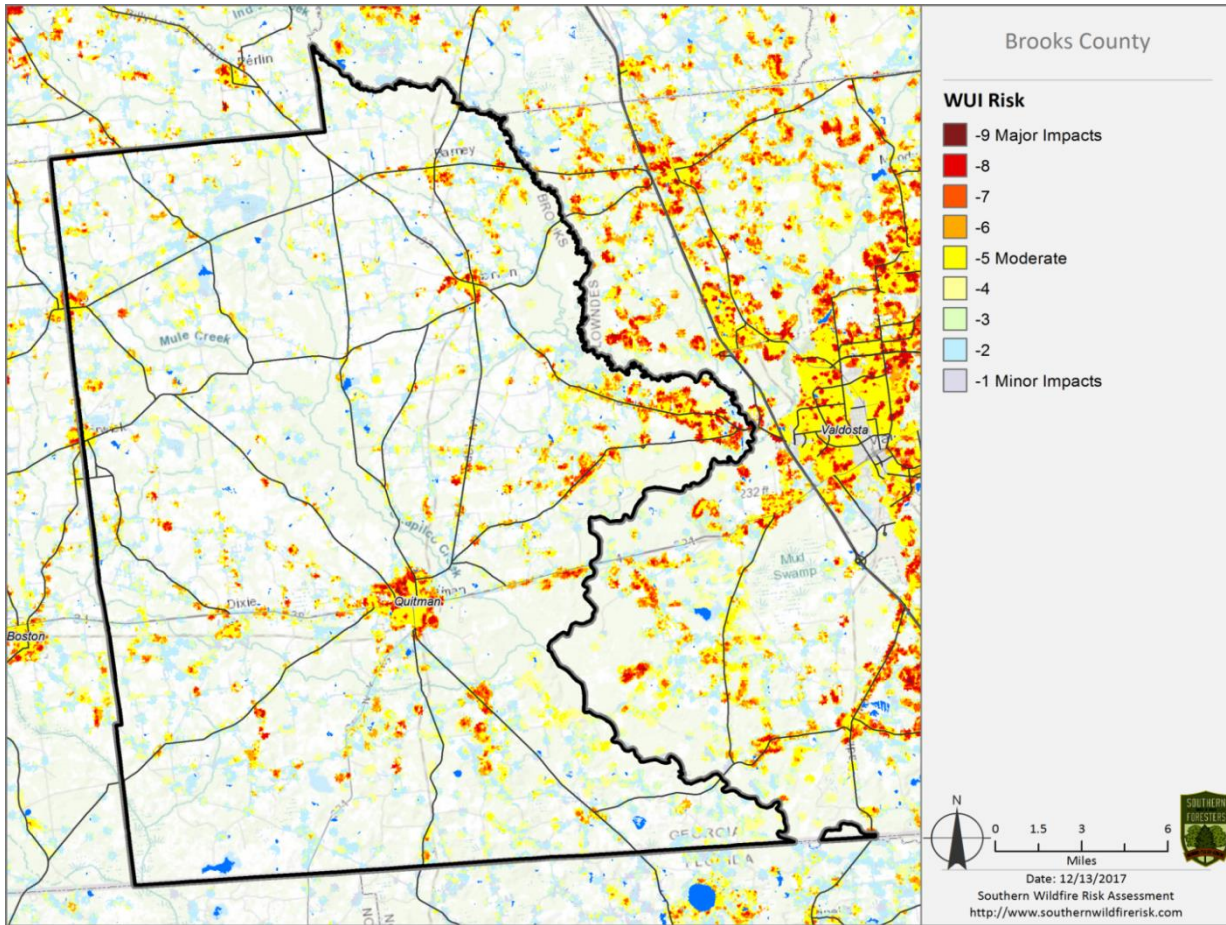
Community Protection Zones map from the Brooks County SWRA



Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map

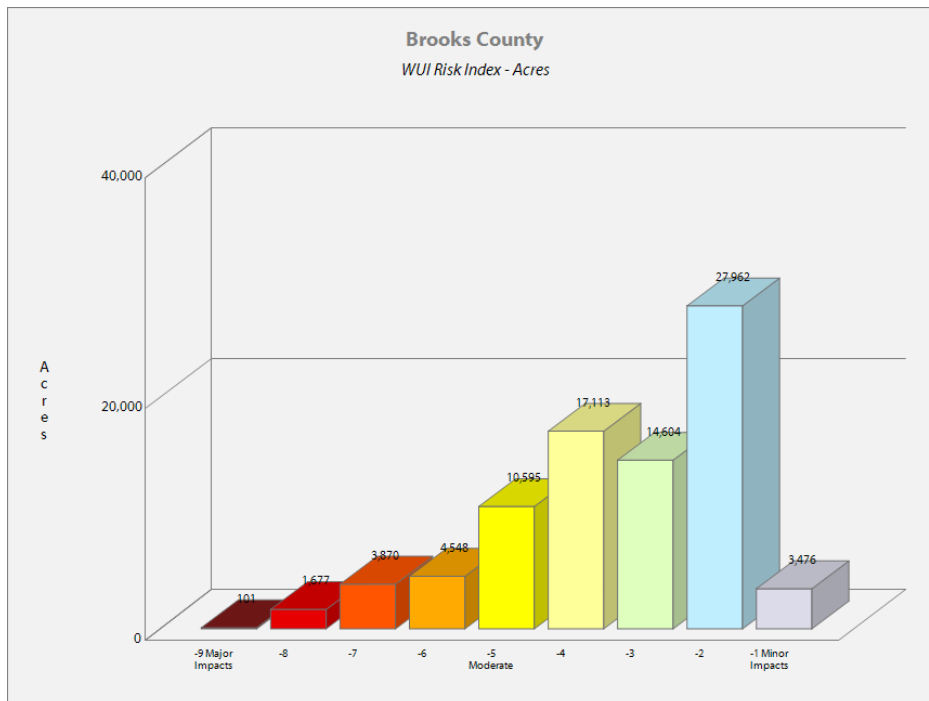
Below: WUI Population (left) WUI Acres (right)

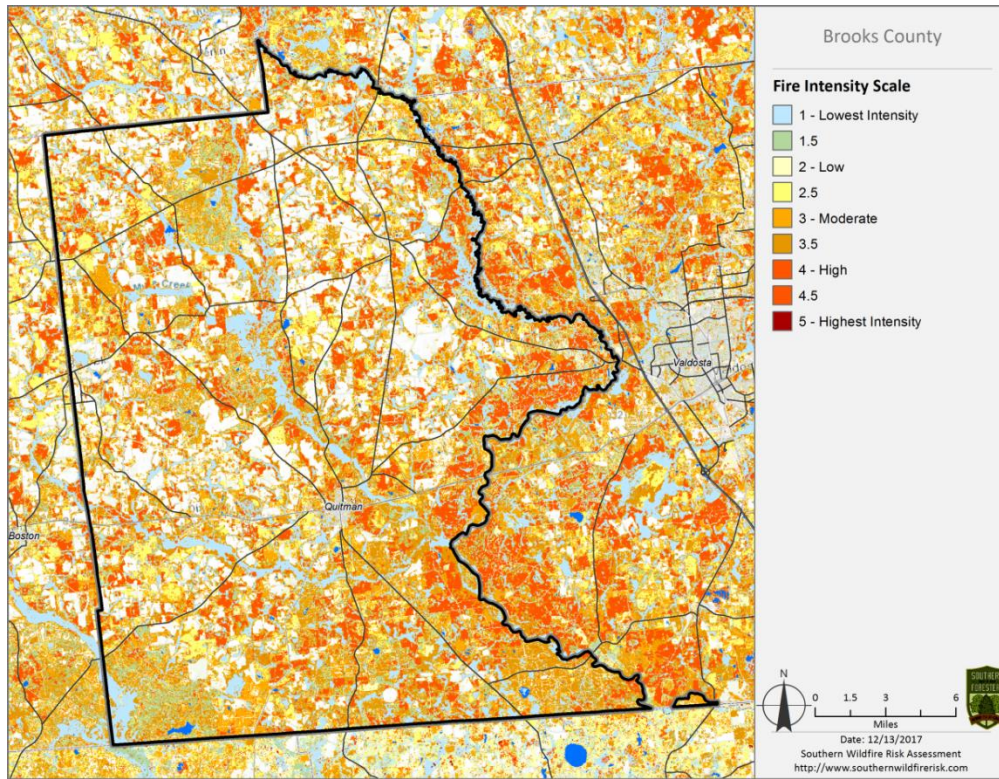




Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map

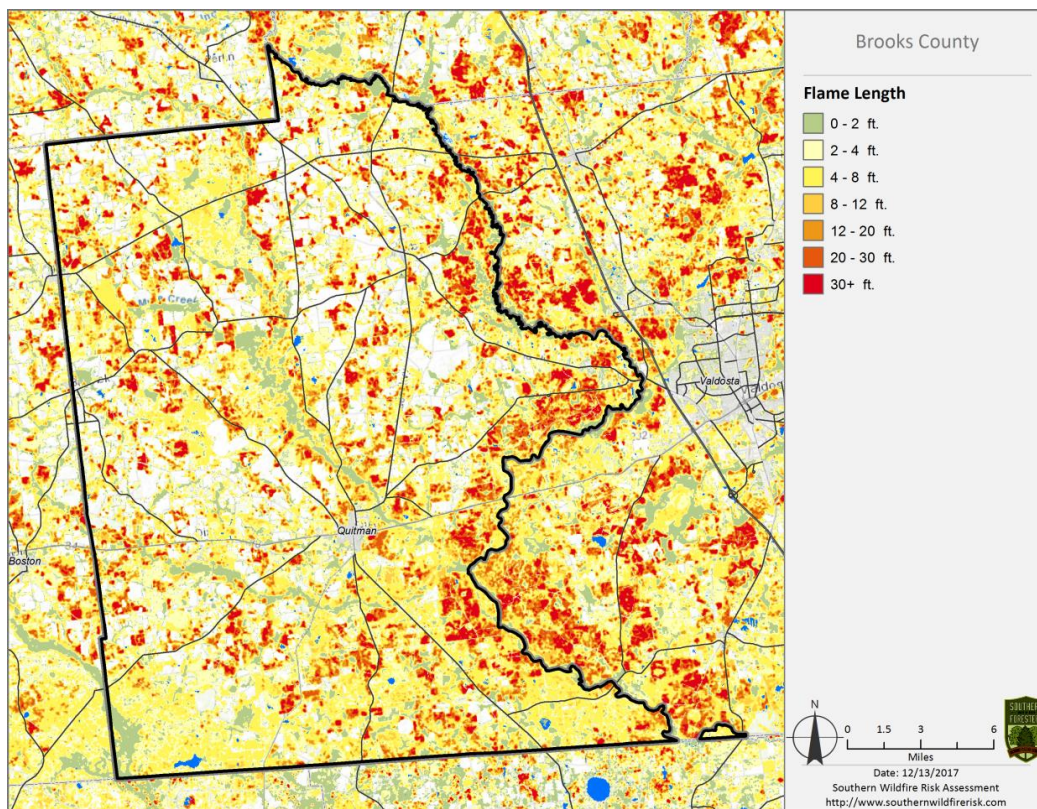
Below: WUI Risk Index – Acres





Above: Fire intensity Scale map

Below: Flame Length map



VII. 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. 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).

RECOMMENDATION: Contact owner/operators of Critical Facilities in person or by letter to provide an evaluation of any hazards and suggest what owner/operators might do to mitigate the 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.

RECOMMENDATION: Initiate a community public education program for Brooks County residents.

- Make Firewise Communities brochures available to the public at central locations such as: Farm Services Agency, Chamber of Commerce and the County Courthouse
- Focus on homeowner education by placing "Firewise Communities" and wildfire prevention displays at festivals in Brooks County.
- Encourage neighborhoods/communities that qualify to apply for recognition as a Firewise Community/ USA.

Reduction of Hazardous Fuels

Because about 57 percent of Brooks County is forested, 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. 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, more costly 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 prescribed burning in Brooks County.

- Help county 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 county roads.



Prescribed burning is a best management practice to reduce hazardous fuel buildup. The Georgia Forestry Commission can assist by developing a prescribed burning plan, installation of firebreaks, and can provide equipment standby and burning assistance when personnel are available.

NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTY

If farm and ranch land is conserved as a mainstay of the County's rural economy, new development will, by necessity, occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. The County Planning and Zoning Board 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.

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. In 2012 the International Code Council developed the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC). This code was adopted by the Georgia Legislature in 2014 for counties to use to strengthen building and zoning codes in the WUI to help reduce loss from wildfire.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

- Evaluate (assess) the wildfire hazard of proposed new development in rural areas as part of the site plan review process. (Resource: GFC "Hazard and Wildfire Risk 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. Adopt the IWUIC in high risk areas.

FIRE SERVICES CAPABILITY

Structural fire protection in the Brooks County is provided by six volunteer fire departments which coordinate activities and training as members of the Brooks County Fire Coalition.

<u>Volunteer Fire Department</u>	<u>#Engines</u>	<u>#Water Tenders</u>	<u>#Brush Trucks</u>	<u># Firefighters</u>
North Brooks VFD	1	1	0	12
South Brooks VFD	2	2	1	11
Talokas Road VFD	2	0	1	5
Dixie Area VFD	2	1	1	9
East Brooks VFD	1	1	1	22
Sand Hill VFD	1	2	1	8

Wildland Fire Training

Most of the County's volunteer firefighters have completed the Incident Management Training Courses, 1-100 & 1-700, however, very few to none of the firefighters have had the NWCG basic wildfire training courses (S-130: Standards for Survival and S-190: Basic Wildfire Behavior). Ready Set Go training is effective for firefighters and homeowners.

Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Tools

Countywide there is no wildland personal protective equipment (including fire shelters) for use by volunteer firefighters. Few engines are equipped with wildland fire hand tools (fire flaps and council rakes).

Water Availability (pressurized hydrants, dry hydrants and drafting sources)

Pressurized fire hydrants exist in Quitman and Morven, but there are none in the unincorporated areas of Brooks County. There are 10-12 dry hydrants in unincorporated areas. Additional drafting sources near communities-at-risk would be beneficial.

Water

The ability to get water to structural fires in remote areas is a serious hindrance to fire suppression in Brooks County. A minimum of six water storage tanks (3,000-4,000 gallon capacity) is needed for 4 departments.

VIII. ACTION PLAN

Area at Risk	Project	Agency	Funding Needs	Priority	Recommendation
Countywide	Install 6 Water Storage Tanks in strategic locations in the County	County	\$60,000	High	Enhance water availability in high wildfire risk areas of unincorporated Brooks County
Countywide	(3) 2,000-4,000 Gallon Water Tenders	County	\$750,000	High	Mobile water supply for W/UI areas
Countywide	Drafting Equipment "Turbo draft"	County	\$9,000	High	3 Large "Turbo-draft" at \$3,000 each
Countywide	Wildland Fire PPE & Hand Tools	County	\$25,000	High	Personal Protective Equipment & Fire Shelters (4 sets per station)
Countywide	(3) Type VI Engines (Brush Truck)	County	\$540,000	High	Improve County's off-road firefighting capability
Countywide	Firefighter Training (SO)	County GFC	\$15,000	Medium	NIIMS , Standards for Survival & Wildland Fire Behavior Training. Ready Set Go training.
Countywide	Dry Hydrants	County	\$15,000	Medium	Install 10 dry hydrants in selected areas of county
Countywide	Satellite Repeater	County	\$37,000	High	Boost communication in north end of Brooks County during fire response
Countywide	Wildland Fire Hose	County	\$5,000(hose) and \$23,000 (nozzles)	High	1 ¾ inch fire hose with nozzles (200 ft. per station) and 30 nozzles
Countywide	Wildfire Mitigation for (9) High to Extreme Risk Neighborhoods	County GFC	\$25,000	Medium	Improve emergency access on public roads, reduce wildland fuel initiate homeowner "Firewise" education program

NOTE: The Action Plan summarizes a recommended course of action for implementation of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Some projects can be implemented at little or no added cost, however, the County or assigned agency will be able to implement most projects only if grant funding is available.

ASSESSMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness of the action plan, Brooks County will implement the following:

- An annual wildfire risk assessment (of "communities-at-risk") will be conducted to reassess wildfire hazards and prioritize needed actions.
- Mitigation efforts that are recurring (such as mowing, burning or clearing of defensible space) will be incorporated into a renewal of the original CWPP action plan.
- Mitigation efforts that could not be funded in the requested year will be incorporated into the annual renewal of the original CWPP action plan.
- Continuing education and outreach programs will be conducted and assessed for effectiveness.
Workshops will be evaluated based upon attendance and post surveys that are distributed by mail following the workshops.
- CWPP Core Committee will continue a year-to-year focus on the wildland/urban interface challenges in the County. The Committee will annually update the Brooks County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, summarizing mitigation projects initiated and completed, progress on ongoing actions, funds received, funds expended and in-kind services utilized.
Recommendations will be incorporated into the Brooks County CWPP Action Plan

IX. MITIGATION ASSISTANCE & GRANT FUNDING

Community Protection Grant: US Forest Service sponsored prescribed fire program. Communities with “at-risk” properties that lie within ten miles of a National Forest, National Park Service or Bureau of Land Management tracts may apply with the Georgia Forestry Commission to have their land prescribe burned free-of-charge. Forest mastication, where it is practical with Georgia Forestry Commission equipment, is also available under this grant program.

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 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.

X. 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 - *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).*

XI. 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.wildfireprepdlay.org

Appended Documents:

Brooks County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Brooks 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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