



Community Wildfire Protection Plan

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

Crisp County, Georgia



October, 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Signature Page.....4

II. Wildland/Urban Interface Disasters.....5

III. The CWPP Core Committee.....5

IV. Objective of the CWPP.....7

V. Community Information.....8

VI. Wildfire History.....11

VII. County Base Maps16

VIII. What are “Communities-at-Risk”?.....19

IX. Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary and Risk Hazards Maps.....20

X. Communities At Risk & Hazard Mitigation Plan.....24

XI. Crisp County Action Plan.....28

XII. Grant Funding and Mitigation Assistance31

XIII. Glossary.....32

XIV. Sources of Information.....34

Appended Documents:

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

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

The plan will:

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

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

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

I. SIGNATURE PAGE

**Sam Farrow
Chairman
Crisp County Commission**

Date

**Johnathon Windham
Fire Chief
Crisp County Fire Rescue**

Date

**Marty E. Fore
Chief Ranger
Crisp/Dooly County
Georgia Forestry Commission**

Date

II. WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE FIRE DISASTERS

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

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

III. CWPP CORE COMMITTEE

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

CWPP Core Committee

Johnathon Windham, Chief, Crisp County Fire Rescue
Billy Hancock, Crisp County EMA Director
Gene Crapse, County Administrator

Georgia Forestry Commission Representatives

Chief Ranger Marty Fore
CWPP Program Specialist Jim Harrell
Beryl Budd, Wildfire Prevention Specialist, (revised plan 2017)

Meeting Dates

Initial Core Committee Meeting: Thursday, April 7, 2011

Follow-Up Meeting #1: Thursday, June 9, 2011

The CWPP Core Committee contributed to the CWPP development by:

Initiation Plan	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)

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 Crisp County CWPP, major stakeholders were invited to participate as members of the CWPP Core Committee.

IV. OBJECTIVES 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 Crisp 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 Community Wildfire Protection Plan will provide Crisp 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 throughout the area addressed by the plan.

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

V. COMMUNITY INFORMATION



Crisp County, in south Georgia, is Georgia's 138th county. The 274-square-mile county was carved from Dooly County in 1905, after residents successfully petitioned for a division of that county. It was named for statesman Charles Crisp, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1891 to 1894, and Cordele was selected as the county seat.

History

The area now forming Crisp County was once a province called Chisi, Ichisi, or Achese, which was inhabited by the Lower Creek division of the Muskogee Indians. The first Europeans visited the area in 1540, when Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto and his followers passed through. Priests traveling with the explorers said Mass in a village that historians have identified as a predecessor of the modern town of Cordele. This Mass may have been the first Christian religious service held in the southeastern United States. In an effort to curtail English trade with Creeks in the region, Spanish Floridians allied with Apalachee Indians and attacked the English

and Creeks in 1702. The English and Creeks prevailed against the invaders near the Flint River in what is now Crisp County, and the battle marked the opening of a campaign that led to England's successful bid for control of the Mississippi Valley.

The coming of railroad transportation to the area in the 1880s had a significant impact on population patterns. Several towns were formed at the sites where one or several of



Crisp County Courthouse

the railroads made stops. Among these was Arabi, founded in 1888 and incorporated in 1891. Cordele, founded in 1888 by John Edgar Dawson Shipp of Americus and incorporated that same year, was named for a daughter of Samuel H. Hawkins, president of the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery Railroad. The town was known in its early years as "the Hub City" because it stood at the junction of several railroad lines. In November 1864, during the Civil War (1861-65), Joseph E. Brown, the

Georgia governor, fled to his farmhouse near Cordele to avoid Union general William T. Sherman's troops, and for a few days Cordele served as the temporary capital of Confederate Georgia. In 1987 Cordele was named a "Main Street City," becoming part of a nationwide program aimed at revitalizing downtowns. Other unincorporated communities in the county are Hatley, Raines, and Wenona.

The Crisp County Hydroelectric Power Dam is the first county-owned, -constructed, and -operated hydroelectric power project in the United States. When the dam began generating



Lake Blackshear

electricity in 1930, a secondary benefit was the formation of Lake Blackshear in its backwaters. Named for David Blackshear, the founder of Fort Early, the 8,700-acre shallow lake is the centerpiece of the Georgia Veterans State Park, which offers venues for water sports and facilities for golfers. Much of the land surrounding the lake was bought from Daphne Plantation, formerly a popular outdoor recreation resort to which the Seaboard Railroad ran excursion trains.

Industry and Economy

Railroad transportation continues to be an important factor in Crisp County's economy, and Cordele–Crisp County is the only Georgia community located on Interstate 75 to be served by three major railroads. In addition to I-75, both U.S. Highways 41 and 280 run through the center of the county, facilitating the distribution of manufactured goods and bringing travelers through the area. Education and the health and social services are the largest employment sectors, closely followed by manufacturing and retail trade.

Agriculture remains significant to the county's economy, with melons, peaches, peanuts, and pecans being among the most important crops. The Georgia Department of Agriculture runs the Cordele Farmers' Market, which features local produce. Because of the large number of watermelons produced in the county, Cordele has styled itself the "Watermelon Capital of the World" and holds an annual Watermelon Days Festival each July.



Watermelon Days Festival

People and Places

Riley Shepard Brown, a writer of detective stories and other works, is from Cordele. He published two books, *Men, Wind, and the Sea: The Story of the Coast Guard* (1939) and *Stringfellow of the Fourth* (1960), and later wrote a weekly column for the *Courier-Post* in New Jersey. Mac Hyman, author of *No Time for Sergeants* (1954), was born in Cordele in 1923. Joe Williams was born in Cordele in 1918 and went on to sing with Count Basie's big band from 1954 until 1961. He then performed until the 1990s with other bands, in club routines, in movies, and on television variety shows. Williams recorded forty albums over his career and finished first-place for five consecutive years in *Down Beat* magazine's polls of international critics (1974-78). He also played the part of Grandpa Al in the television comedy *The Cosby Show*.

Among the county's historic sites is the St. Paul/Gillespie-Selden Rural Life Community Center in the Gillespie-Selden Historic District. Today the center provides learning and recreational facilities for children.

Fort Early, built by Blackshear during the War of 1812 (1812-15), was used in 1818 by Andrew Jackson during his campaign against the Seminole and Creek Indians. A short line of the old Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery (SAM) Railroad has been refurbished within Georgia Veterans State Park, which runs the SAM Shortline Excursion Train regularly to Americus and Plains. There are also indoor and outdoor military museums on the site. The Georgia Southern and Florida Railroad depot, built in 1888 in Arabi, was moved to a location south of town and is today part of the local historical society's outdoor museum.

Education and Population

Darton State College of Albany, an institution of the University System of Georgia, has a satellite campus in Cordele. A branch of the South Georgia Technical College has operated in Cordele since 1999. The college's mission is workforce development.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, the population is 23,439, an increase from the 2000 population of 21,996.

VI. WILDFIRE HISTORY

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) is the state agency responsible for providing leadership, service, and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources. Commission professionals provide a wide variety of services including fire detection, issuing burn permits, wildfire suppression and prevention services, emergency and incident command system expertise, rural fire department assistance, forest management assistance to landowners and communities, the marketing and utilization of forest resources and nature services, and growing and selling quality tree seedlings for planting.

