



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

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources

Columbia County

February 2020



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

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Columbia Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report

I. OBJECTIVES

The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Columbia 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

An initial meeting was held on December 17th 2008 at the Columbia County EMA Department attended by the following core planning team;

Will Fell	GFC CWPP Specialist
Reggie Morgan	GFC Chief Ranger Columbia County (retired)
Mark Munns	GFC District Ranger (transferred to Bartow Co.)
Doug Cooper	Fire Chief Martinez – Columbia Fire & Rescue
Pam Tucker	Columbia County EMA Director
Suzie Hughes	Admin Spec Columbia County EMA
Wayne Kent	Captain Grovetown DPS
Brett Willis	Captain Martinez – Columbia Fire & Rescue
Chuck Meadows	Interim Dir Harlem DPS

After an initial discussion of the processes and goals we hope to accomplish with this report, it was decided that we would define areas within the wildland urban interface. At the completion of this we would reconvene and discuss and evaluate the completed community wildfire risk assessments. It was further decided that we would provide for mitigation recommendations for the cities of Harlem and Grovetown and the suburban unincorporated areas of Evans and Martinez and the rural areas of the county. The chiefs of the area fire departments in the county assessed their districts and reconvened in February 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



Columbia County lies along the Savannah River in east central Georgia, bordering South Carolina just northwest of Augusta. It was created by an act of the state legislature from a northern part of Richmond County on December 10, 1790. In the colonial era the territory that constitutes Columbia County was laid out as part of St. Paul Parish. Named for explorer Christopher Columbus, the county was created in response to a request by backcountry settlers that they be given court sessions that would be more convenient than those held in Augusta.

Columbia County provided several leaders in national affairs. Of the six delegates appointed to attend the constitutional convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1787, William Few Jr. and Abraham Baldwin were from the portion of Richmond County that became Columbia. Few and Baldwin were the only two Georgia delegates who signed to ratify the Constitution of the United States. Both later served in the U.S. Senate, Baldwin as president pro tempore under U.S. president Thomas Jefferson.

The earliest village in the county—Brandon—was founded around 1752. Brandon was abandoned sometime in the mid-1750s, although it appears on a 1779 map. The Quaker town of Wrightsborough was built on the same site in the 1760s, and William Bartram recorded a visit to that town in 1773.

Both the oldest Baptist church in the state, Kiokee (established in 1772), and the third oldest, Abilene (established in 1774), were founded in what became Columbia County.

There are more than thirty prehistoric sites in Columbia County. The most important, on Stallings Island, is a burial mound documenting a culture that flourished in the Archaic Period more than 4,000 years ago.

After the Georgia Railroad was laid through the county around 1834-36, new communities, such as the incorporated cities of Harlem and Grovetown, sprang up or began to flourish. The current county seat, Appling, was chartered in 1816 and was named for Colonel Daniel Appling, a War of 1812 (1812-15) hero from the Columbia County area. Appling is one of many inactive municipalities that lost their incorporated status by an act of the Georgia General Assembly in 1993.

In the 1850s thousands of acres in Columbia County were cotton plantations. Census records show that the county had a slave population of nearly 8,300, more than twice the white population.

Columbia today is a bustling, fast-growing suburban county. According to the 2000 U.S. census, its population is 89,288 (82.7 percent white, 11.2 percent black, and 2.6 percent Hispanic). The county is economically diverse, with service, education, and health-related businesses as its major industries.

Wildfire History

While Columbia County has in the past several decades become a rapidly growing suburban county with an estimated population of over 106,000, 66% of the land area still remains forested. There are large blocks of wildland remaining in the northern and western quadrants of the county. There is also suburban growth in the rapidly expanding suburbs of Augusta concentrated in the southeastern and central part of the county along with many homes and communities being built in traditionally forested areas of the county. This situation along with the many lake homes and communities nestled along the shores of Clark Hill Lake add to the growing concern among fire service agencies about the risks and hazards of protecting homes and infrastructure within the widening Wildland Urban Interface.

Columbia County is well protected by three organized fire departments. The Harlem Department of Public Safety covers the city of Harlem and the Grovetown Department of Public Safety covers the city of Grovetown and a small area of the county just to the south, each with two stations within their respective jurisdictions. The remainder of the county is covered by Martinez – Columbia County Fire and Rescue with 16 stations well distributed throughout the unincorporated area county, 14 of which are staffed around the clock. The Georgia Forestry Commission maintains a unit with wildland fire suppression capability centered in the county.

While there are modern pressurized water systems available in the two incorporated cities and much of the suburban areas of Evans and Martinez, there is still a significant area outside these regions lacking ready access to hydrants and dependable water sources.

Over the past fifty years, Columbia County has averaged about 46 reported wildland fires per year and almost half of these have occurred during the months of February, March and April. These fires have burned an average of 169 acres annually. Of this annual acreage burned, 58% was lost during the above three months. Since the advent of the outdoor burning permit law about 30 years ago, the numbers of fires have decreased over the years as perhaps more residential areas have replaced wildland areas and the populace has become more cautious in their burning practices. During the last 10 years the average is 19 wildfires burning 55 acres annually.

The leading causes of these fires over the past 10 years, FY2008-FY2017, was debris burning causing 43% of the fires and 40% of the acres burned. Incendiary (arson) was the next leading cause with 14% of the fires and 10% of the acres lost. More detailed records over the past five years show that about 68% of these debris fires originated from escapes from household or residential debris burning.

Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Records show that in the past five years, FY2014-FY2018, two homes have been lost or damaged by wildfire in Columbia County resulting in estimated losses of \$65,000 along with one outbuildings valued at \$500. According to reports during this period 35 homes have been directly or indirectly threatened by these fires. This is a significant loss of non-timber property attributed to wildfires in Columbia County.

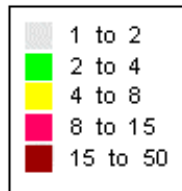
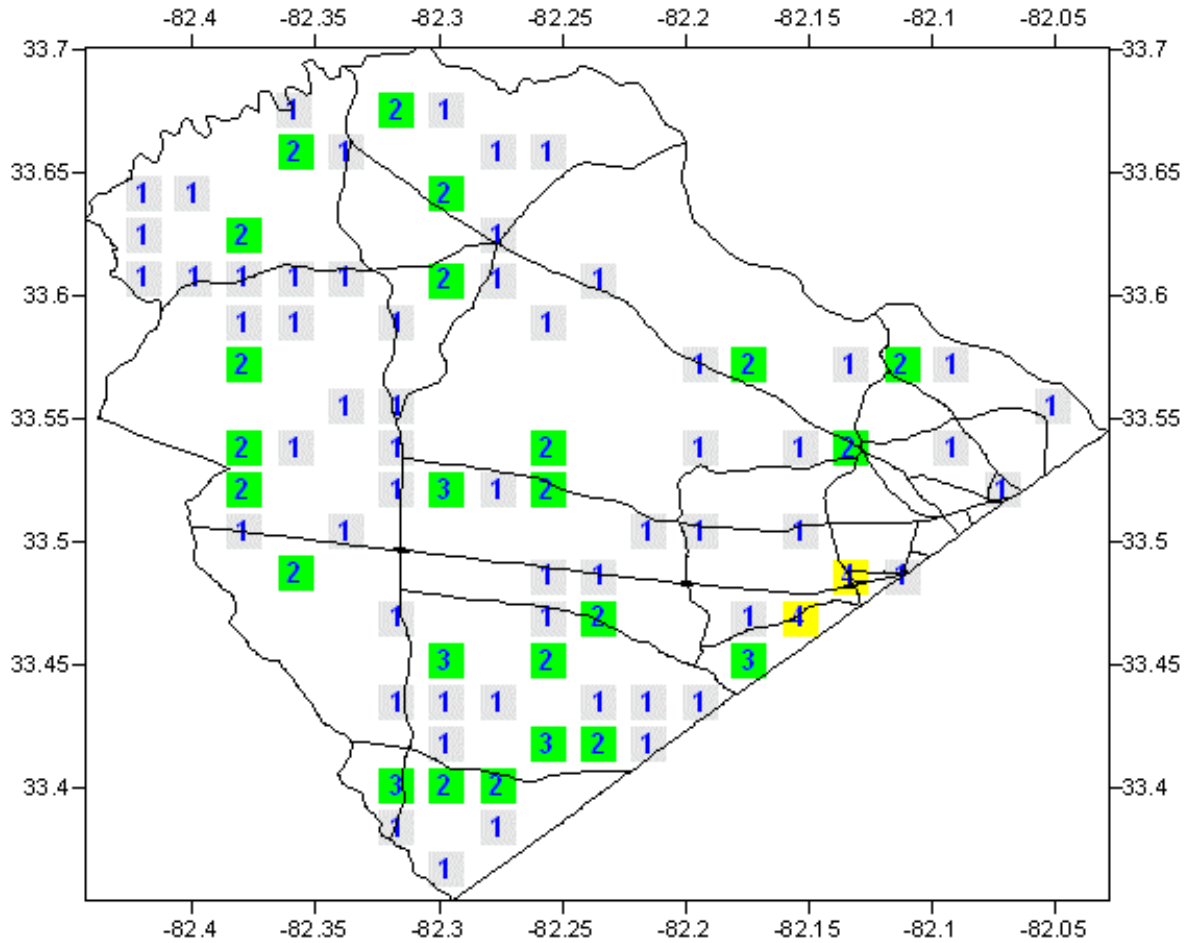
Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	0	0.00	0.60	7.08
Children	0	0.00	0.60	0.89
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	0	0.00	0.20	5.01
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	1	8.80	0.40	21.37
Debris: Household Garbage	0	0.00	0.20	2.74
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	0	0.00	0.80	0.95
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	1	0.10	0.40	0.07
Incendiary	0	0.00	0.40	0.10
Lightning	0	0.00	0.20	6.40
Machine Use	0	0.00	0.40	0.36
Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	0	0.00	0.20	0.12
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	0	0.00	0.60	0.27
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	0	0.00	0.20	0.00
Smoking	0	0.00	0.20	0.72
Undetermined	0	0.00	2.20	16.90
Totals for County: Columbia Year: 2018	2	8.90	7.60	62

