

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



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

Decatur County



JUNE, 2017

Prepared by;
Rodney Heard, Chief Ranger, Decatur County
Will Fell, CWPP Specialist
Beryl Budd, Wildfire Prevention Specialist (revised 2017)

Georgia Forestry Commission
1611 Dothan Rd
Bainbridge, GA 39817

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:

Alan Thomas, County Administrator
Decatur County

Charlie McCann, Fire Chief/EMA Director
Decatur County

Doyle Welch, Fire Chief
City of Bainbridge

Rodney Heard, Chief Ranger
Decatur County Forestry Unit

Jeff Kelly
City of Climax Fire Chief

Harold Bryant
Captain Kendrick VFD

David Ingram
Captain Recovery VFD

James Earp
Captain Brinson VFD

Les Oberry
Captain Fowlstown VFD

Billy Brown
Captain Attapulugus VFD

Frank Kay
Captain Black Jack VFD

Kenny King
Captain DCFR

Tony Nix
Captain DCFR

Guy Yates
Captain DCFR

Patrick Cofty
Training Officer DCFR

Sam Hughes
Captain Mt Pleasant VFD

Howard Author
Captain Faceville VFD

PLAN CONTENTS

PAGE

I. Objectives 1

II. Community Collaboration 1

III. Community Background and Wildfire History..... 2

IV. Community Base Maps 8

V. Community Wildfire Risk Assessment 12

VI. Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment & Risk Hazards Maps 17

VII. Prioritized Mitigation Recommendations 21

VIII. Action Plan 25

IX. Grant Funding & Mitigation Assistance.....28

X. Glossary.....29

XI. Sources of Information31

Appended Documents:

Decatur County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary (SouthWRAP)

Decatur County Wildfire Plan

I. OBJECTIVES

The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Decatur County. The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect this community and its essential infrastructure. It also includes a plan for wildfire suppression. Specifically, the plan includes community-centered actions that will:

- Educate citizens on wildfire, its risks, and ways to protect lives and properties,
- Support fire rescue and suppression entities,
- Focus on collaborative decision-making and citizen participation,
- Develop and implement effective mitigation strategies, and
- Develop and implement effective community ordinances and codes.

II. COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The core team convened in December of 2008 to assess risks and develop the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The group is comprised of representatives from local government, local fire authorities, and the state agency responsible for forest management. Below are the groups included in the task force:

Decatur County Government
Fire Rescue
Emergency Management
Board of County Commissioners

City Of Bainbridge
Public Safety Department

Georgia Forestry Commission

It was decided to conduct community assessments on the basis of the individual fire districts along with selected communities within the county. The chiefs and captains of the twelve fire departments in the county assessed their districts and reconvened in February of 2009 for the purpose of completing the following:

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

III. COMMUNITY BACKGROUND AND WILDFIRE HISTORY

Community Background



Decatur County is located in the southwest corner of the state, adjoining Baker, Grady, Miller, Mitchell, and Seminole counties. One of the largest counties in Georgia at 596.8 square miles, Decatur shares its southern boundary with the Florida state line. There are four incorporated cities in the county: Attapulgus, Bainbridge (the county seat), Brinson, and Climax (named after the fact that it is the highest point on the railroad between Savannah and the Chattahoochee River).

Decatur County was created by an act of the state legislature on December 8, 1823, which carved all the area from Alabama to Grady County out of Early County. Later the western portion of the county was separated from Decatur to form Seminole County. Spanish explorers had visited the area as early as 1540, and settlements were founded shortly thereafter. Decatur County was named after Commodore Stephen Decatur, a War of 1812 (1812-15) naval hero who may be best remembered for his

response to an 1816 toast: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong."

According to the 2000 U.S. census, the population of Decatur County was 28,240 (57.1 percent white, 39.9 percent black, and 3.2 percent Hispanic).

The governing body is a six-member board of commissioners who serve staggered four-year terms elected from individual districts. The chairman is elected by the board from among their own members. The day-to-day operations are supervised by a county administrator.

Decatur County sits atop the Floridan aquifer and is bisected by the Flint River. Lake Seminole, created by a dam at the Florida line built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, forms the southwestern boundary of the county. The lake is noted for bass fishing and is the site of an annual national tournament. Jack Wingate's lodge and marina on the lake was made famous in the first *Mark Trail* comic strip, drawn by cartoonist Ed Dodd.

Bainbridge, the seat of Decatur County, is located in southwest Georgia approximately forty miles north of Tallahassee, Florida; sixty miles east of Dothan, Alabama; and sixty miles south of Albany, Georgia. U.S. Highway 84 and U.S. Highway 27 intersect in Bainbridge, which also boasts its own limited access highway.

Bainbridge is located on the Flint River and is one of two "inland ports" in Georgia (the other is Columbus). Native Americans occupied the area for centuries, and a settlement called Pucknawhitla stood on the site of present-day Bainbridge in 1765, when Europeans arrived. The name was changed to Burgess Town, after a European trader who set up a trading post at the settlement, and then to Fort Hughes after a nearby camp. In 1824 the legislature decided the county seat should be named for Commodore William Bainbridge, commander of the ship commonly known as "Old Ironsides," the U.S.S. *Constitution*, in the War of 1812. Bainbridge is nicknamed "the Oak City" because of its many large oak trees.



Decatur County Courthouse

According to the 2000 U.S. census the population of Bainbridge is 11,722 (47.5 percent white, 50.3 percent African American, and 2 percent Hispanic). The major employment sectors are carpet and fiber manufacturing, agribusiness, glass press manufacturing, health, and education. Bainbridge College, which serves one Florida county and eight Georgia counties, was established in 1970 and opened to students in 1973. Enrollment in 2003 was just over 2,400.

The historic district encompasses most of downtown Bainbridge and the surrounding streets of antebellum homes. At Bainbridge College there is a nature trail on which are located two historic sites: an old turpentine mill and two rough-hewn stones probably, but not certainly, of Native American origin. The Decatur County Historical Society maintains a museum in the old city hall/fire hall/jail building, which it shares with the Decatur County Council for the Arts. A gazebo on the city square hosts musical performances at Christmas and throughout the year.

Recreational opportunities are abundant. National tennis tournaments and fishing tournaments are held in Bainbridge, and water sports facilities are available at the Earle May Boat Basin and nearby Seminole State Park. The boat basin also boasts a performing arts building, several baseball and softball fields, a beach, a petting zoo, a museum, and a riverwalk, with many landscaped holding ponds around surrounded by wooden walkways, lighting, and benches.

During World War II (1941-45) an airport was built in Bainbridge to train pilots. Toward the end of the war, the facility became a camp for German prisoners of war. In the early 1960s Bainbridge State Hospital, a residential facility for the developmentally challenged, took over the property. Today, it is a low-security drug treatment facility.

The Gilbert H. Gragg Library in Bainbridge is the headquarters for the Southwest Georgia Regional Library System, which serves Decatur, Miller, and Seminole counties. As of 2004 the library's collection included more than 163,000 volumes along with computers and audiovisual materials. Meeting facilities include satellite and computer resources as well. The Southwest Georgia Regional Library System won the National Award for Library Service in 2002.

Bainbridge has a mayor and city council/city manager form of government. It is the hometown of Georgia's former secretary of state, Cathy Cox.

(Courtesy New Georgia Encyclopedia)

Wildfire History

While Decatur County is a major agricultural county, 64% of the county is still forested. Large tracts of timberland are South and Southwest of Bainbridge and major landowners include Coastal Lumber Co. and International Paper. International Paper owns 10,000 acres on both sides of the Flint River, with 5000 acres in planted pines less than 15 years old. Land here is rolling, with gullies and creeks. The county is intersected by U.S. Highways 84 & 27 but both roads cross the Flint River inside the city limits, so travel across river to forested areas is difficult at times. The rest of the county is flatter with forested land interspersed with cultivated fields. The Silver Lake and Hog Farm Tracts, roughly 6,000 acres have been acquired by the state for wildlife management areas.

Decatur County is protected by Decatur County Fire & Rescue with the central station located just northwest of Bainbridge, with 10 rural fire departments well spaced throughout the county. The city of Bainbridge is protected by the Bainbridge Public Safety Department with two fire stations located in Bainbridge. The Georgia Forestry Commission maintains a county protection unit located just west of Bainbridge to respond to wildland fires within the county. The city of Bainbridge is serviced with a modern pressurized water system with hydrants throughout the city and in the industrial area just west of the city.

Over the past fifty years, Decatur County has averaged around 100 reported wildfires a year with over 60% of these occurring during January, February and March. These fires have burned an average of 626 acres a year over the same period, though generally there has been some decrease since the advent of burning permits the past 20 years. Still in the year 2004 the county lost over 1100 acres to wildfire. The following table charts wildfire activity from 2007 through 2016 indicating the number of wildfires, acreage, and average size compared to the Statewide average.

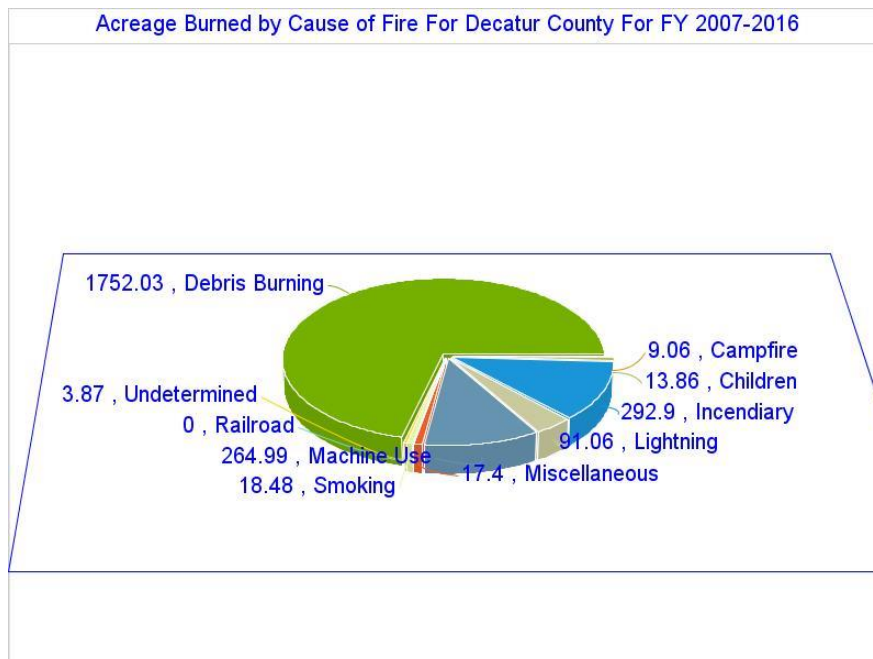
Acreage Burned /Number of Fires for Decatur County For FY 2007-2016				
Year	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	State wide Average
2007	382.82	121	3.16	18.64
2008	279.79	72	3.86	4.56
2009	340.90	64	5.33	3.90
2010	502.85	42	11.97	3.93
2011	371.96	117	3.18	17.56
2012	96.01	42	2.29	5.08
2013	287.50	28	10.27	4.53
2014	48.44	12	4.04	5.02
2015	77.98	41	1.90	4.42
2016	75.40	44	1.71	6.29

The table below indicates wildfire activity for the current fiscal year (July 1, 2016 thru June 30, 2017)

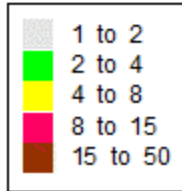
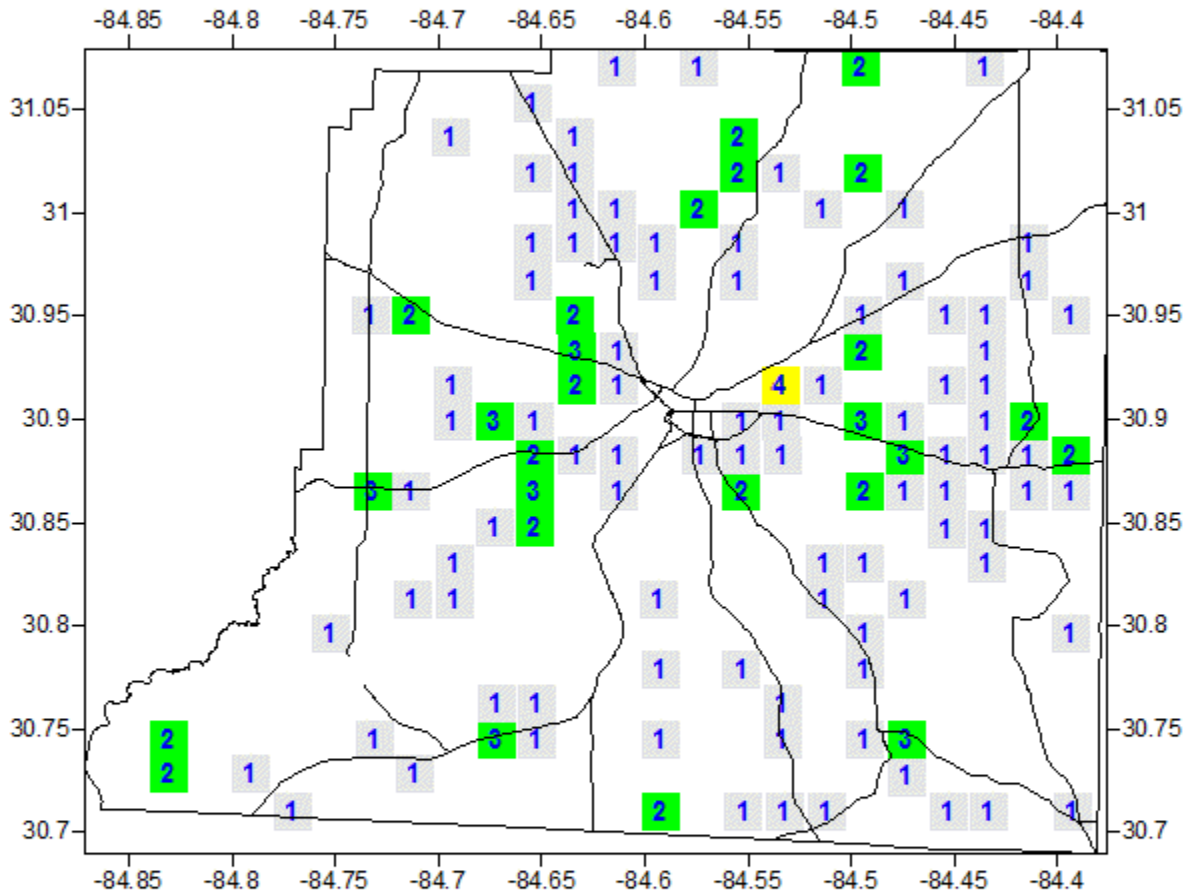
County = Decatur	Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	1	0.00	0.40	0.02
Children	Children	1	0.17	0.80	0.57
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	1	3.82	1.60	5.94
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	6	3.15	2.60	6.91
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	35	138.49	13.60	81.82
Debris: Household Garbage	Debris: Household Garbage	14	8.23	4.00	3.20
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	7	12.71	1.40	2.54
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	14	18.69	7.20	8.70
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	4	1.77	2.60	7.74
Incendiary	Incendiary	0	0.00	1.20	4.51
Lightning	Lightning	0	0.00	0.20	0.84
Machine Use	Machine Use	13	6.31	4.40	9.37
Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	0	0.00	0.20	0.32
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	3	1.07	0.60	0.21
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	2	2.53	2.20	2.83
Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	3	2.80	0.60	0.56
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	1	0.18	0.20	0.04
Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	0	0.00	0.20	0.22
Railroad	Railroad	1	0.10	0.20	0.02
Smoking	Smoking	0	0.00	0.80	0.74
Undetermined	Undetermined	3	0.15	1.80	0.80
Totals for County: Decatur Year: 2017		109	200.17	46.80	137.90

