



**Community Wildfire Protection Plan**  
*An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and  
Conservation of Natural Resources*  
**Colquitt County, Georgia**



**January 2018**

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## Attachments:

Colquitt County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

## Executive Summary

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

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

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

The plan will:

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

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

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Terry R. Clark, Chairman  
Colquitt County Board of County Commissioners

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Russell Moody, EMA Director  
Colquitt County

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Murray Barfield, President  
Volunteer Firefighters' Association  
Colquitt County

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chris Brinson, Chief Ranger  
Colquitt County  
Georgia Forestry Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## I. WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE FIRE DISASTERS

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

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

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

### **CWPP CORE COMMITTEE**

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

Bruce Blease, Westside VFD	Nikie Brady, CCVFA	Chris Brinson, Autryville VFD
Russell Moody, EMA Director	Seth Brady, New Elm VFD	Darrell Truett, Culbertson VFD
Kenneth Hannon, Moultrie FD	Murray Barfield, Northside VFD	Patrick Stowe, Culbertson VFD
Glen Garner, Northside VFD	John Walters, Doerun VFD	Robert Phelps, Southside VFD
Leon Sellers, Southside VFD	Arron Norman, Norman Park VFD	Kayla Bridwell, Berlin VFD
Tony Cato, Berlin VFD	Marvin Heater, Rockyford VFD	Michael Chafin, Ellenton VFD
Chuck Scarborough, Bay VFD	Bo Sprunger, Funston VFD	Jabo Knight, Funston VFD
Dennis Lamb, Norman Park VFD	Paul Buckner, Hamilton VFD	

### **Georgia Forestry Commission Representatives**

Chief Ranger Denny Sellers  
Ranger I Tim Weaver  
Ranger I Chris Brinson  
CWPP Program Specialist Jim Harrell  
Wildfire Prevention Specialist Beryl Budd (Revised 2018)

### **Meeting Dates**

Initial Core Committee Meeting: June 17, 2010

Follow-Up Meeting #1: Tuesday, August 10, 2010

Follow-Up Meeting #2: Tuesday, September 21, 2010

The CWPP Core Committee contributed to the CWPP development by:

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

### **OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

It is important that a collaborative approach be taken in the development of a successful Community Wildfire Protection Plan. This means allowing for the involvement of multiple interested parties in the Core CWPP Committee that develops the CWPP and providing the opportunity for other interested stakeholders in the community (county) to review and comment on the CWPP. Collaboration is a requirement of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.

During development of the Colquitt County CWPP, opportunities for collaboration were provided by:

- Major stakeholders were invited to participate as members of the CWPP Core Committee.
- A news release was submitted to the local paper (*Moultrie Observer*) explaining the objectives of the Colquitt County CWPP, the planning process and the procedure for obtaining a draft copy for review and/or comment.
- A synopsis of the CWPP process was placed on the Colquitt County Volunteer Firefighters' Association website.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE CWPP

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

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

There are three generally accepted types of interface areas:

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

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

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

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

- **Collaboration:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must be collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties.

- **Prioritized Fuel Reduction:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure.
- **Treatment of Structural ignitability:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures.

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

### III. HISTORY OF COLQUITT COUNTY



Colquitt County, in south Georgia, was established in 1856 on lands ceded between 1814 and 1818 by the Creek and Seminole Indians. The state's 115th county, it was created from parts of Thomas and Lowndes counties and named for Walter Terry Colquitt, an attorney, judge, circuit-riding Methodist preacher, and statesman who served Georgia in the state senate, U.S. Senate, and U.S. Congress.

Maps of Colquitt County drawn just seven years after its creation show only two communities, Greenfield (no longer extant) and Moultrie (formerly known as Ochlockney), today the county seat. A number of other communities have come and gone, leaving seven incorporated towns: Berlin, Doerun, Ellenton, Funston, Moultrie, Norman Park, and Riverside.



The courthouse in Moultrie is the county's fourth. The second burned in 1881 and was replaced with a two-story wooden structure. The current courthouse was built of marble in 1902, and over the years it was remodeled, restored, and expanded. In 1980 it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The region was uninviting at first for settlement. Early maps label it as "Piney Wastes" or "Pine Barrens," descriptive of the miles and miles of sandy soil then supporting only yellow long-needle pine forests used mainly as a buffer zone between the Creeks and the Seminoles.

**Colquitt County Courthouse**



**Tram Road**

Realizing that the soil would not support cotton, the first white settlers started making use of the forest. They cleared land, shipped out the lumber, and harvested pine gum for turpentine. Wood and turpentine were both used in shipbuilding, and thus the region became known as a rich source of naval stores. The arrival of a number of railroads after the Civil War (1861-65) provided both a demand for timber to use as crossties and a method to transport Colquitt's products to the rest of the country, thus improving



the economic situation of the area. Large sawmills were set up along the railroad, attracting many people seeking employment.

By 1910 it became apparent that the forests were disappearing into the sawmills and turpentine stills, leaving abundant tracts of "cut over" land. The county's first "farm agent" helped develop a farsighted crop-diversification system known as the "Colquitt County Plan." This five-year method served as a model for the U.S. Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression, earning the county well-deserved national renown for its progressive planning. Colquitt is still known for its diversity of agricultural crops, among them cattle feed, cotton, peanuts, sugar cane, watermelon, corn, wheat, and other grains.



During the subsequent decade, the county added livestock ranching and meat processing and packing to its economic quiver, as well as tobacco cultivation in 1925. As the century moved along, small farms gave way to huge operations employing numerous farmhands. In 1935, within weeks of the creation of the national Rural Electrification Administration, local leaders established the Colquitt County Rural Electric Company. Soon, Colquitt County was among the first in the country to provide electricity to rural homes and farms.

**Tobacco Warehouse**



**Norman Park**

While the civil rights movement of the 1960s caused strife for some in Georgia (and elsewhere), Colquitt's schools were peacefully desegregated by local residents' careful planning. Among other accomplishments of the 1960s and 1970s were the founding of the Moultrie Area Vocational-Technical School (later Southern Regional Technical College) and the consolidation of all high schools in the county. When Spence Field, a military airfield from the World War II (1941-45) era, closed in the 1960s, the city of Moultrie bought it and made the site and facilities available for various conferences, fairs, and shows, among them the annual Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition, the world's largest farm expo with on-site field demonstrations. Brewton-Parker College extension at Norman Park offers a core curriculum associate degree and education-related bachelor's degrees. The extension is housed at the Georgia Baptist Conference Center in Norman Park, which is the former home of Norman College. Moultrie Technical College serves both traditional and nontraditional students and offers associate degrees in such applied sciences as accounting, early childhood care, and Internet programming. Of the college's five campuses, two are in Colquitt County (both in Moultrie).