Acres Burned /Number of Fires For Columbia County For FY 2008-2017				
Year	Acres Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	State Average Size
2008	80.10	38	2.11	4.56
2009	65.59	17	3.86	3.90
2010	4.36	10	.44	3.93
2011	37.44	38	.99	17.56
2012	53.87	33	1.63	5.08
2013	19.80	15	1.32	4.53
2014	135.48	13	10.42	5.02
2015	120.22	14	8.59	4.42
2016	1.08	2	.54	6.29
2017	33.80	11	3.07	11.60

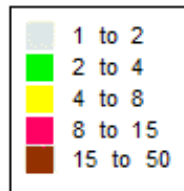
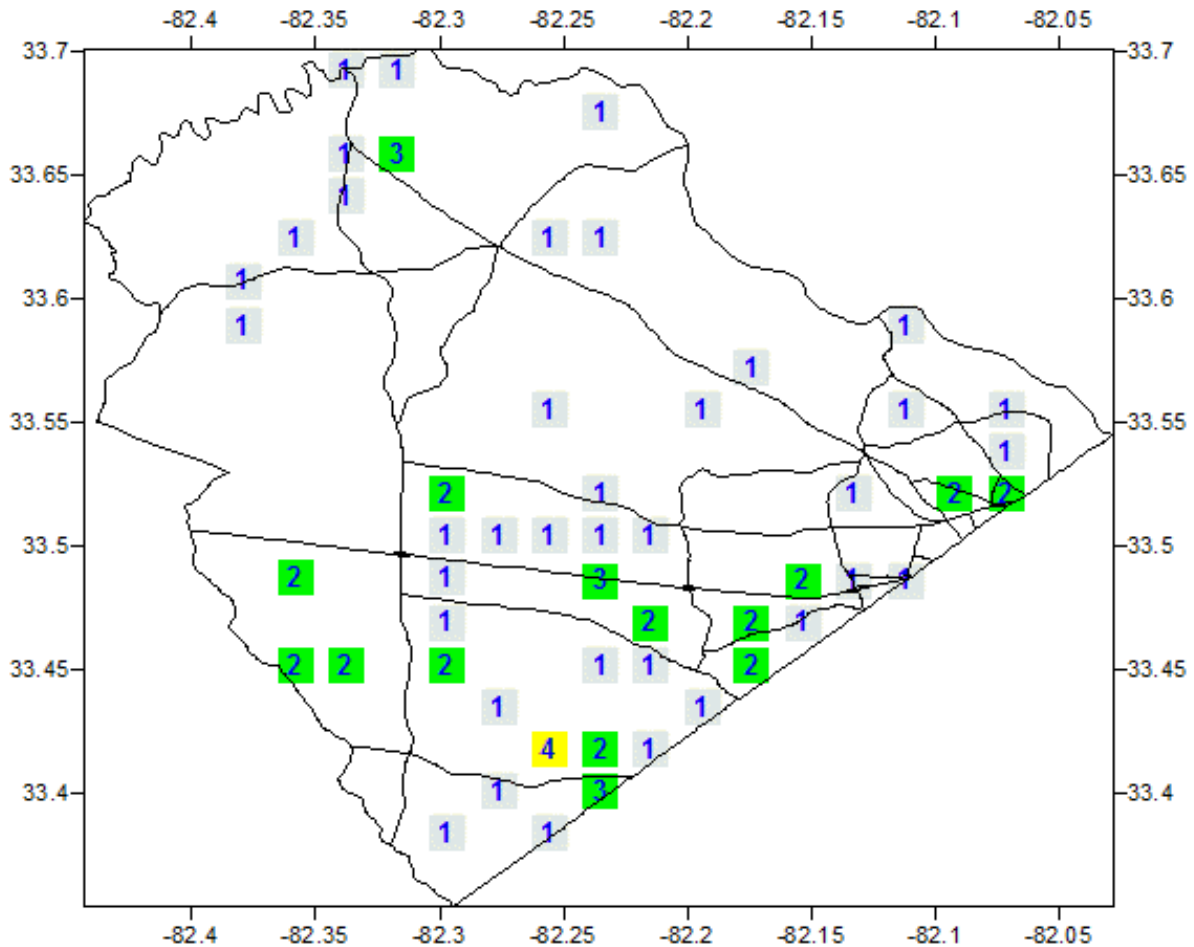
Acreage Burned /Number of Fires by Fire Cause For Columbia County For FY 2008-2017		
Fire Cause	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires
Campfire	55.21	6
Children	9.68	9
Debris Burning	222.73	81
Incendiary	56.19	26
Lightning	74.51	10
Machine Use	16.91	8
Miscellaneous	25.58	29
Railroad	0.00	0
Smoking	5.79	8
Undetermined	84.59	12
Total	551.19	189

Acreage Burned /Number of Fires by Debris-Burning Sub-cause For Columbia County For FY 2008-2017		
Debris Burning Sub-Cause	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires
Non-Categorized	0.00	0
Agriculture	12.45	6
Construction	13.46	4
Escaped Rx Fire	109.30	5
Household Garbage	33.05	14
Others	2.68	3
Residential	17.52	34
Site Prep	34.27	15
Total	222.73	81

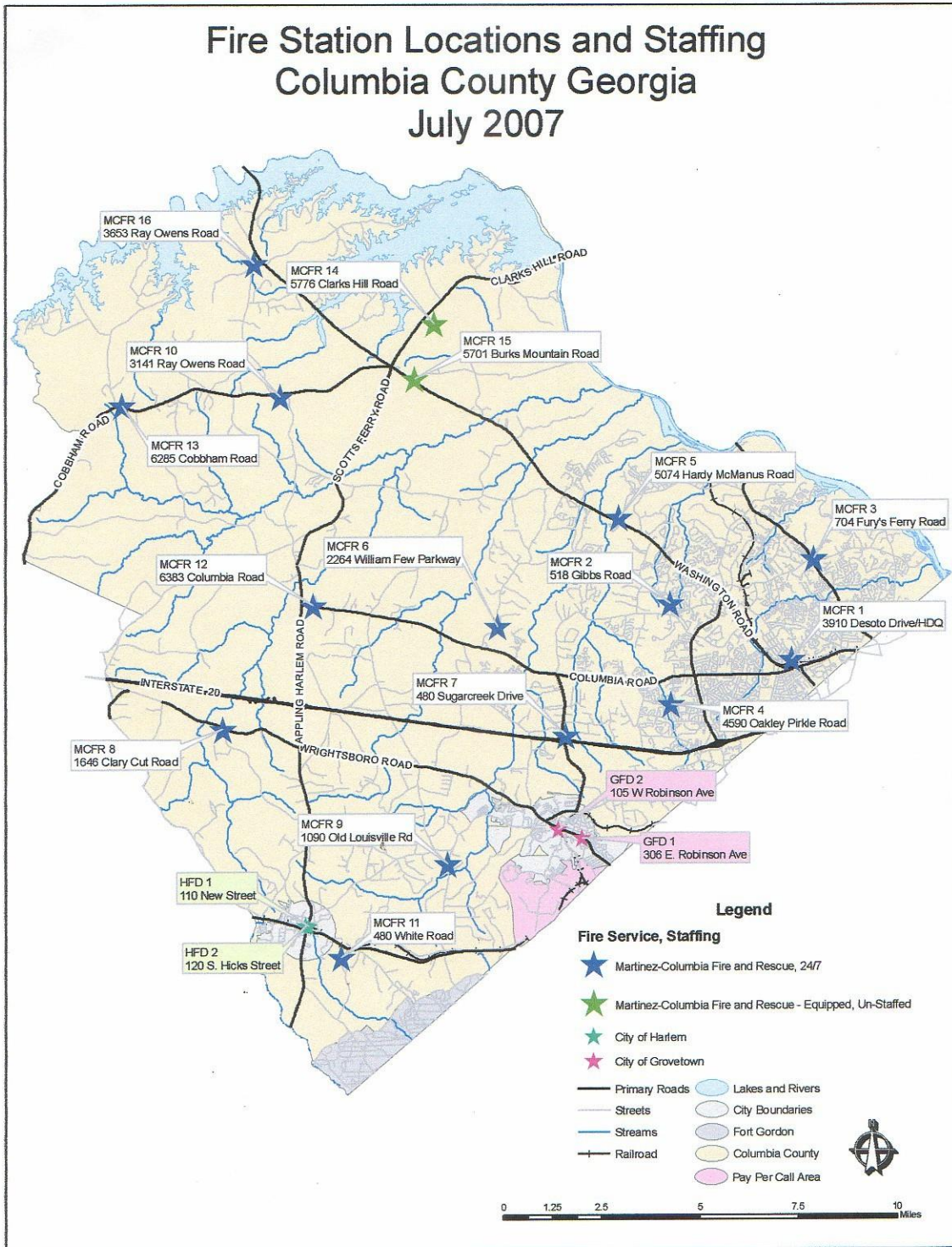
Fire Occurrence Map for Columbia County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011

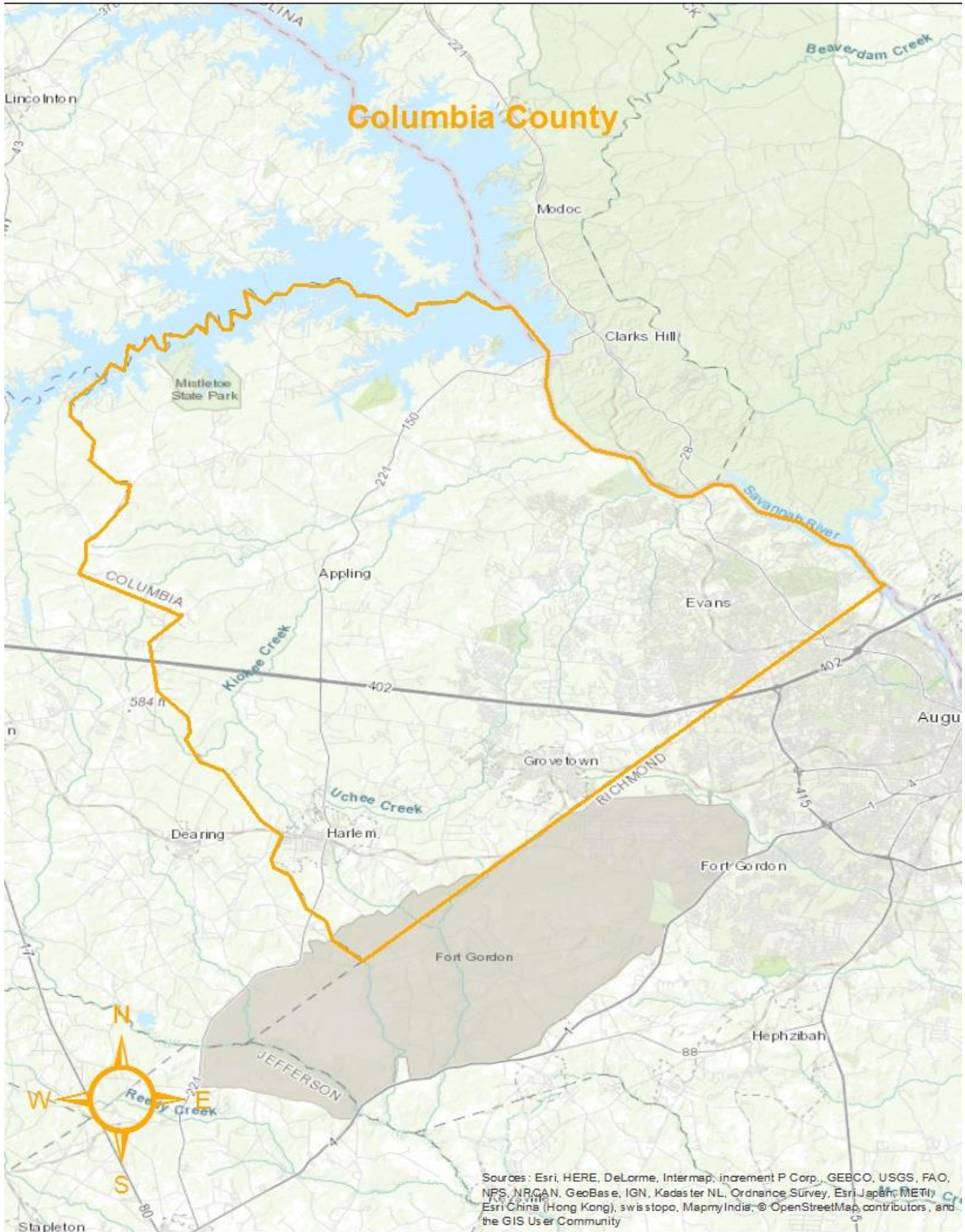


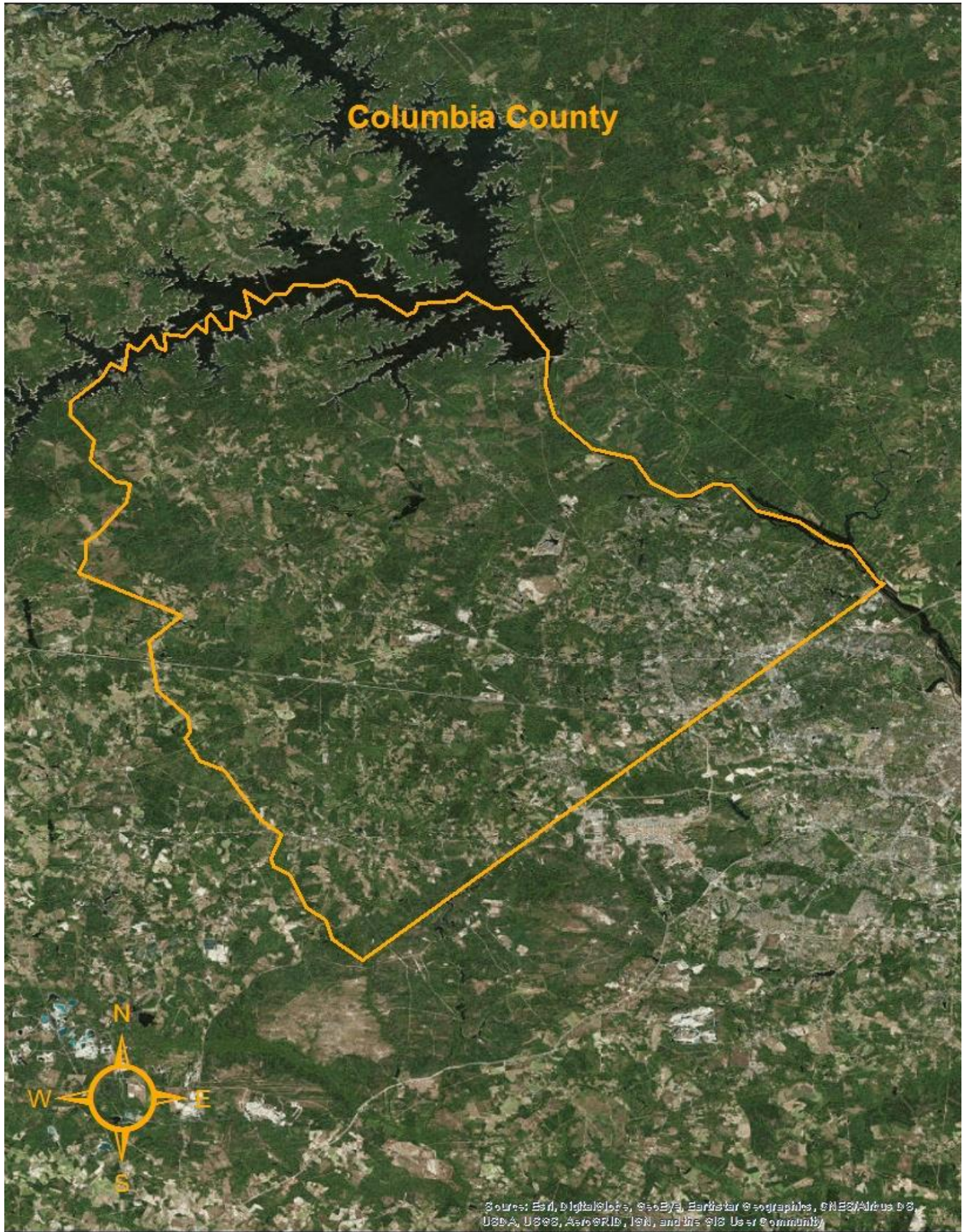
Fire Occurrence Map for Columbia County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016

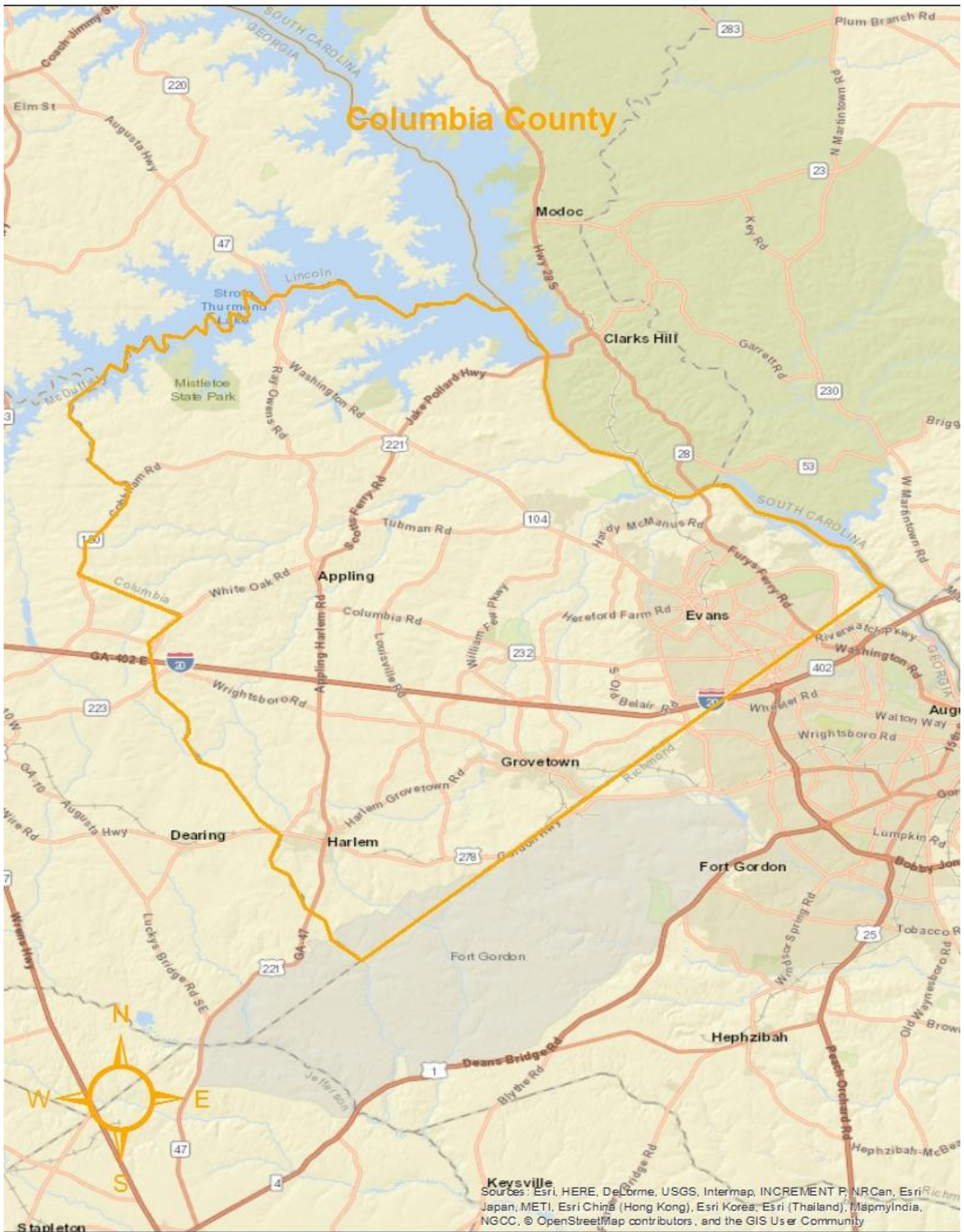


IV. COMMUNITY BASEMAPS









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.

As it was felt there was considerable variation in risk from one end of the county to the other, it was decided by the CORE assessment team to assess each of the two incorporated jurisdictions separately along with dividing the unincorporated area of the county into the largely suburban Martinez – Evans area which is well serviced with a modern pressurized water system and the more rural western and northern sections with either pressurized water located only on the main roads or non-existent.

The wildland fire risk assessments were conducted in early 2009 by the various Columbia County Fire Departments and returned an average score of 82, placing Columbia County overall in the “low moderate” hazard range. The assessments ranged from minimal risk in the Evans – Martinez area to high risk in the rural north and western areas of the county. See the assessed factors and the summary of the assessments following.

The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Columbia County’s WUI was the Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Risk Assessment Checklist. The instrument takes into consideration accessibility, vegetation (based on fuel models), topography, 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 the various sections of Columbia County:

Evans Martinez Suburban Area (Low Risk);

- Sections of grown up wildland fuels within developed areas
- Lack of firewise construction and landscaping in some areas

City of Grovetown and adjacent subscription Area (Moderate Risk);

- Lack of defensible space in wildland interface areas.
- Lack of firewise construction and landscaping in some areas
- Large, adjacent areas of forest or wildlands
- Sections of grown up wildland fuels within developed areas.

City of Harlem (Moderate Risk)

- Long, narrow, and poorly labeled driveways
- Lack of defensible space in wildland interface areas.
- Lack of firewise construction and landscaping in some areas
- Large, adjacent areas of forest or wildlands
- High occurrence of wildfires in the several locations.
- Equipment to respond to off road situations.

Rural Unincorporated North and Western Columbia (High Risk)

- One way in and out in many communities.
- Addresses to homes not clearly marked.
- Long narrow driveways inaccessible to equipment.
- 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 off major roads
- Dry hydrants and drafting sources unusable.
- Above ground utilities
- Large, adjacent areas of forest or wildlands
- Undeveloped lots comprising half the total lots in many rural communities.
- High occurrence of wildfires in the several locations
- Dead end roads with inadequate turn arounds

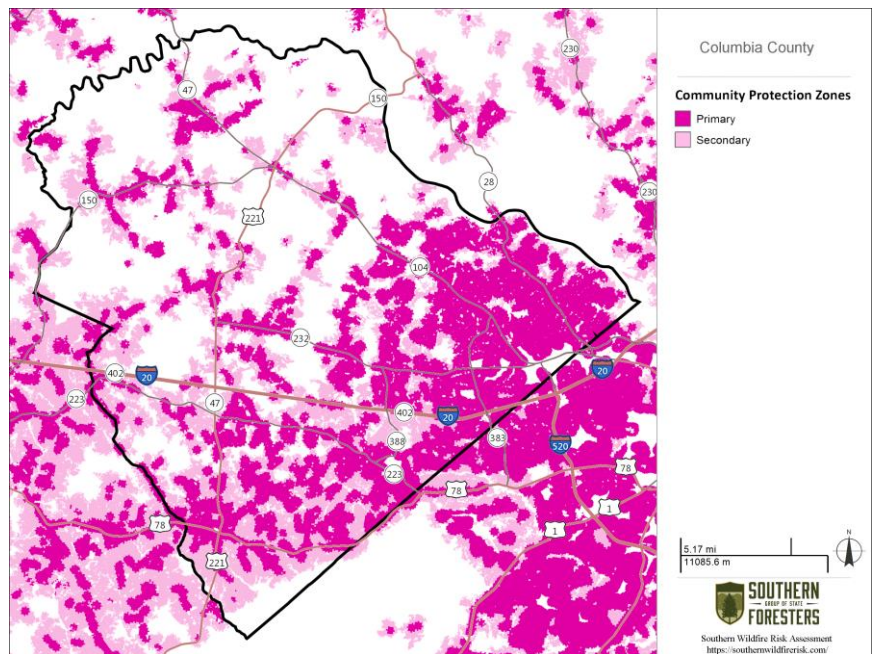
Summary of Columbia County Assessment Ratings

Area	Fire Dept	Access	Site Hazard	Bldg Hazard	Add. Hazards	Total Score	Hazard Rating
Harlem	Harlem	5	41	10	26	82	Moderate Risk
Grovetown Evans	Grovetown Martinez	5	39	10	28	82	Moderate Risk
Martinez	Columbia Martinez	3	17	5	6	31	Low Risk
Rural County	Columbia	13	60	5	54	132	High Risk
Average		7	39	8	28	82	Moderate Risk

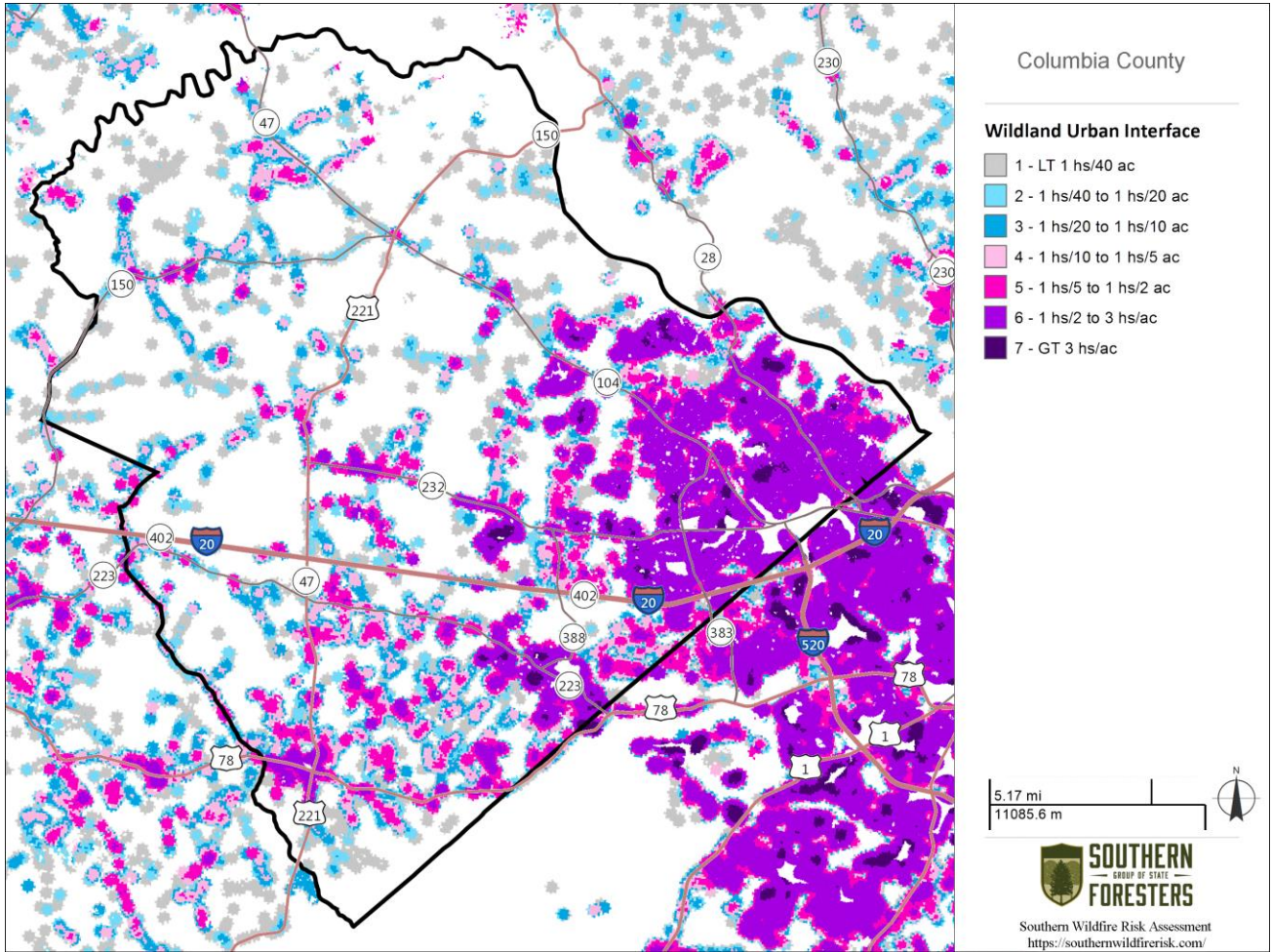
VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

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 Columbia 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.

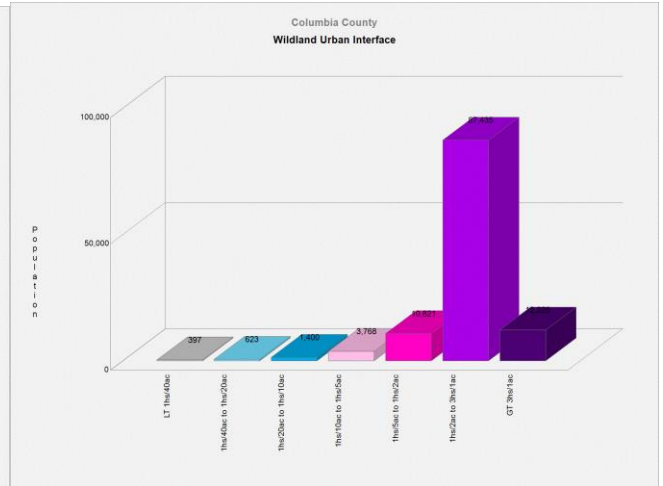
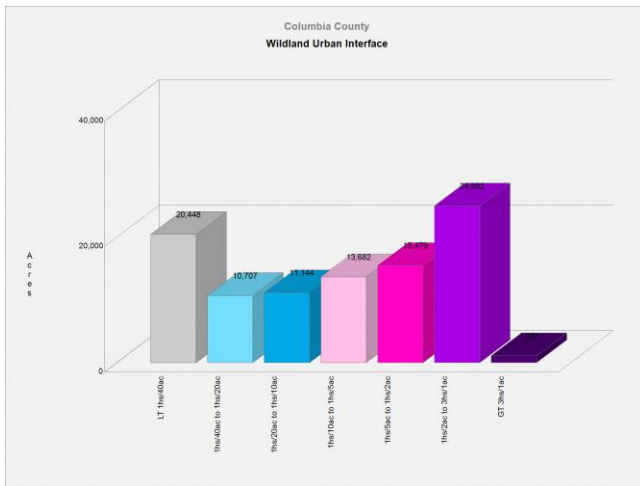


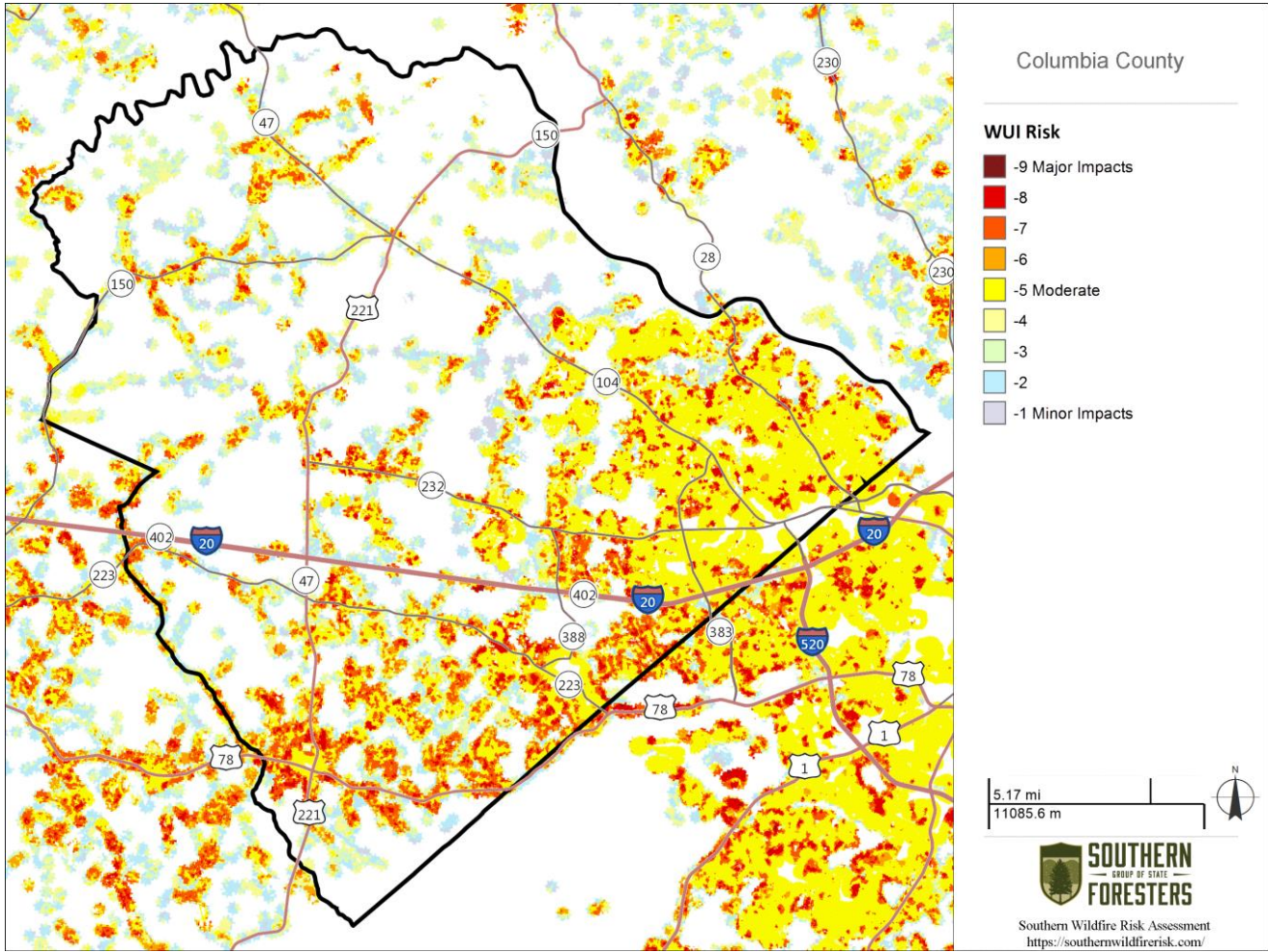
Community Protection Zones map from the Columbia County SWRA



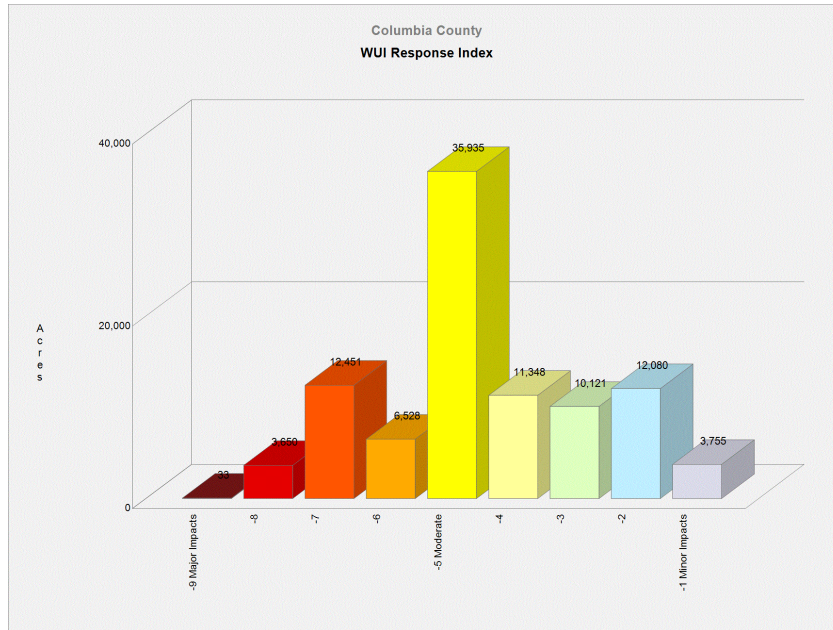
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map

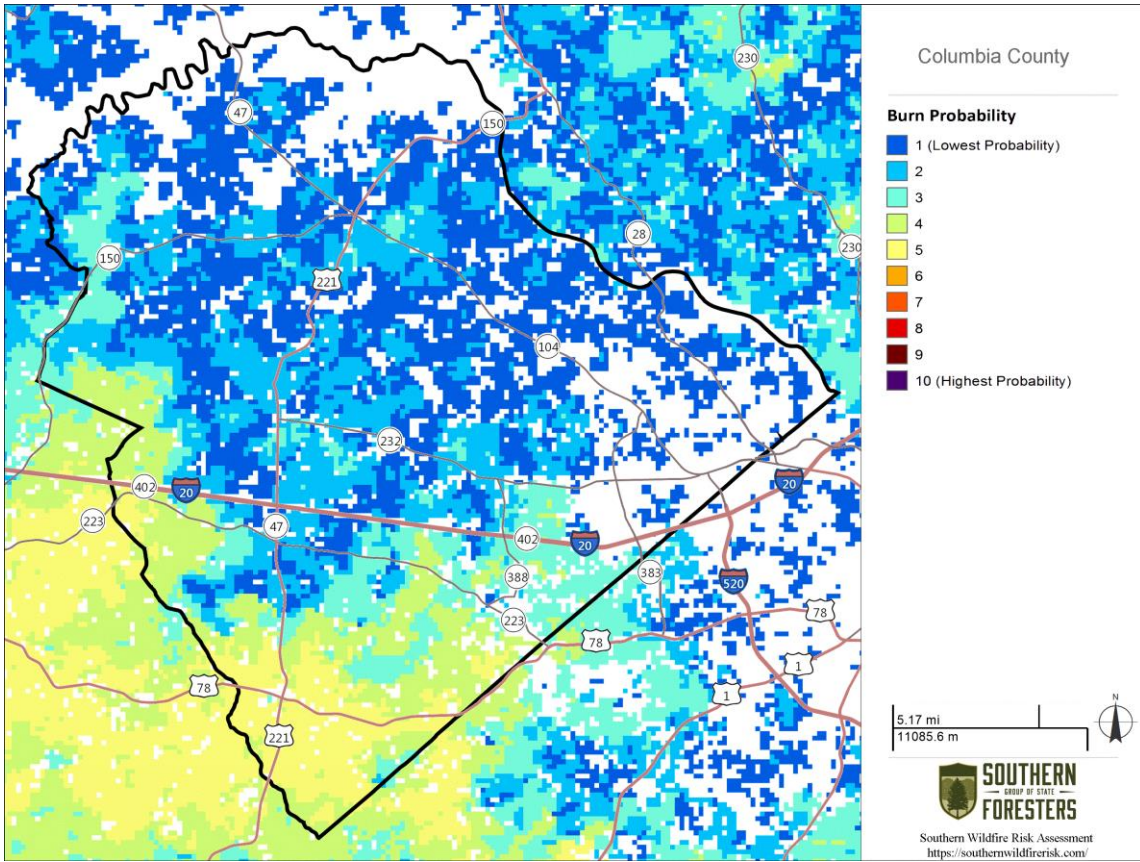
Below: WUI Acres (left) WUI Population (right)



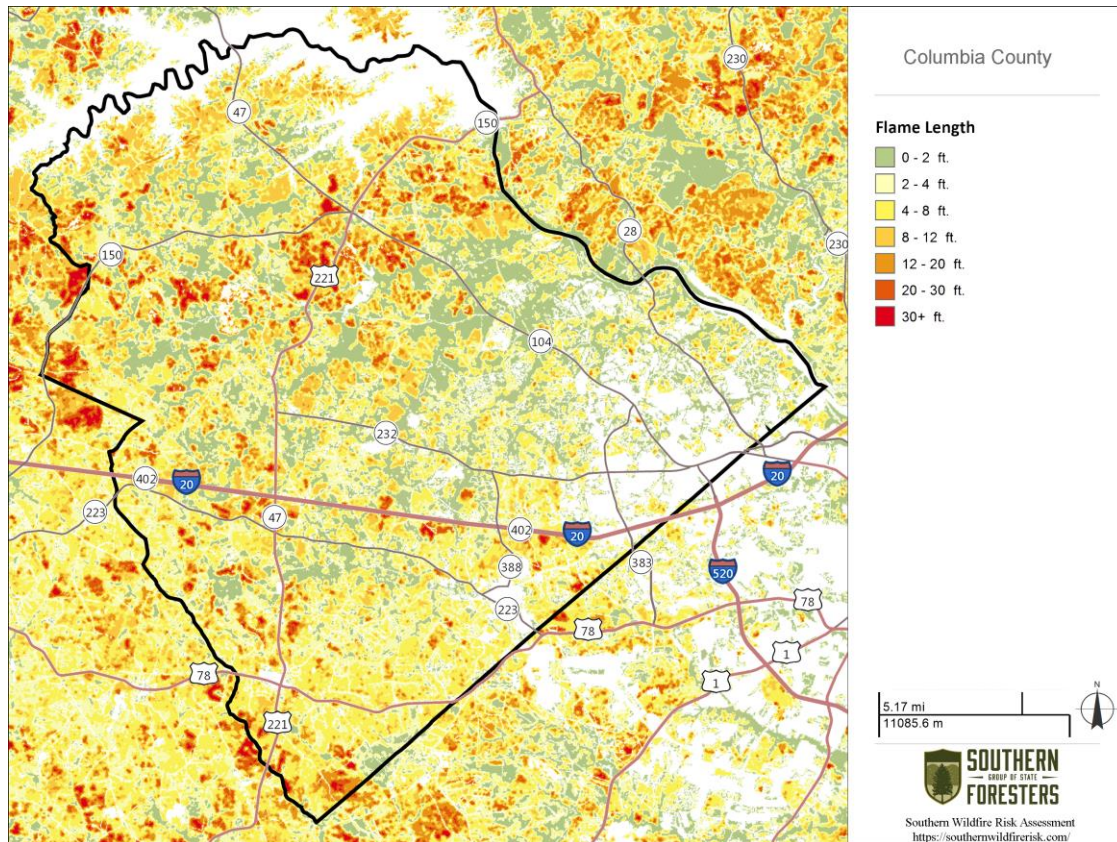


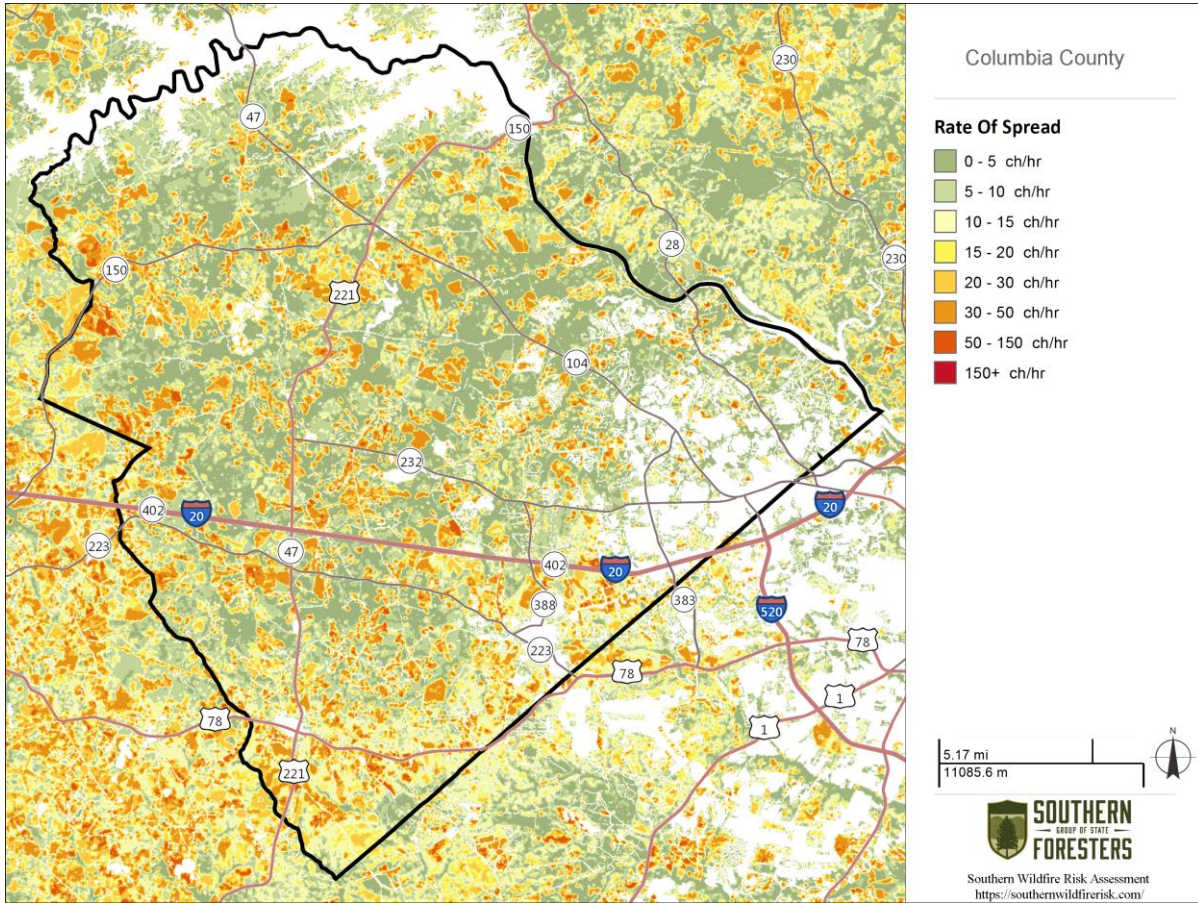
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map Below: WUI Risk Acres



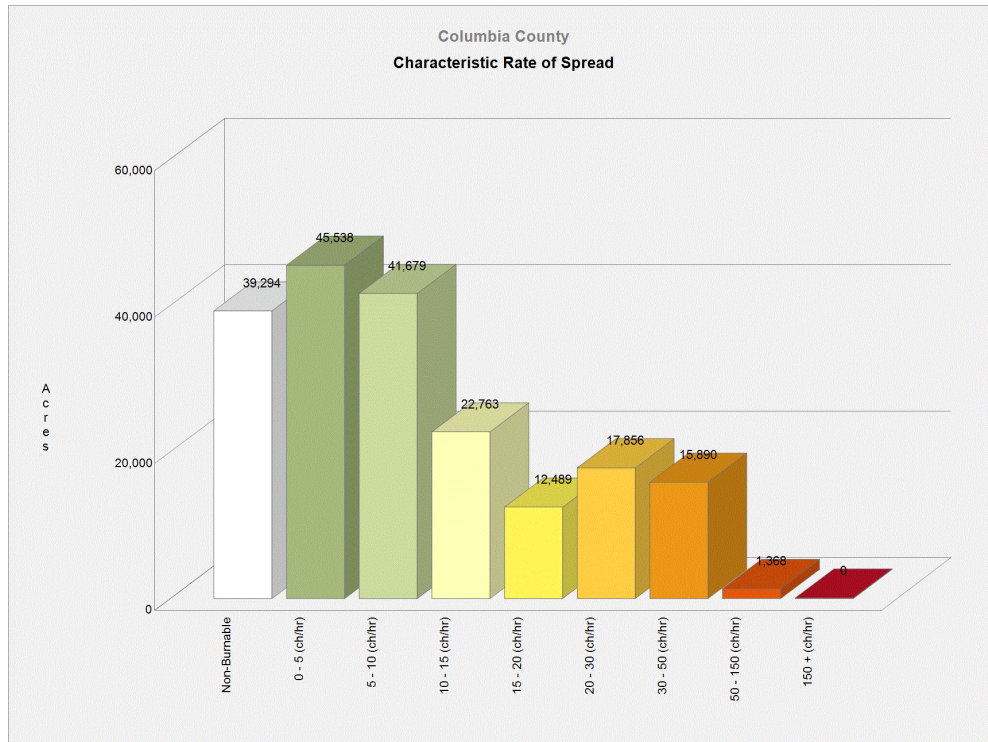


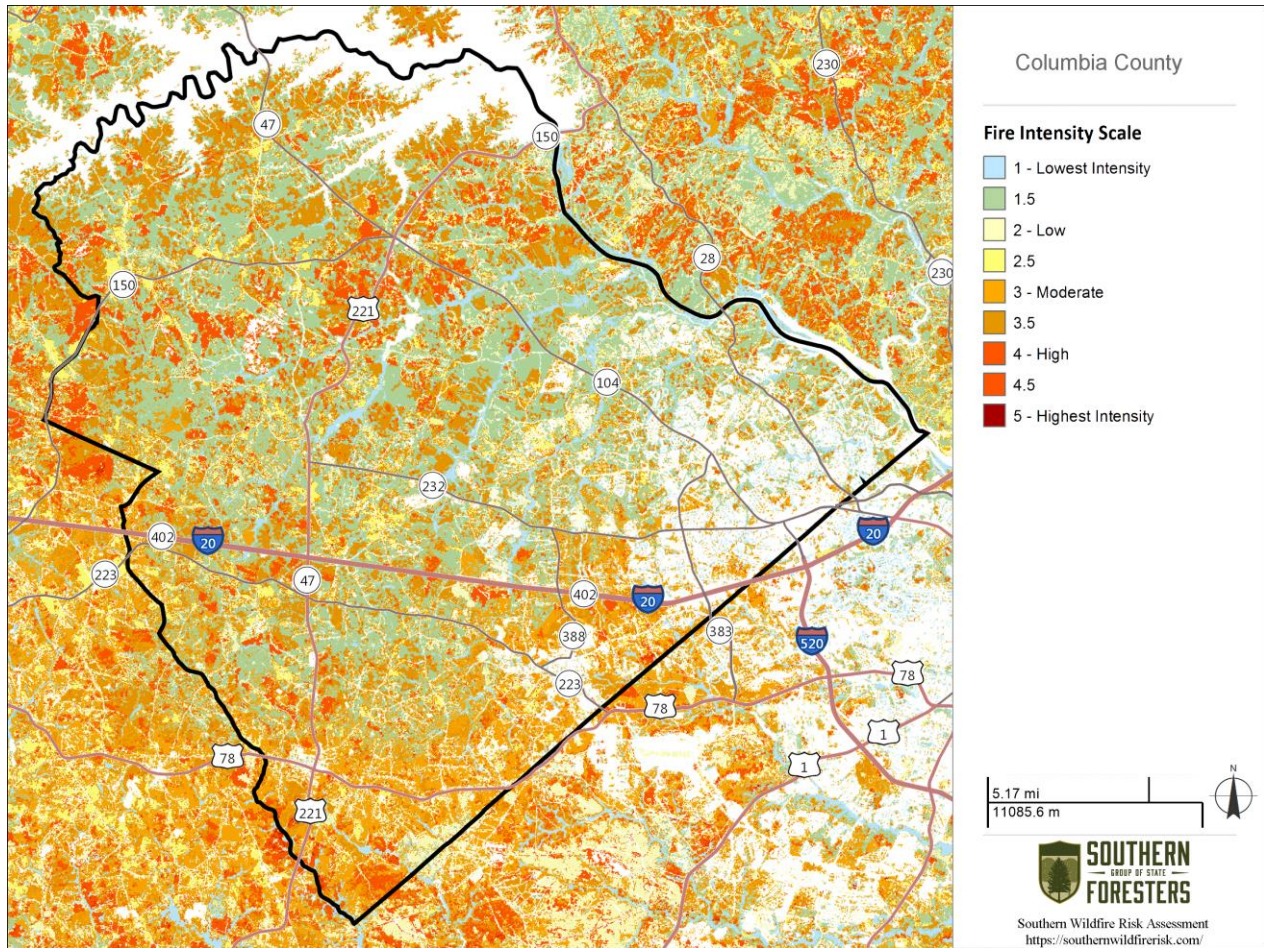
Above: Burn Probability map Below: Flame Length map



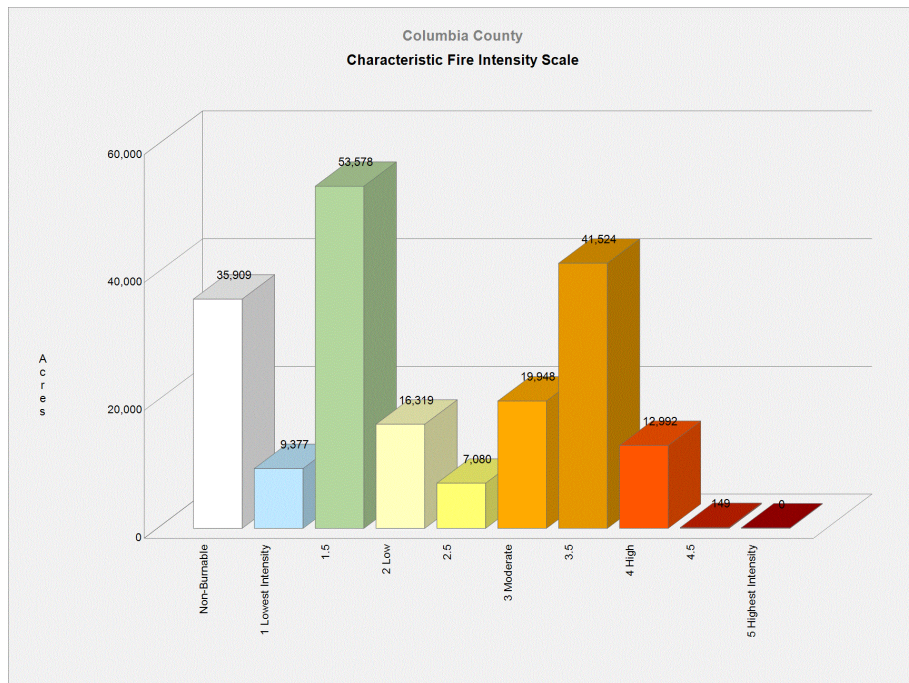


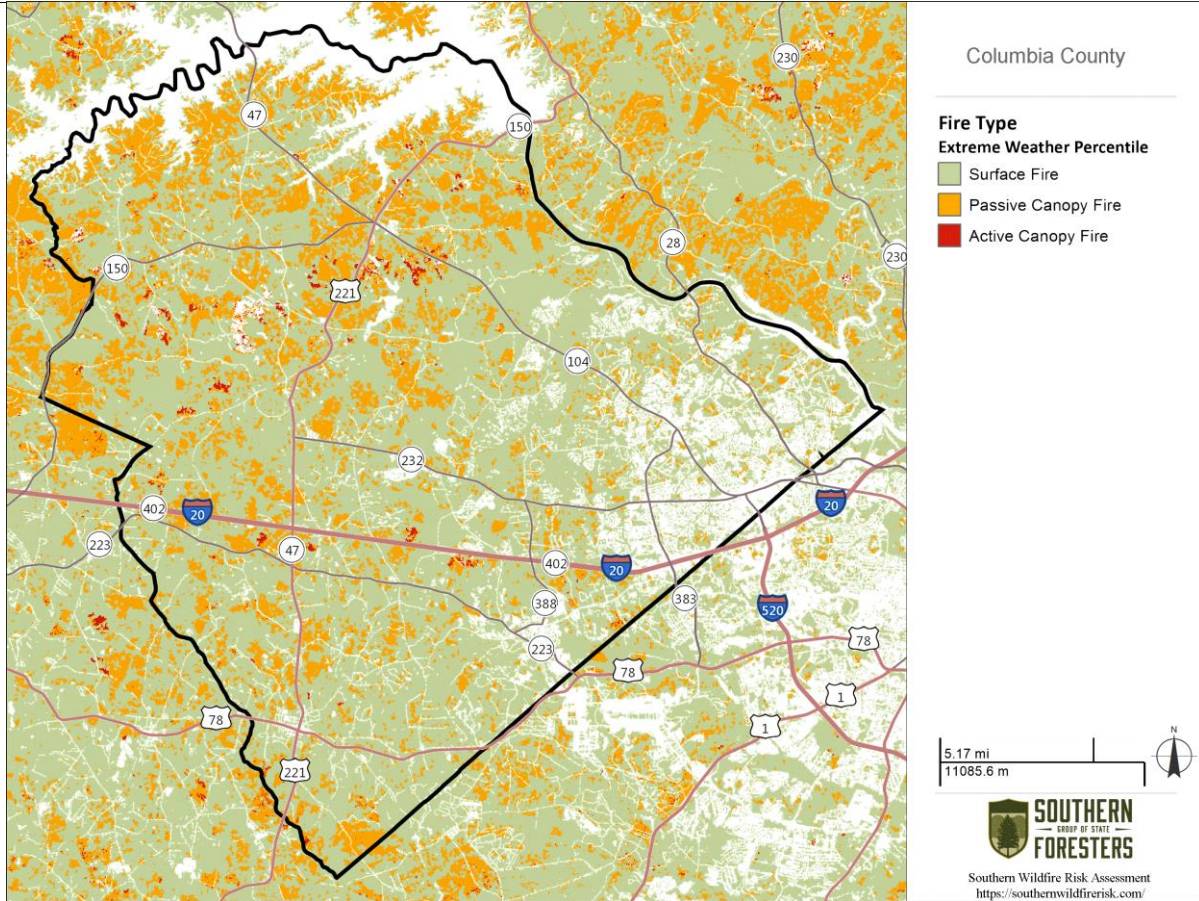
Above: Rate of Spread map Below: Rate of Spread Acres



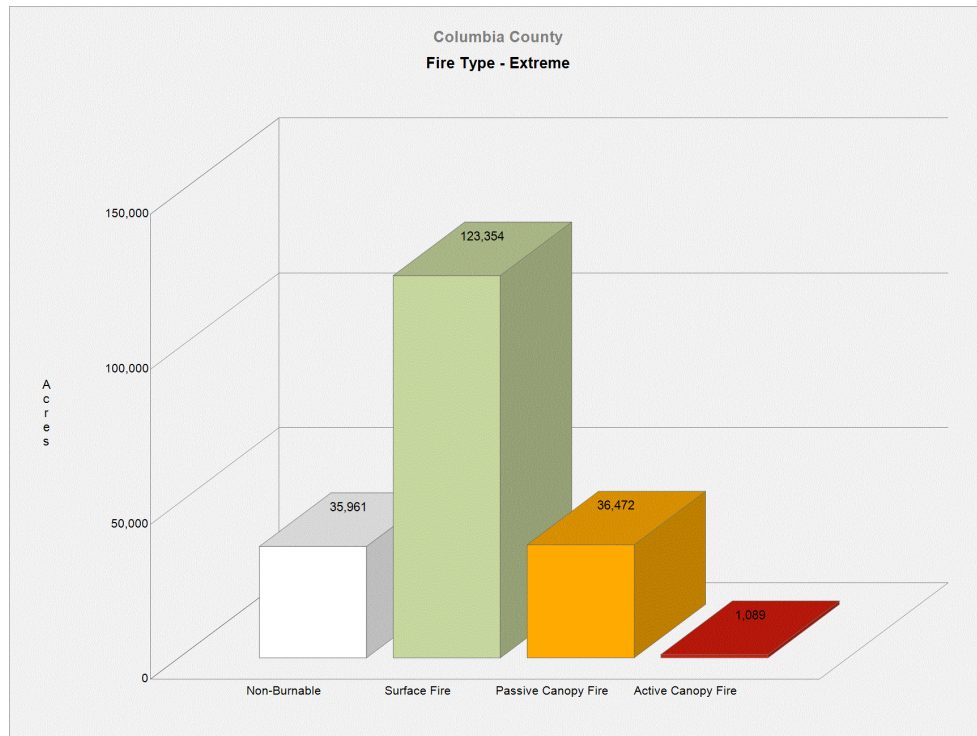


Above: Fire Intensity Scale map Below: Fire Intensity Scale Acres





Above: Fire Type map Below: Fire Type Acres



VII. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

The following recommendations were developed by the Columbia 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**	Educate homeowners to 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**	Educate owners to clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters, store firewood appropriately, install skirting around raised structures, store water hoses for ready access, replace pine straw and mulch around plantings with less flammable landscaping materials.
3. Community Clean-up Day National Wildfire Preparedness Day (1 st Saturday in May)	Cutting, mowing, pruning**	Work with Homeowners Associations to encourage to cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces where needed.
4. Road Signage	At Replacement	New road signage with minimum 4 inch reflective lettering on nonflammable poles. Dead end (no outlet or turn-around) should be prominently tagged.
5. Road Access	Identify needed road improvements	As roads are upgraded, widen to minimum standards with at least 50 foot diameter cul de sacs.
6. Subdivision Access	Alternate exits IWUIC	Work with developers to identify and create alternate access and exits routes to subdivisions and communities with only one way in and out.

7. Codes and Ordinances	<p>Examine existing codes and ordinances.</p> <p>International Wildland Urban Interface Code</p> <p>IWUIC</p>	<p>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</p> <p>As zoning, planning and subdivision ordinances are updated include fire department and emergency services input in the design of these.</p>
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Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities

Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. Adjacent WUI Lands	Reduce hazardous fuels	Encourage prescribed burning for private landowners and industrial timberlands particularly adjacent to residential areas
2. Corps of Engineer Lands	Reduce hazardous fuels	Enter into discussion with C o E land management on fuel reduction activities adjacent to residential areas.
3. Existing Fire Lines	Reduce hazardous fuels	Clean and re-harrow existing lines.

Proposed Improved Community Wildland Fire Response Priorities

1. Water Sources	Dry Hydrants	Inspect, maintain and improve access to existing dry hydrants. Add signage along road to mark the hydrants
2. Fire Stations	Equipment	Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland PPE Gear. Larger capacity hose. Investigate need for “brush” trucks.
3. 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 Columbia County Residents</p>
<p>Set up and conduct a workshop for homeowners that teach the principles of making homes and properties safe from wildfire. Topics for discussion include defensible space, landscaping, building construction, etc. Workshop will be scheduled for evenings or weekends when most homeowners are available and advertised through local media outlets.</p> <p>Distribute materials promoting firewise practices and planning through local community and governmental meetings.</p>
<p>2. Conduct “Firewise” Workshop for Community Leaders</p>
<p>Arrange for GFC Firewise program to work with local community leaders and governmental officials on the importance of “Firewise Planning” in developing ordinances and codes as the county as the need arises. Identify “Communities at Risk” within the county for possible firewise community recognition.</p>
<p>3. Spring Clean-up Event (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1st Saturday in May annually)</p>
<p>Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Grovetown, Harlem and Martinez - Columbia County Fire Departments and community residents. Set up information table with educational materials and refreshments. Initiate the event with a morning briefing by GFC Firewise coordinator and local fire officials detailing plans for the day and safety precautions. Activities to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters • Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet away from structures • Trim overhanging limbs • Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties <p>Celebrate the work with a community cookout, with Community officials, GFC and Grovetown, Harlem and Martinez - Columbia 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 permitting authorities, code enforcement, realtors and insurance agents. Included in the packets are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Firewise Around Your Home • Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction • Firewise Communities USA Brochures • Ready Set Go materials • Fire Adapted Community information

5. Wildfire Protection Display

Create and exhibit a display for the general public at the various fire stations rotating around during fire prevention month. Display can be independent or combined with the Georgia Forestry Commission display.

6. Media

Invite the Columbia County News - Times and the Augusta Chronicle to community "Firewise" functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Columbia County. Utilize TV, radio, and social media to reach the public.

7. Columbia County Website

Create a community Firewise Page on the Columbia County Website. Publish the Columbia County Community Wildfire Protection Plan on the county's website and establish links to Firewise websites to provide easy access for homeowners to access this information.



The Georgia Forestry Commission can assist with developing a prescribed burning plan, installation of firebreaks, and can provide equipment standby and burning assistance when personnel are available. Private forestry contractors can also provide this service.



Forestry mowers and brush cutters, such as pictured here, can be very effective in reducing understory fuels near structures in areas where prescribed fire may not be practical. Private contractors can provide this service.

VIII. ACTION PLAN

Roles and Responsibilities

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

Role	Responsibility
Hazardous Fuels and Structural Ignitability Reduction	
Columbia County Wildland Urban Interface Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC officials, Grovetown, Harlem and Martinez - Columbia County Fire Department officials, a representative from the cities and county governments and the EMA Director for Columbia County. Meet periodically to review progress towards mitigation goals, appoint and delegate special activities, work with federal, state, and local officials to assess progress and develop future goals and action plans. Work with residents to implement projects and firewise activities.
Key Messages to focus on	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping 2 Debris Burning Safety 3 Firewise information for homeowners 4 Prescribed burning benefits
Communications objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Create public awareness for fire danger and defensible space issues 2 Identify most significant human cause fire issues 3 Enlist public support to help prevent these causes 4 Encourage people to employ fire prevention and defensible spaces in their communities.
Target Audiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Homeowners & HOA 2 Forest Landowners and users 3 Civic Groups 4 School Groups
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 News Releases, TV, radio 2 Personal Contacts, social media 3 Key messages and prevention tips 4 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters

Spring Clean-up Day (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1 st Saturday in May)	
Event Coordinator	Coordinate day’s events and schedule, catering for cookout, guest attendance, and moderate activities the day of the day of the event.
Event Treasurer	Collect funds from residents to cover food, equipment rentals, and supplies.
Publicity Coordinator	Advertise event through neighborhood newsletters, 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, Grovetown, Harlem and Martinez - Columbia 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, and using firewise landscaping around homes	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 governments as needed.
4. Spring Cleanup Day	Varies	Community Business Donations.
National Wildfire Preparedness Day		State Farm grants
5. Fuel Reduction Activities	\$15 / Acre	FEMA & USFS Grants

Assessment Strategy

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness for the action plan, the Columbia 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, 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 one month and six months following workshop date.
- The Columbia County WUIFC 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 Columbia County WUIFC meeting. Needed actions will be discussed and delegated.

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

IX. MITIGATION ASSISTANCE & GRANT FUNDING

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

FEMA Mitigation Policy MRR-2-08-01: through GEMA – Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM).

1. To provide technical and financial assistance to local governments to assist in the implementation of long term, cost effective hazard mitigation accomplishments.
2. This policy addresses wildfire mitigation for the purpose of reducing the threat to all-risk structures through creating defensible space, structural protection through the application of ignition resistant construction and limited hazardous fuel reduction to protect life and property.
3. With a completed registered plan (addendum to the State Plan) counties can apply for pre-mitigation funding. They will also be eligible for HMGP funding if the county is declared under a wildfire disaster.

Georgia Forestry Commission: Plowing and prescribed burning assistance, as well as forest mastication, can be obtained from the GFC as a low-cost option for mitigation efforts.

The Georgia Forestry Commission Firewise Community Mitigation Assistance Grants – Nationally recognized Firewise Communities can receive up to \$5000 grants to help address potential wildfire risk reduction projects. Grant submission can be made through local Georgia Forestry Commission offices or your Regional Wildfire Prevention Specialist.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and American International Group, Inc. (AIG) offer grants to assist local fire departments in establishing or enhancing their community fuels mitigation programs while educating members of the community about community wildfire readiness and encouraging personal action.

X. GLOSSARY

Community-At-Risk – A group of two or more structures whose proximity to forested or wildland areas places homes and residents at some degree of risk.

Critical Facilities – Buildings, structures or other parts of the community infrastructure that require special protection from an approaching wildfire.

CWPP – The Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Defensible Space – The immediate landscaped area around a structure (usually a minimum of 30 ft.) kept “lean, clean and green” to prevent an approaching wildfire from igniting the structure.

Dry Hydrant - A non-pressurized pipe system permanently installed in existing lakes, ponds and streams that provides a suction supply of water to a fire department tank truck.

FEMA – The Federal Emergency Management Agency whose mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Fire Adapted Community – A community fully prepared for its wildfire risk by taking actions to address safety, homes, neighborhoods, businesses and infrastructure, forest, parks, open spaces, and other community assets.

Firewise Program – A national initiative with a purpose to reduce structural losses from wildland fires.

Firewise Community/USA – A national recognition program for communities that take action to protect themselves from wildland fire. To qualify a community must have a wildfire risk assessment by the Georgia Forestry Commission, develop a mitigation action plan, have an annual firewise mitigation/education event, have dedicated firewise leadership, and complete the certification application.

Fuels – All combustible materials within the wildland/urban interface or intermix including, but not limited to, vegetation and structures.

Fuel Modification – Any manipulation or removal of fuels to reduce the likelihood of ignition or the resistance to fire control.

Hazard & Wildfire Risk Assessment – An evaluation to determine an area’s (community’s) potential to be impacted by an approaching wildland fire.

Healthy Forests Initiative - Launched in August 2002 by President Bush (following passage of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act by Congress) with the intent to reduce the risks severe wildfires pose to people, communities, and the environment.

Home Ignition Zone (Structure Ignition Zone) - *Treatment area for wildfire protection. The “zone” includes the structure(s) and their immediate surroundings from 0-200 ft.*

Mitigation – *An action that moderates the severity of a fire hazard or risk.*

National Fire Plan – *National initiative, passed by Congress in the year 2000, following a landmark wildland fire season, with the intent of actively responding to severe wildland fires and their impacts to communities while ensuring sufficient firefighting capacity for the future.*

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) - *An international nonprofit organization established in 1896, whose mission is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.*

National Wildfire Preparedness Day – *Started in 2014 by the National Fire Protection Association as a day for communities to work together to prepare for the approaching wildfire season. It is held annually on the first Saturday in May.*

Prescribed Burning (prescribed fire) –*The use of planned fire that is deliberately set under specific fuel and weather condition to accomplish a variety of management objectives and is under control until it burns out or is extinguished.*

Ready, Set, Go - *A program fire services use to help homeowners understand wildfire preparedness, awareness, and planning procedures for evacuation.*

Southern Group of State Foresters – *Organization whose members are the agency heads of the forestry agencies of the 13 southern states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.*

Stakeholders– *Individuals, groups, organizations, businesses or others who have an interest in wildland fire protection and may wish to review and/or contribute to the CWPP content.*

Wildfire or Wildland Fire – *An unplanned and uncontrolled fire spreading through vegetative fuels.*

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

XI. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Publications/Brochures/Websites:

- FIREWISE materials can be ordered at www.firewise.org
- Georgia Forestry Commission www.georgiafirewise.org
- Examples of successful wildfire mitigation programs can be viewed at the website for National Database of State and Local wildfire Hazard Mitigation Programs sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service and the Southern Group of State Foresters www.wildfireprograms.com
- Information about a variety of interface issues (including wildfire) can be found at the USFS website for Interface South: www.interfacesouth.org
- Information on codes and standards for emergency services including wildfire can be found at www.nfpa.org
- Information on FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) can be found at www.firegrantsupport.com
- Information on National Fire Plan grants can be found at <http://www.federalgrantswire.com/national-fire-plan--rural-fire-assistance.html>
- Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment website SouthWRAP www.SouthernWildfireRisk.com
- Fire Adapted Communities www.fireadapted.org
- Ready, Set, Go www.wildlandfirersg.org
- National Wildfire Preparedness Day www.wildfirepreeday.org

Appended Documents:

Columbia County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Columbia County Wildfire assessment scoresheets

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

GEORGIA FORESTRY
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*The Georgia Forestry Commission provides leadership,
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