During the last 10 years the leading cause of fires in Decatur County has been Debris Burning accounting for over 60% of the fires and 70% of the acres lost. The second leading cause of fires was Machine Use followed by Incendiary or Arson fires.

Acreage Burned /Number of Fires by Fire Cause For Decatur County For FY 2007-2016		
Fire Cause	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires
Campfire	9.06	6
Children	13.86	16
Debris Burning	1,752.03	364
Incendiary	292.90	65
Lightning	91.06	17
MachineUse	264.99	79
Miscellaneous	17.40	18
Railroad	0.00	0
Smoking	18.48	12
Undetermined	3.87	6
Total	2,463.65	583

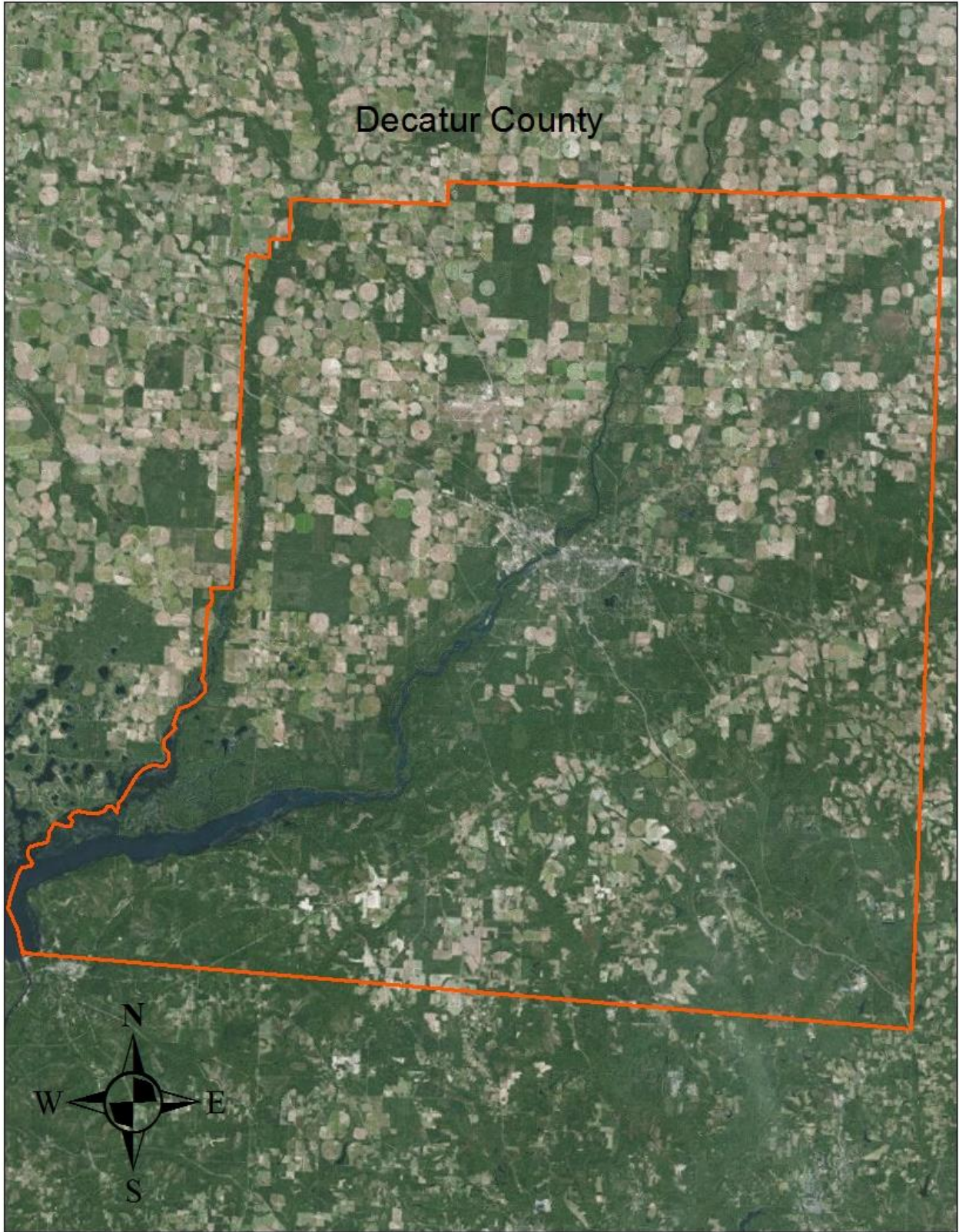


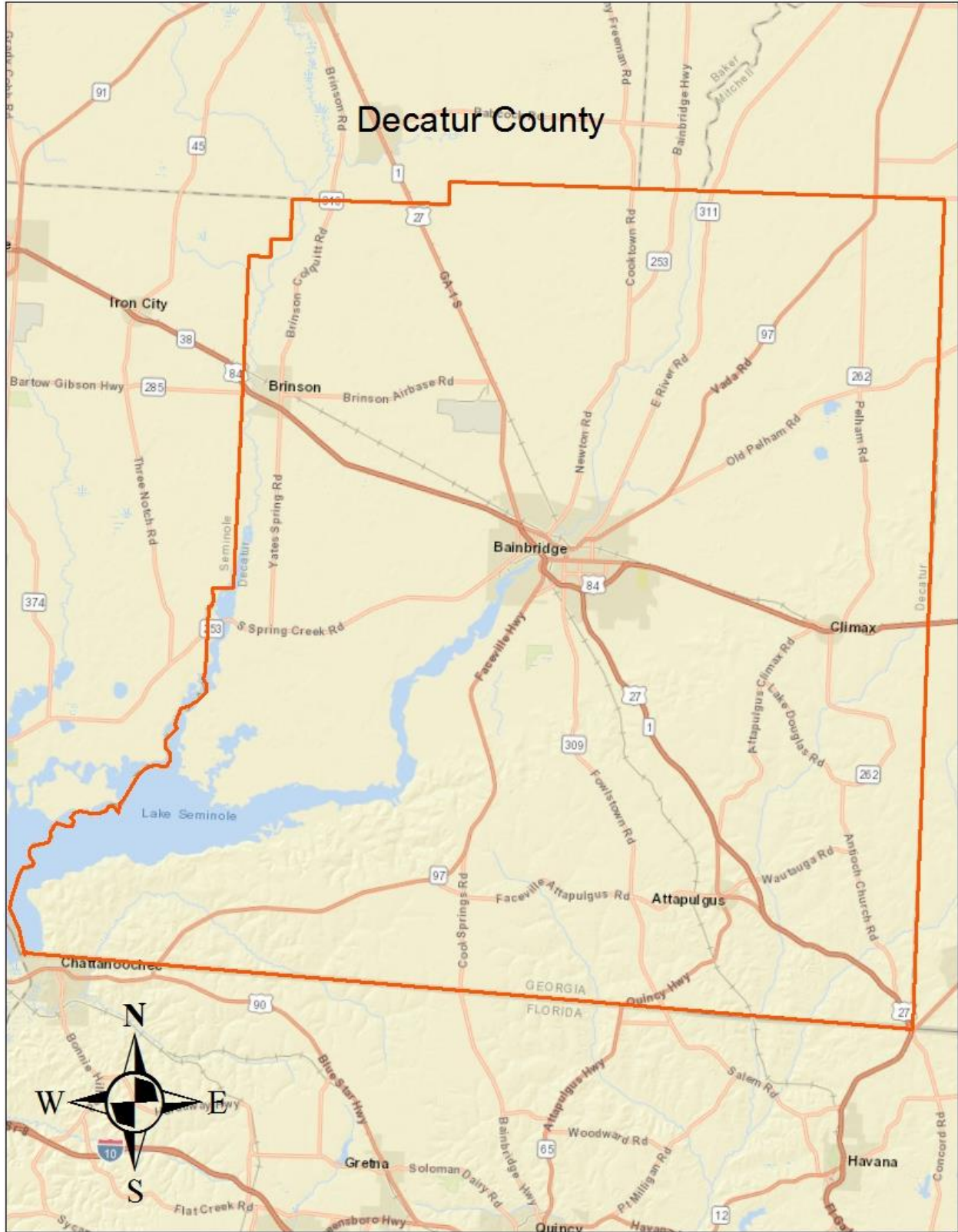
Fire Occurrence Map for Decatur County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



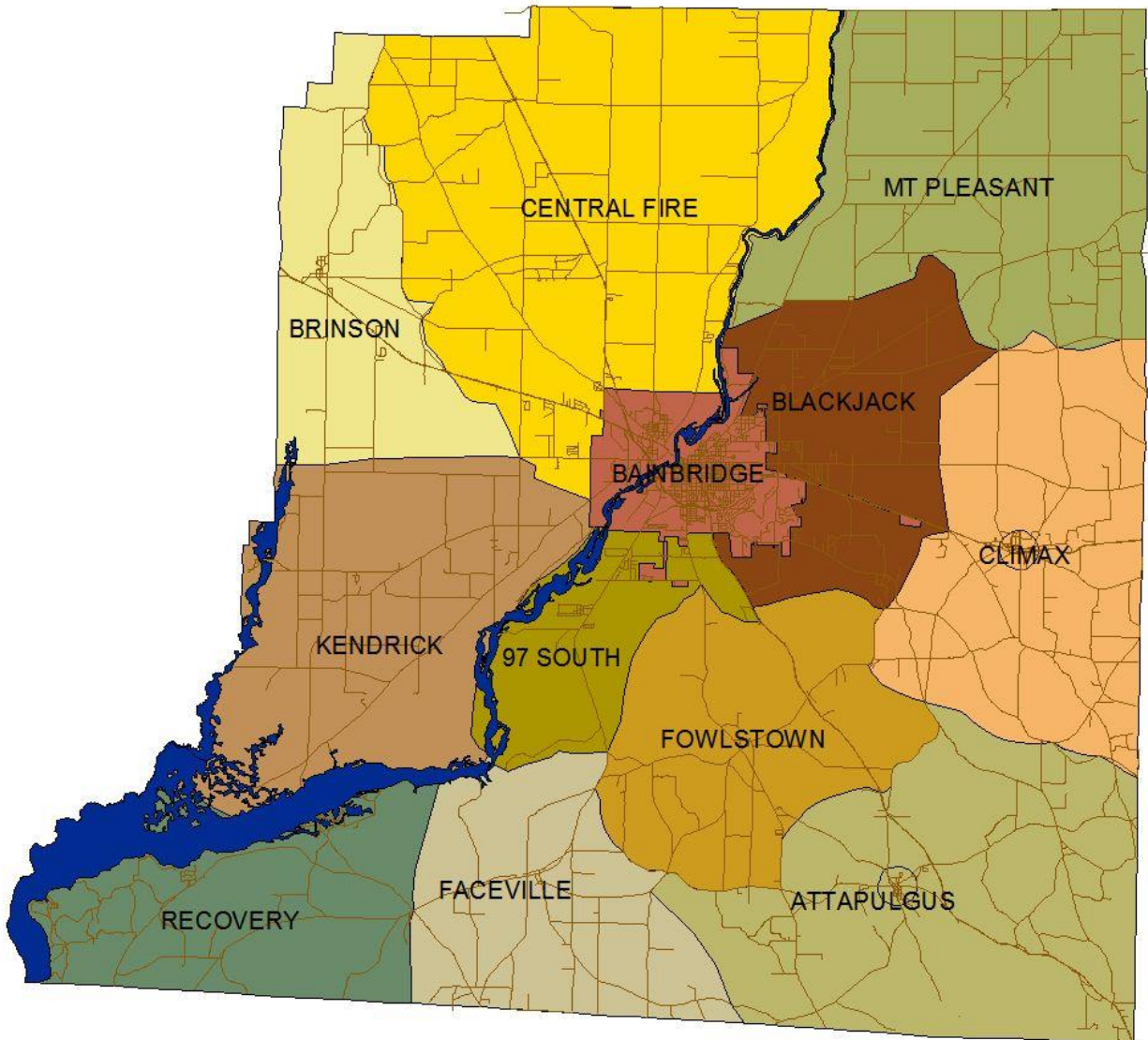
IV. COMMUNITY BASE MAPS







Decatur County Fire Districts



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.

(courtesy *Fire Ecology and Wildfire Mitigation in Florida* 2004)



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

Wildland Urban Interface Hazards

Firefighters in the wildland urban interface may encounter hazards other than the fire itself, such as hazardous materials, utility lines and poor access.