Notable county residents include U.S. senator Saxby Chambliss and Charles M. Duke, a lunar-module pilot for the Apollo 16 space mission and the tenth man to walk on the moon. Duke received his first flight training at Spence Air Base.

Notable places in Colquitt include the Moose Moss Aquatics Center in Moultrie, which has long produced world-class swimmers and was the training site for the 1996 Olympics. Reed Bingham State Park comprises 1,613 acres, including a 375-acre lake, and is used for picnics, camping, hiking, birding, water sports, and fishing. Half of the park lies in Colquitt County, while the other lies in neighboring Cook County. Five hunting preserves—for deer, dove, duck, quail, and turkey—are also found in the county.



**Reed Bingham State Park** According to the 2010 U.S. census, the population of Colquitt County is 45,498, an increase from the 2000 population of 42,053.

**WILDFIRE HISTORY**

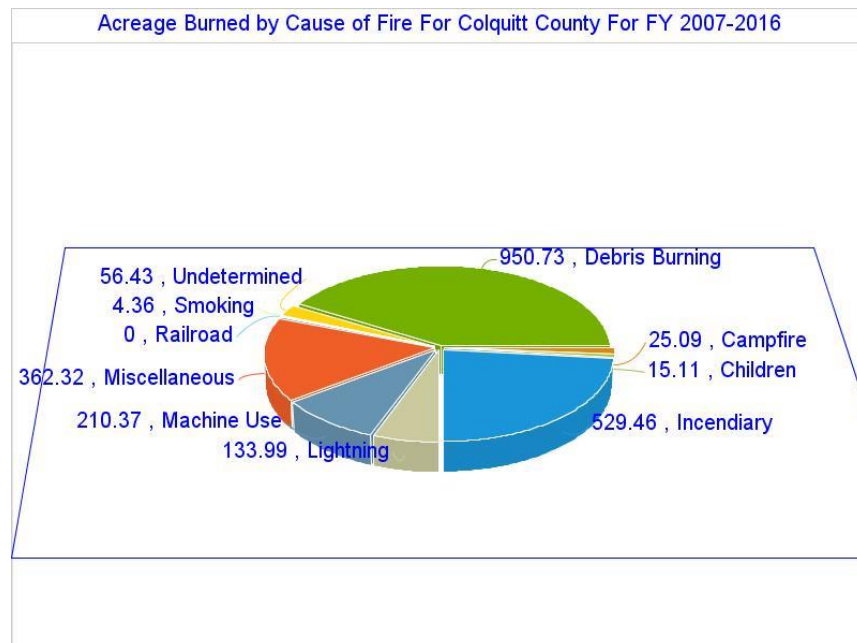
The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) is the state agency responsible for providing leadership, service, and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources. Commission professionals provide a wide variety of services including fire detection, issuing burn permits, wildfire suppression and prevention services, and landowner forest management assistance. The Georgia Forestry Commission office serving Colquitt County is located at 100 Veteran’s Parkway, N.E., Moultrie, GA 31788. Telephone: (229) 891-7120.

Personnel

Chris Brinson, Chief Ranger  
 Cooper Browning, Ranger I  
 Stacey Rabun, Ranger I  
 Jefferson McKinnon, Ranger I  
 Donald Bennett, Supplemental Fire Fighter 3

Wildland Firefighting Equipment

3 Tractor/Plow Units with JD 650 and JD 450 Tractors  
 1 Type VI Engine  
 1 Type VII Engine  
 1 Swamp Irrigation Pump



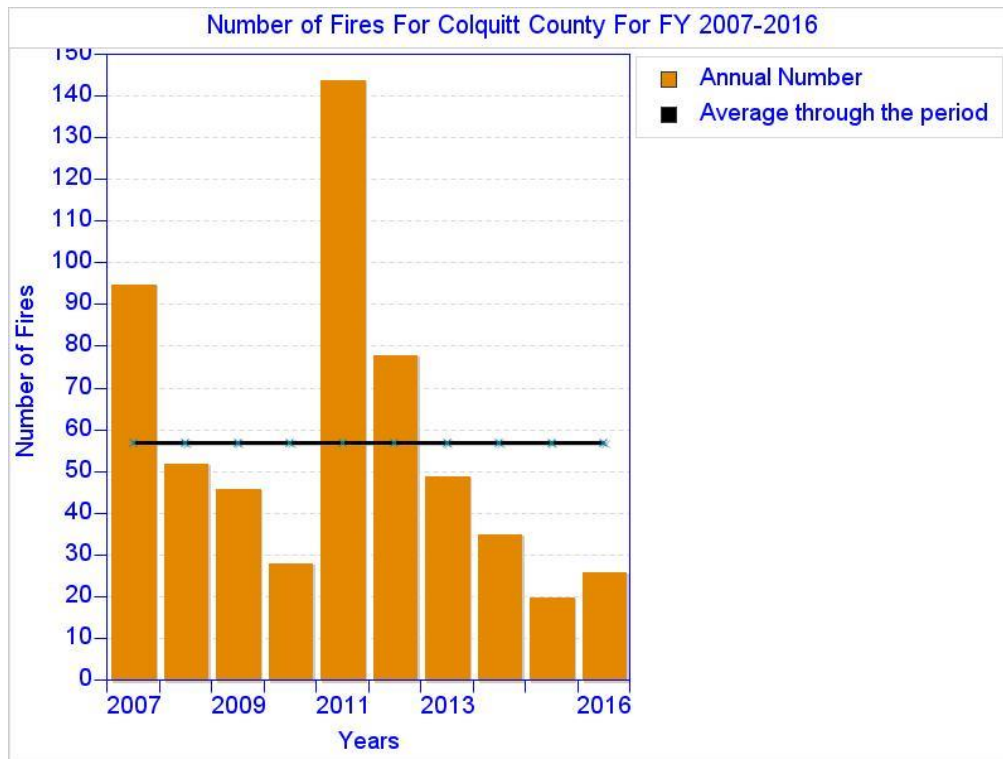
Year to year the primary cause of wildfire in Colquitt County is careless debris burning. The 2<sup>nd</sup> major cause is machine use followed by incendiary (Arson). The chart pictured here shows the amount of acreage burned by wildfire cause over the 10 year period, 2007 thru 2016.

The table below is a record of the wildfire activity in Colquitt County during the 2017 fiscal year (July 1, 2016 thru June 30, 2017). The table reflects number of wildfires by cause, acres burned, and includes the 5 year average in each category.

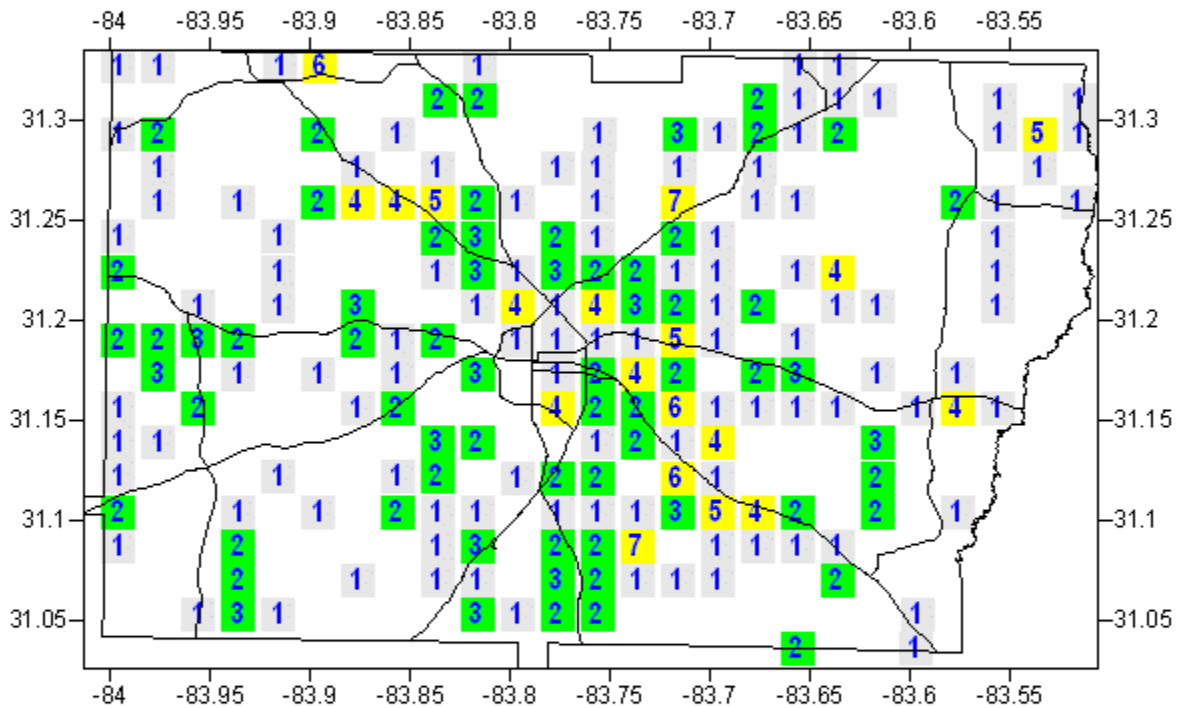
County = Colquitt	Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
<a href="#">Campfire</a>	Campfire	2	4.27	1.20	1.47
<a href="#">Children</a>	Children	2	8.76	1.40	2.37
<a href="#">Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc</a>	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	1	0.20	0.80	1.15
<a href="#">Debris: Construction Land Clearing</a>	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	3	7.77	1.40	2.52
<a href="#">Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn</a>	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	16	89.59	9.00	44.96
<a href="#">Debris: Household Garbage</a>	Debris: Household Garbage	1	0.32	0.60	1.27
<a href="#">Debris: Other</a>	Debris: Other	0	0.00	0.60	0.26
<a href="#">Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc</a>	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	8	36.11	5.80	18.09
<a href="#">Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related</a>	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	1	3.50	1.20	8.07
<a href="#">Incendiary</a>	Incendiary	3	11.16	3.00	16.95
<a href="#">Lightning</a>	Lightning	1	11.80	1.00	15.14
<a href="#">Machine Use</a>	Machine Use	3	36.02	2.40	9.67
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition</a>	Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	0	0.00	0.20	0.02
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Other</a>	Miscellaneous: Other	0	0.00	0.40	0.04
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences</a>	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	1	1.39	0.40	1.48
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion</a>	Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	1	2.67	0.40	0.94
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires</a>	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	1	0.08	0.20	0.02
<a href="#">Undetermined</a>	Undetermined	12	31.00	7.20	17.49
<b>Totals for County: Colquitt Year: 2017</b>		56	244.64	37.20	141.91

**Acreage Burned /Number of Fires  
For Colquitt County  
For FY 2007-2016**

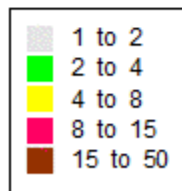
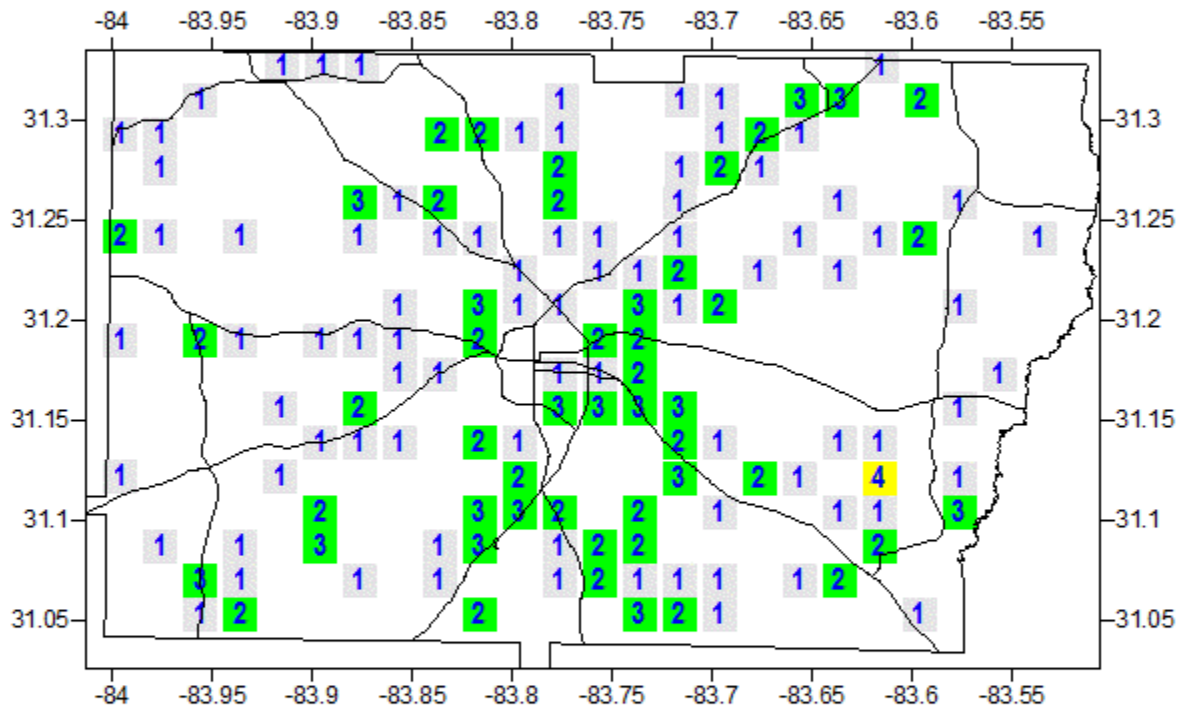
Year	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2007	251.37	95	2.65	18.64
2008	48.62	52	.94	4.56
2009	336.39	46	7.31	3.90
2010	78.38	28	2.80	3.93
2011	812.93	144	5.65	17.56
2012	297.52	78	3.81	5.08
2013	206.04	49	4.20	4.53
2014	55.28	35	1.58	5.02
2015	56.72	20	1.61	4.42
2016	146.87	26	5.65	6.29



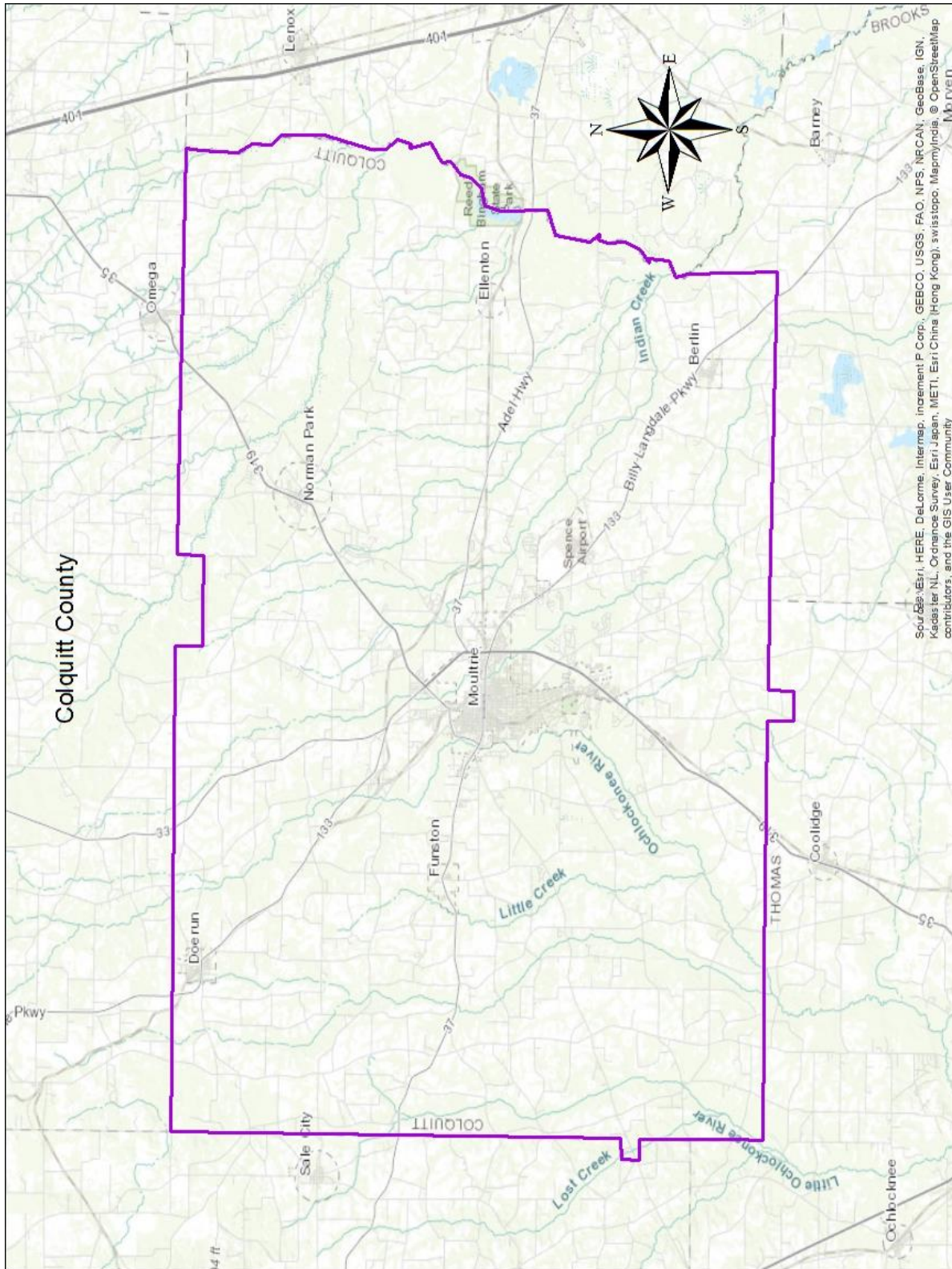
# Fire Occurrence Map for Colquitt County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011



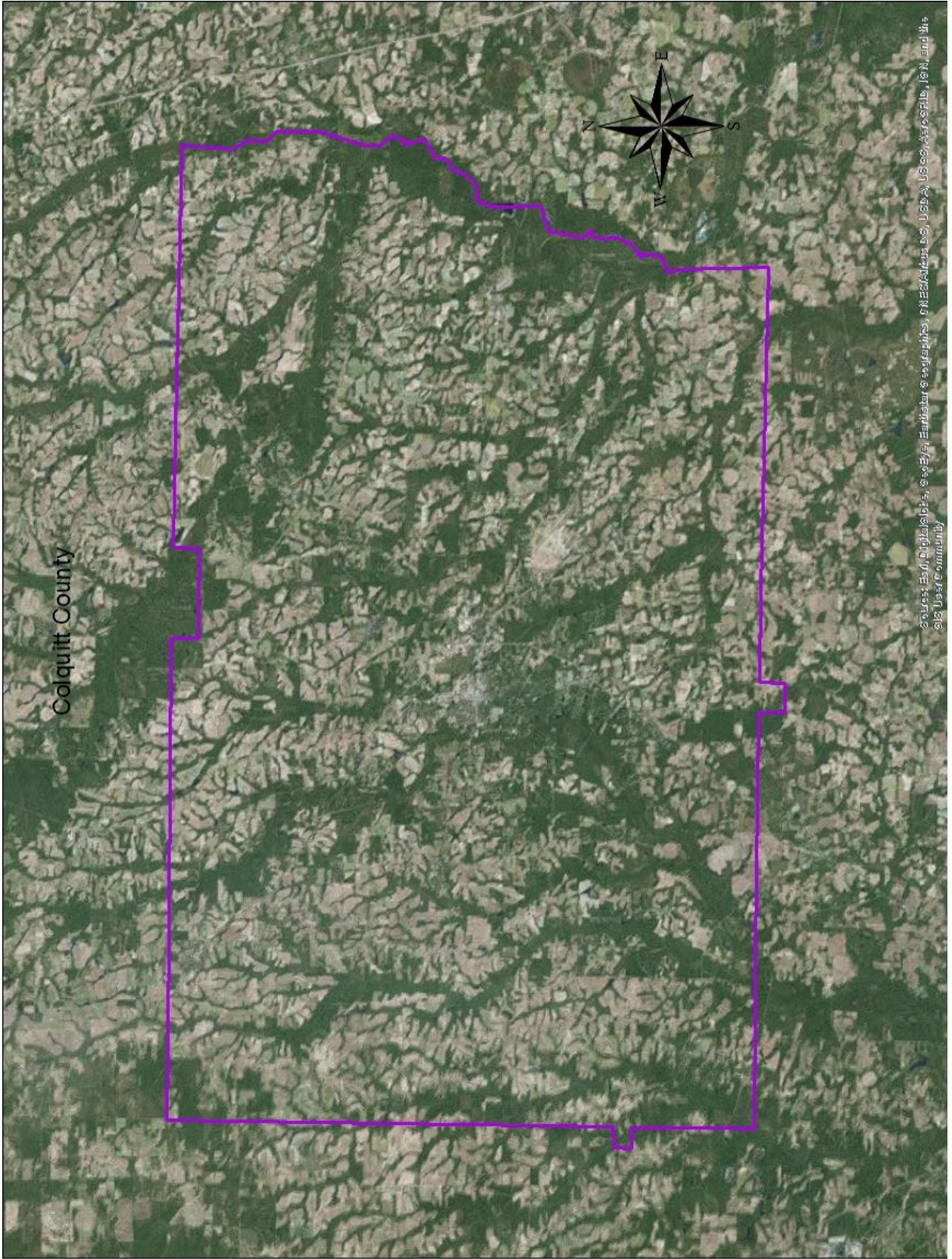
# Fire Occurrence Map for Colquitt County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



# IV. COUNTY BASE MAPS

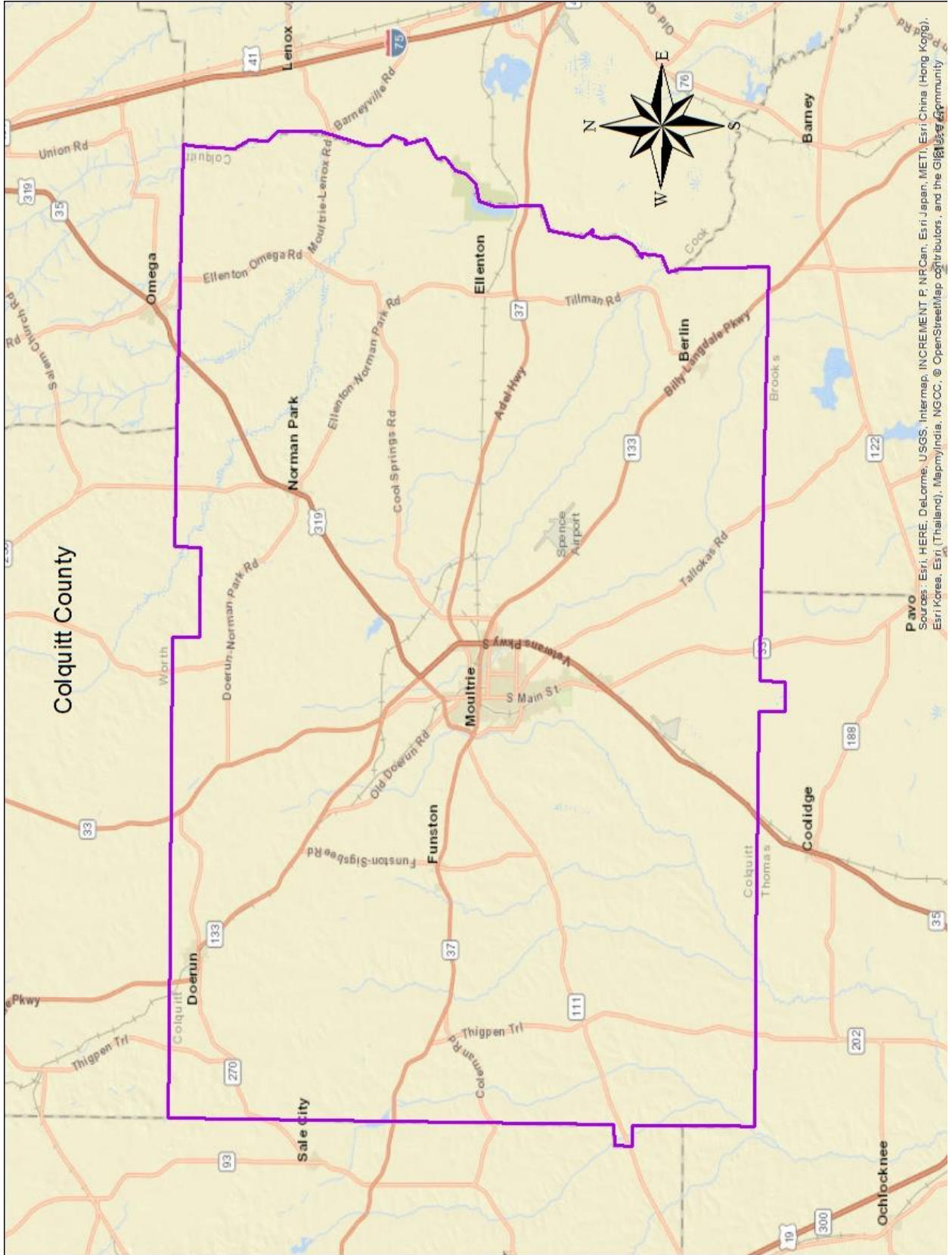


Source: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



Sources: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar (Earthstar), CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the  
GIS User Community





PAVO  
 Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong),  
 Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), MapmyIndia, NGCC, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

## V. WHAT ARE “COMMUNITIES-AT-RISK”?

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

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

Improvements to the community infrastructure (roads, utilities, etc.) may be beyond the capabilities of the homeowners. However, if access by emergency vehicles can be enhanced by widening the entrance right-of-way(s), creating “hammerhead-T’s” or other ways for fire trucks to turn around and operate safely and residences can be identified with reflective “911 addresses” wildfire protection can be greatly improved.

Modifications in and around individual residences may need to be budgeted by the residents over time (for example, making a roof more fire resistant may have to wait until it is time to replace the current roof covering), however, moving firewood away from the home, skirting raised decks and keeping roofs free of accumulated flammable debris are improvements most families can do in the short-run.

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

## HAZARD RATINGS FOR COMMUNITIES AT RISK

Community	Score	Hazard Rating
1. 650-660-662 Cool Springs Road	143	Extreme Hazard
2. Doerun-Norman Park Road/ Norman Park City Limit Area	100	Very High Hazard
3. Intersection of Norman Park – Ellenton and Perry Batts Road	36	Low Hazard
4. Moye Road – east end	51	Low Hazard
5. 4200 Block of Doerun- Norman Park Road	98	High Hazard
6. Pearlie Knight Lane	75	High Hazard
7. Little River Lane	137	Extreme Hazard
8. Doerun/Howell Road	76	High Hazard
9. D.H. Alderman Road & Clark/ George Flowers Road	101	Very High Hazard
10. Jasmine Lane Trailer Park	153	Extreme Hazard

These hazard ratings were completed by personnel of the volunteer fire departments in Colquitt County during the Summer of 2010. The Georgia Forestry Commission’s Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Scoresheet was used. This document evaluates communities (groups of homes) based upon six criteria: community access, surrounding vegetation, building construction, fire protection, utilities and additional rating factors. The quantitative wildfire hazard ratings range from a low hazard rating of 0 to 50 points to an extreme hazard rating with over 120 points.

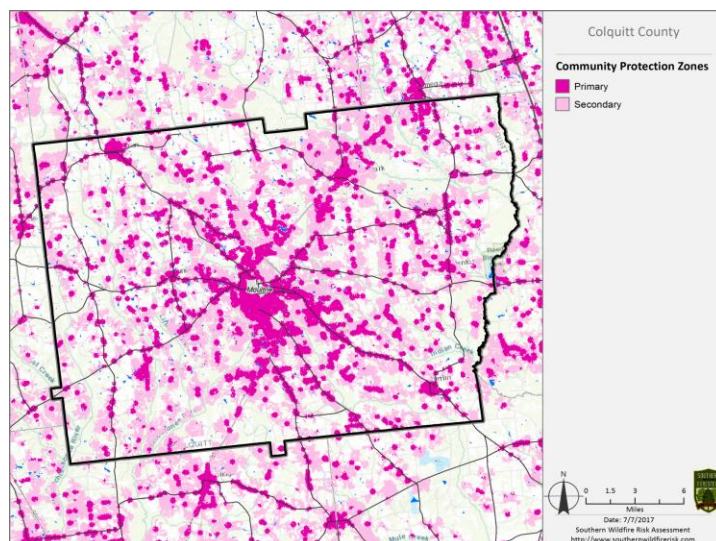


**Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is described as the area where structures and other human improvements meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.**

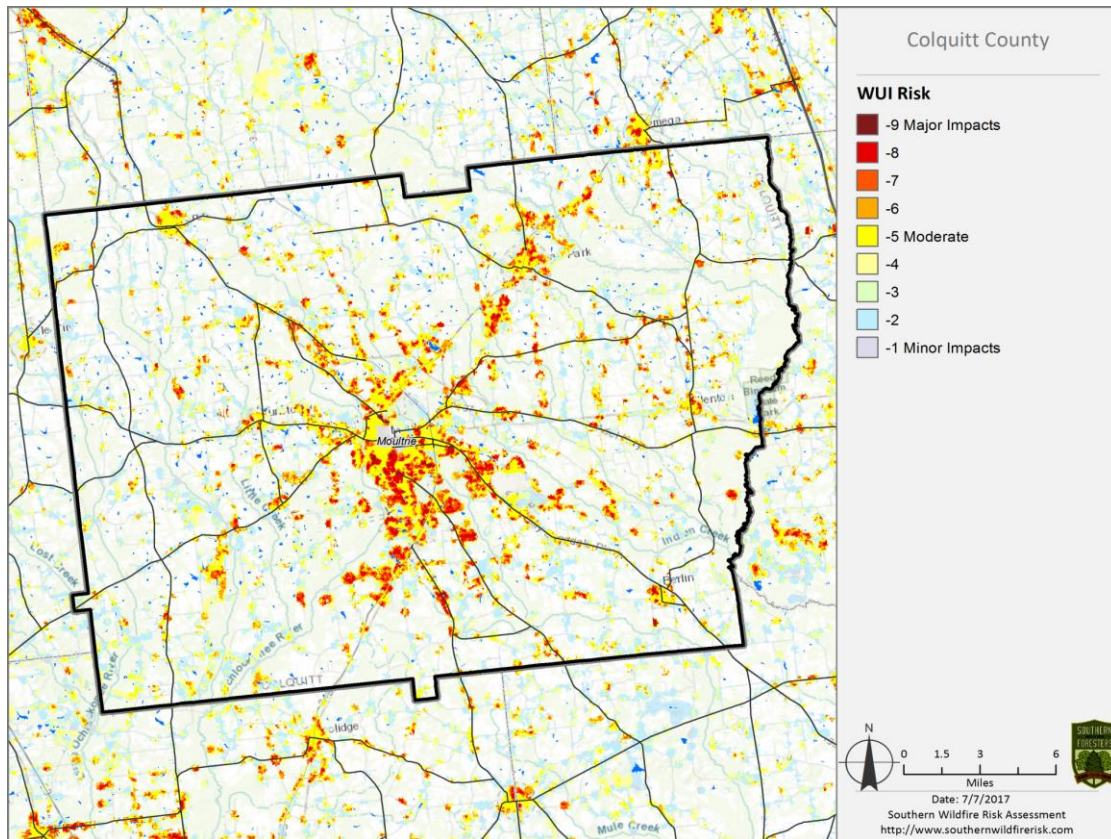
## VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

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 Colquitt County. The SouthWRAP (SWRA) products included in this report are designed to provide the information needed to support the following key priorities:

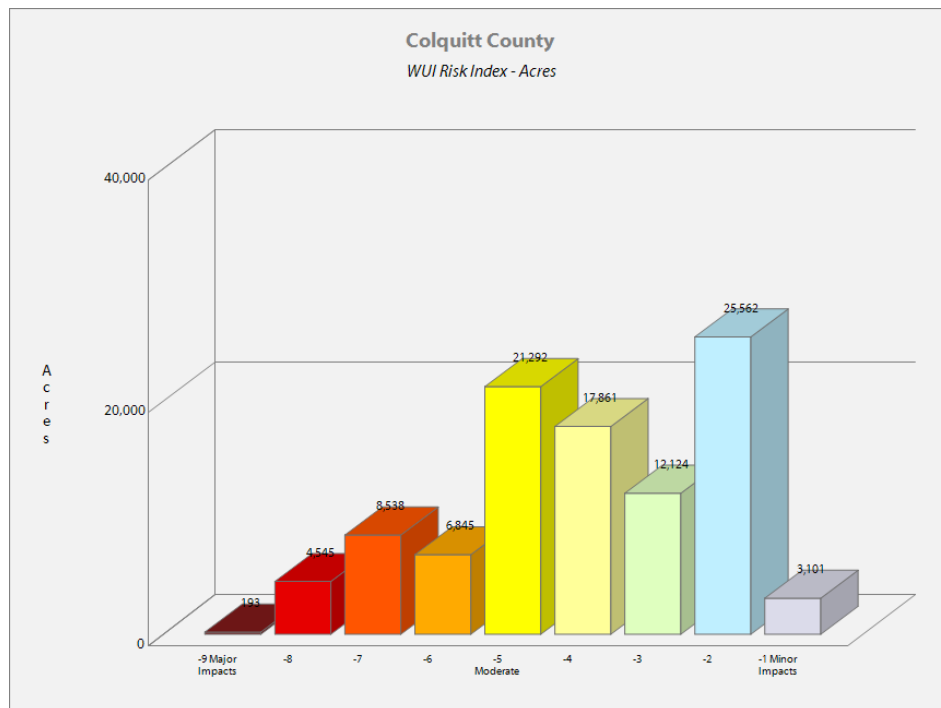
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests
- Allow agencies 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

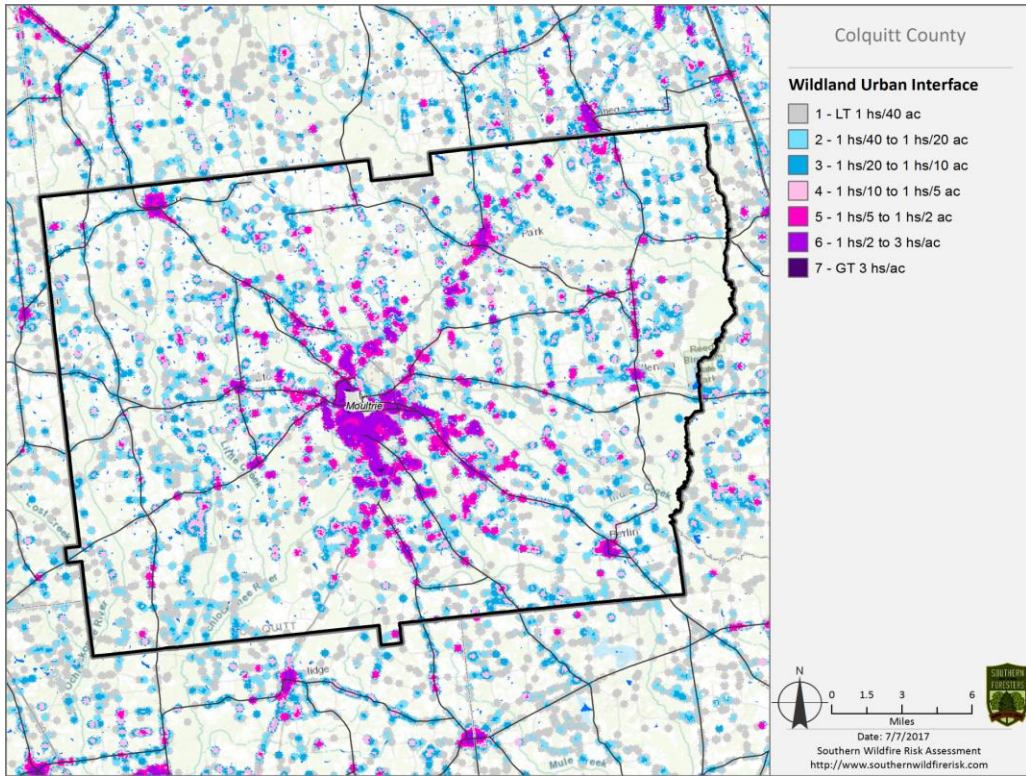


Community Protection Zones map from the Colquitt County SWRA

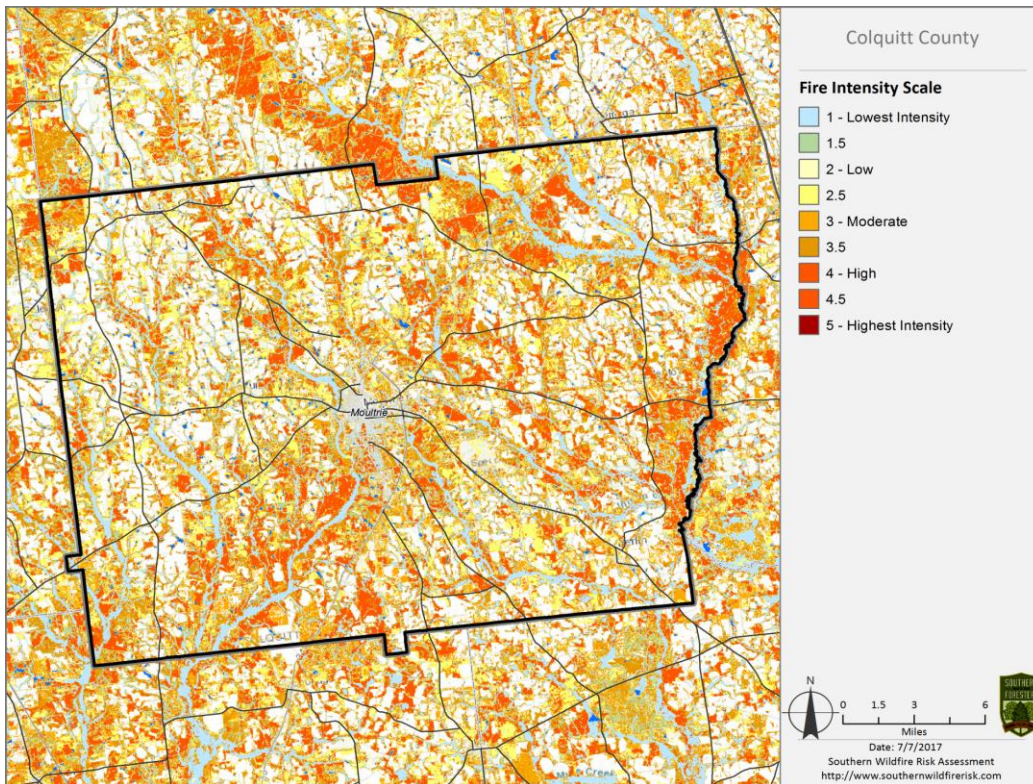


Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map Below: WUI Risk Index – Acres graph





Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map Below: Fire Intensity Scale map



## VII. MITIGATION & ACTION PLAN

### Public Education Needs

“Firewise” structures are homes and other buildings in the wildland/urban interface that have been built, designed and maintained to survive a wildfire event even in the absence of firefighters on the scene.

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

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

### **RECOMMENDATIONS: Initiate a community public education program for Colquitt County residents**

- Develop a “Firewise Communities” educational display for use at local festivals.
- Make Firewise Communities brochures available to the public at central locations such as: Farm Services Agency, Chamber of Commerce and the County Courthouse.
- Encourage neighborhoods/communities that qualify to apply for recognition as a Firewise Community/ USA.

### Reduction of Hazardous Fuels

Because approximately 44 percent of Colquitt County is forested, the accumulation of brush (and other mostly ground vegetation) can create conditions that could fuel a disastrous wildfire. Treatment of forested areas with prescribed fire can significantly reduce this hazard while improving pulpwood and sawtimber production and enhancing wildlife habitat. Prescribed burning, however, must be conducted by experienced personnel when weather conditions are conducive to a safe burn and when an authorization has been obtained from the local office of the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Other ways to reduce wildland fuel (vegetation) include:

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

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

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

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

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



**Left: 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. Consulting foresters can also provide this service.**

**Right: Pictured here is a forestry masticator mowing understory in a pine stand. This type of fuel modification works well on sites where burning may not be practical. The Georgia Forestry Commission or a private contractor can provide this service.**





## **NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTY**

### Site Plan Review

If agricultural land is conserved as a mainstay of the County's rural economy, new development will, by necessity, occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. Colquitt County Code Enforcement and Compliance 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, the loss of homes and outbuildings 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 Firewise Communities program is a national awareness initiative to help people understand that they don't have to be victims in a wildfire emergency. The National Fire Protection Association has produced two standards for reference: NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.

When new multi-unit subdivisions are built in rural areas (sometimes referred to as the wildland/urban interface), a number of public safety challenges may be created for the local fire services: (1) the water supply in the immediate areas may be inadequate for fire suppression; (2) if the development is in an outlying area, there may be a longer response time for emergency services; (3) in a wildfire emergency, the access road(s) may need to simultaneously support evacuation of residents and the arrival of emergency vehicles; and (4) when wildland fire disasters strike, many structures may be involved simultaneously, quickly exceeding the capability of even the best equipped fire departments.

In 2012 the International Code Council created the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC). Georgia Legislature adopted the code the following year for counties to use in building and zoning regulations in high risk areas.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

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

- Evaluate (assess) the wildfire hazard of proposed new development in rural areas as part of the site plan review process (Resource: GFC Hazard & Wildfire Risk Assessment Scoresheet).
- Consider the "adoption by reference" of NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.
- Utilize the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) for zoning and building codes within the County.

## FIRE SERVICES CAPABILITY

Structural fire protection in the unincorporated areas of the county is provided 15 volunteer fire departments which operate under contract to the Colquitt County Board of County Commissioners. The Moultrie Fire Department provides structural fire protection within the city limits of Moultrie. Although the numbers fluctuate from year to year, the total number of volunteer firefighters in the 15 fire departments is approximately 246. The Colquitt County Volunteer Firefighters Association (CCVFA) coordinates and supports the activities of the 15 volunteer fire departments. The CCVFA meets on a regular basis throughout the year to facilitate communication between the VFD's and improve the effectiveness of a unified fire response.

<u>Volunteer Fire Department</u>	<u>Engines</u>	<u>Water Tenders</u>	<u>Brush Trucks</u>	<u>#Firefighters</u>
Autreyville	2	2	1	14
Bay	2	1	1	11
Berlin	1	2	1	21
Culbertson	1	1	0	25
Doerun	3	1	1	16
Ellenton	1	2	1	30
Funston	2	1	1	15
Hamilton	1	1	1	13
Livingston Bridge	1	2	0	8
New Elm	1	1	1	13
Norman Park	1	1	1	21
Northside	2	1	1	15
Rockyford	1	2	1	11
Southside	1	2	1	16
Westside	1	1	1	17

### Equipment and Training Needed

Countywide Nomex type wildland personal protective equipment (PPE) is not available for use by volunteer firefighters and none of the VFD's are equipped with fire shelters.

Most of the volunteer firefighters have completed either Incident Management Training Courses I-100 or I-700, however, none (or very few) of the county's firefighters have had the basic wildfire training courses (S-130, Standards for Survival and S-190, Basic Wildfire Behavior).

There are 21 water tankers (2,000 – 3,000 gallon capacity) in Colquitt County to transport water for a prolonged response to structural fires in remote areas.

### Fire Hydrants

Pressurized fire hydrants exist within the incorporated areas of the below communities:

Berlin – 50 pressurized fire hydrants	Ellenton – 27 pressurized fire hydrants
Doerun – 77 pressurized fire hydrants	Funston – 31 pressurized fire hydrants
Norman Park – 50 pressurized fire hydrants	

### Dry Hydrants

There are 76 dry hydrants or pumping sites within the county.

## COLQUITT COUNTY ACTION PLAN

Community/Area at Risk	Project	Agency	Funding Needs	Priority	Recommendation
Countywide (T.B.D.)	Brush Trucks	County	\$90,000 each	High	Improve emergency access in remote areas and off-road firefighting capability.
Countywide	Large Capacity Elevated Water Tanks	County	\$20,000	Medium	Enhance water availability in remote areas of the county
Countywide	Wildland Fire PPE & Fire Shelters	County	\$48,000 PPE	High	Personal protective equipment (PPE) and fire shelters (4 sets per truck)
Countywide	Firefighter Training	GFC/County	-0-	High	Train volunteer firefighters: Standards for Survival (S-130) & Wildland Fire Behavior (S-190)
Countywide	Wildfire Prevention Education	GFC/County	\$5,000	Medium	Wildfire prevention/Firewise educational materials for public education initiative Ready Set Go training
Countywide	Dry Hydrants	County	\$15,000	Low	Maintenance and repair of existing system of 76 dry hydrants and pumping sites
Countywide	Communications	County	\$30,000	Medium	Handheld radios for firefighters
Countywide	Wildland Fire Hose	County	\$5,000 (hose) and \$23,000 (nozzles)	Medium	1 ¾ inch fire hose with nozzles (200 ft. per station) and 30 nozzles

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

## **ASSESSMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

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

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

## VIII. 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.

## IX. 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).*

## X. 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.wildfireprepdays.org](http://www.wildfireprepdays.org)

### Appended Documents:

Colquitt County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Colquitt 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  
5645 Riggins Mill Rd.  
Dry Branch, GA 31020**

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

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