Vision: Healthy sustainable forests providing clean air, clean water and abundant products for future generations.

Mission: To provide leadership, service and education in protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources.

Personnel

The Georgia Forestry Commission office serving Crisp-Dooly Counties is located at 259 Highway 41, Vienna, Georgia 31092 (Dooly County). Telephone number is: 229-273-3576 or 229-268-4466. Personnel assigned to this office include:

Marty E. Fore, Chief Ranger
Roger D. Pollock, Ranger/Forest Technician
Willie Perry, Ranger
Tyler Hobbs, Ranger

Wildland Firefighting Equipment

International Transport w/ 450G JD Tractor
Sterling Truck tractor w/ 650K JD Tractor
Freightliner Truck Tractor w/550J JD tractor
150 Gallon Water tank on F-250 4X4 Pickup

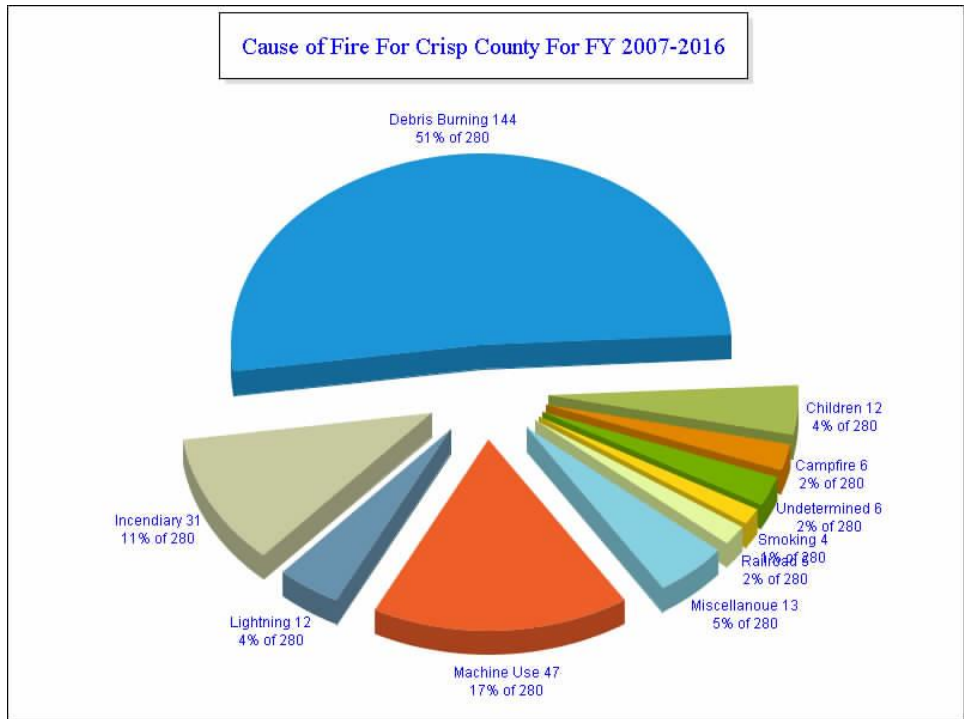
Wildfire Causes

On a year-to-year basis, the leading cause of wildfire in Crisp County is escaped debris fire followed by fires resulting from machine use (example: combine in a wheatfield) and then incendiary fires. The following table covers wildfire activity in Crisp County during fiscal years 2007 thru 2016. Acreage burned, number of fires and the average size is compared to the statewide average size.

**Acreege Burned /Number of Fires For Crisp County
For FY 2007-2016**

Year	Acreege Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2007	54.74	30	1.82	18.64
2008	112.41	40	2.81	4.56
2009	55.57	23	2.42	3.90
2010	31.99	17	1.88	3.93
2011	517.27	66	7.84	17.56
2012	79.09	39	2.03	5.08
2013	54.56	28	1.95	4.53
2014	16.90	11	1.54	5.02
2015	10.64	15	.71	4.42
2016	3.20	11	.29	6.29

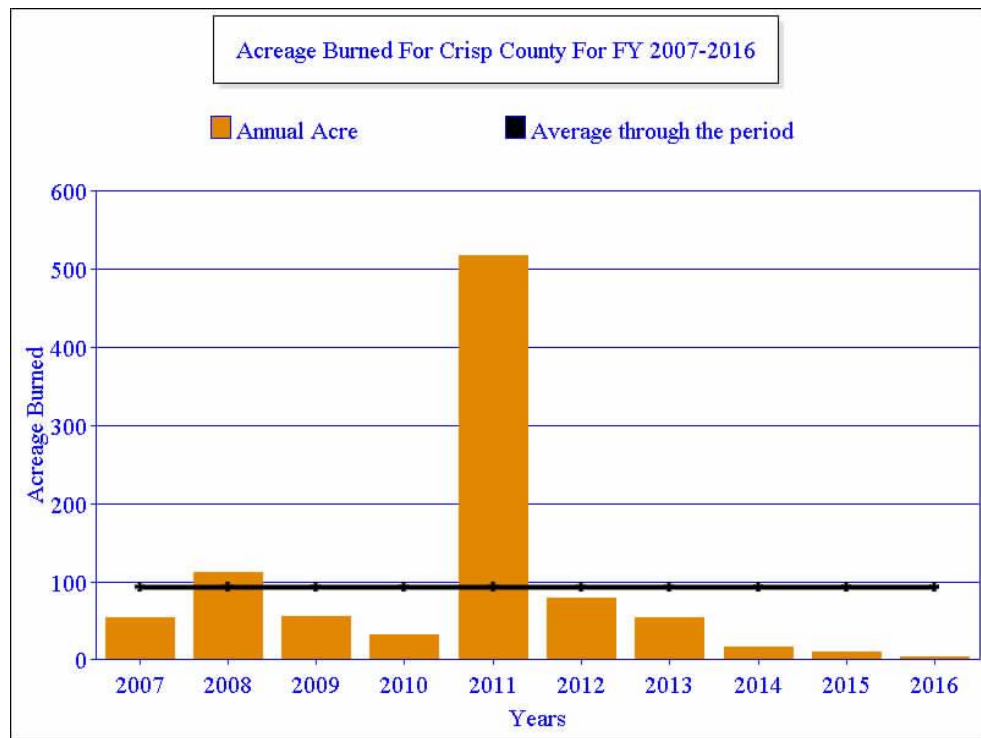
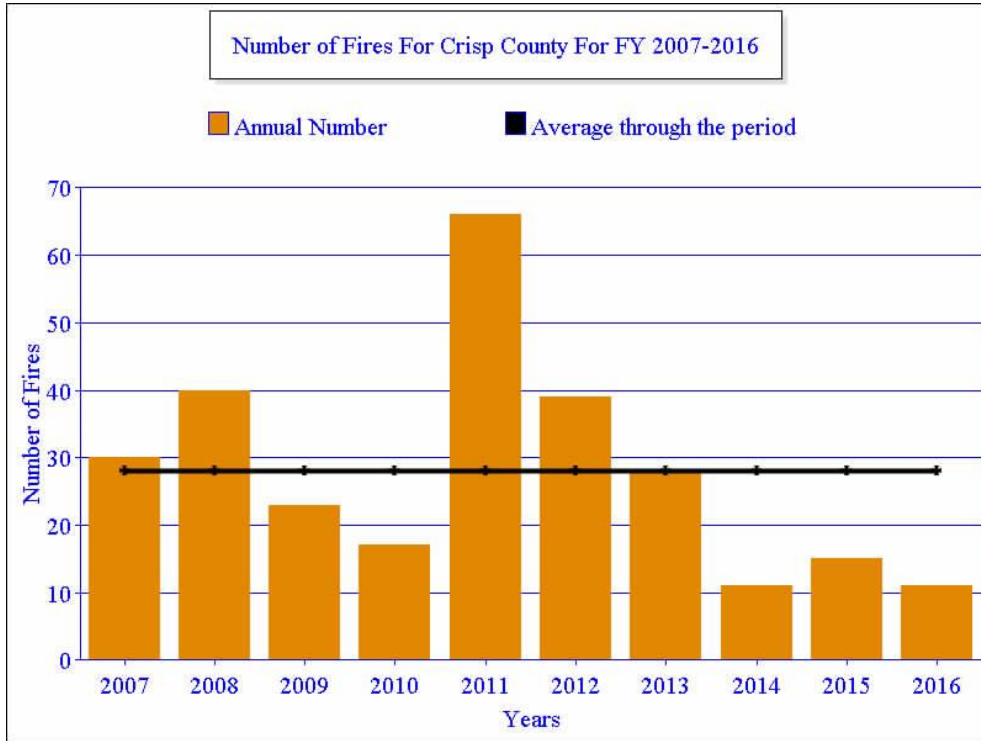
Debris Burning was the cause of 51% of wildfires during the 10 year period. Machine Use (17%) was the second leading cause followed by Incendiary (11%).



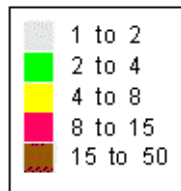
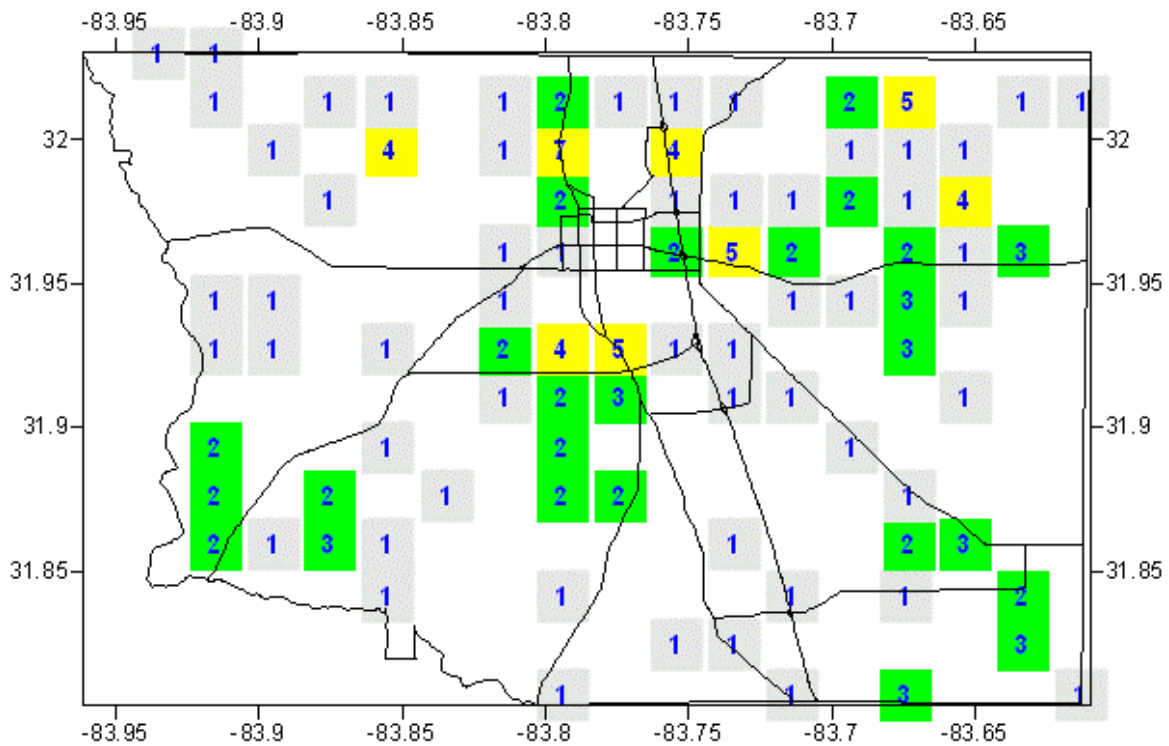
The table below is wildfire activity for the 2017 fiscal year ending in June 2017. The number of wildfires and acreage burned is the highest for Crisp County since 2011 because of the extended drought.

County = Crisp	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	1		0.75	0.20	0.15
Children	Children	0		0.00	0.60	0.68
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	1		1.10	1.20	3.17
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	1		1.35	0.40	0.48
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	9		66.36	3.80	16.83
Debris: Household Garbage	Debris: Household Garbage	5		6.16	1.40	1.25
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	1		0.23	1.00	0.42
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	4		4.46	2.60	2.50
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	2		4.66	1.40	1.34
Incendiary	Incendiary	0		0.00	0.80	1.25
Lightning	Lightning	1		0.10	0.60	0.47
Machine Use	Machine Use	0		0.00	1.20	4.18
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	1		4.30	0.80	0.96
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	5		5.68	1.80	1.77
Railroad	Railroad	0		0.00	0.20	0.13
Undetermined	Undetermined	2		2.16	1.60	0.94
Totals for County: Crisp Year: 2017		33		97.31	19.60	36.52

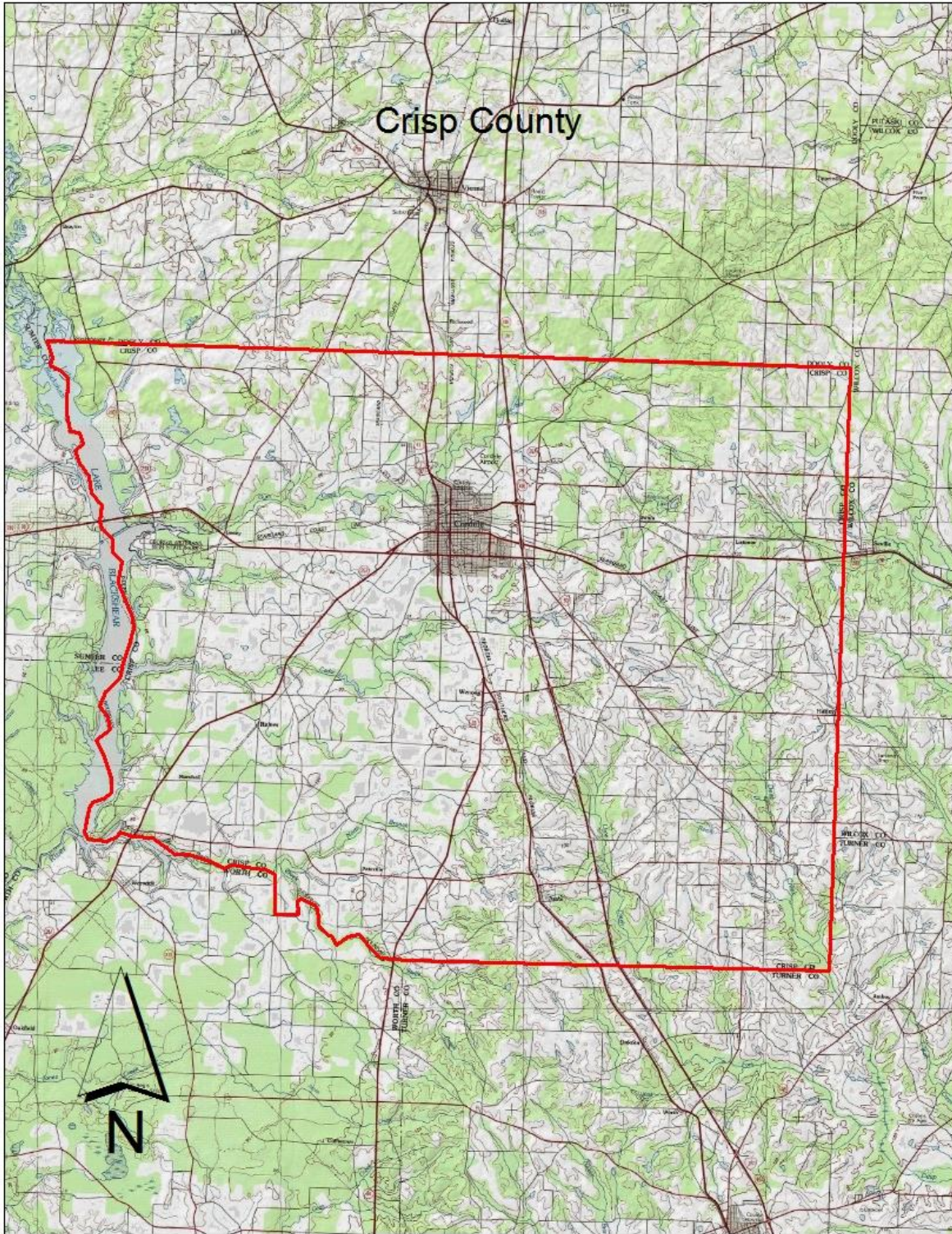
The following graphs indicate wildfire activity from FY 2007- FY 2016. Crisp County averaged 28 wildfires and about 99 acres burned annually during these years. Record low wildfire activity was seen in 2014, 2015, and 2016 due to above average rainfall during peak wildfire seasons.

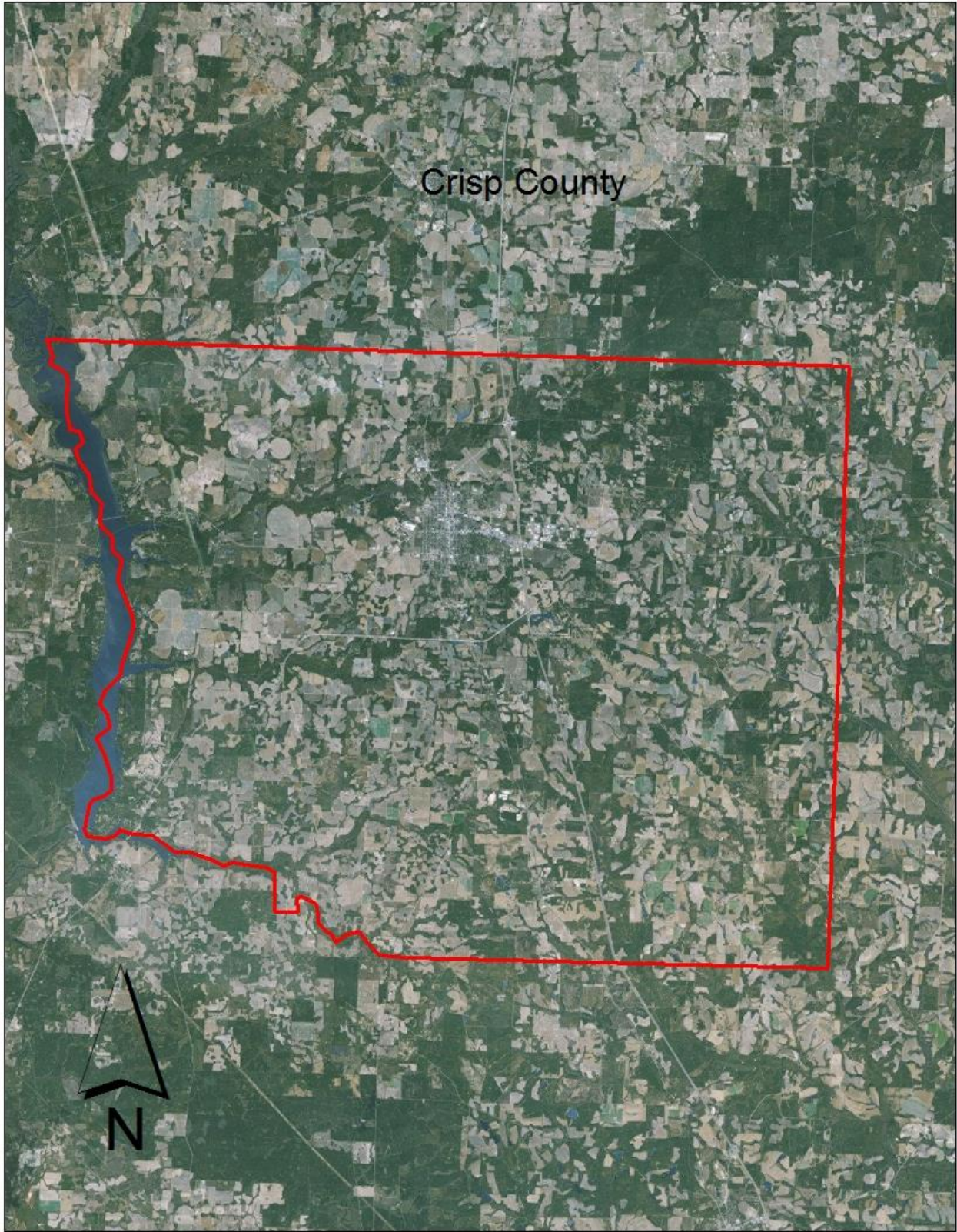


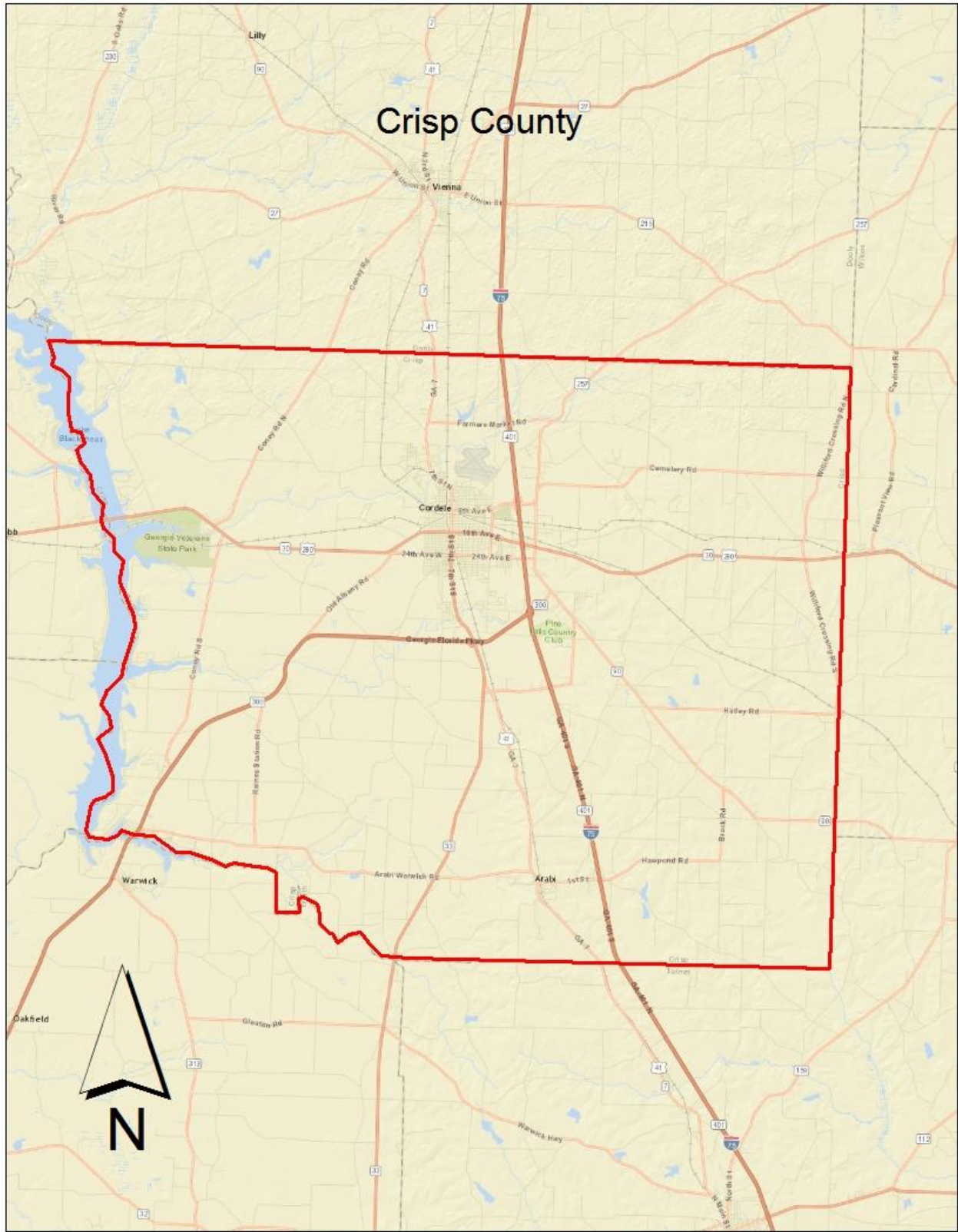
Fire Occurrence Map for Crisp County for Fiscal Year 2011-2015



VII. COUNTY BASE MAPS







VIII. 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 places homes and residents at some degree of risk from wildfire. Other characteristics of the “community” such as the closeness of structures, building materials, accumulated debris near the structures, access in and out and the distance from the nearest fire station or a permanent water source such as a pond or dry hydrant may contribute to the risk.

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

In Crisp 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 assume a greater responsibility for wildfire protection - - - by making improvements to the landscape and structures that will provide some degree of wildfire protection until the fire department can arrive. This can only be accomplished if rural residents know how to make their homes and properties “Firewise”.

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

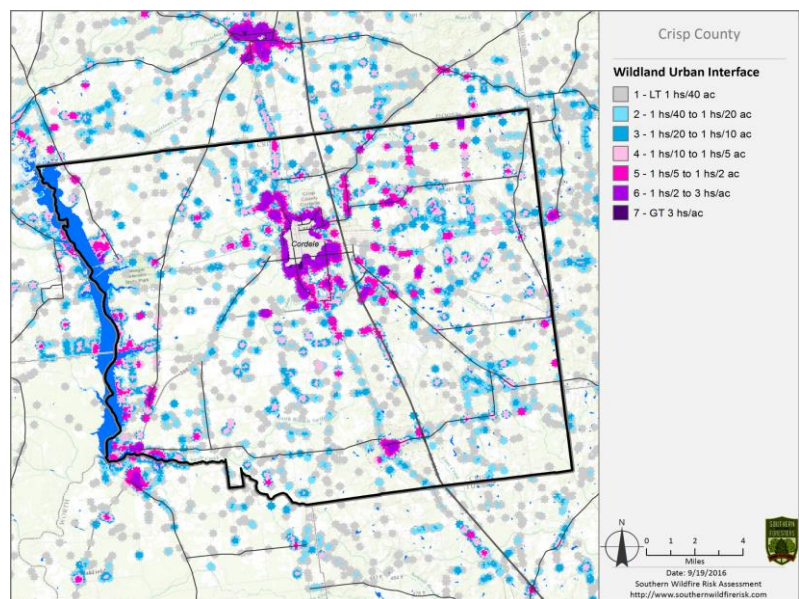
More extensive modifications in and around individual residences may need to be budgeted by the residents over time (for example, making a roof more fire resistant may have to wait until it is time to replace the current roof covering). Moving firewood away from the home, skirting raised decks and keeping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

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

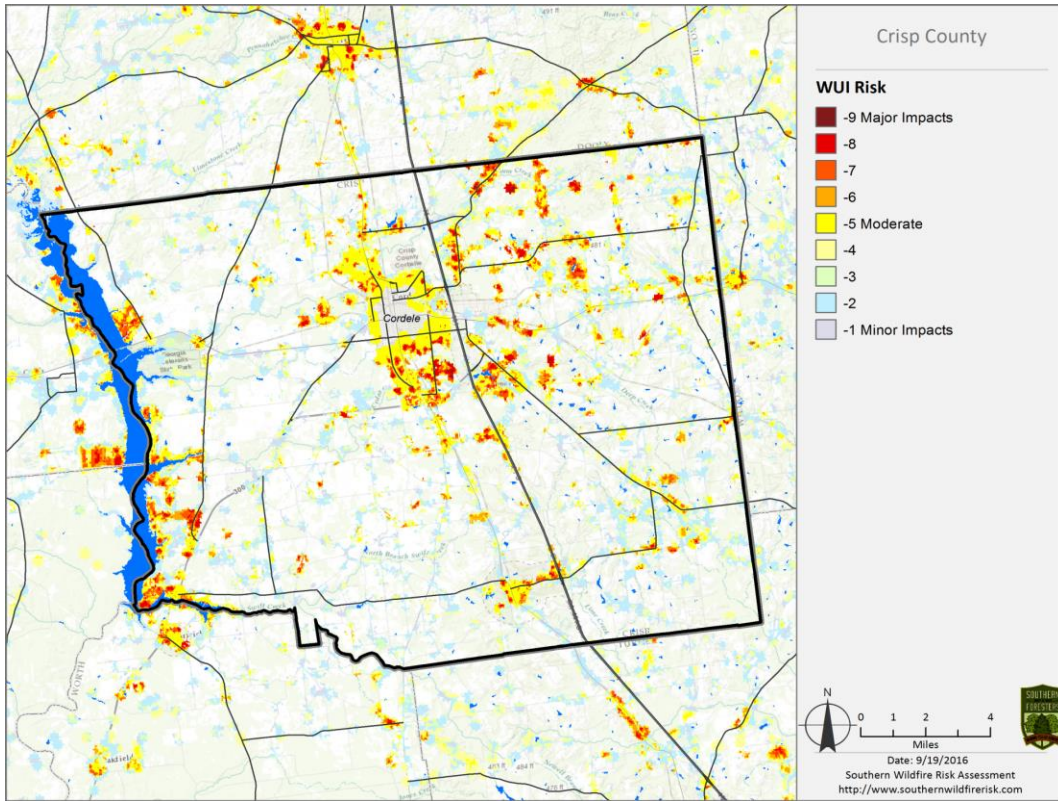
IX. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARDS MAPS

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

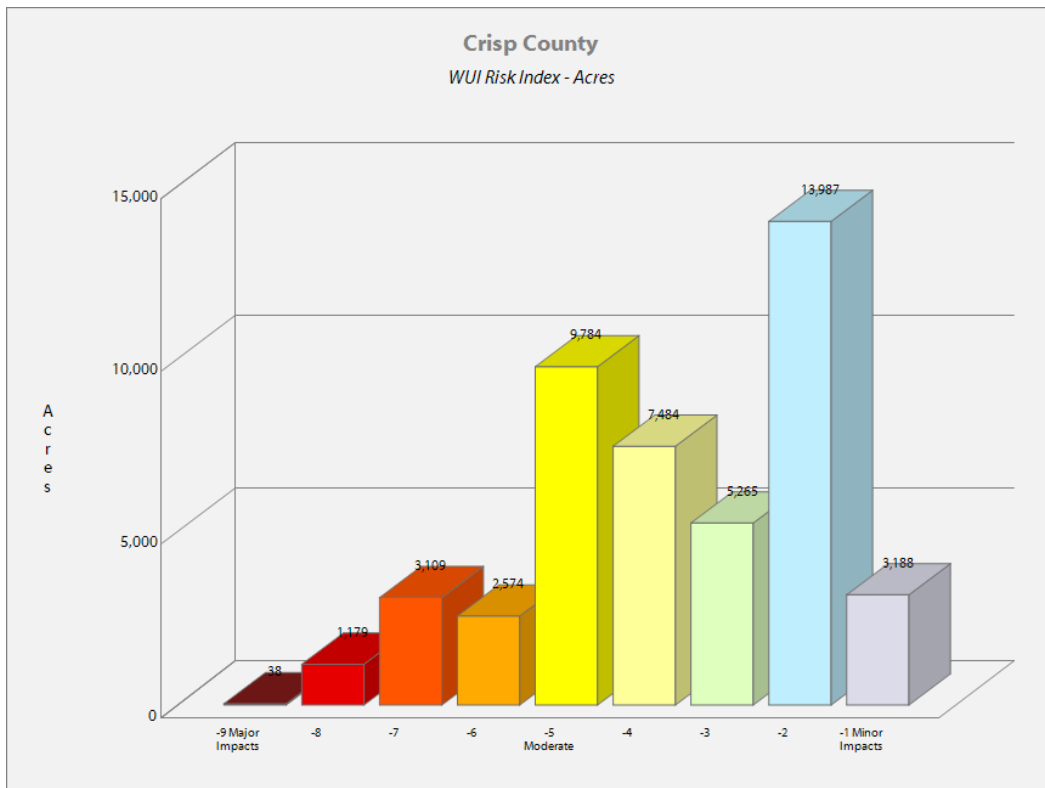
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests
- Allow agencies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

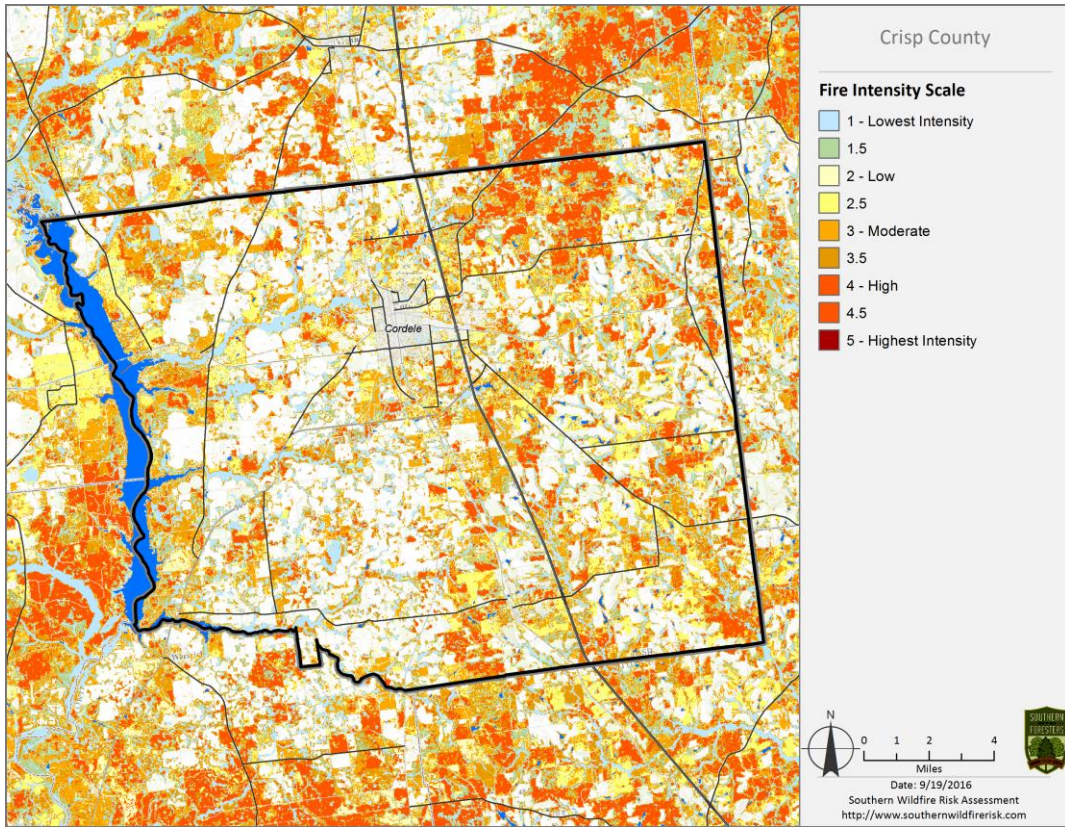


Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Map from the Crisp County SWRA Report

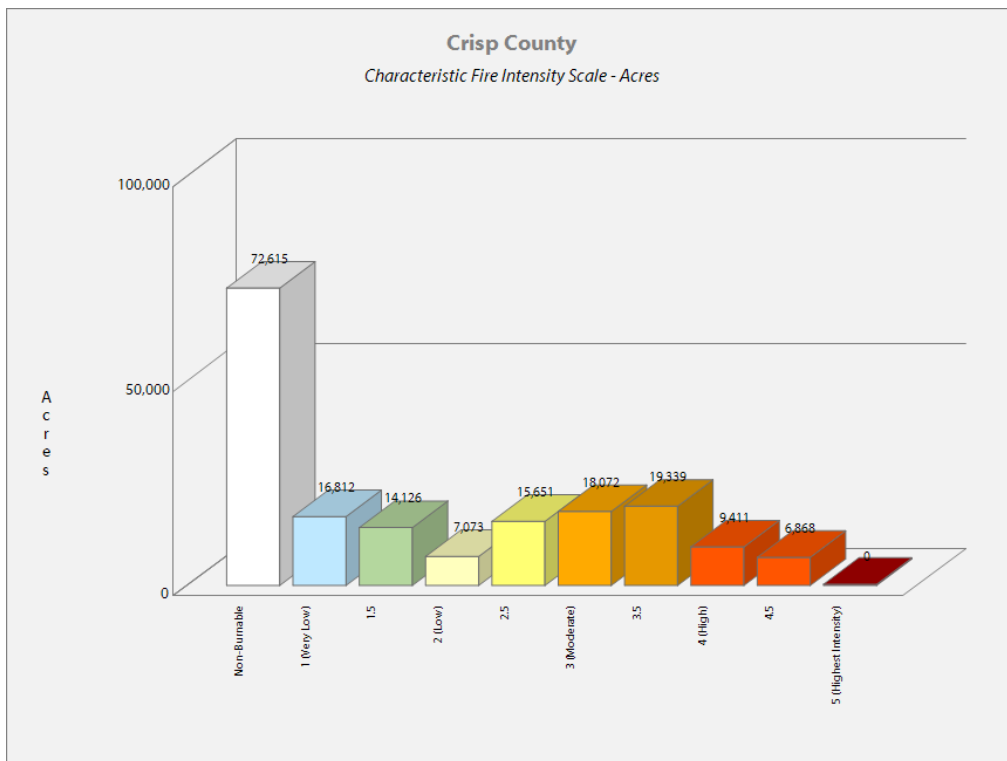


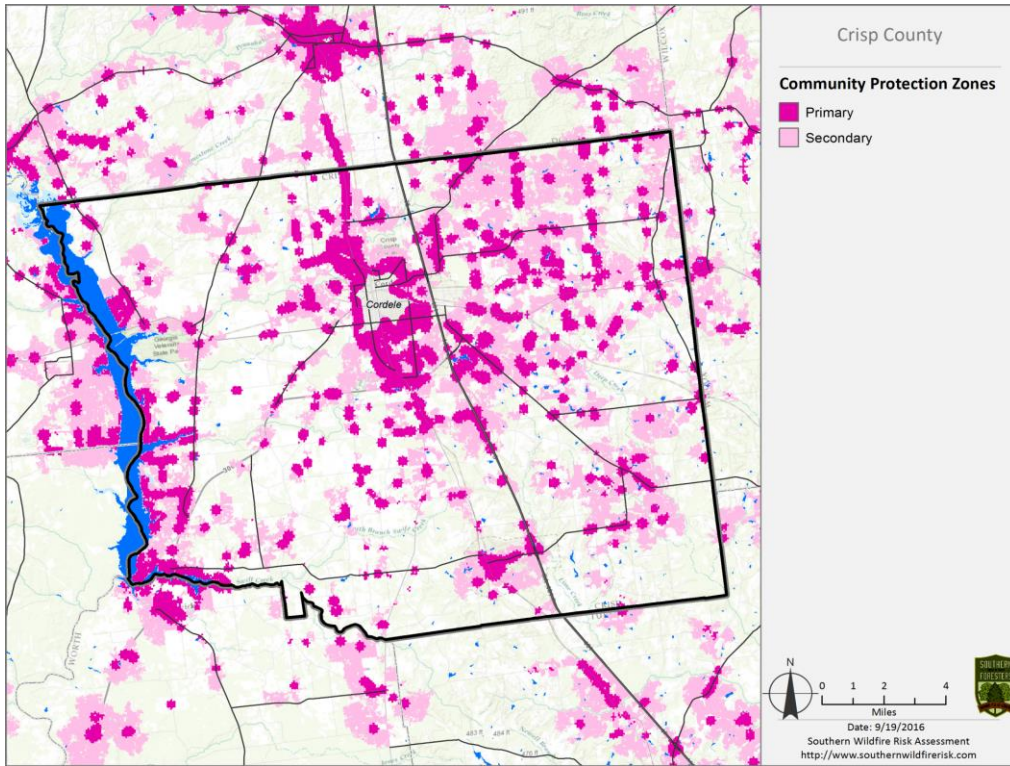
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map (above) and WUI Risk Acres graph (below)



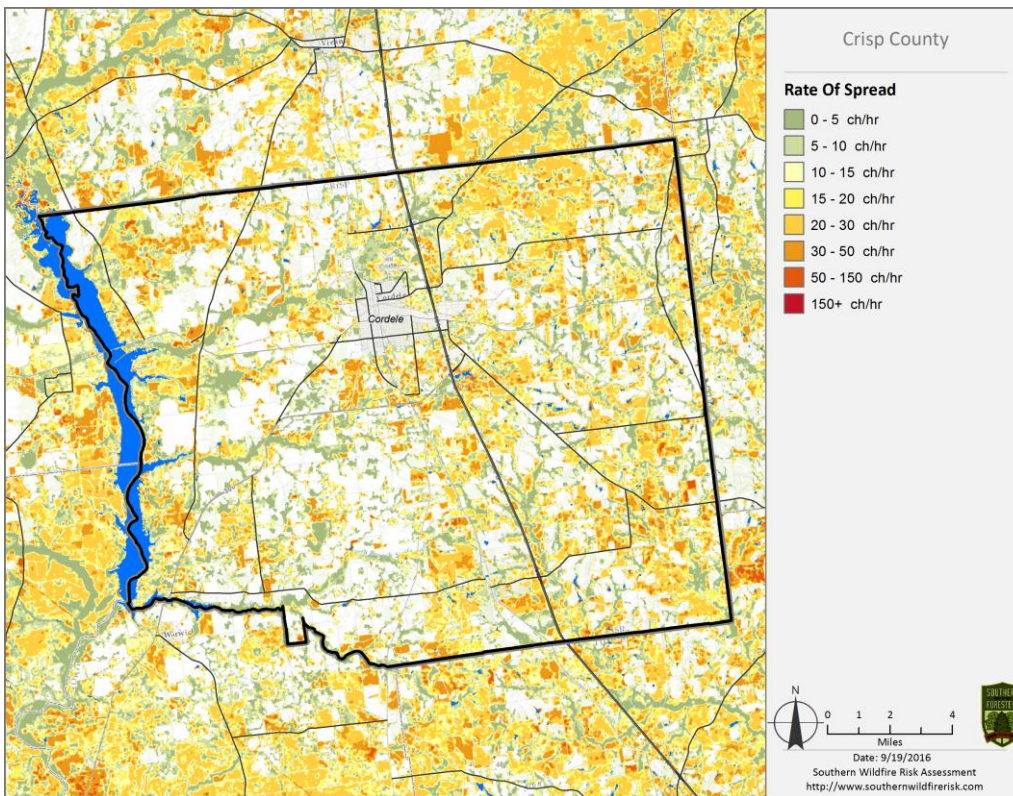


Fire Intensity Scale map (above) and Acres map (below)





Community Protection Zones map (above) and Rate of Spread map (below)



X. COMMUNITIES AT RISK & HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

HAZARD RATINGS FOR COMMUNITIES AT RISK

Community	Score	Hazard Rating
West Road Community	119	Very High Hazard
Lambtown (Crisp)	101	Very High hazard
Scenic Route	84	High Hazard
East Lake Briarpatch	77	High Hazard
Timberland	71	Moderate Hazard

These hazard ratings were completed during the month of May, 2011. 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 factors. The quantitative wildfire hazard ratings range from a low rating of 0 to 50 points to an extreme rating if over 120 points.

PROTECTING EXISTING STRUCTURES

Critical Facilities

Critical facilities are unique structures which require special consideration in the event of an emergency such as a wildland/urban interface fire. Every county will have some critical facilities and some more urbanized counties will have many. Critical facilities include: a nursing home that may need special consideration because the smoke accompanying a wildfire may be hazardous to the health of elderly residents, a law enforcement dispatch center is a critical facility that will need special consideration to insure there is no disruption of emergency communications in the event of a disastrous wildfire. Other examples of critical facilities are ethanol plants, auto salvage yards and facilities that produce chemicals that could be hazardous to the local population if released into the atmosphere.

The Crisp County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan 2011-2015 identifies a number of critical facilities that may require special protection in the event of a wildfire emergency.

RECOMMENDATION: Review Critical Facilities to evaluate any wildfire hazard and, if appropriate, suggest to owner/operators in person or by letter what action(s) might be taken to mitigate any observed hazards and improve wildfire protection.

Public Education Needs

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Initiate a community public education program for residents of “communities-at-risk”**
- **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 Crisp County is forested, the accumulation of brush and other (mostly ground) vegetation can create conditions over extensive areas that could fuel a disastrous wildfire. Treatment of forested areas with prescribed fire can significantly reduce this hazard while improving pulpwood and sawtimber production and enhancing wildlife habitat. Prescribed burning, however, must be conducted by experienced personnel when weather conditions are conducive to a safe burn and when an authorization has been obtained from the local office of the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Other ways to reduce wildland fuel (vegetation) include:

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

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

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

RECOMMENDATION:

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

SITE PLAN REVIEW

Growth pressure in Crisp County will undoubtedly increase over the next 20 years. If farm and ranch land is to be conserved as a mainstay of the County’s rural economy, new development will, by necessity, occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. The County Planning and Zoning Board(?) will have an opportunity to significantly influence the wildland fire safety of new developments. It is important that new development be planned and constructed to provide for public safety in the event of a wildland fire emergency.

Over the past 20 years, much has been learned about how and why homes burn during wildland fire emergencies. Perhaps most importantly, case histories and research have shown that even in the most severe circumstances, wildland fire disasters can be avoided. Homes can be designed, built and maintained to withstand a wildfire even in the absence of fire services on the scene. The national Firewise Communities program is a national awareness initiative to help people understand that they don’t have to be victims in a wildfire emergency. The National Fire Protection Association has produced two standards for reference: NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas. In 2014 Georgia adopted the International Wildland-Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) for use by counties in the State.

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,

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.
- 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.

FIRE SERVICES CAPABILITY

Structural fire protection in the County is provided by the Crisp County Volunteer Fire Department. At any one time, there are 5 paid firefighters and 15-20 volunteer firefighters who operate out of 6 stations.

<u>Station</u>	<u># Engines</u>	<u>Water Tenders</u>	<u>Brush Trucks</u>	<u>Firefighters</u>
1	1-1,000 gal.	1-1500 gal. & 1-3500 gal.	0	1
2	1-1,000 gal.	1-1500 gal.	0	1
3	1-1,000 gal.	1-1500 gal.	0	1
4	1-1,000 gal.	1-1500 gal.	0	1
5	1-1,250 gal.	1-1500 gal.	0	1
6	1-1,000 gallon	1-1500 gal.	0	vols.

Wildland Fire Training

All paid firefighters and some volunteer firefighters have completed the National Incident Management System (NIIMS) training courses, I-100, I-200 & I-300. About half of the firefighters participated in the NWCG (National Wildfire Coordinating Group) basic wildfire training courses (S-130: Standards for Survival and S-190: Basic Wildfire Behavior) 14-15 years ago.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Countywide there is no wildland personal protective equipment for use by volunteer firefighters when fighting brush fires and no fire shelters. Most engines are equipped with basic wildland fire hand tools (shovels, fire flaps and council rakes).

Water Availability

Pressurized hydrants exist in a number of developed areas in unincorporated Crisp County; however, the availability of an adequate supply of water in most outlying (rural) areas is a critical issue for structural fire protection.

Water Tenders

There are three (3) water tenders (1,500 – 3,500 gallon capacity) in Crisp County to transport water to structural fires in remote areas. These are located at Fire Departments 1 and 2 and are in addition to the six engines that carry 1,000-1,250 gallons of water.

XI. CRISP COUNTY ACTION PLAN

Proposed Education and Outreach Priorities

1. Conduct “How to Have a Firewise Home” Workshop for Crisp County Residents

Set up and conduct a workshop for homeowner’s that teaches 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.

Distribute materials promoting firewise practices and planning through local community and governmental meetings.

2. Conduct “Firewise” Workshop for Community Leaders

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 Firewise Community recognition.

3. Spring Clean-up Event (National Wildfire Preparedness Day)

Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Crisp County Fire Department, and community residents. Set up information table with Firewise 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. Since 2013 National Wildfire Preparedness Day is held annually on the 1st Saturday in May. Activities to include any of the following activities:

- 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
- Provide firewise materials to residents, homeowners, etc.

4. Informational Packets

Develop and distribute informational packets to be distributed by realtors and insurance agents. Included in the packets are the following:

- Be Firewise Around Your Home
- Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction
- Firewise Communities USA materials
- Fire Adapted Community information
- Ready Set Go materials

5. Wildfire Protection Display
Create and exhibit a display for the general public during festivals and events in the county. The display can be independent or combined with the Georgia Forestry Commission display.
6. Press
Invite the Crisp County and Cordele News Media and area TV and Radio to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Crisp County.

Community/Area at Risk	Project	Agency	Funding Needs	Priority	Recommendation
Countywide	(1) Water Tender	County	\$200,000	H	2,500 -3,000 gallon capacity
Countywide	Wildland Fire Training Courses	County/GFC	\$2,500	H	(Standards for Survival:S-130) and (Wildland Fire Behavior: S-190)
Countywide	Wildland Personal Protective Equipment	County	\$15,000	M	12 sets of wildland PPE, including boots and fire shelters
Countywide	Water Storage Tanks (2,500-3,000 gallon capacity)	County	\$25,000 (\$5,000 each)	M	5 water storage tanks to be located in strategic areas of the county
Countywide	Public Education	County/GFC	\$250	M	Firewise questionnaire to accompany all Building Permits for New Construction (non-regulatory; for info only)
Countywide	Public Education	GFC/County	\$1,000	M	Initiate targeted Firewise public education program for 5 “communities-at-risk”

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, Crisp County will implement the following:

- Communities-at-risk will be re-evaluated at periodic intervals to reassess wildfire hazards and prioritize any needed actions.
- Any 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.
- Continuing education and outreach programs will be continued and assessed for effectiveness.
- Mitigation efforts that could not be funded in the requested year will be incorporated into the annual renewal of the original CWPP action plan.
- 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 the 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.



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.

GRANT FUNDING AND MITIGATION ASSISTANCE

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 fire 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 edition.*

XI. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Publications/Brochures/Websites:

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

Appended Documents:

Crisp County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SouthWRAP)

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



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

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