● Hazardous Materials

- Common chemicals used around the home may be a direct hazard to firefighters from flammability, explosion potential and/or vapors or off-gassing. Such chemicals include paint, varnish and other flammable liquids; fertilizer; pesticides; cleansers; aerosol cans, fireworks, batteries and ammunition. In addition, some common household products such as plastics may give off very toxic fumes when they burn. Stay OUT of the smoke from burning structures and any unknown sources such as trash piles.

● Illicit Activities

- Marijuana plantations or drug production labs may be found in wildland urban interface areas. Extremely hazardous materials such as propane tanks and flammable/toxic chemicals may be encountered, as well as booby traps.

● Propane tanks

- Both large (household size) and small (gas grill size) liquefied propane gas (LPG) tanks can present hazards to firefighters, including explosion. See the "LPG Tank Hazards" discussion for details.

● Utility lines

- Utility lines may be located above and below ground and may be cut or damaged by tools or equipment. Don't spray water on utility lines or boxes.

● Septic tanks and fields

- Below-ground structures may not be readily apparent and may not support the weight of engines or other apparatus.

● New construction materials

- Many new construction materials have comparatively low melting points and may "off-gas" extremely hazardous vapors. Plastic decking materials that resemble wood are becoming more common and may begin softening and losing structural strength at 180° F, though they normally do not sustain combustion once direct flame is removed. However, if they continue to burn they exhibit the characteristics of flammable liquids.

● Pets and livestock

- Pets and livestock may be left when residents evacuate and will likely be highly stressed, making them more inclined to bite and kick. Firefighters should not put themselves at risk to rescue pets or livestock.

● Evacuation occurring

- Firefighters may be taking structural protection actions while evacuations of residents are occurring. Be very cautious of people driving erratically. Distraught residents may refuse to leave their property, and firefighters may need to disengage from fighting fire to contact law enforcement officers for assistance. In most jurisdictions firefighters do not have the authority to force evacuations. Firefighters should not put themselves at risk for those that won't evacuate!

● Limited access

- Narrow one-lane roads with no turn-around room, inadequate or poorly maintained bridges and culverts are frequently found in wildland urban interface areas. Access should be sized-up and an evacuation plan for all emergency personnel should be developed.

The wildland fire risk assessments conducted in 2009 by the Decatur County Fire Departments and the Bainbridge Department of Public Safety returned an average score of 117, placing Decatur County in the “high” moderate range. The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Decatur 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 Decatur County:

- Dead end roads with inadequate turn arounds
- Narrow roads without drivable shoulders
- Long, narrow, and poorly labeled driveways
- Thick, highly flammable vegetation surrounding many homes
- Minimal defensible space around structures
- Homes with wooden siding and roofs with heavy accumulations of vegetative debris
- No pressurized or non-pressurized water systems available
- Above ground utilities
- Large, adjacent areas of forest or wildlands
- Undeveloped lots comprising half the total lots in many rural communities
- High occurrence of wildfires in the several locations
- Heavy fuel loading in forested areas

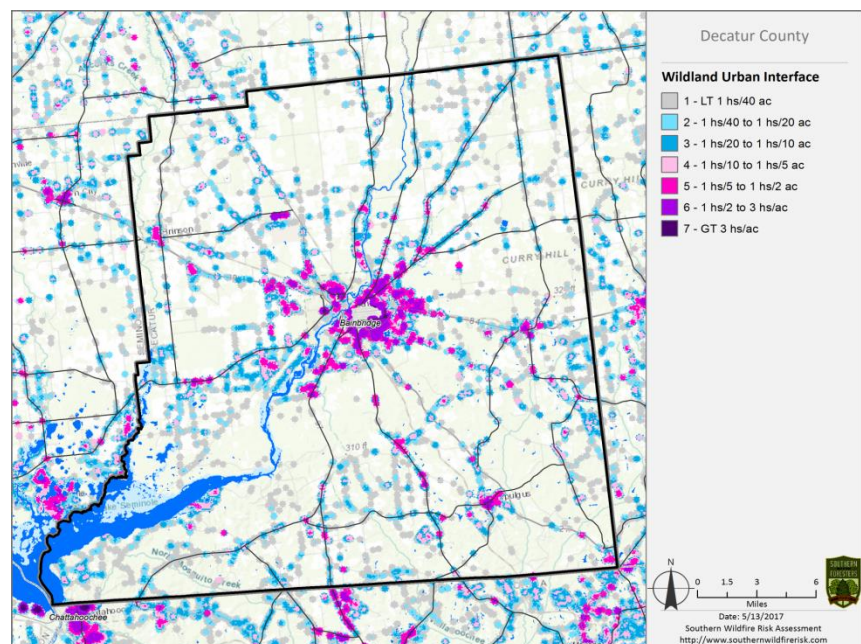
Summary of Decatur County Assessment Ratings

Community/VFD District	Access Hazard	Site Hazard	Bldg Hazard	Add	Total score	Hazard Rating
Riverview / Mt Pleasant VFD	9	66	18	35	128	Moderate Risk
Mt Pleasant / Mt Pleasant VFD	8	28	20	19	75	Low Risk
Cyrene / DCFR	17	50	20	20	107	Moderate Risk
Elderendo / DCFR	21	54	25	41	141	Extreme Risk
Pinehill / DCFR	21	54	25	41	141	Extreme Risk
Cooktown / DCFR	21	47	20	40	128	Moderate Risk
Booster Club / Recovery VFD	12	59	5	44	120	Moderate Risk
Jinks Crossing / Recovery VFD	20	67	10	49	146	Extreme Risk
Recovery / Recovery VFD	11	45	5	14	75	Low Risk
Smith Landing / Kendrick VFD	22	59	35	60	174	Extreme Risk
Piney Woods / Kendrick VFD	15	25	48	44	132	High Risk
River Oaks / Kendrick VFD	14	40	5	52	111	Moderate Risk
McCrayville / Attapulcus VFD	16	44	20	58	138	High Risk
Attapulcus / Attapulcus VFD	4	27	15	36	82	Moderate Risk
Climax / Climax VFD	8	31	24	16	79	Moderate Risk
Bettsville Lndg Rd/Facevile VFD	11	47	10	42	110	Moderate Risk
Slough Loop/Blackjack VFD	8	51	15	29	103	Moderate Risk
Blackjack Comm/Blackjack VFD	10	29	0	41	80	Moderate Risk
Meadowbrook SD/Hwy 97 South	12	42	5	44	103	Moderate Risk
Dollar SD/97 South VFD	8	72	1	54	144	Extreme Risk
Brinson/Brinson VFD	21	47	20	40	128	Moderate Risk
City of Bainbridge/Bainbridge PSD	7	28	24	10	69	Low Risk
Dowdells/Fowlstown VFD	15	37	20	37	114	Moderate Risk
Fowlstown/Fowlstown VFD	8	79	30	42	159	Extreme Risk
Average					117	Moderate Risk

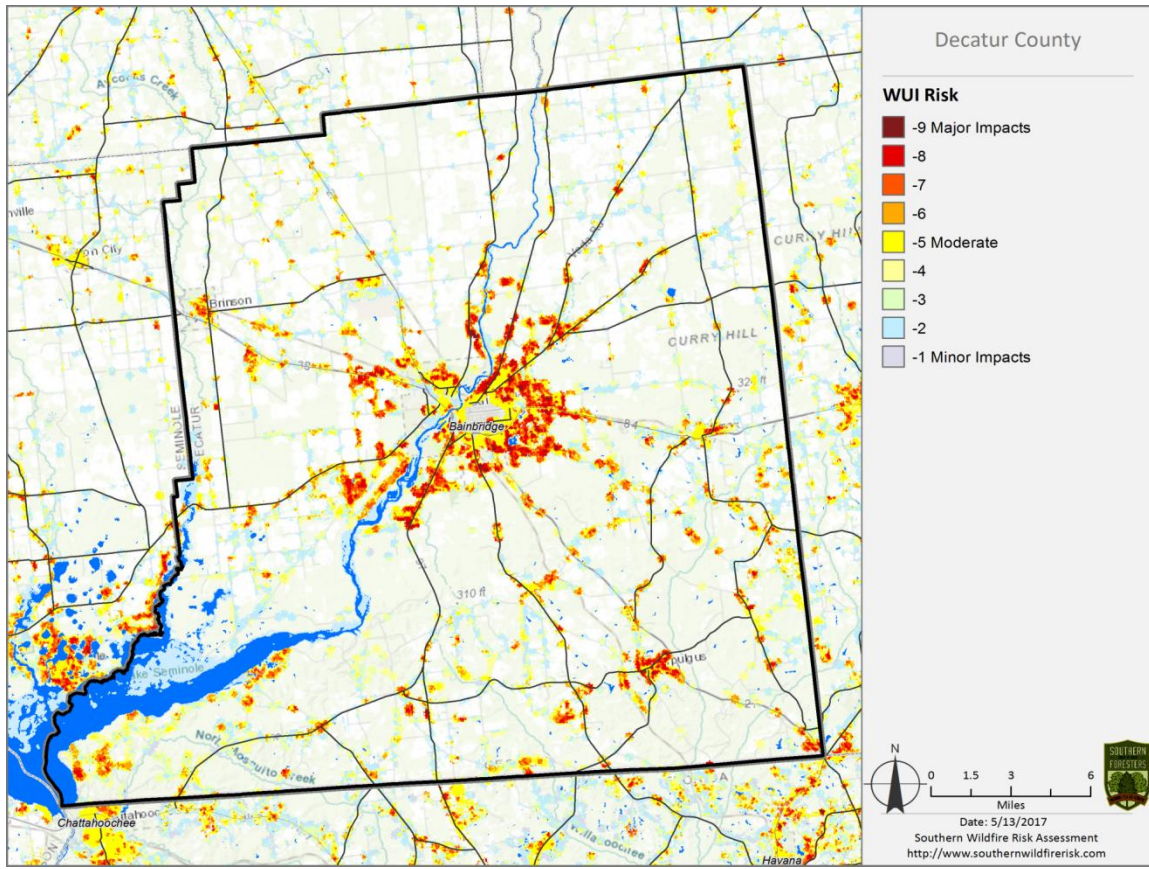
VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & HAZARD RISK MAPS

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

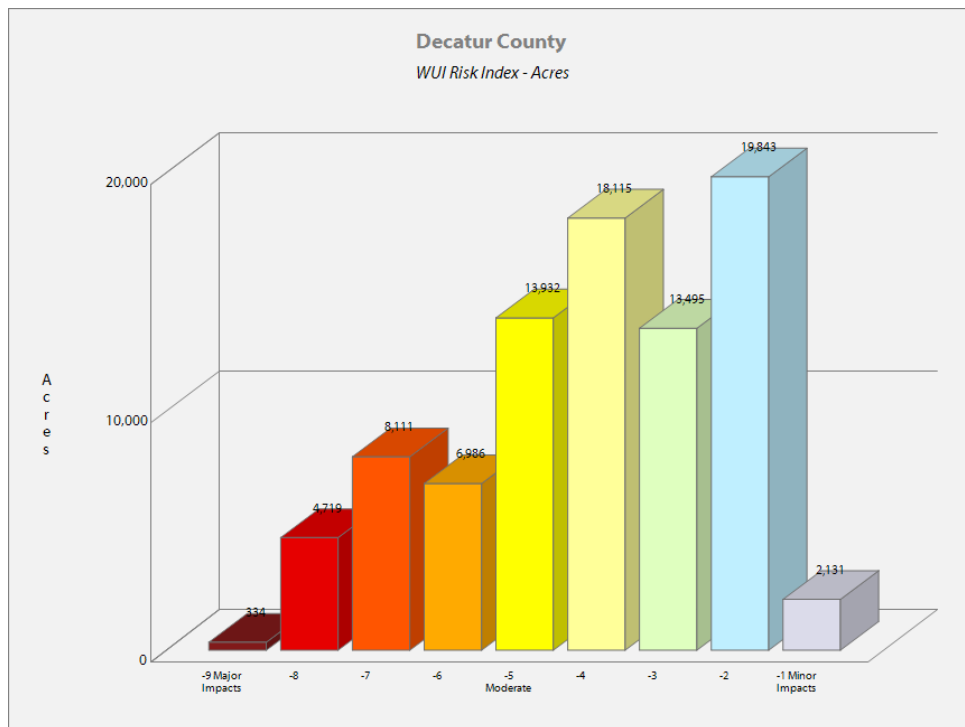
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests
- Allow agencies to work together to better define priorities and improve emergency response, particularly across jurisdictional boundaries
- Define wildland communities and identify the risk to those communities
- Increase communication and outreach with local residents and the public to create awareness and address community priorities and needs
- Plan for response and suppression resource needs
- Plan and prioritize hazardous fuel treatment programs

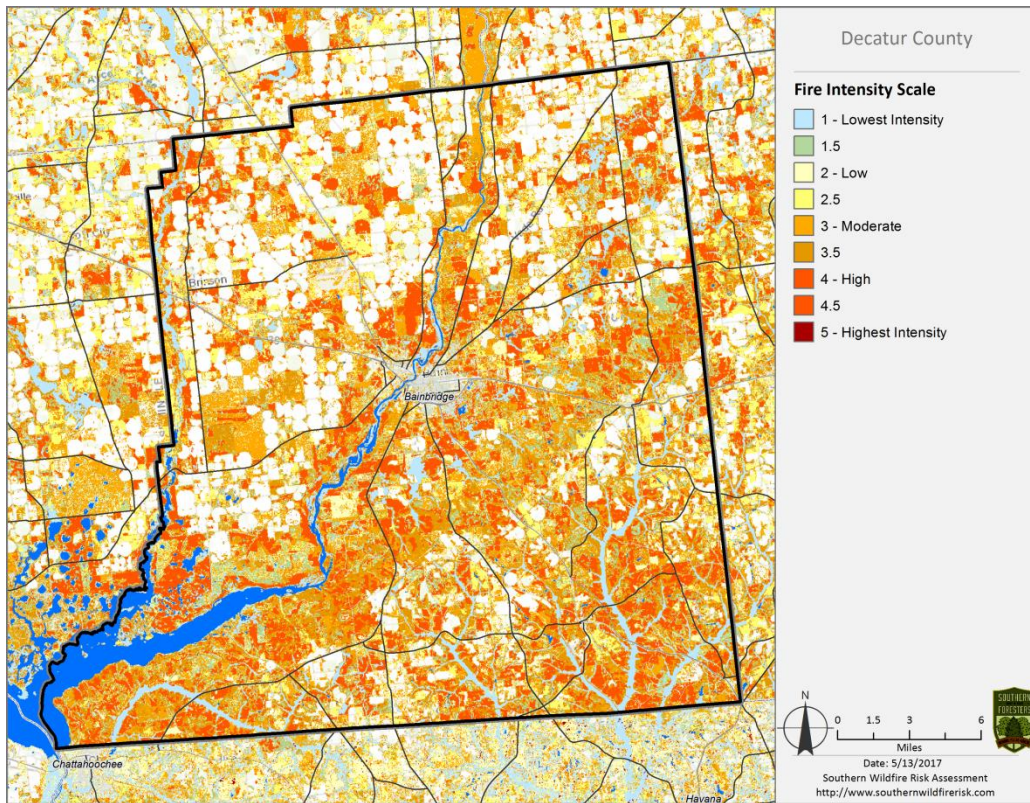


Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map from the Decatur County SWRA Summary

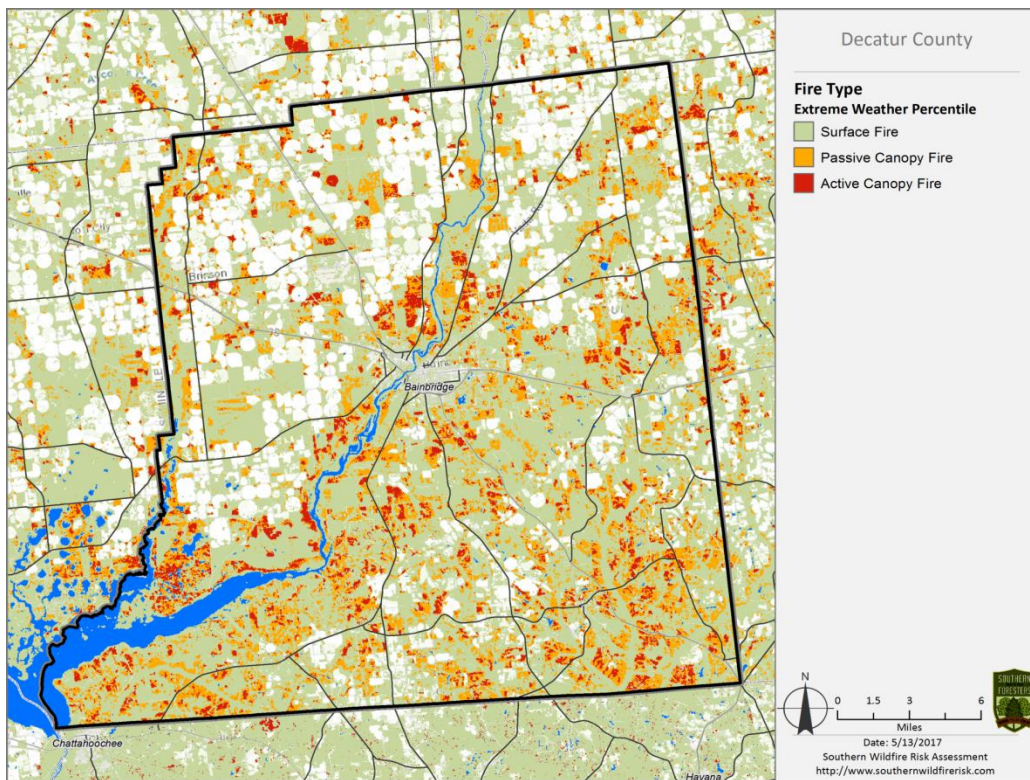


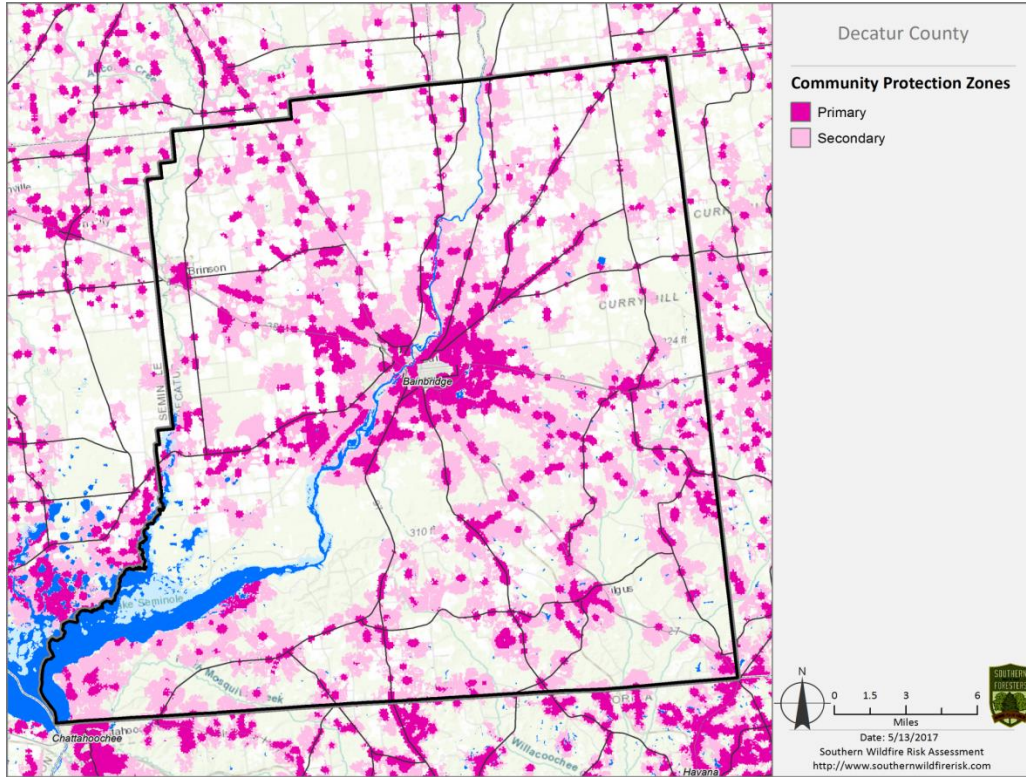
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map (above) and WUI Acres graph (below)



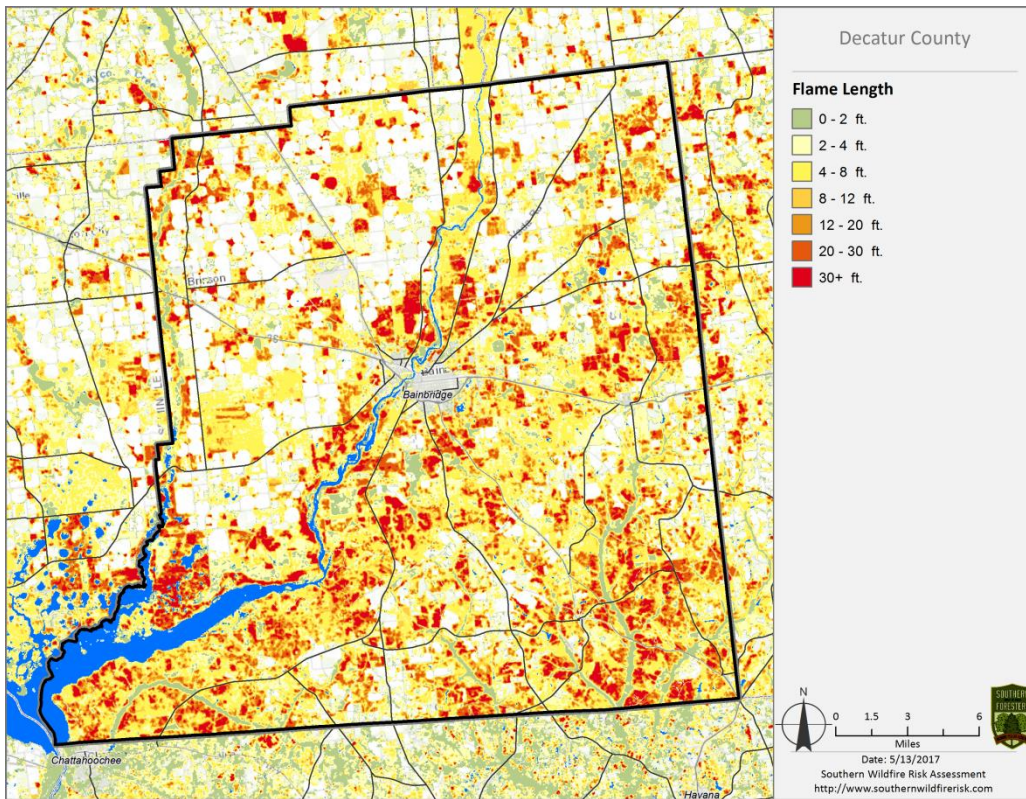


Pictured above is a Fire Intensity Scale map and below is potential Fire Type map





Pictured above is a Community Protection Zones map and below is a Flame Length map



VII. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

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

Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

Primary Protection for Community and Its Essential Infrastructure		
Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. All Structures	Create minimum of 30-foot of defensible space**	Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet from structures, trim overhanging limbs, replace flammable plants near homes with less flammable varieties, remove vegetation around chimneys.
2. Applicable Structures	Reduce structural ignitability**	Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters, store firewood appropriately, install skirting around raised structures, store water hoses for ready access, replace pine straw and mulch around plantings with less flammable landscaping materials.
3. Community Clean-up Day National Wildfire Preparedness Day	Cutting, mowing, pruning**	Cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces. Firewise education to homeowners.
4. Road Signage	At replacement	New road signage with minimum 4 inch reflective lettering on non flammable 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	Work with developers to identify and create alternate access and exits routes to subdivisions and communities with only one way in and out.

<p>7. Codes and Ordinances</p>	<p>Examine existing codes and ordinances.</p> <p>International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) was approved and adopted for use in Georgia counties in 2014.</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>At such time as the development of zoning, planning and subdivision ordinances become practical include fire department and emergency services input in the design of these.</p>
--------------------------------	--	---

Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities

Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
<p>1. Adjacent WUI Lands</p>	<p>Reduce hazardous fuels</p>	<p>Encourage prescribed burning for private landowners and industrial timberlands particularly adjacent to residential areas</p>
<p>2. Adjacent Corps Lands</p>	<p>Reduce hazardous fuels</p>	<p>Work with Corps land management to undertake fuel reduction strategies on Lake Seminole lands adjacent to WUI areas.</p>
<p>3. Adjacent WMA Lands</p>	<p>Reduce hazardous fuels</p>	<p>Work with DNR land management to incorporate regular prescribed burning on Lake Seminole WMA managed lands adjacent to identified WUI areas.</p>
<p>4. Railroad Corridors</p>	<p>Reduce hazardous fuels</p>	<p>Encourage railroads to better maintain their ROW eliminating brush and grass through herbicide and mowing. Maintain firebreaks along ROW adjacent to residential areas.</p>
<p>5. Existing Fire Lines</p>	<p>Reduce hazardous fuels</p>	<p>Encourage private landowners to clean and re-harrow existing fire lines.</p>

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	Brush Trucks	Investigate need for Brush Trucks at selected stations
3. Fire Stations	Equipment	Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland PPE Gear.
4. Lakeside WUI	Fire Boat	Investigate need for fire boat equipped with pumping capability and rescue equipment for lakeside areas.
5. Emergency infrastructure	Equipment	Obtain mobile generator to provide backup power where needed.
6. 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

1. Conduct “How to Have a Firewise Home” Workshop for Decatur County Residents
<p>Set up and conduct a workshop for homeowners 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.</p> <p>Distribute materials promoting firewise practices and planning through local community and governmental meetings.</p>
2. Conduct “Firewise” Workshop for Community Leaders
<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>

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

Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Decatur County Fire Department, Bainbridge Department of Public Safety, 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 the following:

- 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.

Celebrate the work with a community cookout, with Community officials, GFC and Decatur County Fire Dept and Bainbridge Dept of Public Safety discussing and commending the work accomplished.

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 the several festivals in the county. The display can be independent or combined with the Georgia Forestry Commission display.

6. Press

Invite the Bainbridge News Media and area TV and Radio to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Decatur County.

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	
Decatur County WUI Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC officials, Decatur County and Bainbridge fire officials, a representative from the city and county governments and the EMA Director for Decatur 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 2 Forest Landowners and users 3 Civic Groups 4 School Groups
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 News Releases 2 Personal Contacts 3 Key messages and prevention tips 4 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters

Spring Clean-up Day (National Wildfire Preparedness Day is held on the 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 newsletter, letters to officials, and public service announcements (PSAs) for local media outlets. Publicize post-event through local paper and radio PSAs.
Work Supervisor	Develop volunteer labor force of community residents; develop labor/advisory force from Georgia Forestry Commission, Decatur County Fire Dept, Bainbridge Dept of Public Safety, and Decatur County Emergency Management Agency. Procure needed equipment and supplies. In cooperation with local city and county officials, develop safety protocol. Supervise work and monitor activities for safety the day of the event.

Funding Needs

The following funding is needed to implement the action plan:

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
1. Create a minimum of 30 feet of defensible space around structures	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
2. Reduce structural ignitability by cleaning flammable vegetation from roofs and gutters, appropriately storing firewood, installing skirting around raised structures, storing water hoses for ready access, replacing pine needles and mulch around plantings with less flammable material.	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
3. Amend codes and ordinances to provide better driveway access, increased visibility of house numbers, properly stored firewood, minimum defensible space brush clearance, required Class A roofing materials and skirting around raised structures, planned maintenance of community lots.	No Cost	To be adopted by city and county government.
4. Spring Cleanup Day	Varies	Community Donations.
5. Fuel Reduction Activities	\$15 / acre	FEMA & USFS Grants

Ultimately it is our goal to help the communities by identifying the communities threatened with a high risk to wildfire and educate those communities on methods to implement on reducing those risks.

Assessment Strategy

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness for the action plan, the Decatur 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 1 month and 6 months following workshop date.
- The Decatur 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 Decatur 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. 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.wildfireprepdays.org
- Wildland Urban Interface Code www.iccsafe.org

Appended Documents:

Decatur 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.



Georgia Forestry Commission
5645 Riggins Mill Rd.
Dry Branch, GA 31020
800-GA-TREES
GaTrees.org

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

An Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider