

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



Community Wildfire Protection Plan

An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources

Charlton County, Georgia

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



APRIL 2019

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

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Appended Documents

Charlton County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Charlton County Wildfire Pre-suppression Plan

NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.

I. OBJECTIVES

The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Charlton County. The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect this community and its essential infrastructure. 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.

II. COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

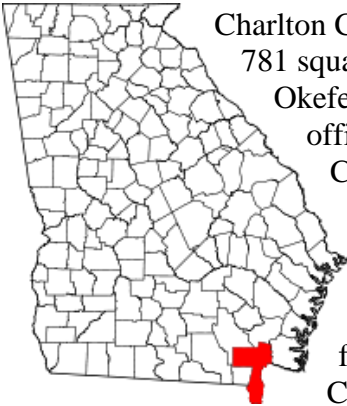
The core team convened on August 9, 2009 to assess risks and develop the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The group is comprised of representatives from local government, local fire authorities, and the state agency responsible for forest management. Below are the groups included in the task force:

Charlton County Government
Charlton County Fire Rescue
Emergency Management
Board of County Commissioners
Georgia Forestry Commission
US Fish and Wildlife Service.

It was decided to conduct community assessments on the basis of the on high risk communities and the individual fire districts in the county. The chiefs of the six fire departments in the county assessed their districts and reconvened on September 23, 2009 for the purpose of completing the following:

Risk Assessment	Assessed wildfire hazard risks and prioritized mitigation actions.
Fuels Reduction	Identified strategies for coordinating fuels treatment projects.
Structure Ignitability	Identified strategies for reducing the ignitability of structures within the Wildland interface.
Emergency Management	Forged relationships among local government and fire districts and developed/refined a pre-suppression plan.
Education and Outreach	Developed strategies for increasing citizen awareness and action and to conduct homeowner and community leader workshops.

III. COMMUNITY & WILDFIRE HISTORY



Charlton County, in southeast Georgia, is the state's 111th county. Comprising 781 square miles, the county borders Florida and includes most of the Okefenokee Swamp. It was carved from a part of Camden County and officially recognized by the state legislature in 1854. Portions of Ware County were added to Charlton in 1855. Charlton County was named for Robert Milledge Charlton, a nineteenth-century jurist, U.S. senator, and mayor of Savannah. The current courthouse was built in 1928 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. The area was originally inhabited by Creek Indians, and the first white settlers came from neighboring counties in Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Folkston, the county seat of Charlton since 1901, became the focal point for transportation after the arrival of railroads in the 1880s and grew to become the county's largest city by the end of the nineteenth century. Named after William Brandon Folks of Waycross, Folkston was not officially incorporated until 1911. For many years it was the major stopping point for railroad passengers traveling between Florida and points north, giving rise to a number of fine hotels around the train depot. The depot has today been restored, and it now houses the Okefenokee Chamber of Commerce and the Folkston–Charlton County Development Authority.

The major attraction in the county is the Okefenokee Swamp. Floyds Island Hammock (also known as the Hebard Cabin) in the swamp is the site of a cabin used by naturalists and writers in the 1930s. Folkston Train Depot and the "Folkston Funnel" Train Viewing Platform have been restored, allowing railroad fans to see as many as sixty trains go by within one twenty-four-hour period. Old Folkston Grammar School, built in 1926 and recently renovated, is now the home of the Okefenokee Education and Research Center. Sponsored by the City of Folkston and the Georgia Wildlife Federation, the center includes a 2,700-square-foot exhibit area and the Okefenokee Heritage Garden, representing four local habitats. The William Mizell House, on four acres of "urban forest," is a two-story wood-frame house with a greenhouse and pavilion and is included on the National Register of Historic Places. Located on Route 2, Sardis Church, built around 1821, is the oldest church in the county. (New Georgia Encyclopedia)

More than 98 percent of the county's land is forest, making it the most timbered of Georgia's counties. Rich titanium deposits lie between Charlton and neighboring Ware County, much of it bordering the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. In 1997 concerned county residents protested the DuPont Company's plan for a titanium strip mine, resulting in the company's eventual donation of 16,000 acres to the people of Georgia—the largest land preservation gift in Georgia history.

Annual events include National Wildlife Week and Earth Day Art Festival, the Okefenokee Festival, the Folkston RailWatch, the Cherokee of Georgia Council Spring Pow Wow, and the Mizell House Gala.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, the county population was 12,171 (68.6 percent white, 28.5 percent black, and 2.5 percent Hispanic, .6 percent Native American, .4 percent Asian), a 6.5 percent increase since 2010. (US Census Bureau 2016)

Wildfire History

Charlton County, one of the largest counties in Georgia in land area, is also one of the most heavily forested with 98% of the land area in forest. Even though a large portion of the western part of the county is within the confines of Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, there are still almost 300,000 acres of commercial timberland within the confines of the county. The county is oriented such that it is over 50 road miles from the southernmost Big Bend area to the Brantley County line on the north. While the main population center is Folkston near the center of the county there are several small communities and developments spread the length of the county with a significant risk as wildland urban interface around them.

Charlton County is protected by Charlton County Fire Rescue (CCFR) consisting of 5 strategically placed fire stations in the main communities of Charlton County; Folkston, Saint George, Race Pond, Winokur and Georgia Bend Communities. The CCFR is a combination Department consisting of one career position serving as the Fire Chief, with Volunteer Firefighters filling the remainder of the department's personnel. As of August 2016 the CCFR manpower consisted of 60 members including the Chief. The Georgia Forestry Commission maintains a county protection unit located about three miles south of Folkston on Hwy 121 to respond to wildfires throughout the county. The city of Folkston and the adjacent incorporated town of Homeland are serviced by a pressurized water system with hydrants well placed throughout the city.

Over the past fifty years, Charlton County has averaged 74 reported wildland fires per year. The occurrence of these fires is fairly uniform throughout the year with a slight peak in the months of February and March and a slight decrease during the fall months. These fires have burned an average of 1,002 acres annually. While the numbers of fires remain fairly similar every month, there is a marked difference in the monthly acreage lost. The monthly acres lost during the late winter through summer period show a ten-fold increase over the acres lost during the fall and early winter. Additionally, while the annual numbers of fires have not increased noticeably during the 50-year period that records are available, the annual acreage lost appears to have increased in later years. This perhaps a result of the decrease in the practice of prescribed burning and the resultant increase in wildland fuel loadings. Despite this alarming trend in fire behavior, more homes are being built outside of traditional communities into the wildland urban interface. The leading causes of these fires, was lightning and debris burning causing 23% and 22% respectively of the fires and 12% and 32% respectively of the acres burned. More alarming is that incendiary or arson while causing only 17% of the fires account for 45% of the acres lost.

During the last 10 years, fiscal year 2008 thru 2017, the county has averaged having 46 wildfires annually with an average size of 85 acres per fire. Lightning has been the major cause during these years, causing 38% and burning 80% of the total acres. Debris burning is the 2nd leading cause accounting for 18% of the fires and burning 3% of the acres. Incendiary (arson) and machine use are also leading causes with each accounting for 12% of these fires and respectively 1% and 12% of the acreage burned during these years.

Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Records show that in the past five years, FY2014 – FY2018, 6 Homes have been lost or damaged by wildfire in Charlton County resulting in estimated losses of \$714,000 along with 20 outbuildings valued at \$788,500. According to reports during this period 263 homes have been directly or indirectly threatened by these fires.

Additionally 5 vehicles valued at \$35,000 and 5 pieces of other mechanized equipment suffered damages estimated at \$13,700. This is a substantial loss of non-timber property attributed to wildfires in Charlton County.

It is of significance that the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge lies partially within Charlton County. This National Wildlife Refuge, a component of the US Department of the Interior, encompasses 186,565 acres in Charlton County and has a well-documented history and occurrence of wildfires. The majority of the refuge is nationally designated wilderness, and is inaccessible to fire suppression equipment. Large fire occurrence had trended to a 4-6 year cycle over the past 20 year period, with most of the larger fires occurring during moderate to severe droughts. The fires occurring are during this period are almost exclusively lightning fires. These large refuge fires do have a profound impact to local GFC units, personnel and equipment. Recent large wildfires occurring on refuge lands and beyond the refuge boundary have burned hundreds of thousands of acres and have burned for periods of several months to a year before being declared out.

****Please note that wildfires occurring on the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge are not reflected in following tables.**



Wildfires usually occur from lightning in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

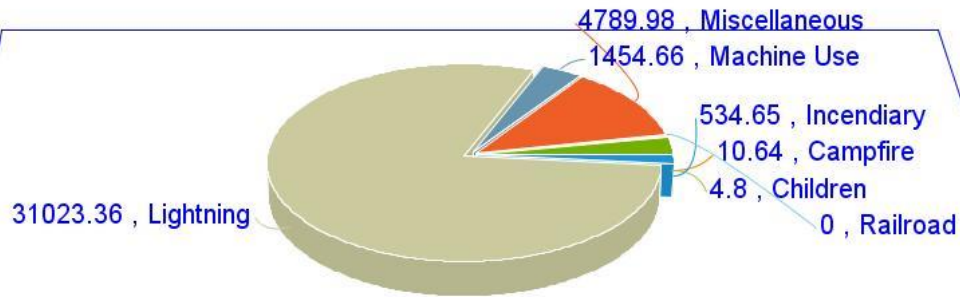
Charlton County wildfire activity during the last complete fiscal year, July 1, 2017 thru June 30 2018. This table also includes averages for the last 5 years.

County = Charlton	Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	0	0.00	0.60	1.15
Children	Children	0	0.00	0.20	0.10
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	0	0.00	0.40	4.90
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	3	1.05	3.20	17.47
Debris: Household Garbage	Debris: Household Garbage	0	0.00	0.20	0.06
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	1	1.90	0.60	0.96
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	5	3.50	2.80	4.12
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	3	3.40	1.80	14.37
Incendiary	Incendiary	1	11.60	3.60	41.68
Lightning	Lightning	4	25.60	12.80	5,912.00
Machine Use	Machine Use	2	0.30	2.00	1.42
Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	0	0.00	0.40	0.18
Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	0	0.00	0.20	0.02
Miscellaneous: Fireworks/Explosives	Miscellaneous: Fireworks/Explosives	0	0.00	0.20	0.44
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	0	0.00	1.80	2.32
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	6	5.20	3.80	23.79
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	0	0.00	0.20	0.04
Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	0	0.00	0.40	1.46
Railroad	Railroad	7	6.10	2.60	2.18
Undetermined	Undetermined	3	0.12	6.40	20.60
Totals for County: Charlton Year: 2018		35	58.77	44.20	6,049.26

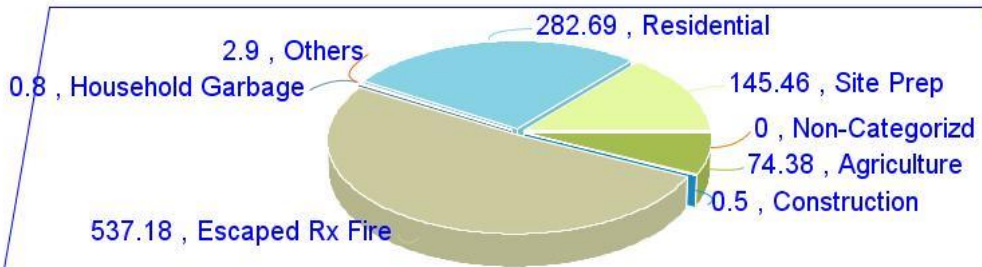
Acres Burned /Number of Fires For Charlton County For FY 2008-2017				
Year	Acres Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2008	519.91	51	10.19	4.56
2009	281.36	29	9.70	3.90
2010	202.00	30	6.73	3.93
2011	7,366.94	101	72.94	17.56
2012	228.00	49	4.65	5.08
2013	196.74	19	10.35	4.53
2014	155.93	36	4.33	5.02
2015	380.64	50	7.61	4.42
2016	470.91	45	10.46	6.29
2017	29,180.07	55	530.55	11.60
Average	3,898.25	46	84.74	6.69

Acres Burned /Number of Fires by Fire Cause For Charlton County For FY 2008-2017		
Fire Cause	Acres Burned	Number of Fires
Campfire	10.64	6
Children	4.80	3
Debris Burning	1,043.91	84
Incendiary	534.65	57
Lightning	31,023.36	173
MachineUse	1,454.66	56
Miscellaneous	4,789.98	43
Railroad	0.00	0
Smoking	2.61	4
Undetermined	112.09	32
Total	38,976.70	458

Acreage Burned by Cause of Fire For Charlton County For FY 2008-2017

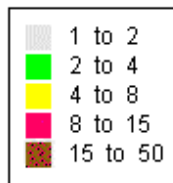
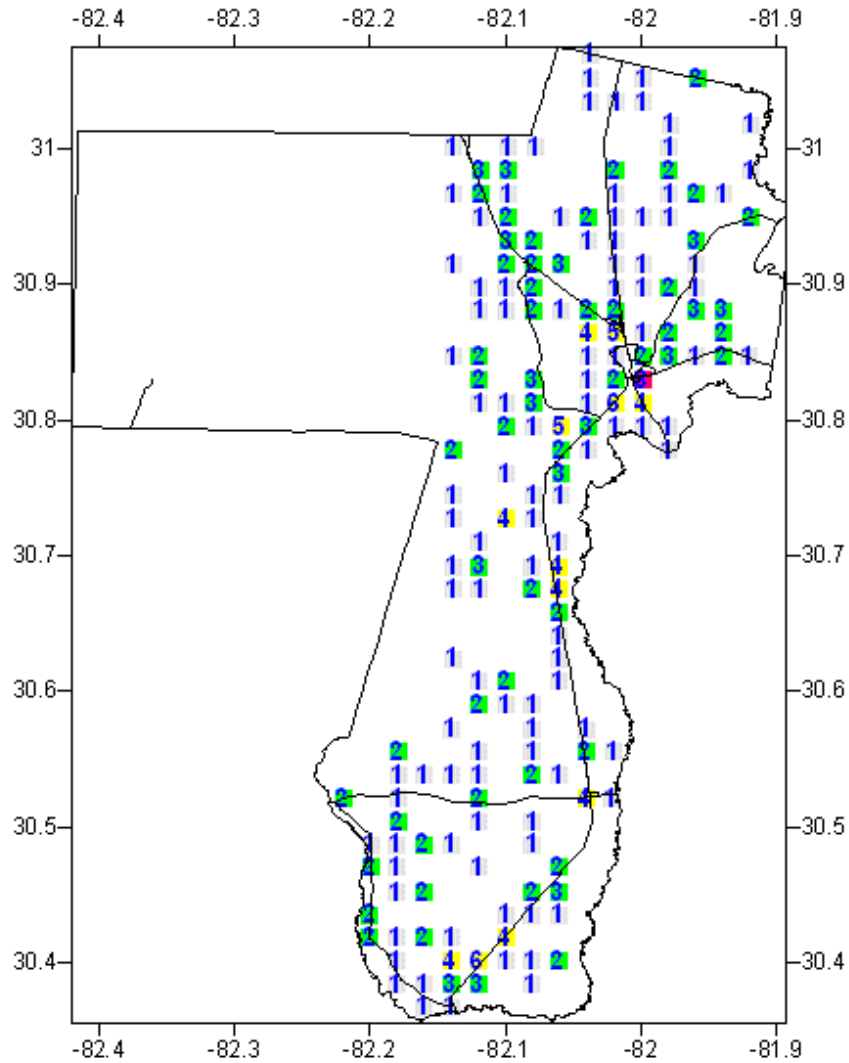


Acreage Burned By Debris Burning Sub Cause For Charlton County For FY 2008-2017

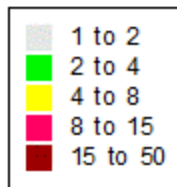
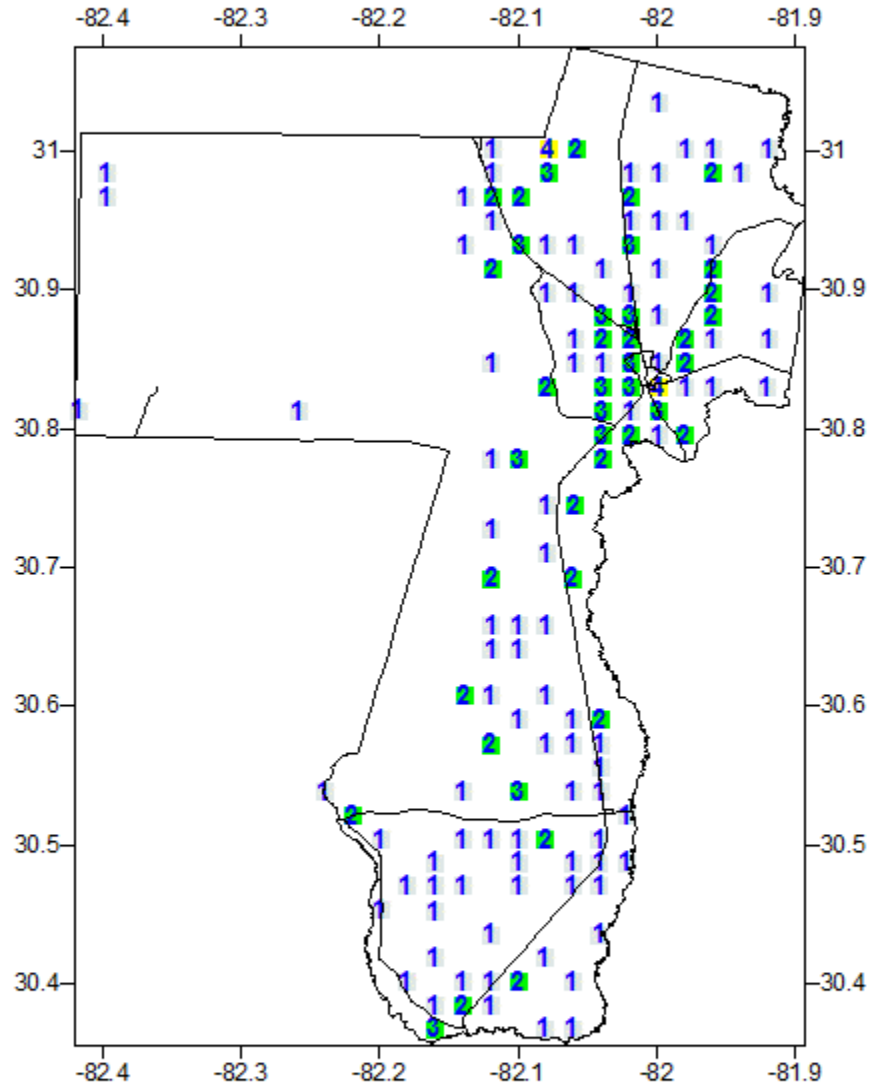


Fire Cause

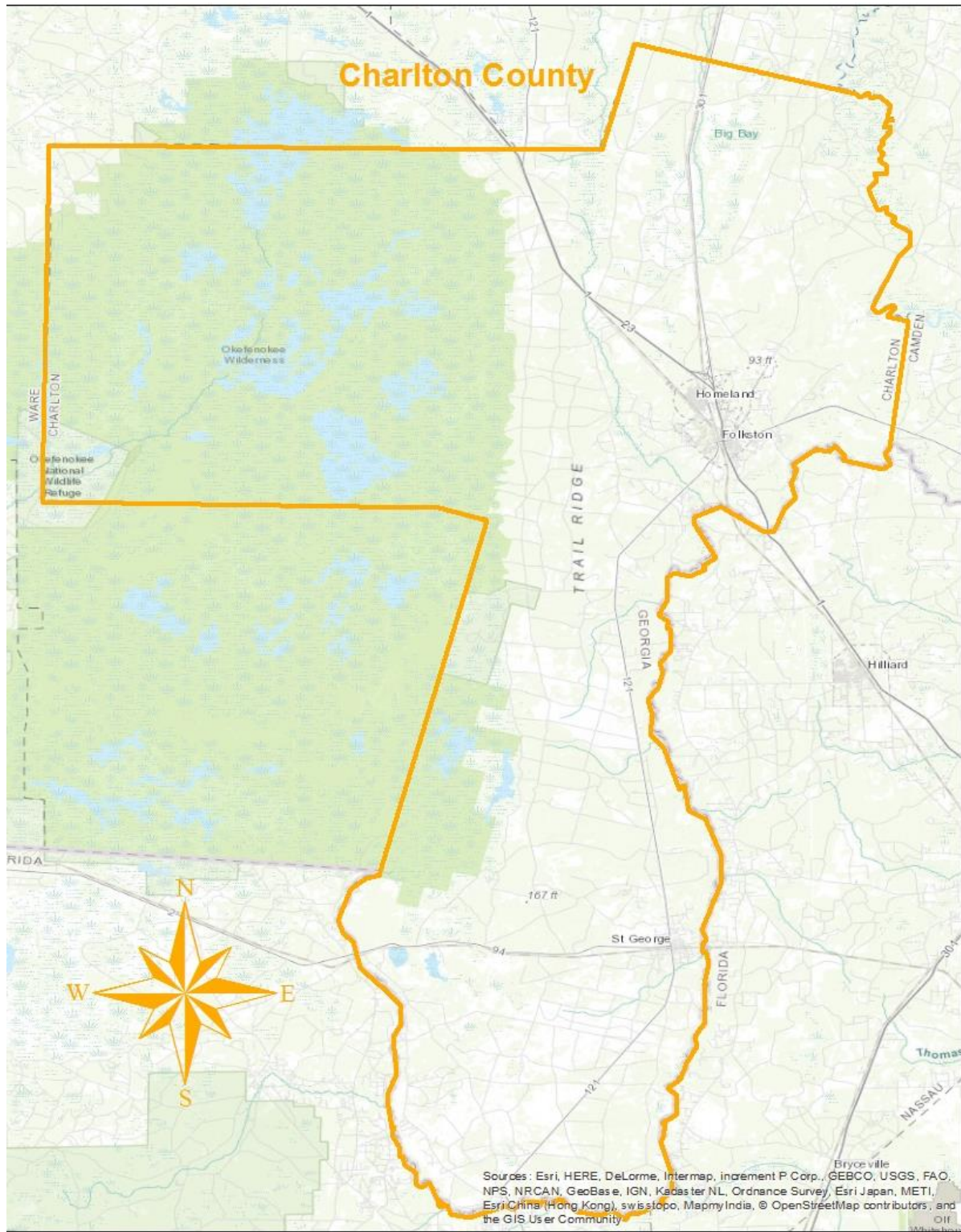
Fire Occurrence Map for Charlton County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011

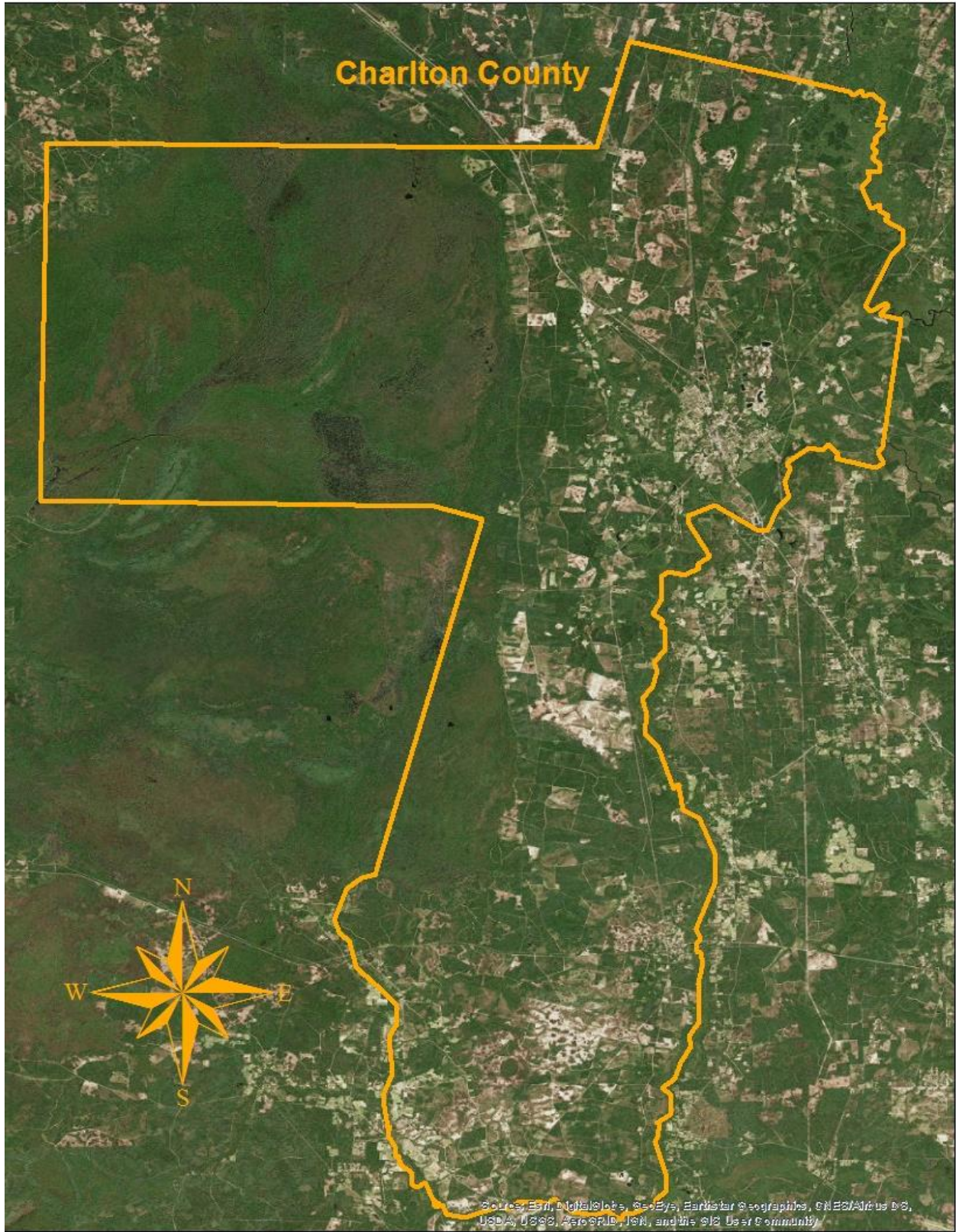


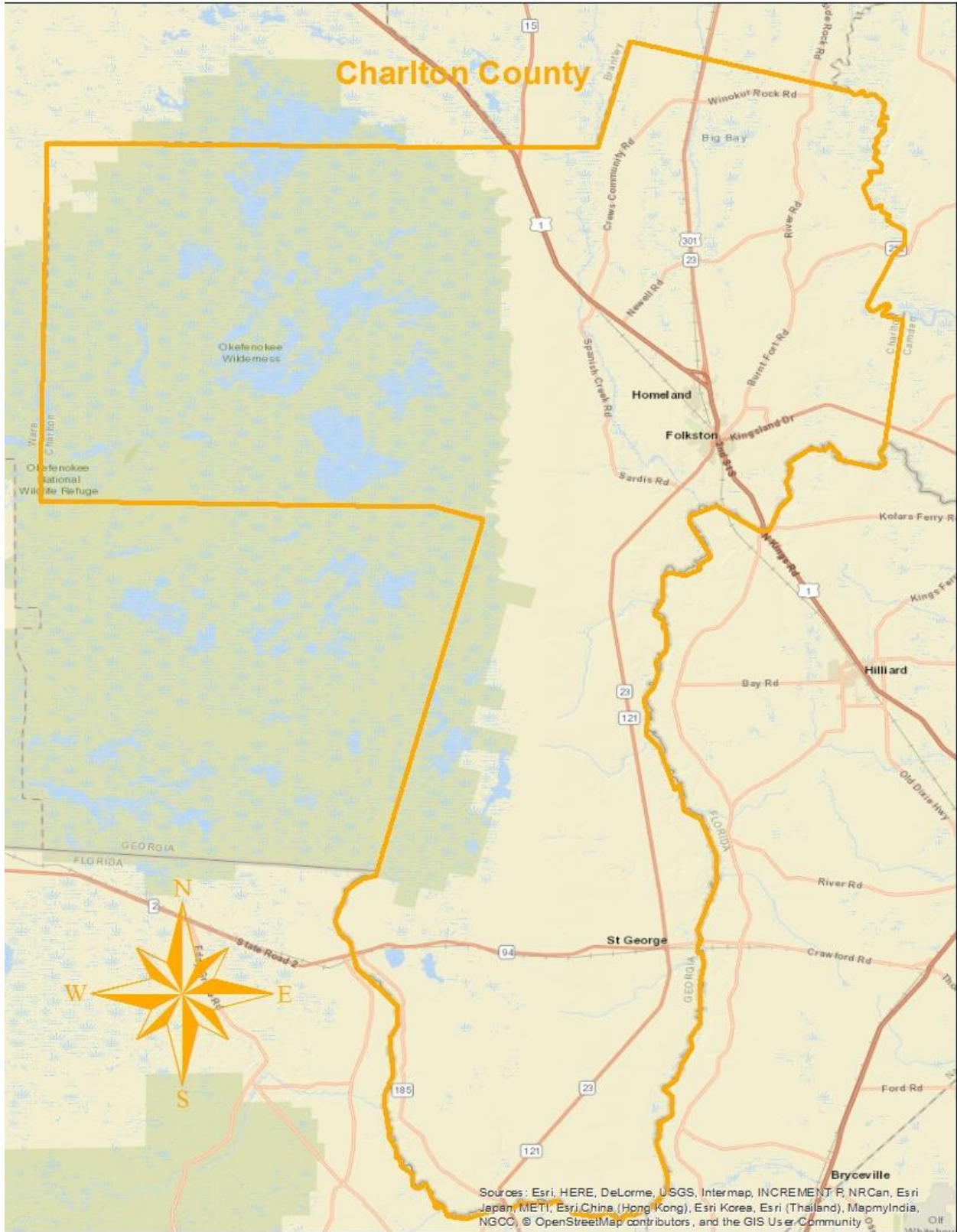
Fire Occurrence Map for Charlton County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



IV. COMMUNITY BASE MAPS







V. COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

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.

The wildland fire risk assessments conducted in 2015 by the Georgia Forestry Commission returned an average score of 109, placing Charlton County in the “very high” hazard range. A new Community Risk Assessment is presently being conducted by a team of Wildfire Mitigation Specialist and should be completed by 2019. The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Charlton County’s WUI was the Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Checklist. The instrument takes into consideration accessibility, vegetation (based on fuel models), roofing assembly, building construction, and availability of fire protection resources, placement of gas and electric utilities, and additional rating factors. The following factors contributed to the wildfire hazard score for Charlton County:

- Dead end roads with inadequate turn arounds
- Narrow roads without drivable shoulders
- Long, narrow, and poorly labeled driveways
- Limited street signs and homes not clearly addressed
- Thick, highly flammable vegetation surrounding many homes
- Minimal defensible space around structures
- Homes with wooden siding and roofs with heavy accumulations of vegetative debris
- No pressurized or non-pressurized water systems available
- Above ground utilities
- Large, adjacent areas of forest or wildlands
- Heavy fuel buildups in adjacent wildlands
- Undeveloped lots comprising half the total lots in many rural communities.
- High occurrence of wildfires in several locations
- Distance from fire stations
- Lack of homeowner or community organizations
- Train Crossings – many of which have inadequate slope for heavy equipment access, such as lowboy trailers hauling dozers or tractor plow units



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

Summary of Charlton County Assessment Ratings

Community	Fire Dept	Access	Surrounding Vegetation	Building Construction	Fire Protection	Utilities	Additional Factors	Score	Hazard Rating
Homeland	Folkston	10	20	15	14	9	39	107	Very High
Dixie Lake	Folkston	10	20	10	14	9	45	108	Very High
Traders Hill Camp	Folkston	15	20	25	25	9	43	137	Extreme
Pinckney Live Oak Estates	Folkston	12	20	5	17	9	30	93	High
Yankee Forest	Folkston	16	20	0	20	9	35	100	Very High
Colrain	Folkston	10	20	10	17	9	31	97	High
Colrain	Folkston	20	20	20	25	9	38	132	Extreme
May Bluff	Folkston	13	20	20	27	9	39	128	Extreme
Spring Lake	Folkston	11	20	10	15	9	21	86	High
Forest Lake	Folkston	23	20	10	15	9	37	114	Very High
Black River	Folkston	9	10	5	18	9	43	94	High
Stokes Lake	Folkston	13	20	5	18	9	31	96	High
Folkston District	Folkston	18	35	15	29	4	17	118	Very High
Sam Howard Rd	Racepond	20	20	25	16	3	23	107	High
Uptonville	Racepond	5	30	20	18	6	23	102	Very High
Racepond District	Racepond	5	30	20	18	7	23	103	High
St. Marys Bluff	Ga Bend	18	45	15	29	4	17	128	Extreme
Ga Bend Dist	Ga Bend	11	30	10	25	4	16	96	High
Winokur Dist	Winokur	20	30	10	22	7	28	117	Very High
Average		14	24	13	20	8	30	109	High

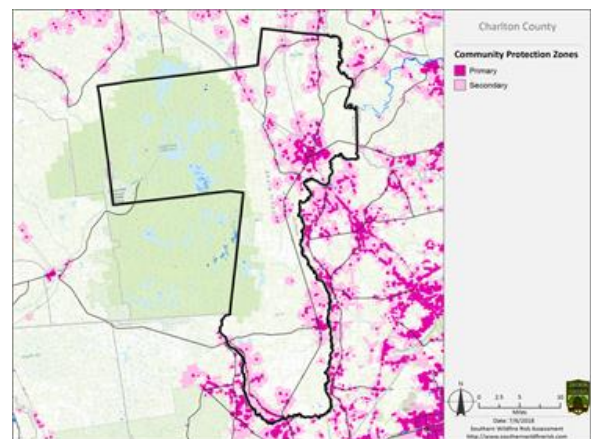


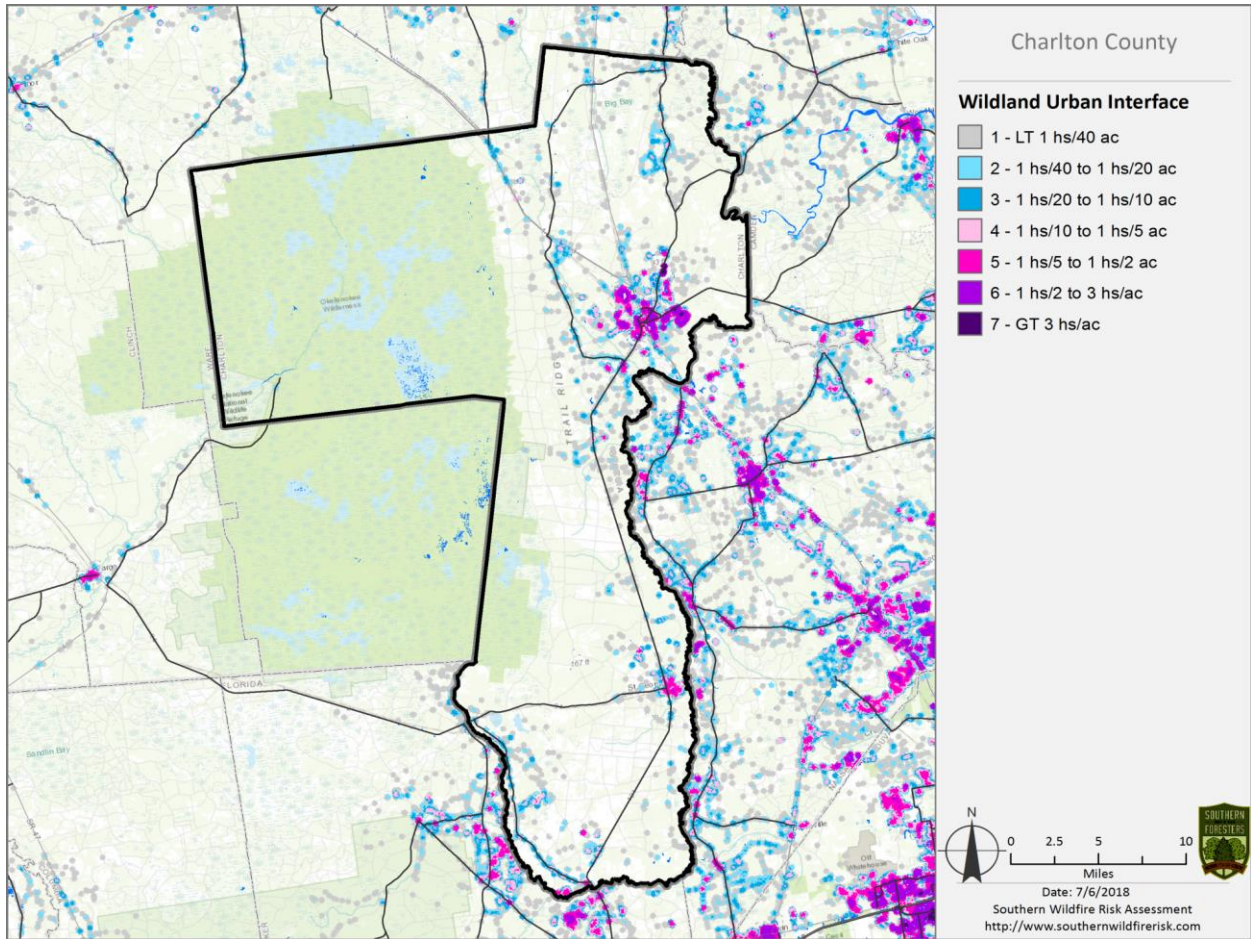
Prescribed burning of woodlands is the best management practice to reduce hazardous fuel accumulation. The Georgia Forestry Commission can provide a prescribed burning plan, establish fire breaks, and can also provide equipment standby and assist with burning when personnel are available. Forestry contractors can also provide this service.

VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

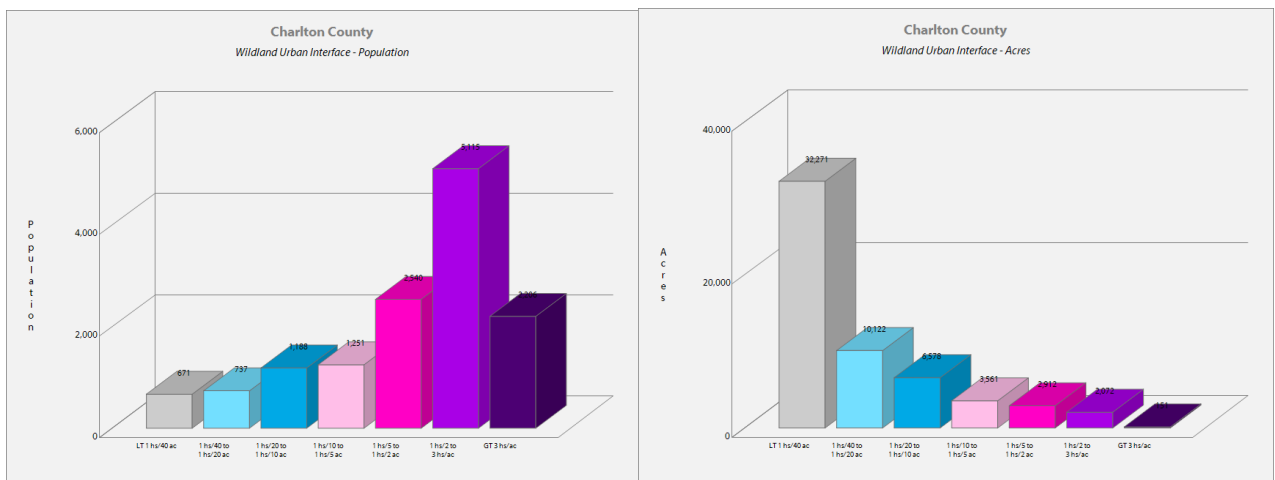
The Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment tool, developed by the Southern Group of State Foresters, was released to the public in July 2014. This tool allows users of the Professional Viewer application of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA) web Portal (SouthWRAP) to define a specific project area 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 Charlton County. The SouthWRAP ((SWRA) products included in this report are designed to provide the information needed to support the following key priorities:

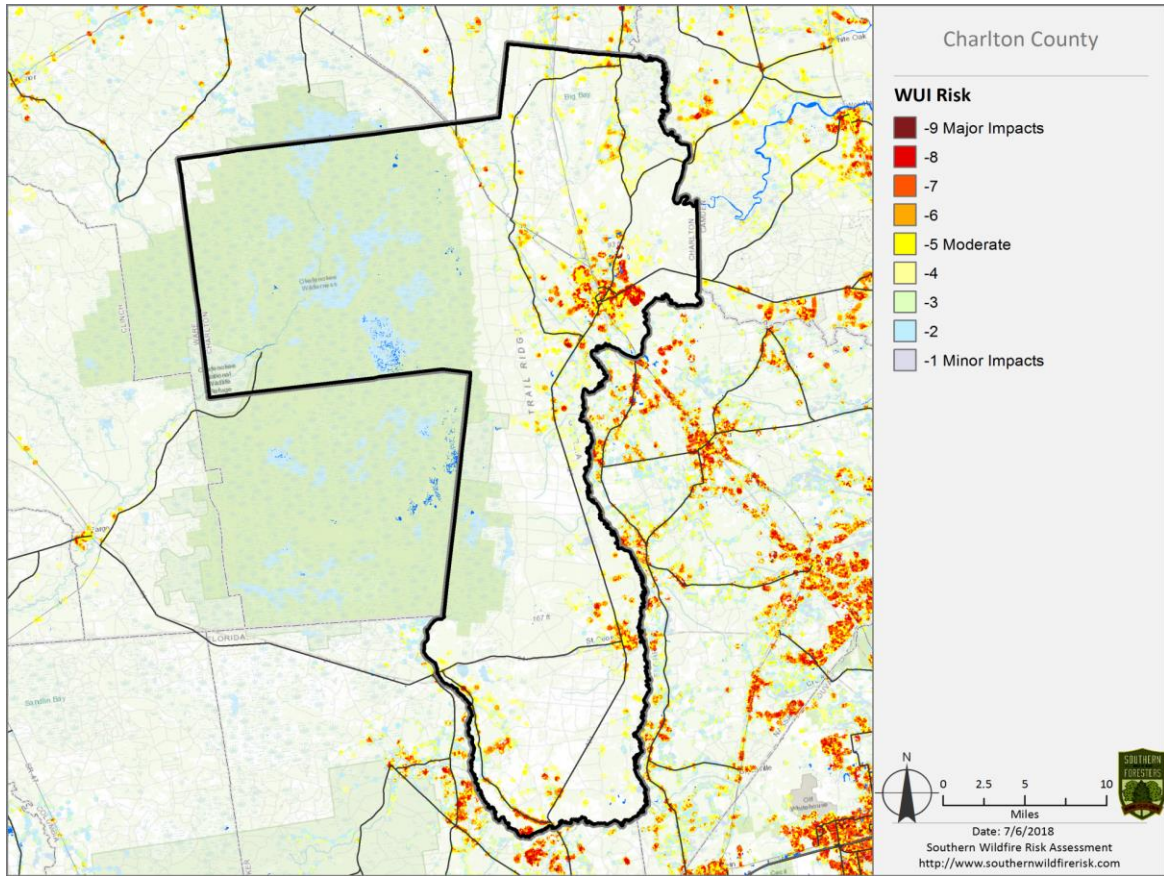
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire.
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning.
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests.
- Allow agencies 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.
- The Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment and Hazard Maps **do not** accurately reflect the risk threat of the Okefenokee swamp/refuge lands, the fire intensity, burn probability, and rate of spread. Models specific to the refuge more accurately reflect the wildfire potential and risk associated with those lands.



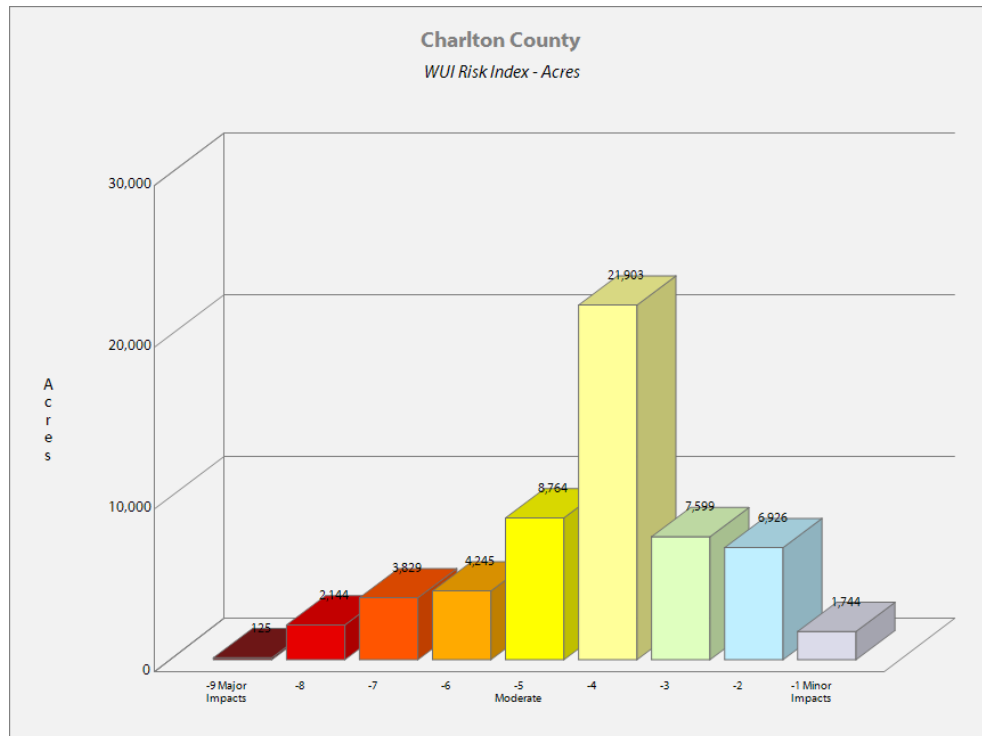


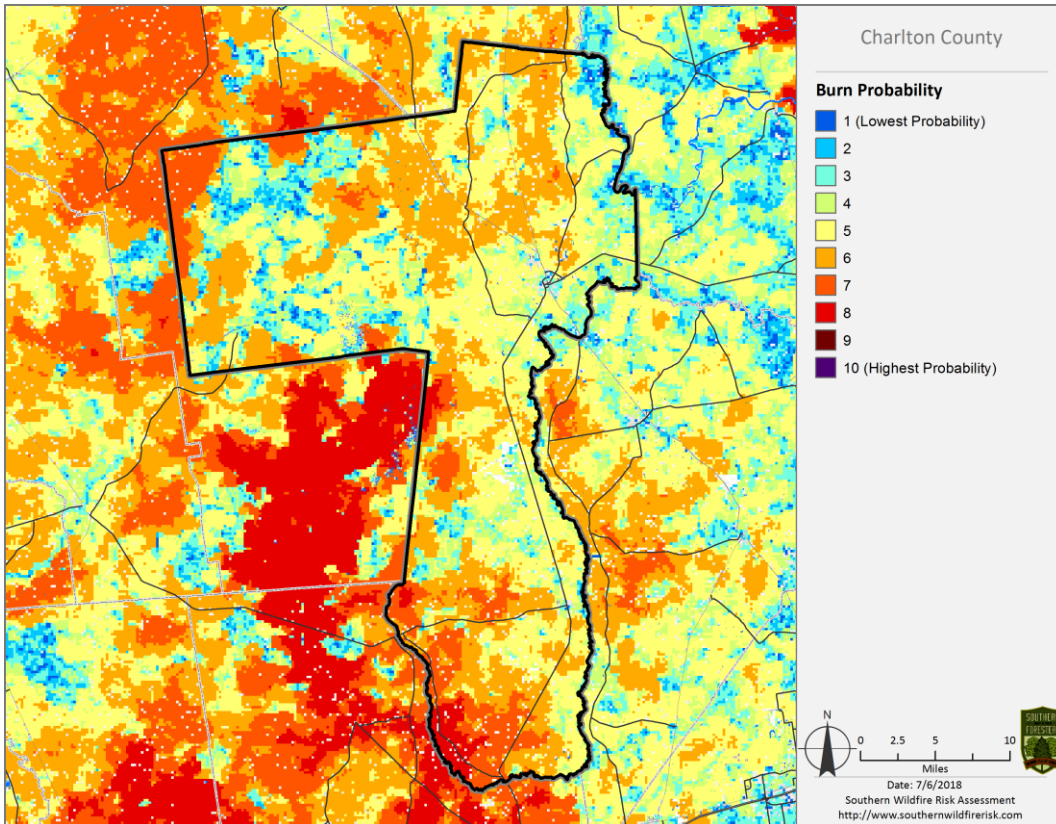
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map Below: WUI Population (left) WUI Acres (right)



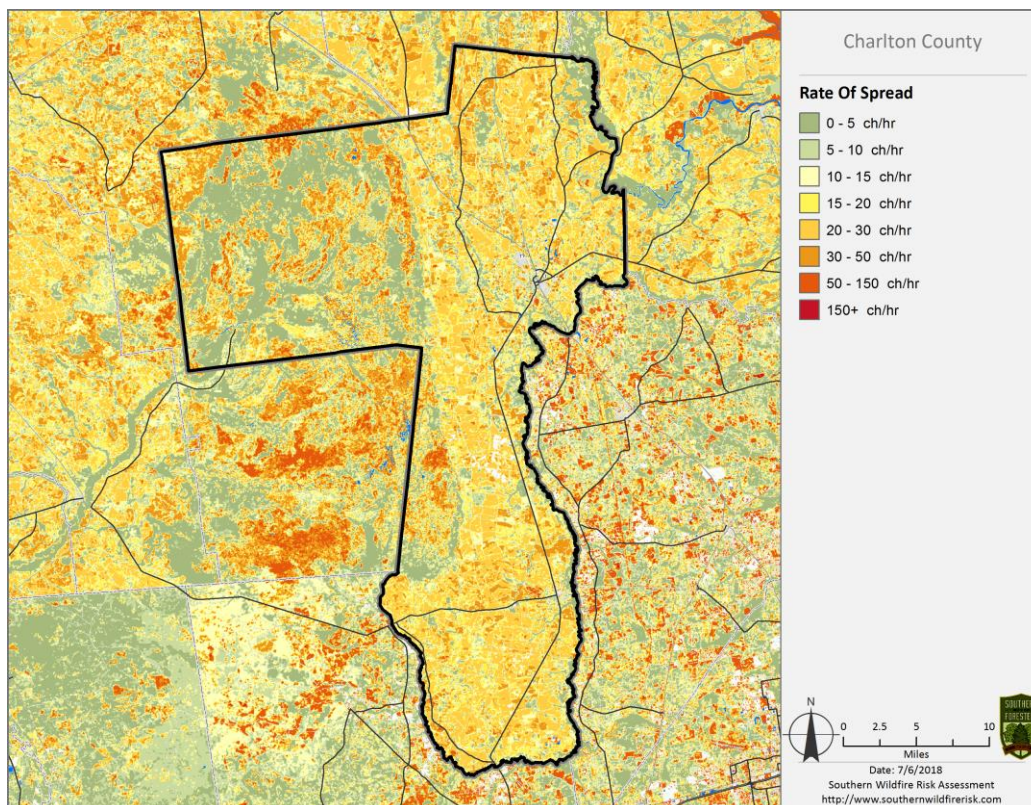


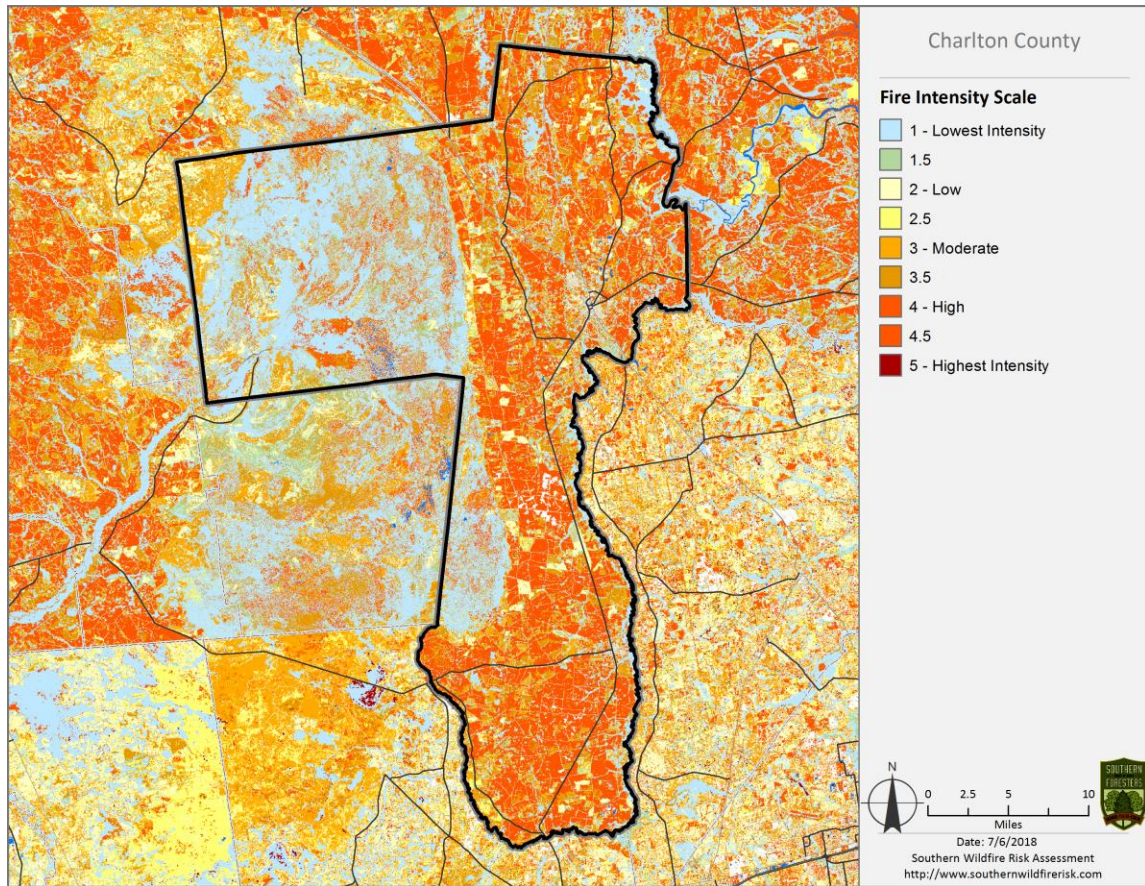
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map Below: WUI Risk Index Acres



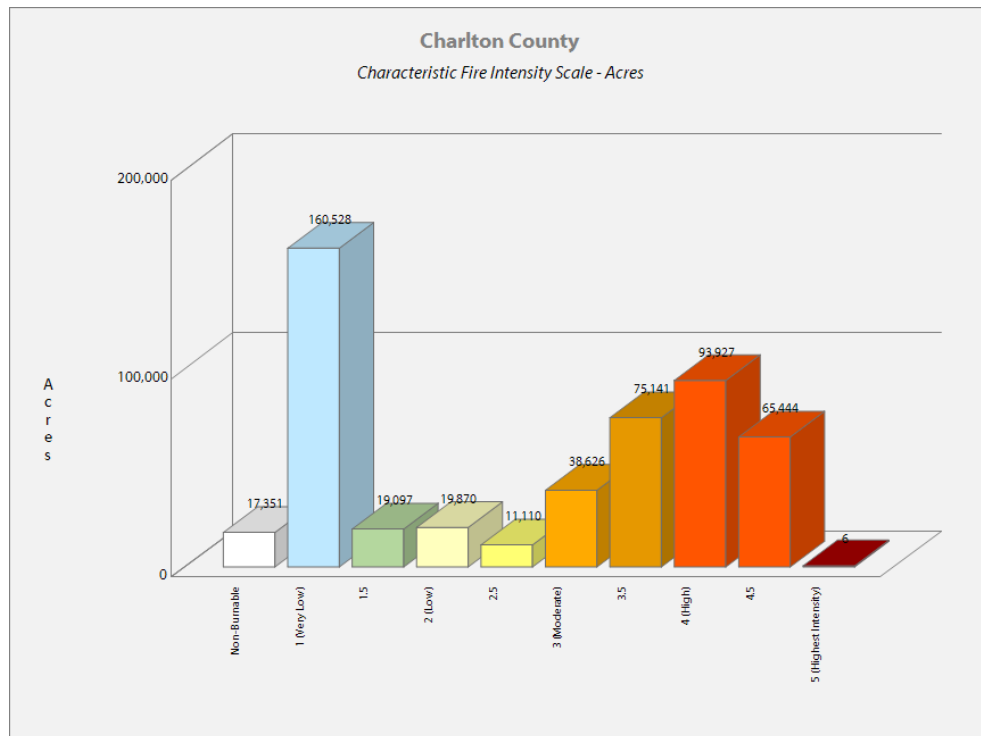


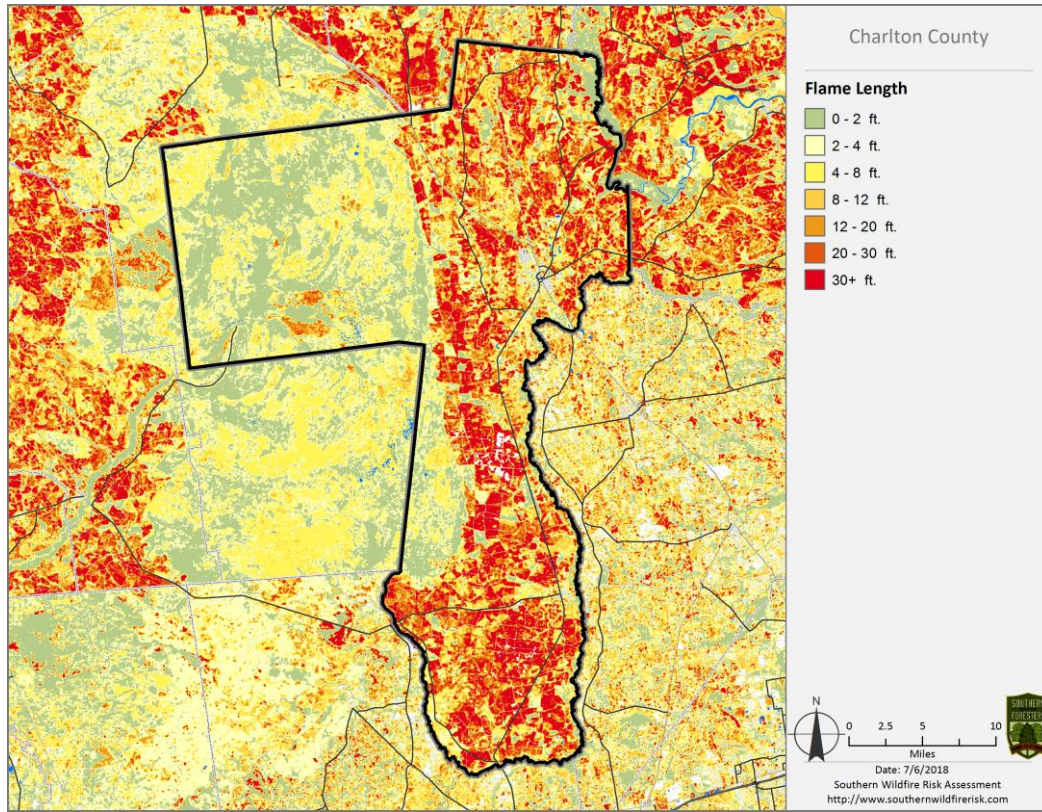
Above: Burn Probability map Below: Rate of Spread map



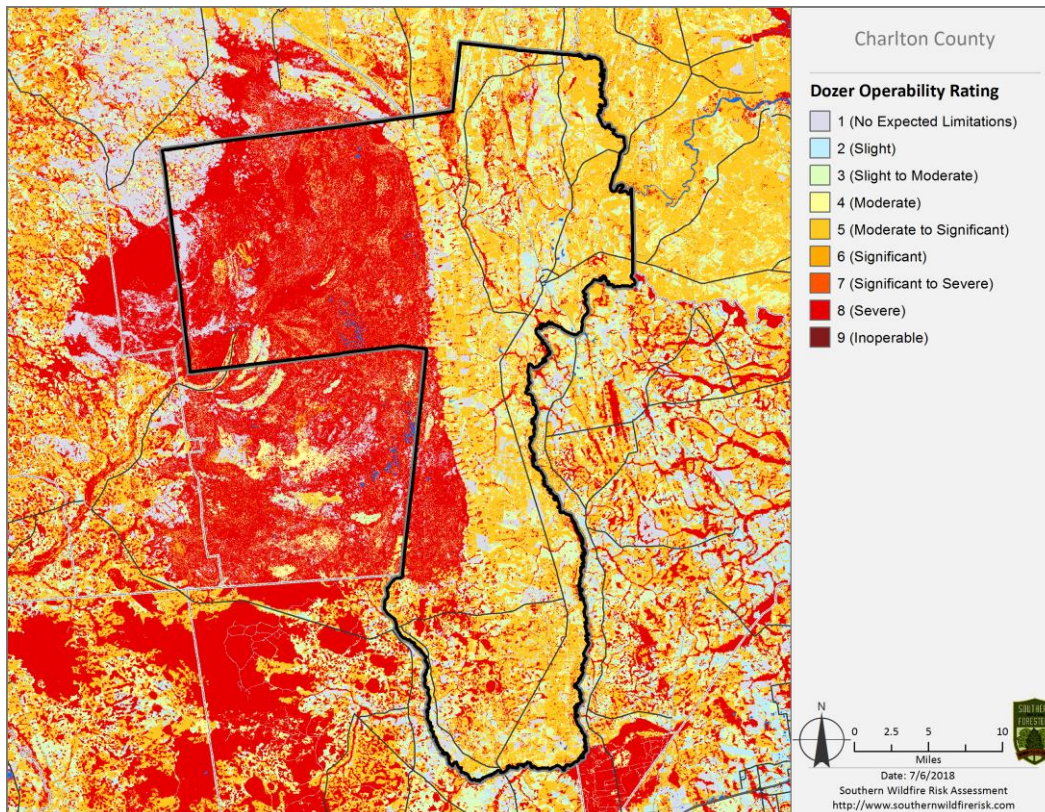


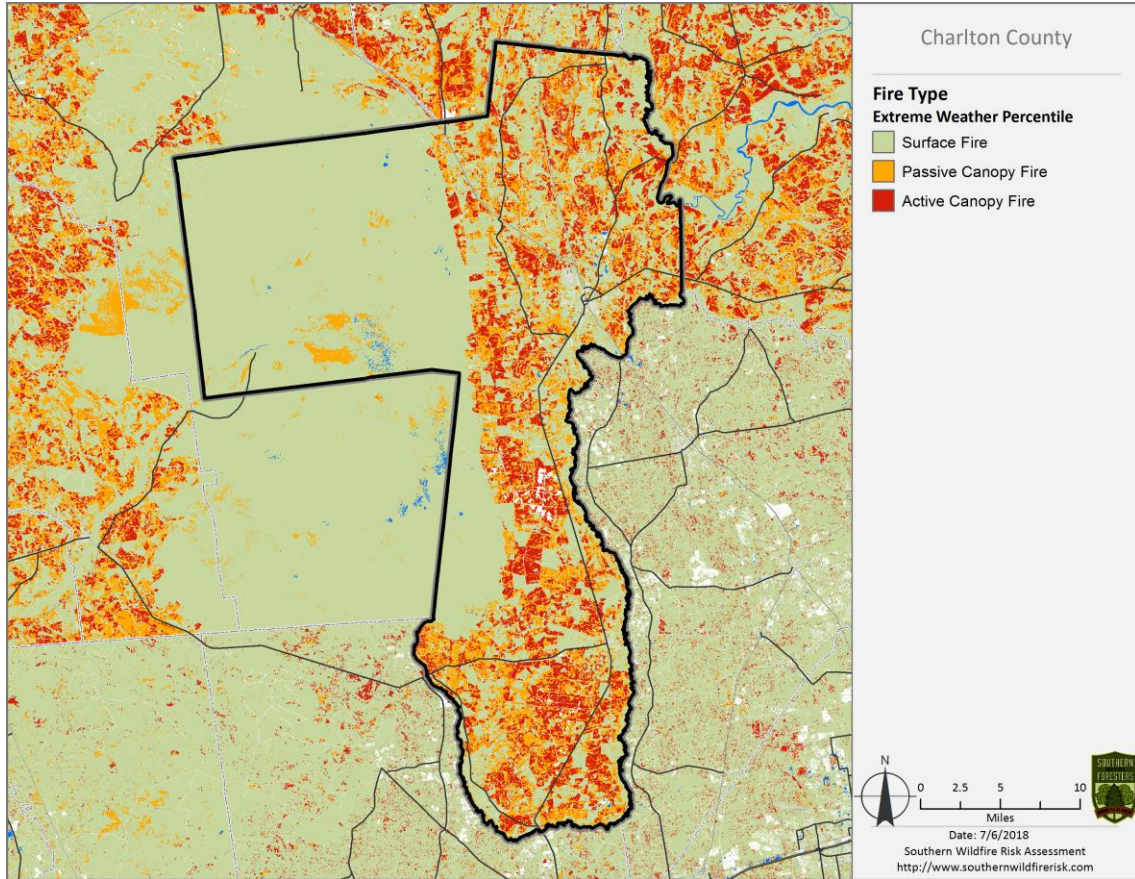
Above: Fire Intensity Scale map Below: Fire intensity Scale Acres



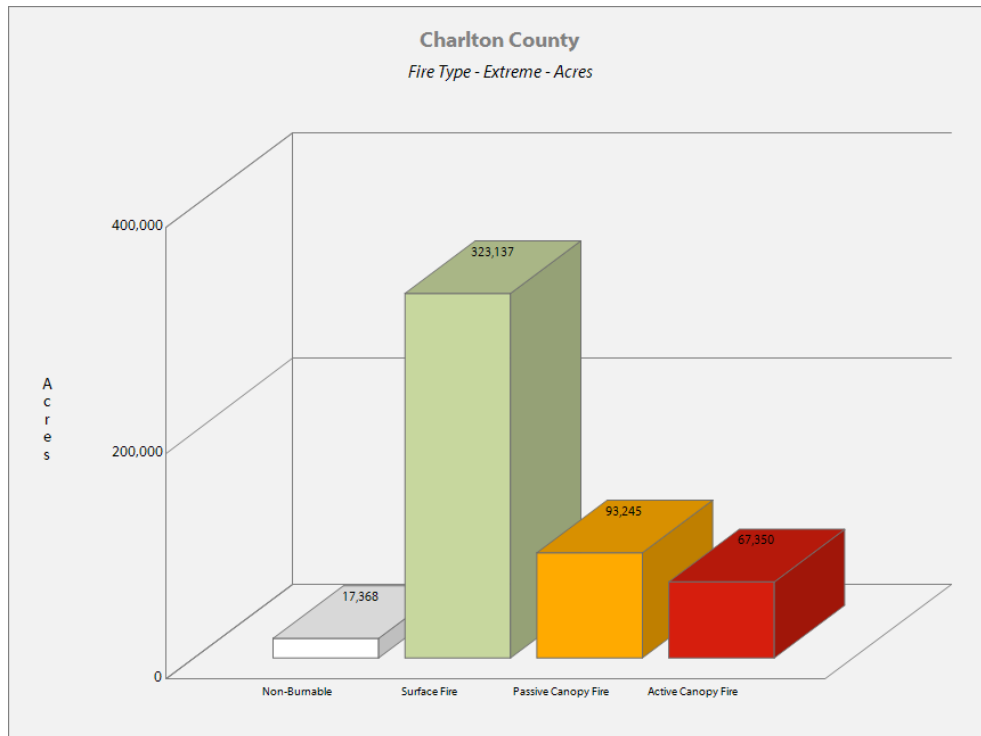


Above: Flame Length map Below: Dozer Operability Rating map





Above: Fire Type map Below: Fire Type Acres



VII. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

As Southeast Georgia continues to see increased growth from other areas seeking less crowded and warmer climates, new development will 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 30 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, 2010 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 by the Georgia Legislature in 2014 for Counties to use when developing building and zoning codes in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) to help reduce risk and minimize structure loss. When new developments are built in 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.

The following recommendations were developed by the Charlton County CWPP Core team as a result of surveying and assessing fuels and structures and by conducting meetings and interviews with county and city officials. A priority order was determined based on which mitigation projects would best reduce the hazard of wildfire in the assessment area.

Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

Primary Protection for Community and Its Essential Infrastructure		
Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. All Structures	Create minimum of 50-foot of defensible space**	Trim shrubs and vines to 50-feet from structures, trim overhanging limbs, replace flammable plants near homes with less flammable varieties, remove vegetation around chimneys.
2. Applicable Structures	Reduce structural ignitability**	Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters, store firewood appropriately, install skirting around raised structures, store water hoses for ready access, and replace pine straw and mulch around plantings with less flammable landscaping materials.
3. Community Clean-up Day National Wildfire Preparedness Day 1 st Saturday in May	Cutting, mowing, pruning**	Cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces.
4. Driveway Access	Culvert installation	See that adequate lengths of culverts are installed to allow emergency vehicle access.
5. Road Access	Identify needed road improvements	As roads are upgraded, widen to minimum standards with at least 50-foot diameter cul-de sacs or turn arounds.
6. Codes and Ordinances	Examine existing codes and ordinances. Utilize the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC)	Amend and enforce existing building codes as they relate to skirting, propane tank locations, public nuisances (trash/debris on property), Property address marking standards and other relevant concerns Review the need for subdivision and development ordinances for public safety concerns. Adopt and enforce uniform addressing ordinance.
Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities		

Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. Adjacent WUI Lands	Reduce hazardous fuels	Encourage prescribed burning for private landowners and industrial timberlands particularly adjacent to residential areas. County resolution to state recommending that the Ga Forestry Commission not charge for prescribed burning in WUI areas. Seek grant for WUI mitigation team.
2. Railroad Corridors	Reduce hazardous fuels	Encourage railroads to better maintain their ROW eliminating brush and grass through herbicide and mowing. Maintain firebreaks along ROW adjacent to residential areas.
3. Existing Fire Lines	Reduce hazardous fuels	Clean and re-harrow existing lines. Utilize equipment for mastication of understory fuels near housing development and other improvements.
Proposed Improved Community Wildland Fire Response Priorities		
1. Water Sources	Dry Hydrants	Inspect, maintain and improve access to existing dry hydrants. Add signage along road to mark the hydrants. Locate additional dry hydrants as needed.
2. Fire Stations	Equipment	Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland PPE Gear. Investigate need for “brush” trucks.
3. Water Sources	Drafting equipment	Investigate need for additional drafting pumps.
4. Personnel	Training	Obtain Wildland Fire Suppression training for Fire Personnel. Ready Set Go training.
**Actions to be taken by homeowners and community stakeholders		

Proposed Education and Outreach Priorities

<p>1. Conduct “How to Have a Firewise Home” Workshop for Charlton County Residents</p>
<p>Set up and conduct a workshop for homeowners that teach the principles of making homes and properties safe from wildfire. Topics for discussion include defensible space, landscaping, building construction, etc. Workshop will be scheduled for evenings or weekends when most homeowners are available and advertised through local media outlets.</p> <p>Distribute materials promoting firewise practices and planning through local community and governmental meetings.</p>
<p>2. Conduct “Firewise” Workshop for Community Leaders</p>
<p>Arrange for GFC Firewise program to work with local community leaders and governmental officials on the importance of “Firewise Planning” in developing ordinances and codes as the county as the need arises. Identify “Communities at Risk” within the county for possible firewise community recognition.</p>
<p>3. Spring Clean-up Event (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1st Saturday in May annually)</p>
<p>Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Charlton County Fire Departments and community residents. Set up information table with educational materials and refreshments. Initiate the event with a morning briefing by GFC Firewise coordinator and local fire officials detailing plans for the day and safety precautions. Activities to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters • Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet away from structures • Trim overhanging limbs • Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties <p>Celebrate the work with a community cookout, with Community officials, GFC and Charlton Fire Departments discussing and commending the work accomplished.</p>
<p>4. Informational Packets</p>
<p>Develop and distribute informational packets to be distributed by realtors, insurance agents, and others. Included in the packets are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Firewise Around Your Home • Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction • Firewise Communities USA brochures • Ready Set Go educational materials • Fire Adapted Community information
<p>5. Wildfire Protection Display</p>

Create and exhibit a display for the general public at the local events. Display can be independent or combined with the Georgia Forestry Commission display.

6. Media

Invite the Folkston and Waycross news media to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Charlton County. Utilize radio and social media to reach new audiences.

Add READY – SET – GO to the ongoing FIREWISE Programs:

The Ready, Set, Go! Program seeks to develop and improve the dialogue between fire departments and the residents they serve. Engaging in this dialogue is particularly important for the fire service, because national studies have shown that firefighters are uniquely respected in their communities and can project a trusted voice to the public preparedness appeal. They can also explain what fire resources are available during an event and the role that individuals can play in preparedness and early evacuation – if called for by their local officials – to increase the safety of residents and responding firefighters to a wildland fire.

The RSG! Program works in complimentary and collaborative fashion with Firewise and other existing wildland fire public education efforts. It amplifies their preparedness messages to individuals to better achieve the common goal we all share of fire-adapted communities. When firefighters encourage residents to take personal responsibility for preparing their property and family for WUI/wildland fire, residents become an active part of the solution to the problem of increasing fire losses.

The Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) Program is managed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). Launched nationally in March 2011 at the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI 2011) Conference, the program helps fire departments to teach individuals who live in high risk wildfire areas – and the wildland-urban interface – how to best prepare themselves and their properties against fire threats.



Mastication equipment, such as pictured on left, can be very effective in mowing or mulching understory fuels to reduce wildfire hazard. This management practice is practical for areas near homes where prescribed burning may not be possible. This type of service is available from private contractors.

VIII. 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	
Charlton County WUI Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC officials, Charlton County Fire Rescue, a representative from the city and county government and the EMA Director for Charlton 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping 2 Debris Burning Safety 3 Firewise information for homeowners 4 Prescribed burning benefits 5 Ready Set Go! Information for homeowners
Communications objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Create public awareness for fire danger and defensible space issues. 2 Identify most significant human cause fire issues. 3 Enlist public support to help prevent these causes. 4 Encourage people to employ fire prevention and defensible spaces in their communities.
Target Audiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Homeowners/Homeowner Associations 2 Forest Landowners and users 3 Civic Groups 4 School Groups 5 General Public
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 News Releases 2 Personal Contacts 3 Key messages and prevention tips 4 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters 5 Radio and TV 6 Social Media

Spring Clean-up Day – National Wildfire Preparedness Day (1 st Saturday in May annually)	
Event Coordinator	Coordinate day’s events and schedule, catering for cookout, guest attendance, and moderate activities the day of 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 post-event through local paper and radio PSAs.
Work Supervisor	Develop volunteer labor force of community residents; develop labor/advisory force from Georgia Forestry Commission, Charlton 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 50 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.
5. Fuel Reduction Activities	\$15 / acre	FEMA & USFS Grants

Assessment Strategy

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness for the action plan, the Charlton County WUI Fire Council will implement the following:

- Annual wildfire risk assessment will be conducted to re-assess wildfire hazards and prioritize needed actions.
- Mitigation efforts that are recurring (such as mowing, burning, and clearing of defensible space) will be incorporated into an annual renewal of the original action plan.
- Mitigation efforts that could not be funded in the requested year will be incorporated into the annual renewal of the original action plan.
- Continuing educational and outreach programs will be conducted and assessed for effectiveness. Workshops will be evaluated based on attendance and post surveys that are distributed by mail 1 month and 6 months following workshop date.
- The Charlton County WUI Council will publish an annual report detailing mitigation projects initiated and completed, progress for ongoing actions, funds received, funds spent, and in-kind services utilized. The report will include a “state of the community” section that critically evaluates mitigation progress and identifies areas for improvement. Recommendations will be incorporated into the annual renewal of the action plan.
- An annual survey will be distributed to residents soliciting information on individual mitigation efforts on their own property (e.g., defensible space). Responses will be tallied and reviewed at the next Charlton County WUI Council meeting. Needed actions will be discussed and delegated.

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

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
- Okefenokee Refuge www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee/
- 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.wildfireprepdays.org

Appended Documents:

Charlton County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

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



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