



# **Community Wildfire Protection Plan**

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

### **Clinch County, Georgia**

---

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



AUGUST 2018

Prepared by;  
Ken Wells, Chief Ranger, Clinch County  
Will Fell, CWPP Specialist (Initial plan 2010)  
Beryl Budd, Wildfire Prevention Specialist (Revised plan 2018)  
Georgia Forestry Commission  
1277 Pearson Hwy  
Homerville, GA 31634

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:

Jacklyn James  
Chairman, Clinch County Commission  
(912) 487-2667

Danny Strickland  
Chief, Homerville Clinch County Fire Department  
(229) 356-2375

Ken Wells  
Chief Ranger, Clinch County Forestry Unit  
(912) 487-5358

Will Joyce  
Director, Clinch County EMA  
(912) 487-3700

Travis Hursery  
Director, Tri-County Joint E-911  
County FD (912) 487-1806

Andrew Register  
Assistant Chief, Homerville Clinch  
(912) 487 6601

Otis Fleming  
Argyle City Council  
(912) 487-5358

Kenton McClain  
Clinch County Commissioner  
(912) 487-2667

Terri Jenkins  
Fire Management Officer  
Okefenokee NWR  
(912) 496-7366 ext. 232

Chad Brown  
Clinch County Commissioner  
(912) 487-2667

# PLAN CONTENTS

I. Objectives .....	1
II. Community Collaboration.....	1
III. Community & Wildfire History.....	2
IV. County Base Maps .....	9
V. Community Wildfire Risk Assessment.....	12
VI. Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment & Risk Hazard Maps .....	14
VII. Prioritized Mitigation Recommendations .....	21
VIII. Action Plan.....	26
IX. Mitigation Assistance & Grant Information.....	29
X. Glossary.....	30
XI. Sources of Information.....	32

## Appended Documents

Clinch County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Clinch 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 Clinch 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 May 27, 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:

Clinch County Government  
*Fire Department*  
*Emergency Management*  
*Board of County Commissioners*

City of Homerville  
*Homerville Fire Department*

Georgia Forestry Commission  
US Fish and Wildlife Service.

It was decided to conduct the Wildland Urban Interface assessment on the basis of the county as a whole. The county fire chief completed the assessment and reconvened on July 30, 2009 and December 15, 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



Clinch County, in southeast Georgia, is the state's third largest county. Clinch comprises 809 square miles and includes a portion of the Okefenokee Swamp, which extends over the eastern border of the county.

Clinch County was formed in 1850 from land that came from parts of Lowndes and Ware counties; portions also came from Appling County. (In subsequent years Clinch lost some of its territory to Atkinson, Coffee, Echols, and Lanier counties.) The county was named for Duncan Lamont Clinch, a veteran of the War of 1812 (1812-15) and later a Georgia congressman who was defeated in the 1847 gubernatorial campaign.

The region was originally inhabited by Oconee Indians. The first white settlers established small farms, but by the nineteenth century, the county's economy focused on timber products, with a very active turpentine distillation industry.

According to the 2000 U.S. census, the county population was 6,878 (68.9 percent white, 29.5 percent black, and 0.8 percent Hispanic), an increase of 11.7 percent since 1990.

The county seat is Homerville, which began as a stagecoach stop and was first incorporated in 1869. The town became important to the developing turpentine industry, and several major sawmills were established in and around Homerville after the Civil War (1861-65). The current county courthouse, built in 1896, was extensively renovated and extended in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration. During the Great Depression, Company 1413 of the Civilian Conservation Corps was encamped at Homerville, where its members worked in forestry and photography. In the late twentieth century, the town established a thriving honey industry, based on a deeply aromatic honey from bees who gather their nectar in the Okefenokee Swamp.

There are three other incorporated towns in Clinch County—Argyle, DuPont, and Fargo. Established in 1885, Argyle was first known as Saussy, after Clement Saussy, an heir to Gasper J. Fulton of Savannah, who had previously owned the land. The town was located on the A.C.L. Railroad and in its first years was little more than a railroad station. In 1899 the town took its current name, which honors Fort Argyle, the earliest of James Oglethorpe's coastal forts, and in 1901 the town was incorporated. DuPont was first known as Suwanoochee, after a nearby creek. Settled in 1858 by Captain J. P. A. DuPont of Darien, the town was renamed Lawton. It did not take its current name until 1874, when it was incorporated. The town of Fargo was established on the banks of the Suwannee River and incorporated in 1992.

Notable residents of Clinch County have included U.S. congresswoman Iris Faircloth Blitch, who was the first woman to serve two terms in the Georgia senate, actor Ossie Davis, and Methodist bishop Arthur J. Moore.

Places of interest include Stephen C. Foster State Park, inside the Okefenokee Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge is home to numerous mammals, birds, and reptiles and amphibians, many of which can be seen from the trails.

The largest festival in the county is the Timberland Jubilee, held each October to showcase the contributions the timber industry has made to the local economy.

*(Courtesy New Georgia Encyclopedia)*

## **Wildfire History**

Clinch County, one of the largest counties in Georgia in land area, is also one of the most heavily forested with more than 96% of the land area in forest. Even though a significant portion of the eastern part of the county is within the confines of Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, there are still almost 500,000 acres of commercial timberland within the confines of the county. The county is oriented such that it is almost 50 road miles from the southernmost portions south of Fargo to the Atkinson County line on the north. While the main population center is Homerville in the north central area of the county, there are several smaller communities and developments spread primarily in the north half of the county with a significant risk from the wildland urban interface around them.

Clinch County is protected by organized fire departments within the city of Homerville and two other widely spaced volunteer fire departments in Fargo and DuPont. The Georgia Forestry Commission maintains a county protection unit located just north of Homerville on Hwy 441 to respond to wildfires throughout the county. The city of Homerville and the small incorporated town of Fargo are serviced by a pressurized water system with well placed hydrants throughout.

Over the past fifty years, Clinch County has averaged 77 reported wildland fires per year. The occurrence of these fires is fairly uniform throughout the year with a slight peak in the months of May through July and a slight decrease during the fall months. These fires have burned an average of 675 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 spring through summer period show a dramatic 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 is 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.

During the last complete fiscal year 2018 the County had 32 wildfires burning 120 acres. During the preceding 10 years, FY 2008 thru 2017, the County has had 399 wildfires burning over 25,716 acres. The leading cause of these fires was lightning causing 36% of the fires and 32% of the acreage burned. The 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause was debris burning which totaled 32% of the fires but only burning 7% of the acreage. Another major cause was Incendiary (arson) which accounted for 11% of the fires and 60% of the acreage burned.

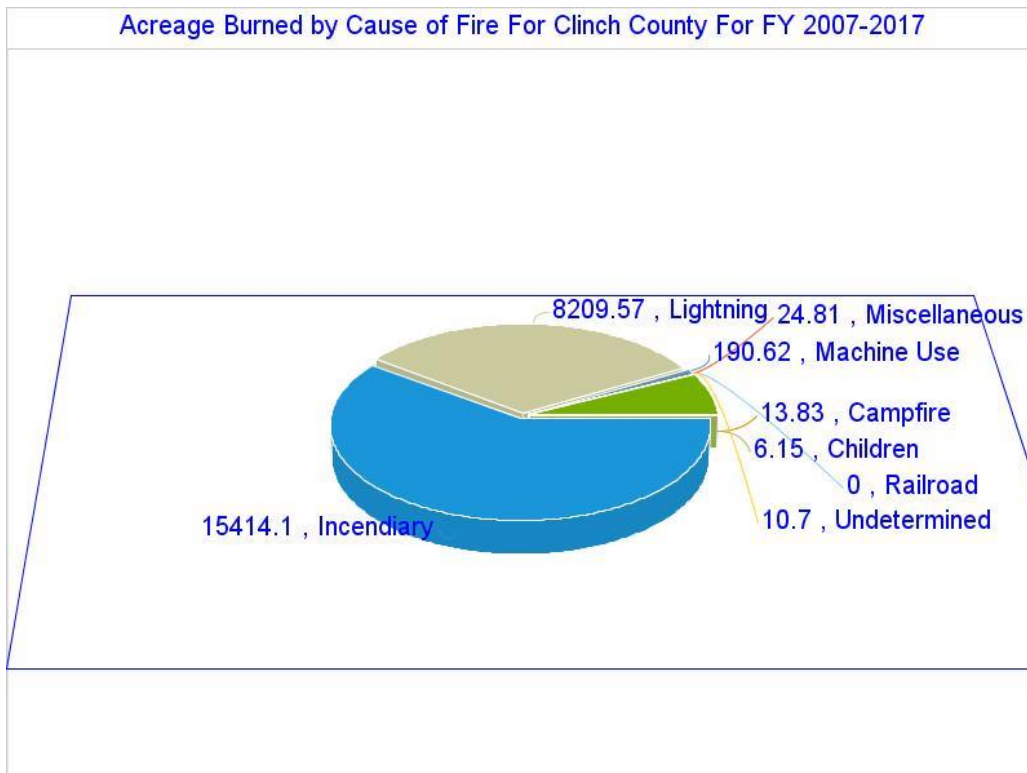
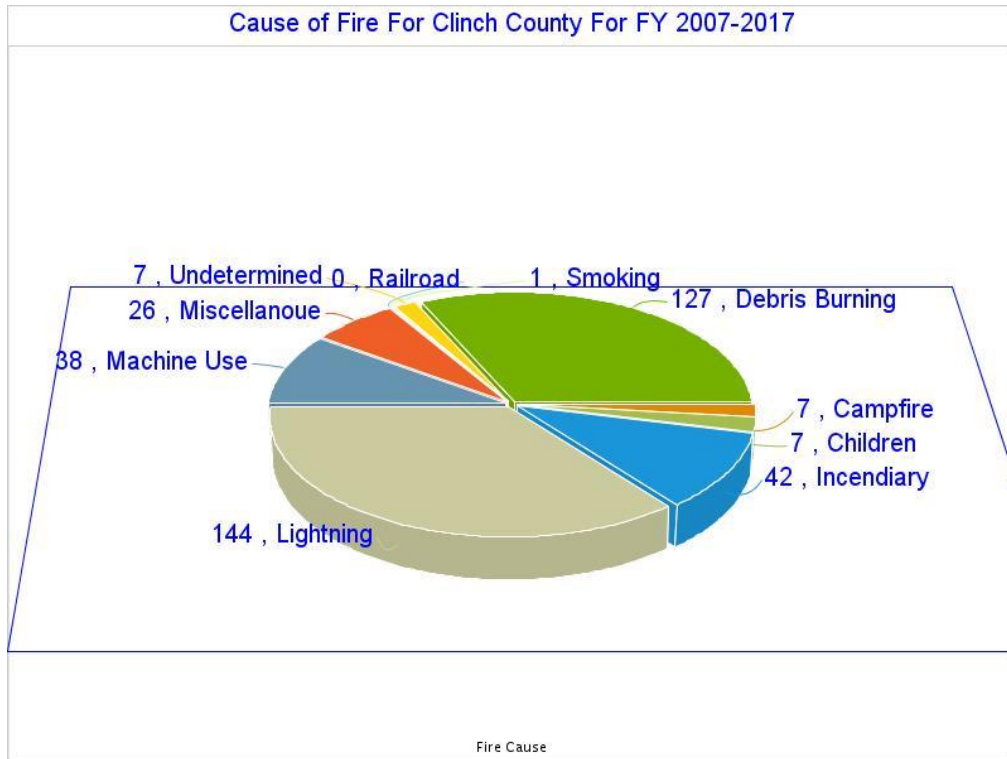
The years 2011 and 2017 were exceptionally dry. The total for these 2 years was 33% of fires and 90% of the acreage burned for the 10 year period. The following page is a record of wildfire activity for FY 2018. Pages 5 – 9 cover wildfire data from the preceding 10 years, FY2008 - FY2017.

County = Clinch	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
<a href="#">Campfire</a>	Campfire	1		4.20	0.80	1.20
<a href="#">Children</a>	Children	1		0.20	0.80	0.66
<a href="#">Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc</a>	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	1		4.00	0.60	3.20
<a href="#">Debris: Construction Land Clearing</a>	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	1		1.00	0.80	1.40
<a href="#">Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn</a>	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	2		2.00	6.80	156.15
<a href="#">Debris: Other</a>	Debris: Other	0		0.00	0.60	1.30
<a href="#">Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc</a>	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	2		7.60	2.60	6.96
<a href="#">Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related</a>	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	0		0.00	0.20	0.26
<a href="#">Incendiary</a>	Incendiary	7		25.10	6.20	36.19
<a href="#">Lightning</a>	Lightning	10		64.80	12.80	639.35
<a href="#">Machine Use</a>	Machine Use	0		0.00	2.60	5.40
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding</a>	Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	0		0.00	0.20	0.02
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition</a>	Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	1		0.50	0.20	0.10
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Other</a>	Miscellaneous: Other	1		5.00	0.80	2.42
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences</a>	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	1		4.00	0.60	1.20
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion</a>	Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	1		0.10	0.60	0.32
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires</a>	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	2		2.25	0.80	0.75
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes</a>	Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	0		0.00	0.20	0.10
<a href="#">Railroad</a>	Railroad	0		0.00	0.20	0.04
<a href="#">Undetermined</a>	Undetermined	1		0.20	1.60	2.18
<b>Totals for County: Clinch Year: 2018</b>		32		120.95	40.00	859.20

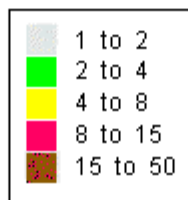
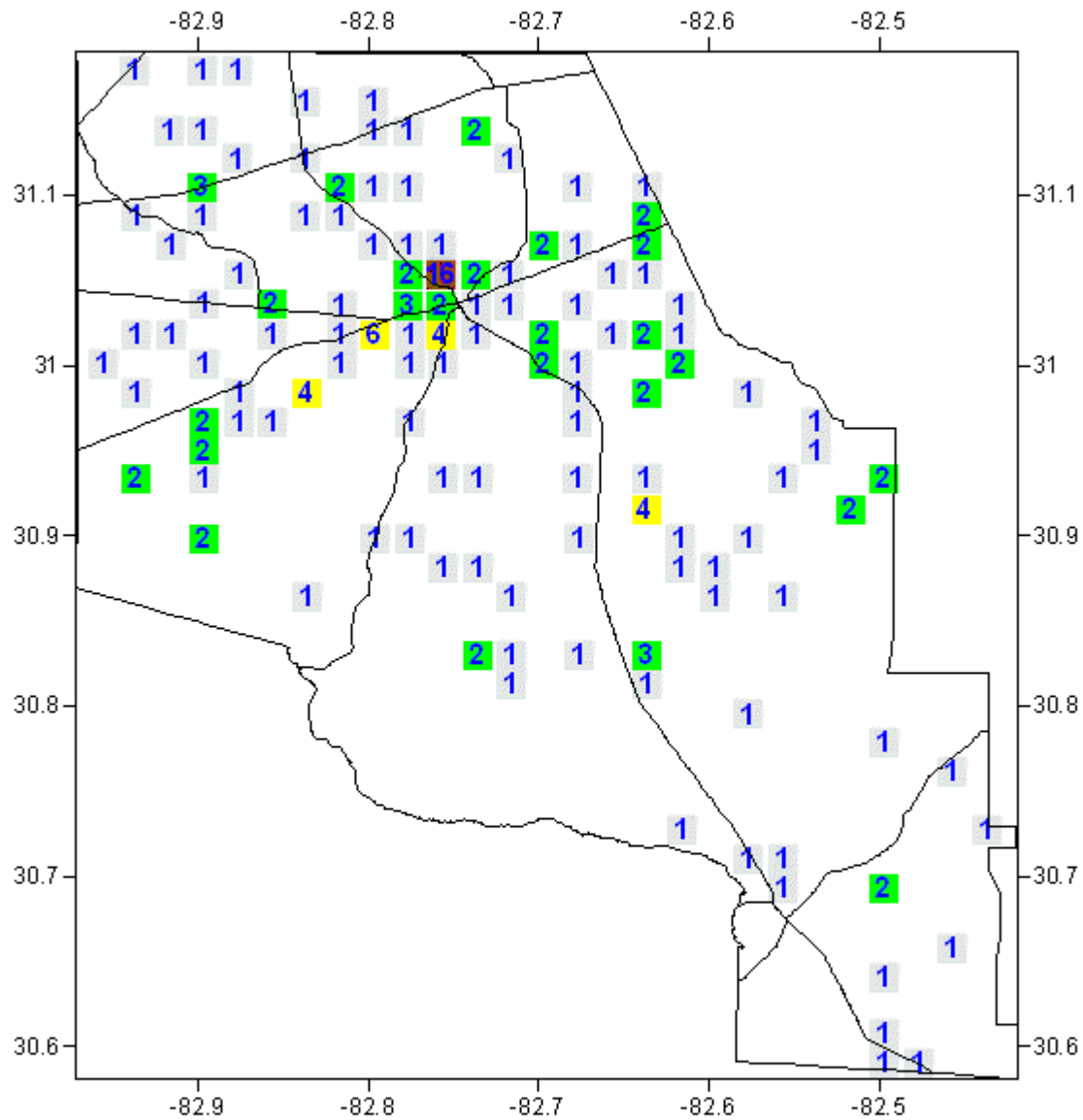
<b>Acreage Burned /Number of Fires For Clinch County For FY 2008-2017</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Acreage Burned</b>	<b>Number of Fires</b>	<b>Average Size</b>	<b>Statewide Average Size</b>
2008	254.89	35	7.28	4.56
2009	781.79	35	22.33	3.90
2010	50.62	21	2.41	3.93
2011	19,723.21	58	340.05	17.56
2012	270.53	27	10.02	5.08
2013	63.99	15	4.27	4.53
2014	79.34	13	6.10	5.02
2015	453.75	40	11.34	4.42
2016	262.49	39	6.73	6.29
2017	3,379.49	76	44.47	11.60

<b>Acreage Burned /Number of Fires by Fire Cause For Clinch County For FY 2007-2017</b>		
<b>Fire Cause</b>	<b>Acreage Burned</b>	<b>Number of Fires</b>
Campfire	13.83	7
Children	6.15	7
Debris Burning	1,837.62	127
Incendiary	15,414.10	42
Lightning	8,209.57	144
Machine Use	190.62	38
Miscellaneous	24.81	26
Railroad	0.00	0
Smoking	9.40	1
Undetermined	10.70	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,716.80</b>	<b>399</b>

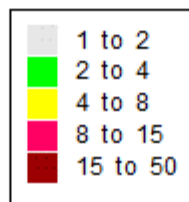
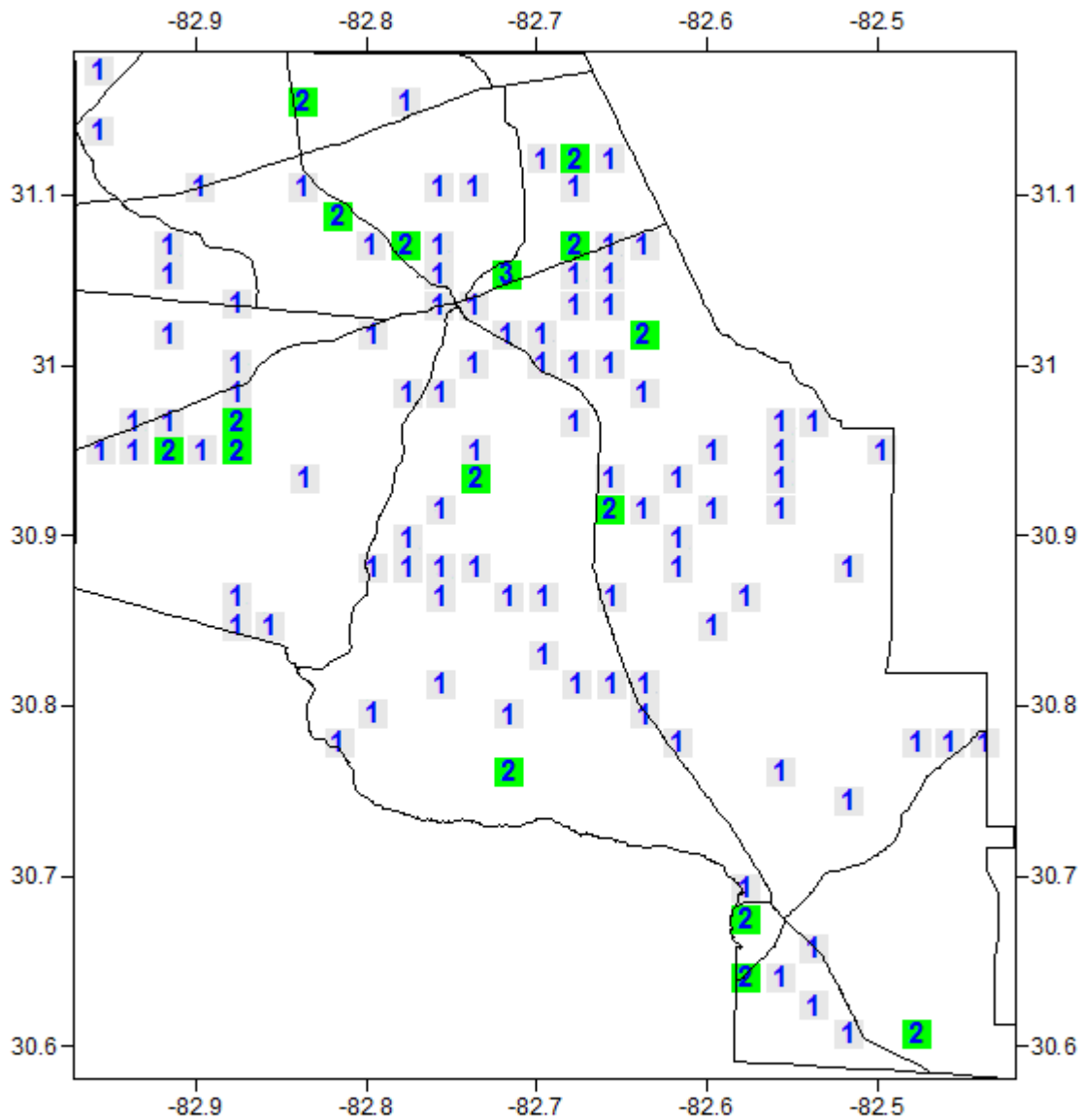




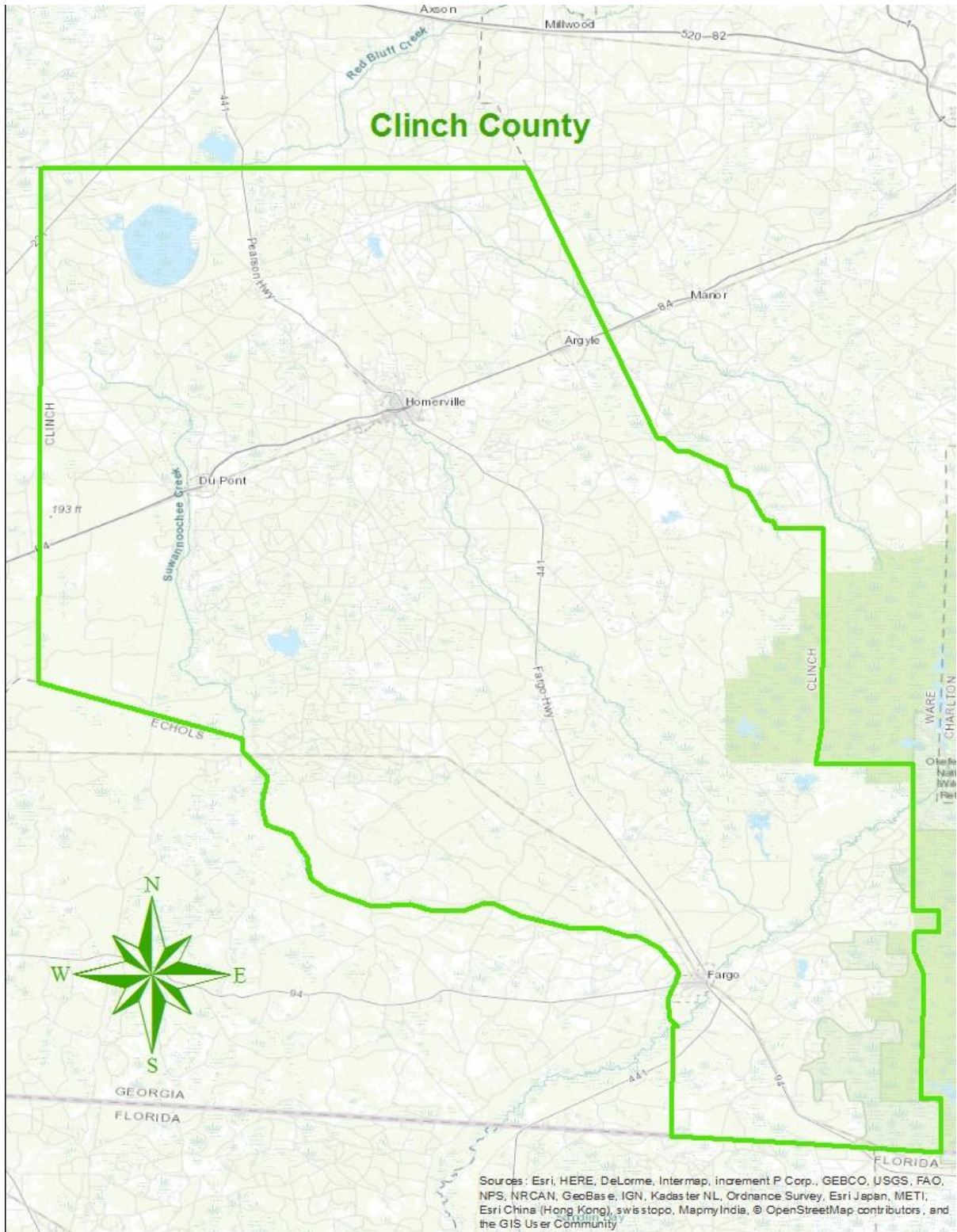
# Fire Occurrence Map for Clinch County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011

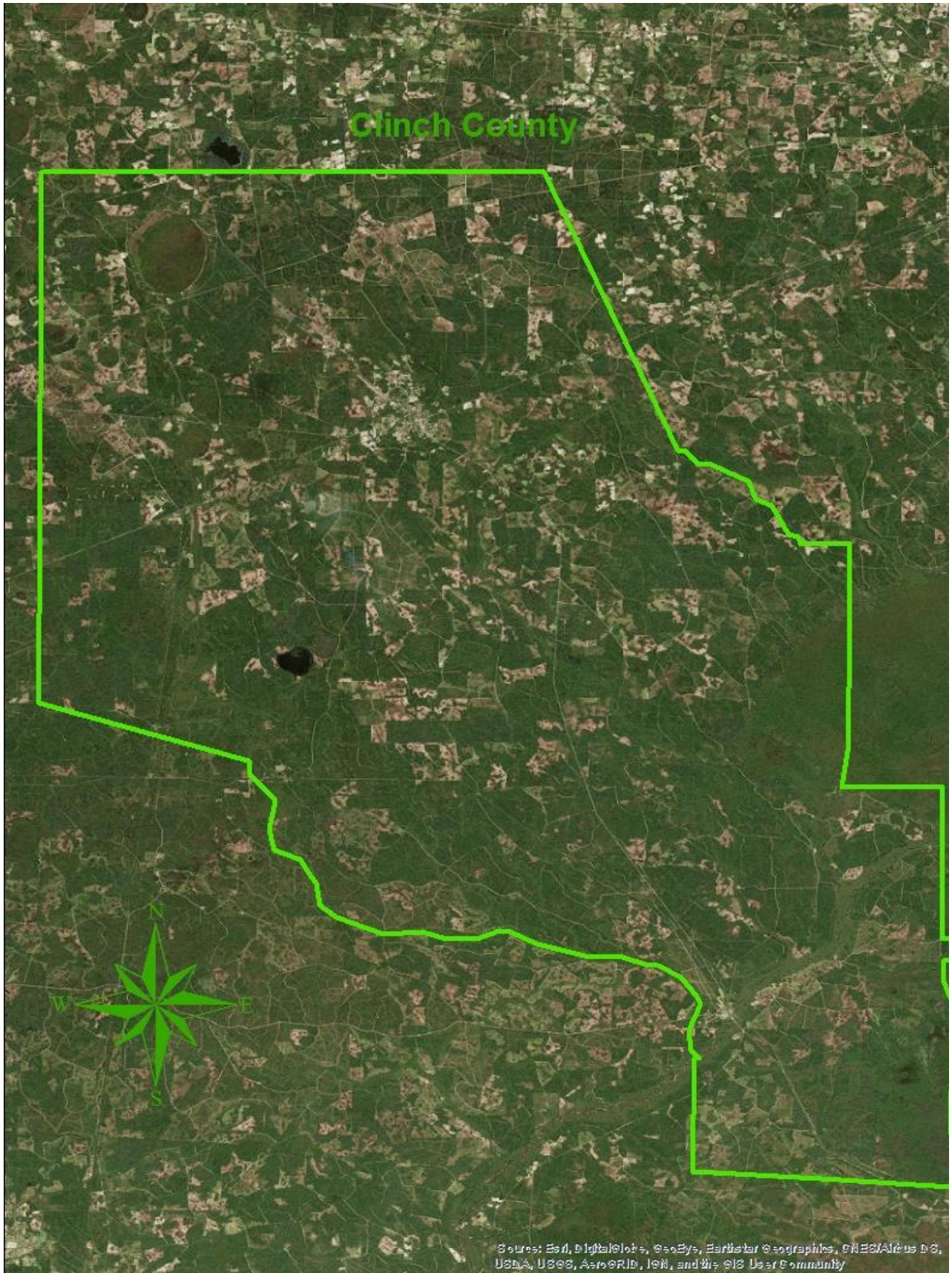


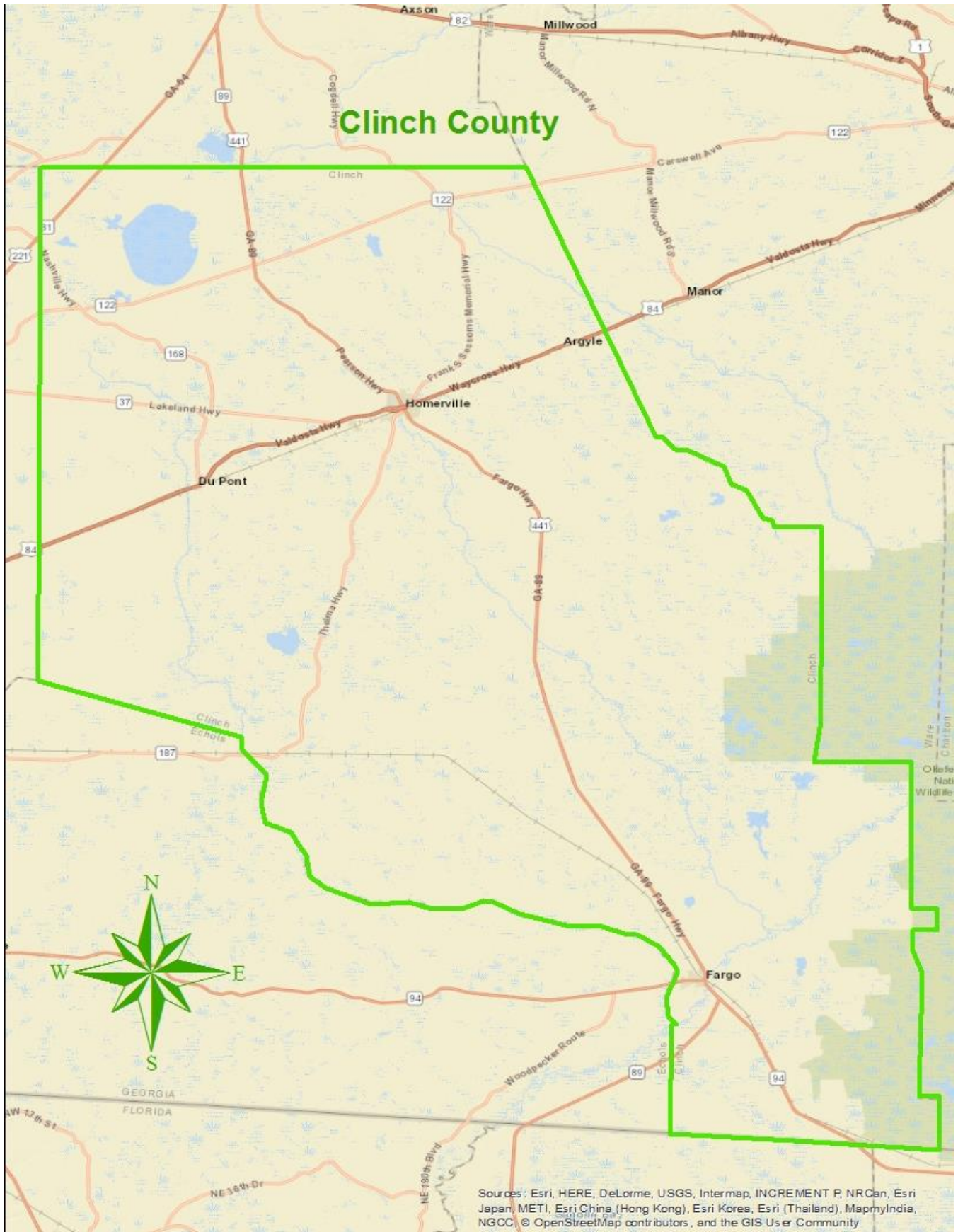
# Fire Occurrence Map for Clinch County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



## IV. COUNTY 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.



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

The wildland fire risk assessment conducted in 2009 by the Clinch County Fire Departments and the Georgia Forestry Commission returned an average score of 122, placing Clinch County in the “extreme” hazard range. The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Clinch 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 Clinch 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 the several locations Distance from fire stations.
- Lack of homeowner or community organizations.

**Summary of Clinch County Assessment Ratings**

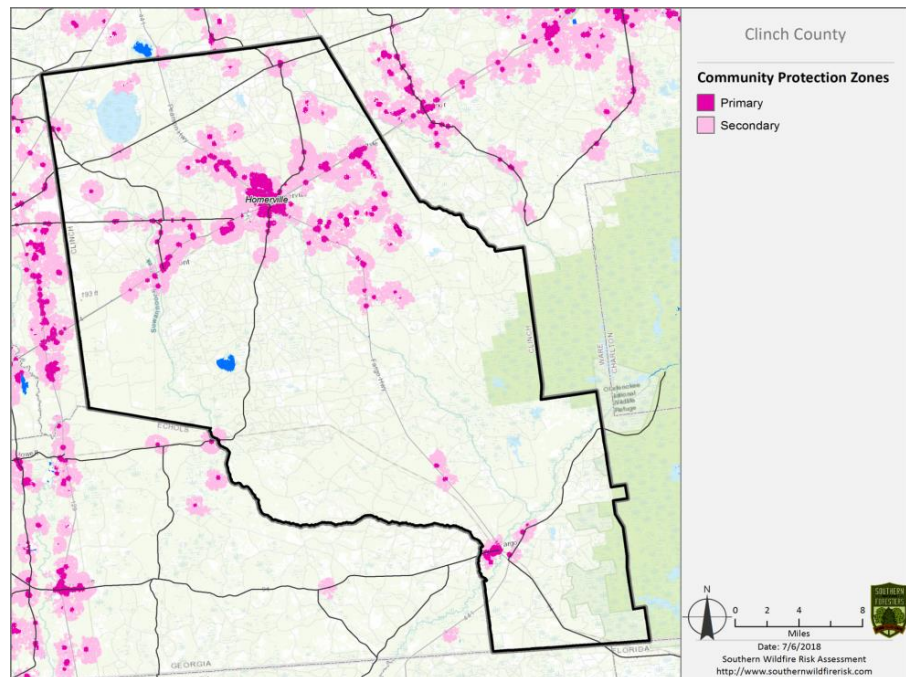
Access	Surrounding Vegetation	Bldg Construction	Fire Protection	Utilities	Additional Factors	Score	Hazard Rating
18	35	20	15	4	29	122	<b>Extreme</b>



## VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

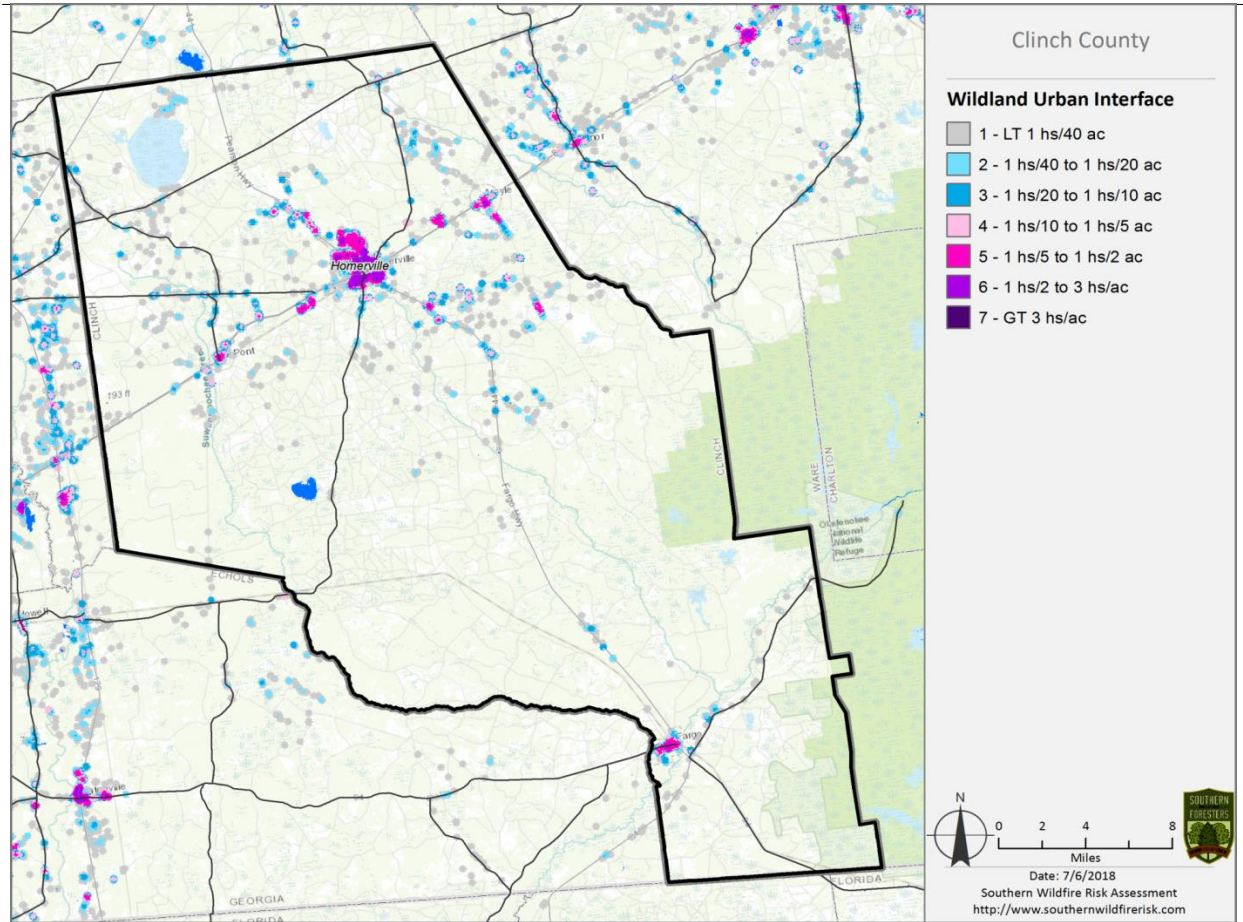
The Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment tool, developed by the Southern Group of State Foresters, was released to the public in July 2014. This tool allows users of the Professional Viewer application of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA) web Portal (SouthWRAP) to define a specific project area 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 Clinch 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.

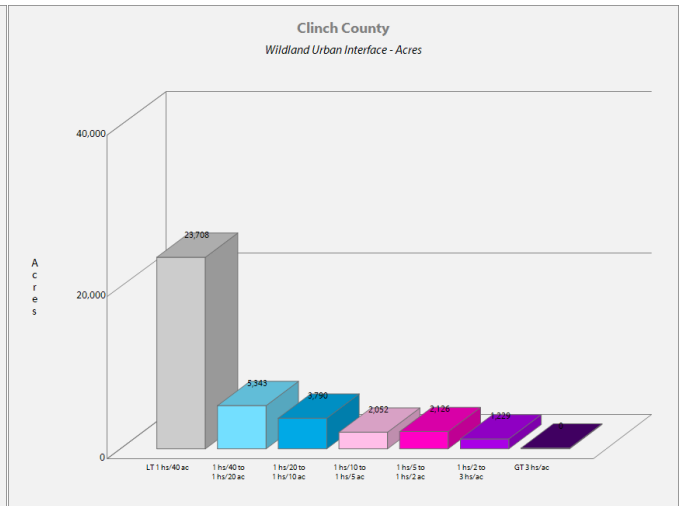
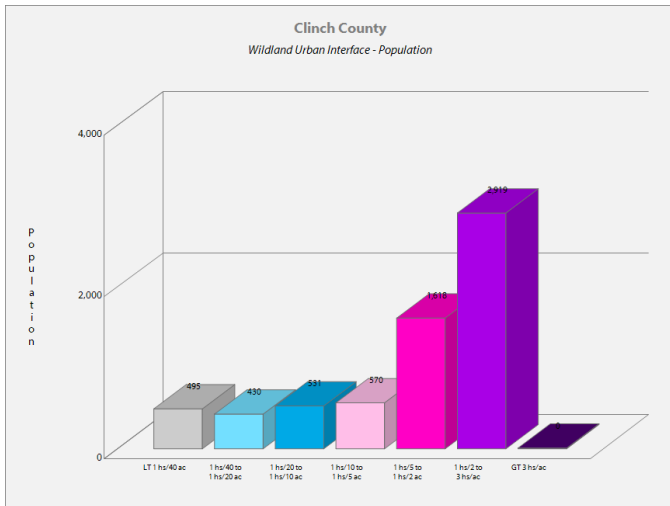


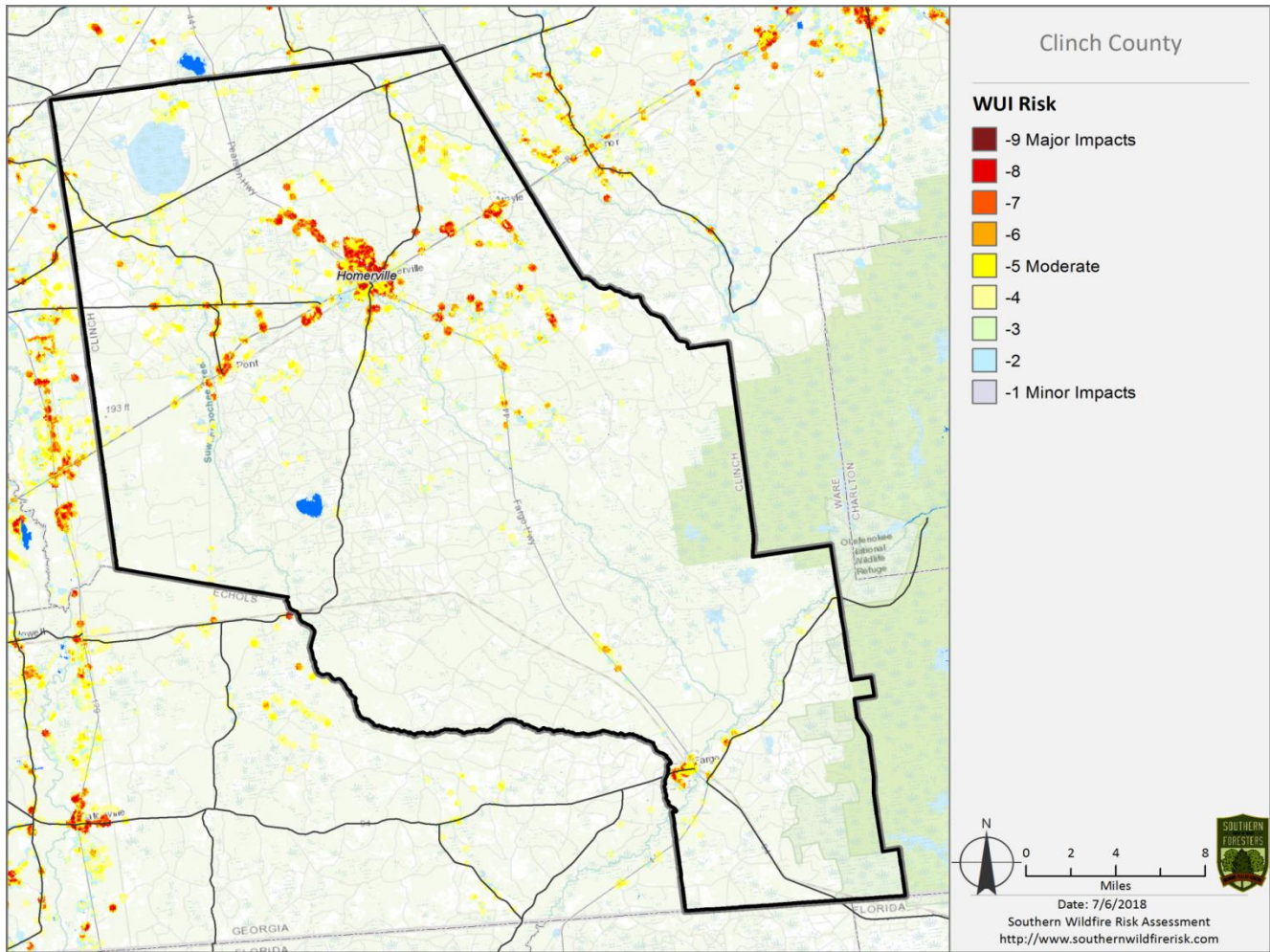
Community Protection Zones map from the Clinch County SWRA

WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN: AN ACTION PLAN FOR WILDFIRE MITIGATION

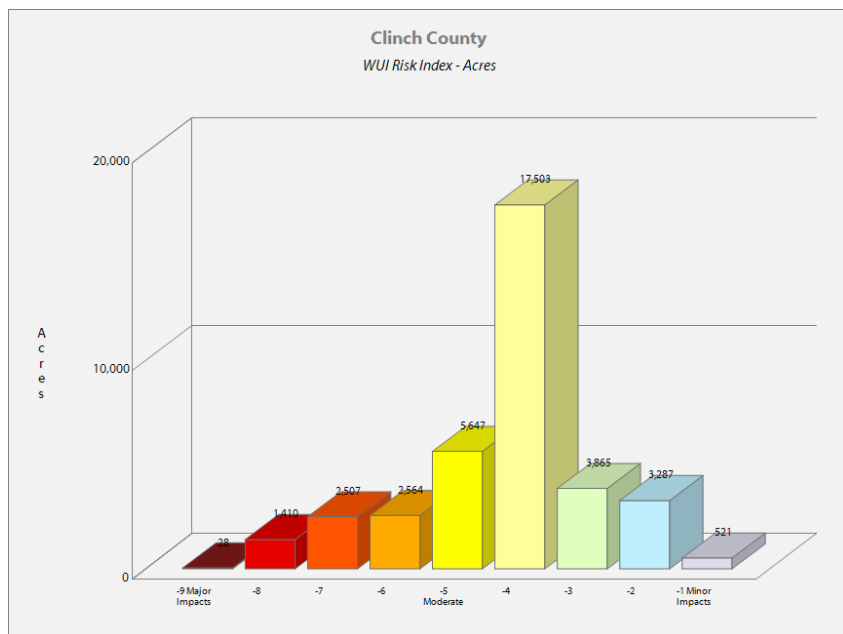


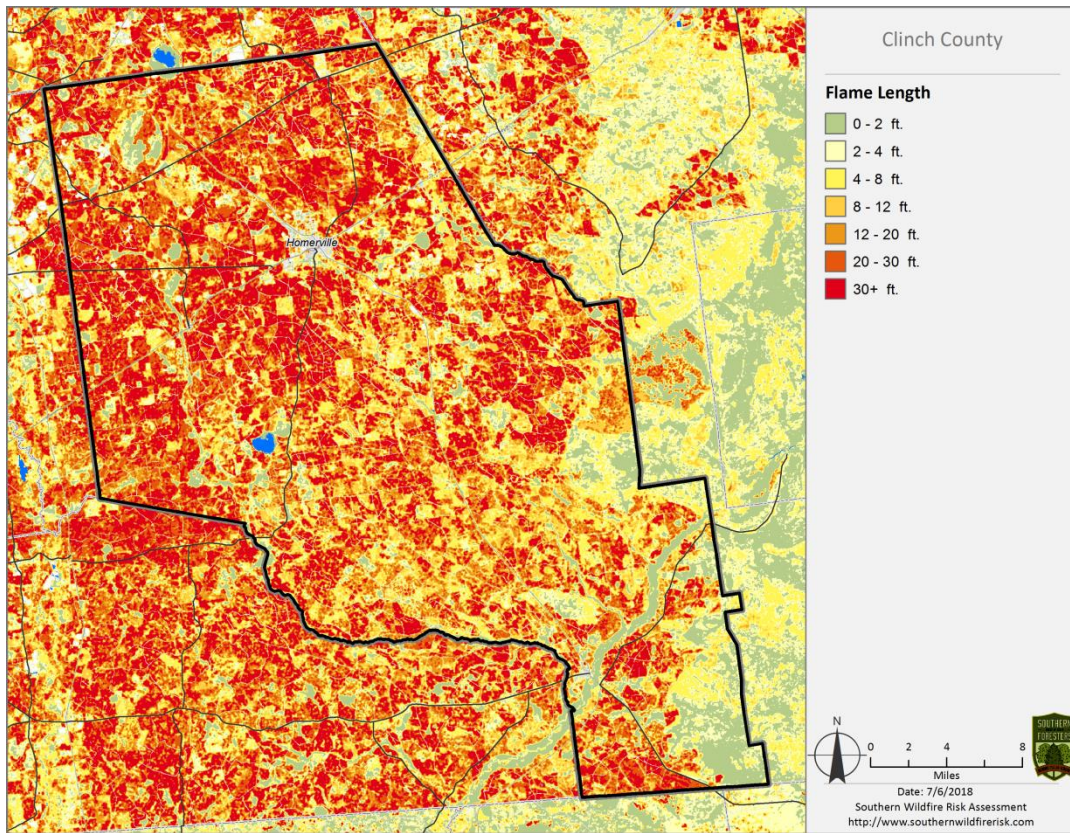
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map Below: WUI Population (left) WUI Acres (right)



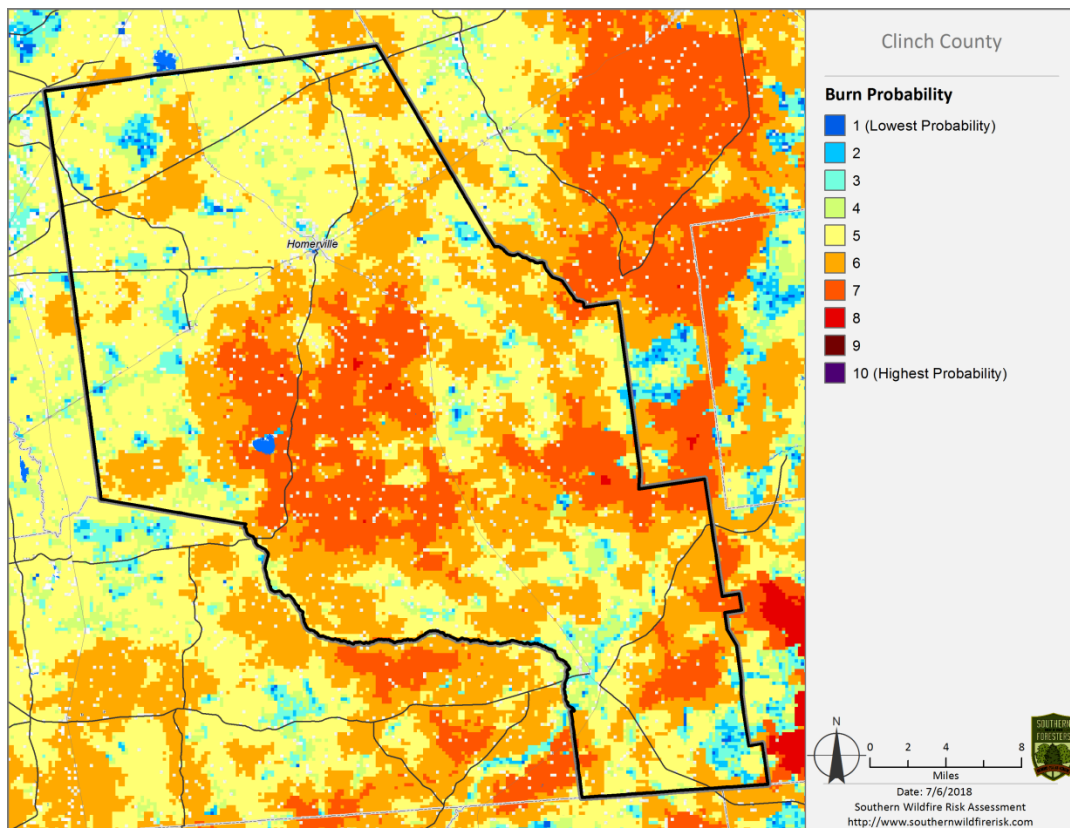


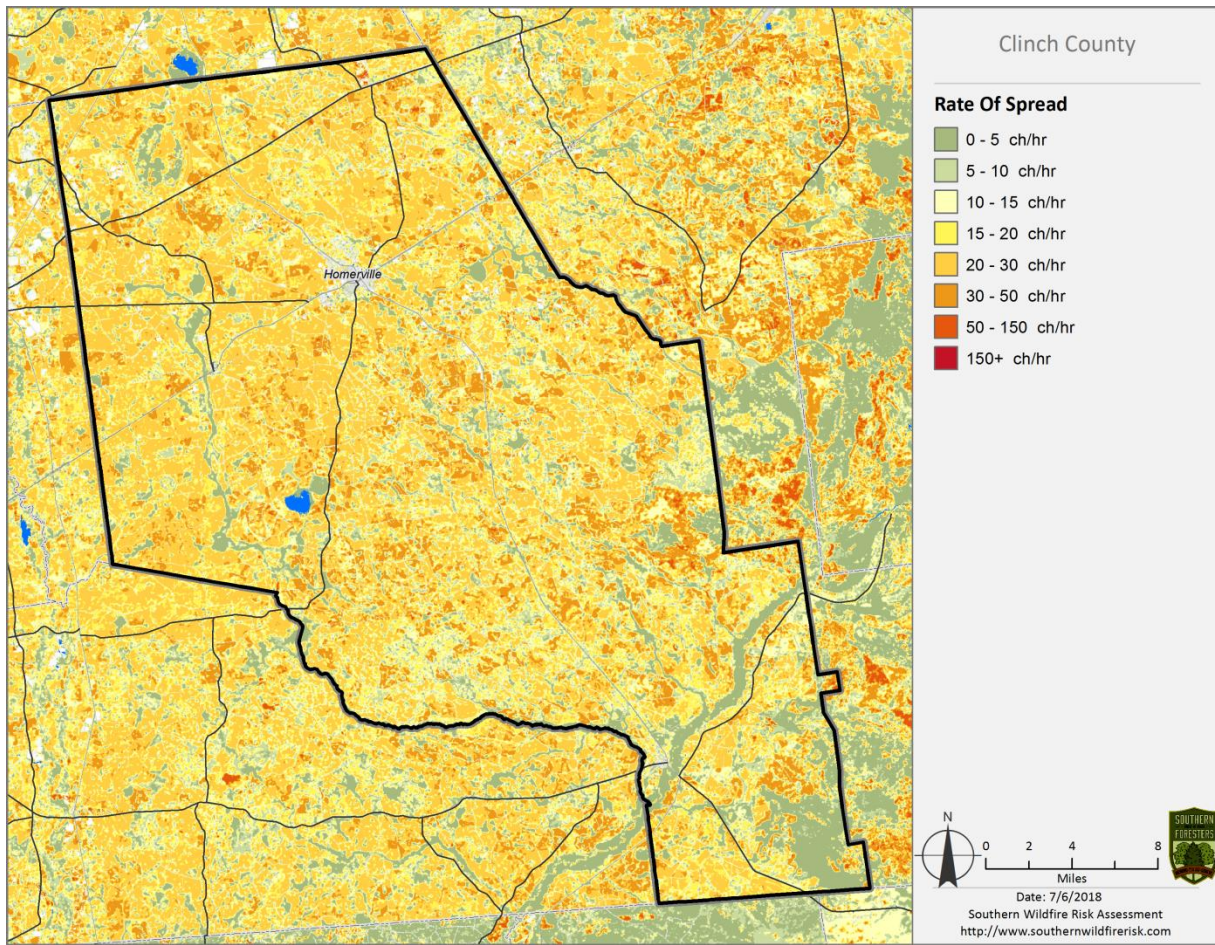
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map Below: WUI Risk Acres



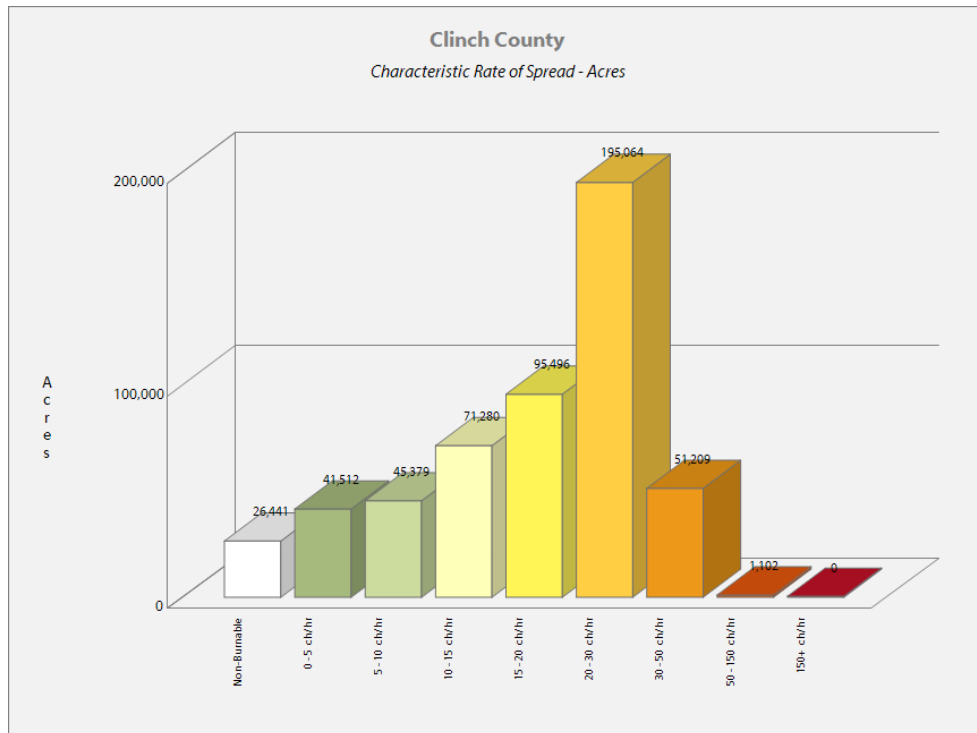


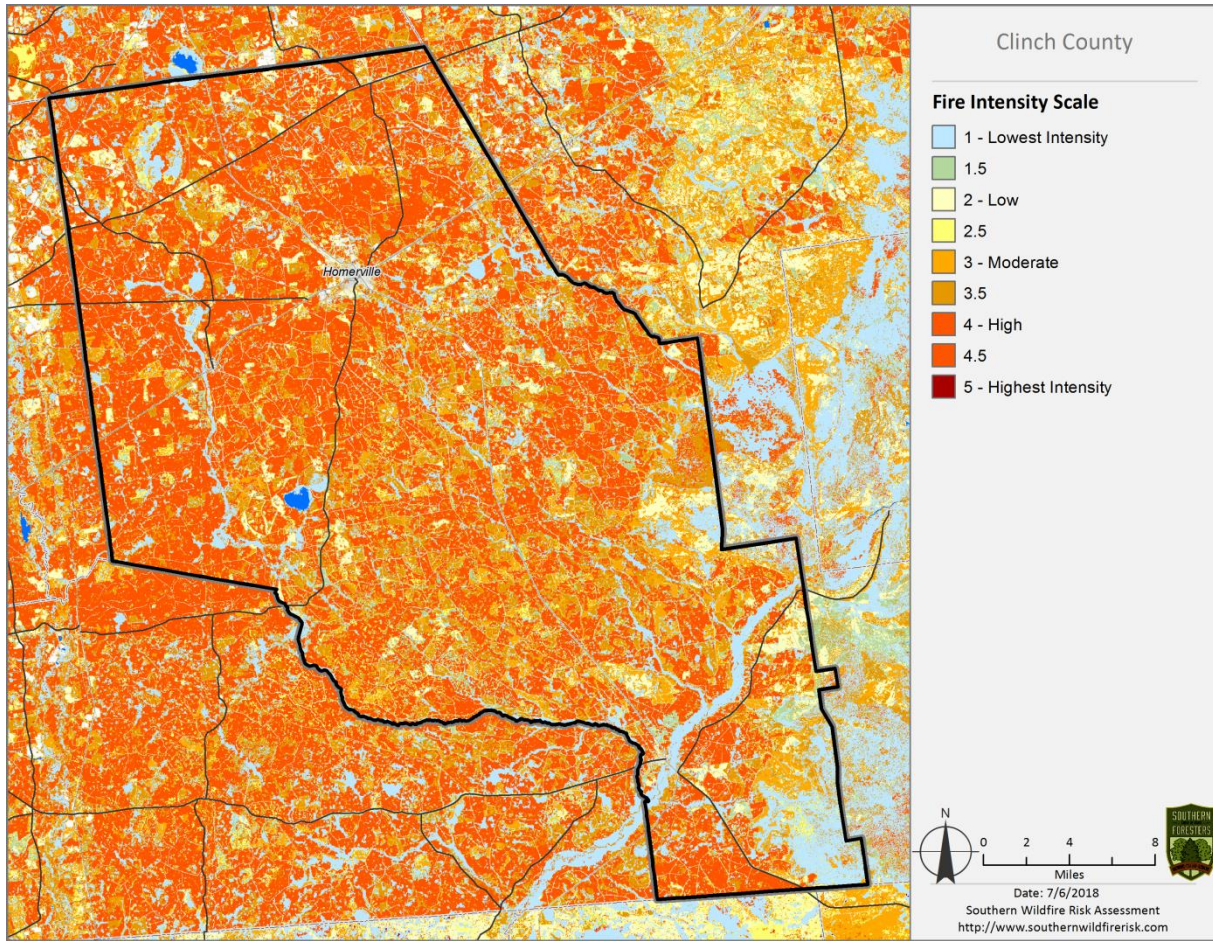
Above: Flame Length map Below: Burn Probability map



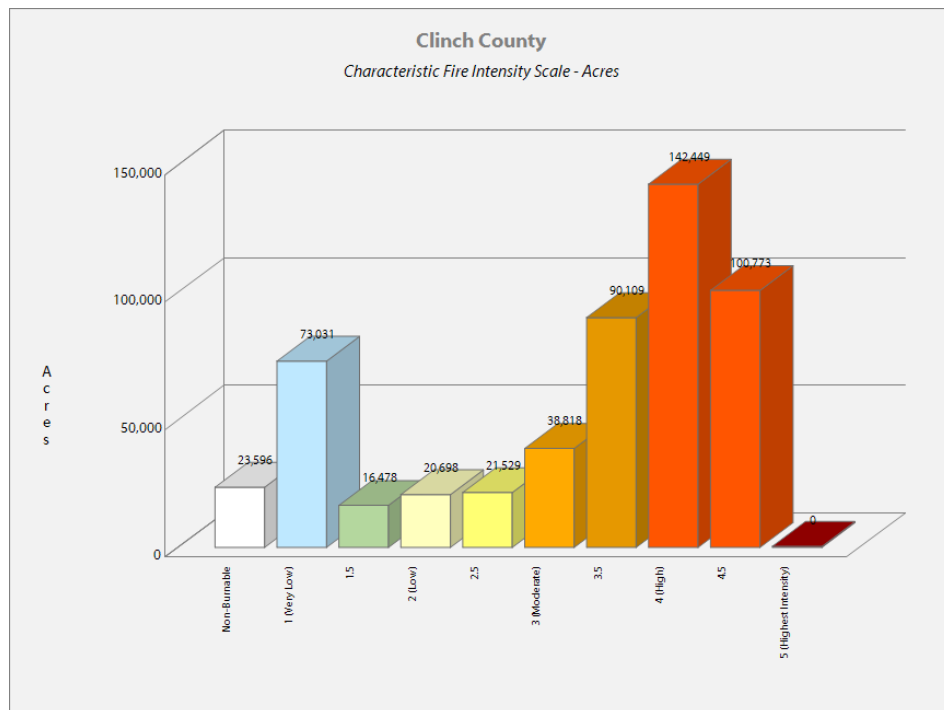


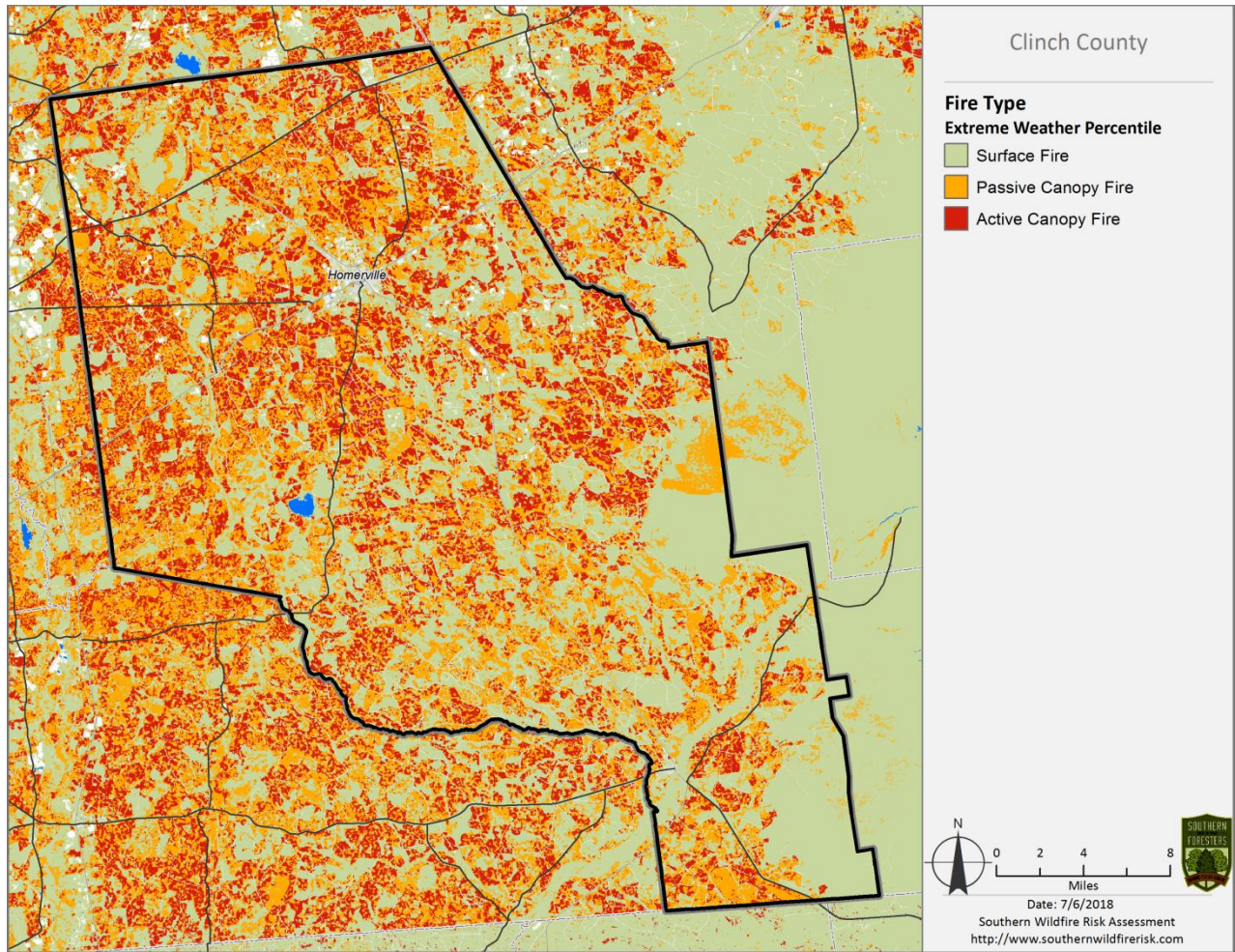
Above: Rate of Spread map Below: Rate of Spread - Acres



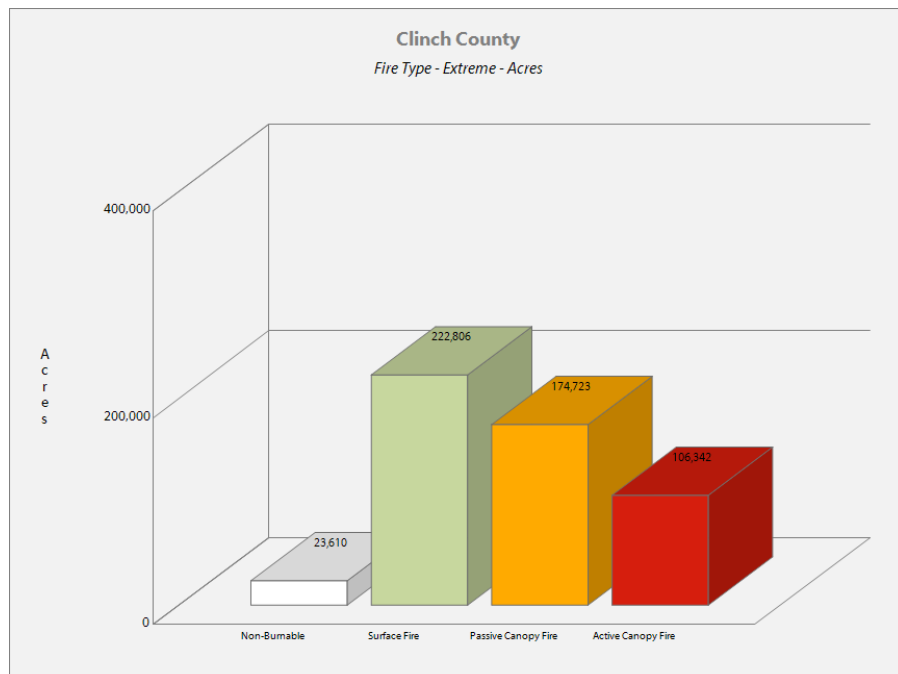


Above: Fire Intensity Scale map    Below: Fire Intensity Scale Acres





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

In 2012 the International Code Council developed the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC). The code is endorsed by NFPA and the Georgia Legislature adopted the code in 2014 for use by Georgia Counties to help reduce risk in the WUI. Counties can utilize this code as a model to develop their own county building and zoning regulations.

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 Clinch 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 30-foot of defensible space**	Trim shrubs and vines to 30 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 <sup>st</sup> 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  Amend State Law to allow city/county equipment on private property to clear debris and wildland fuels.  Review Subdivision and development ordinances for public safety concerns.  Adopt uniform addressing ordinance.
7. Road Signage and Addressing	As road signs are replaced.	Add “dead end” or “no outlet” to county road signs as needed. Upgrade signs to NFPA standards.

<b>Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities</b>		
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.  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. Mow, mulch, masticate areas in the WUI near housing developments.
<b>Proposed Improved Community Wildland Fire Response Priorities</b>		
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	Need additional station in Argyle.  Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland PPE Gear. Investigate need for “brush” trucks.
3. Water supply	Water handling equipment	Investigate need for additional drafting pumps and tankers.
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 Clinch 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” such as Argyle within the county for possible firewise community recognition.</p>
<p>3. Spring Clean-up Event (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in May annually)</p>
<p>Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Clinch 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"> <li>• Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters.</li> <li>• Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet away from structures.</li> <li>• Trim overhanging limbs.</li> <li>• Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties.</li> <li>• Provide firewise education to homeowners and others.</li> </ul> <p>Celebrate the work with a community cookout, with Community officials, GFC and Clinch County 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 and insurance agents. Included in the packets are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be Firewise Around Your Home</li> <li>• Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction</li> <li>• Firewise Communities USA materials</li> <li>• Ready Set Go information</li> <li>• Fire Adapted Community materials</li> </ul>

5. Wildfire Protection Display

Create and exhibit a display for the general public at the local events such as the Timber Fest and the Christmas Parade. Display can be independent or combined with the Georgia Forestry Commission display. Establish “Community Days” at local fire departments to promote firewise practices.

6. Media

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



**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.**

**This type of mowing or mastication, pictured on the right, can be very effective in reducing wildfire risk by removing or reducing forest understory fuels. This type of management is most practical in developed areas where prescribed fire is not an option as a management practice.**



**The Georgia Forestry Commission or private contractors can provide these services.**

## VIII. ACTION PLAN

### Roles and Responsibilities

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

Role	Responsibility
<b>Hazardous Fuels and Structural Ignitability Reduction</b>	
Clinch County WUI Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC officials, Clinch County Fire department officials, a representative from the city and county government and the EMA Director for Clinch 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"> <li>1 Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping</li> <li>2 Debris Burning Safety</li> <li>3 Firewise information for homeowners</li> <li>4 Prescribed burning benefits</li> </ol>
Communications objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Create public awareness for fire danger and defensible space issues</li> <li>2 Identify most significant human cause fire issues</li> <li>3 Enlist public support to help prevent these causes</li> <li>4 Encourage people to employ fire prevention and defensible spaces in their communities.</li> </ol>
Target Audiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Homeowners and homeowner associations</li> <li>2 Forest Landowners and users</li> <li>3 Civic Groups</li> <li>4 School Groups</li> </ol>
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 News Releases</li> <li>2 Personal Contacts and social media</li> <li>3 Key messages and prevention tips</li> <li>4 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters</li> </ol>

Spring Clean-up Day (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday in May)	
Event Coordinator	Coordinate day’s events and schedule, catering for cookout, guest attendance, and moderate activities the day of the event.
Event Treasurer	Collect funds from residents to cover food, equipment rentals, and supplies.
Publicity Coordinator	Advertise event through neighborhood newsletter, letters to officials, and public service announcements (PSAs) for local media outlets. Publicize 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, Clinch County Fire Departments, and Emergency Management Agency. Procure needed equipment and supplies. In cooperation with local city and county officials, develop safety protocol. Supervise work and monitor activities for safety the day of the event.

### Funding Needs

The following funding is needed to implement the action plan:

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

## Assessment Strategy

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness for the action plan, the Clinch 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 Clinch 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 Clinch 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. Private contractors can also provide these services.

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](http://www.firewise.org)
- Georgia Forestry Commission [www.georgiafirewise.org](http://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](http://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](http://www.interfacesouth.org)
- Information on codes and standards for emergency services including wildfire can be found at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)
- Information on FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) can be found at [www.firegrantsupport.com](http://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](http://www.SouthernWildfireRisk.com)
- Fire Adapted Communities [www.fireadapted.org](http://www.fireadapted.org)
- Ready, Set, Go [www.wildlandfirersg.org](http://www.wildlandfirersg.org)
- National Wildfire Preparedness Day [www.wildfireprepdlay.org](http://www.wildfireprepdlay.org)

### Appended Documents:

Clinch County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Clinch County Wildfire assessment scoresheets

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

GEORGIA FORESTRY  
COMMISSION



**Georgia Forestry Commission**  
**5645 Riggins Mill Rd.**  
**Dry Branch, GA. 31020**

**1-800-GA-TREES**  
**GaTrees.org**

*The Georgia Forestry Commission provides leadership, service, and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources.*

*An Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider*