GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION

# Community Wildfire Protection Plan

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

## Habersham County

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

NOVEMBER 2016

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## PLAN CONTENTS



## 1) OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

**The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Habersham County. The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect this county and its essential infrastructure. Prioritized activities to educate the public are included. 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 property.**
- **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.**

**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.**

## 2) COUNTY BACKGROUND AND EXISTING SITUATION

### Habersham County


Habersham County, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of northeast Georgia, is the state's forty-sixth county. Created in 1818 from land formerly held by Cherokee Indians, it was named after Joseph Habersham, an army officer during the Revolutionary War (1775-83) and a U.S. postmaster general.

Habersham County was enlarged in 1828 and 1829 when more Cherokee lands were added to it. At one time it encompassed 713 square miles, but through the years parts of it were taken to help form Banks, Cherokee, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, and White counties, decreasing Habersham County to 278 square miles.

Old Habersham Courthouse

The first white inhabitants, enticed by free land distributions, came after the Indian cessions of 1818 and 1819. They settled along the banks of the county's four major rivers, the Chattahoochee, Soque, Tallulah, and Tugaloo. The white population increased slowly until gold was discovered in northeast Georgia; the ensuing gold rush brought sudden growth, eventually resulting in the removal of the Cherokees from the area in 1838. Soon thereafter wealthy slave-owning planters established themselves in parts of the county that have since been annexed by other counties.

Early industries included leather tanning, iron mining, and the processing and mining of such other minerals as asbestos, cynanite, and tourmaline. During the Civil War (1861-65) the Habersham Iron Works and Manufacturing Company produced arms for the Confederacy.

Nearly 1,000 men from Habersham fought for the Confederacy. On October 12, 1864, Confederate troops defeated Union troops at the Battle of Narrows (also called the Battle of Currahee), which was fought at a mountain pass in the county. The Confederate victory is said to have saved Habersham County from pillage by the Union troops.

Between 1870 and 1900 the county's economy was enhanced by the arrival of railroads, the planting of apple orchards and vineyards, and the founding of Piedmont College. When rail travel through the Blue Ridge brought tourists to the Tallulah Gorge beginning in 1882, Habersham County shared a tourist-based economic boost with neighboring Rabun County. Immigrants from Europe (primarily from Germany and Switzerland) arrived in the 1880s to plant vineyards and set up wineries, but the state of Georgia adopted a strict prohibition law before their labor could yield profits, and many of them returned to Europe.

Apple Monument

Clarkesville was incorporated as a village and designated the county seat in 1823. The current courthouse, the fourth, was built in 1963. During the nineteenth century Clarkesville, with its temperate summers, attracted well-to-do families hoping to escape the heat of south Georgia. For a time there were county residents who strongly wished to relocate the county seat to Toccoa (then in Habersham County), leading to such a feud that when the Clarkesville courthouse was blown up in 1898, those advocating the move to Toccoa were blamed. The feud was ultimately resolved by the creation of Stephens County in 1905 with Toccoa as its seat.

Habersham County Courthouse

Other incorporated communities in the county are Alto, Baldwin, Cornelia, Demorest, Mount Airy, and Tallulah Falls. In the 1870s the high point (the "altus") of the railroad line through the area was located at Alto, and the town took its name from this railroad term. There the Northeastern Railroad connected the Richmond-Danville Air Line Railroad. Baldwin was incorporated in 1896, taking its name from Joseph A. Baldwin, an Atlanta-Charlotte Air Line Railroad official. Demorest was founded in 1889 as a planned community advocating temperance. Its original settlers were from the Midwest and New England, and the town's architecture reflects their influence.

Notable agricultural products from this county are apples and poultry. The county has capitalized on the market for retirement and summer/weekend homes by encouraging such development. Homesites along the shores of Lake Russell and many other smaller lakes have increased the property tax base, resulting in a solid financial status for the county.

Several museums are located in Habersham County: the Cornelia Railroad Depot Museum; the Johnny Mize Museum; the Loudermilk Boarding House Museum, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and home of the Panoramic Encyclopedia of Everything Elvis; and the Mauldin House Visitors Center. The 100-acre Lake Russell, which is part of the Chattahoochee National Forest, and Panther Creek Park and Falls are popular sites for outdoor activities. Notable residents include baseball player Johnny Mize.

Everything Elvis

The county is home to two institutions of higher learning. Piedmont College is located in Demorest, and North Georgia Technical College is located in Clarkesville.

According to the 2000 U.S. census, the population of Habersham County was 35,902 (88.9 percent white, 4.5 percent black, and 7.7 percent Hispanic), a 30 percent increase since 1990.

## The above information is courtesy of the New Georgia Encyclopedia

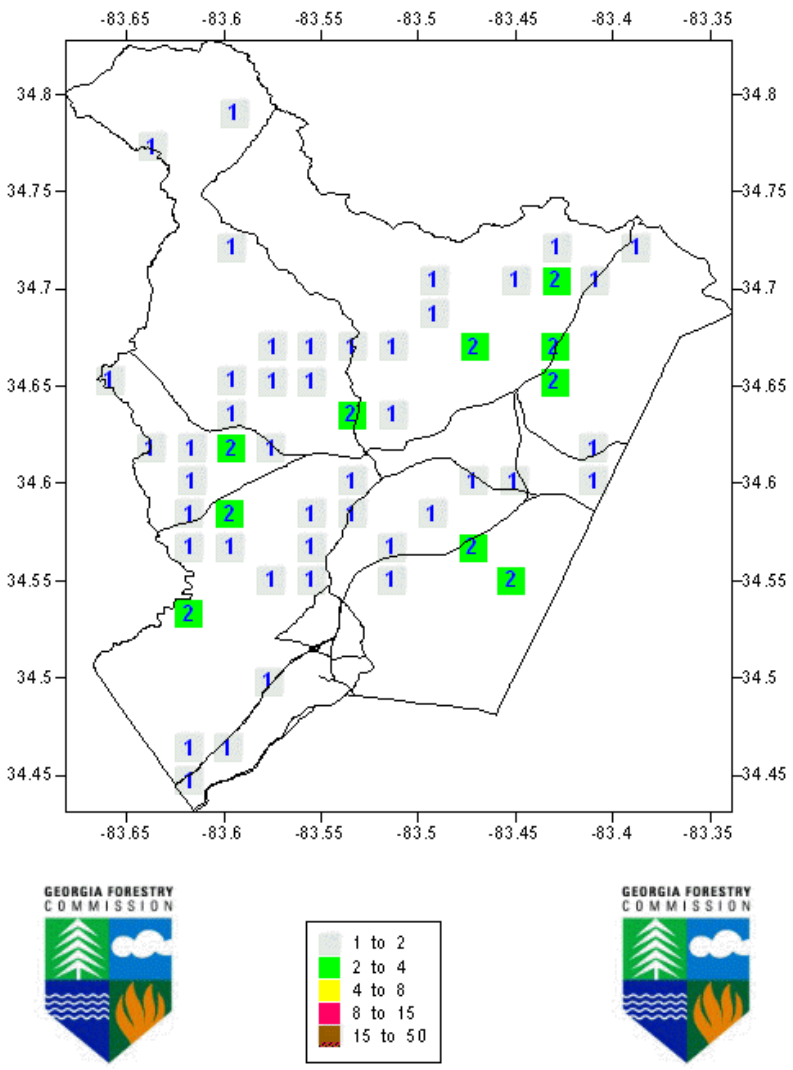
## Fire History and Existing Situation

Wildland Fire has not been a serious problem in Habersham County when compared to counties in the rest of the state. The following table reflects fire statistics for FY 2016 which began on July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016. The average size fire in the County is 2.89 acres for that same period.

| County = Habersham | Cause | Fires | | Acres | Fires 5 Yr Avg | Acres 5 Yr Avg |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Campfire | Campfire | 1 | ↑ | 3.49 | 0.60 | 1.17 |
| Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc | Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc | 0 | | 0.00 | 0.20 | 0.20 |
| Debris: Construction Land Clearing | Debris: Construction Land Clearing | 1 | ↑ | 13.00 | 0.80 | 3.32 |
| Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc | Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc | 4 | | 8.39 | 4.60 | 50.14 |
| Incendiary | Incendiary | 0 | | 0.00 | 0.60 | 5.28 |
| Machine Use | Machine Use | 1 | ↑ | 3.94 | 0.80 | 2.20 |
| Miscellaneous | Miscellaneous | 0 | | 0.00 | 0.40 | 0.16 |
| Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding | Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding | 0 | | 0.00 | 0.20 | 0.48 |
| Miscellaneous: Other | Miscellaneous: Other | 0 | | 0.00 | 0.40 | 2.18 |
| Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences | Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences | 0 | | 0.00 | 0.40 | 1.04 |
| Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion | Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion | 0 | | 0.00 | 0.20 | 0.16 |
| Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires | Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires | 1 | ↑ | 0.25 | 0.80 | 0.32 |
| Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes | Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes | 0 | | 0.00 | 0.20 | 0.08 |
| Undetermined | Undetermined | 3 | ↑ | 2.77 | 2.00 | 3.76 |
| **Totals for County: Habersham Year: 2016** | | 11 | | 31.84 | 12.20 | 70.48 |

The average size fire is usually less than the statewide average. The map on the following page outlines fire occurrence in Habersham County for the past five complete fiscal years (July – June).

# Fire Occurrence Map for Habersham County for Fiscal Year 2011-2015




The following table shows fire occurrence numbers, acres, and average size in Habersham County for the period FY 2012 through FY 2016.

| Fiscal Year | Number of Fires | Acres | Average size | Statewide average size |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2016 | 11 | 31.84 | 2.89 | 4.13 |
| 2015 | 20 | 78.57 | 3.93 | 4.50 |
| 2014 | 14 | 162.10 | 11.58 | 5.02 |
| 2013 | 9 | 49.40 | 5.49 | 4.75 |
| 2012 | 7 | 30.10 | 4.30 | 4.98 |

The higher average size fire in FY 2014 was due to a 143 acre fire that occurred on private land. This fire was attributed to debris burning, which is a common occurrence not only in Habersham County, but state-wide.

## 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)

Habersham County is typical of a county that is undergoing a rapid transition from an isolated rural county to a highly desirable recreational and retirement destination. It contains mixtures of both boundary and intermix interface.

## 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 trying to protect someone who will not 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.

## 3) Risk Summary

This is an update of the initial CWPP, which was created in 2009. The updates in this plan reflect changes in community risk as outlined in the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment mapping which can be found in section 7 of this document. Updates have also been made to various other sections of this document.
Following a meeting of personnel of Habersham County Emergency services and the Georgia Forestry Commission on August 28, 2009, assessments of communities at risk from wildland fire was undertaken by Habersham County Fire department personnel. Fifty Five (55) wildland communities were assessed using the Georgia Forestry Commission Form 140 for Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment. This document determines risk based on four criteria, Subdivision design, Site Hazard, Building Construction, and Additional Factors. From this analysis sites are rated as being in one of four risk categories, extreme, high, moderate, or low. Twenty Four (24) were classified as at moderate risk, and thirty one (31) were low. Information from these assessments is displayed in a spreadsheet which is included in the appendix. Communities at risk were organized by the Fire District or station having jurisdiction. The communities are also represented on the base maps for wildfire susceptibility included in the appendix. Original copies of the assessments are retained by Habersham County Emergency Services.

## 4) Prioritized Mitigation Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed during follow-up meetings with County and State fire response agencies. A priority order was determined based on which mitigation projects would best reduce the hazard of wildland fire to communities and infrastructure. The following priorities were considered.

- Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction
- Wildland Fuel reduction or modification
- Improvements to capabilities of Wildland response agencies
- Public Education regarding risk of wildland fire

## Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

| Hazard | Mitigation | Method |
|---|---|---|
| Incendiarism | Standardized investigation | Utilizing state and federal fire reports, investigations should be conducted on all fires determined to be caused by incendiarism on each jurisdiction. Coordination across agency and possibly geographic boundaries should be common practice. |
| Lack of defensible space | Improve defensible space around structures in communities at risk | All departments should examine structures in communities at risk in their response areas. Improvements to defensible space as referenced in Firewise guidelines should be conveyed to residents through media or direct contact. |
| Access problems for initial attack | Improve access problems | All County response agencies and the Georgia Forestry Commission should closely examine access in all communities identified to be at risk. When problems are identified corrective measures should be made. |

## Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

| Hazard or Opportunity | Mitigation | Method |
|---|---|---|
| Structural Ignitability | Reduce structural ignitability | Citizens in communities at risk should be educated regarding methods to reduce structural ignitability as referenced in Firewise guidelines. This can be accomplished through media or direct contact. |
| Local Codes and Ordinances | Improve and amend to codes and ordinances pertaining to infrastructure and community protection from wildland fire. | Examine all existing codes and ordinances for problems regarding direct conflicts to wildland safety or lack of needed codes or enforcement. |

## Proposed Wildland Fuel Reduction or modification Priorities

| Hazard | Mitigation | Method |
|---|---|---|
| Fuel Hazards near Communities at risk | Prescribed Burning and presuppression firebreaks | Determine Communities at risk where Prescribed burning would be appropriate to use. Seek cooperation from adjacent landowners. Find funding to cover cost of burning. Prioritize burn compartments and execute. Should burning be inappropriate or undesirable install permanent or semi-permanent firebreaks |
| Fuel Hazard in public or shared spaces | Fuel Modification or reduction | Determine where hazards exist. Determine appropriate method for modification or reduction. Chipping, raking and piling, County pick-up, Organized Community Clean-up days could be beneficial. Organized burning could be conducted on these days supported by local fire department personnel. |

**Proposed Improvements to capabilities of Wildland Response Agencies**
**Priorities**

| Problem or need | Improvement or solution | Details |
|---|---|---|
| Lack of qualification or training | Provide training opportunities | Examine training records of all wildland responders to insure training and qualifications match expected duties. Insure that all wildland responders have Basic Wildland Certification. Locate and secure funding for enhanced training from state and federal agencies. |
| Equipment needs | Improve or acquire Wildland fire equipment | Determine specific equipment needs to bring all wildland response equipment to NWCG Standards. Provide appropriate PPE to all County wildland responders. Provide wildland hand tools to County departments. Investigate needs for improvements to all wildland water handing and supply (dry hydrants, brush trucks, hose, etc.) |

## Proposed Public Education Priorities

| Educational Priority | Responsible party | Method |
|---|---|---|
| Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through direct contact | Federal, State, County, and municipal governments | Conduct Firewise meetings by each fire response jurisdiction assisted by Georgia Forestry Commission (state) and USDA Forest Service (federal). Conduct a door to door campaign in particularly hazardous communities |
| Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through use of media | County, State, and municipal governments | Use PSA's in local newspapers and local radio stations. Utilize Firewise displays in local post offices and banks. Seek use of local EMC newsletter for Firewise message. Create poster sized notices for use in common public places (stores, post offices, etc. adjacent to high hazard areas advising residents about the hazard and how to protect themselves and their property. Distribute public notices concerning Firewise at local sporting events and other public gatherings. |

# Action Plan, Timetables, and Assessment Strategy

## GRANT FUNDING AND MITIGATION ASSISTANCE

- Georgia Firewise Community Hazard Mitigation Grant: Georgia Forestry Commission grant designed to assist Firewise communities in the mitigation of fire hazards within their community. The grant is designed to provide financial assistance in helping the community to carry out the recommendations of their Firewise Action Plan.

- Community Protection Grant: U.S.F.S. 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.

- 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 complete a 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.

- FEMA – Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program

    1. Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG). The purpose of AFG’s is to award one-year grants directly to fire departments and emergency medical services (EMS) organizations of a state to enhance their abilities with respect to fire and related hazards.

2. Fire Prevention and Safety Grants. The purpose of these grants is to assist state, regional, national or local organizations to address fire prevention and safety. Emphasis of the program is on prevention of fire-related injuries to children.

3. Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER). The purpose of SAFER is to award grants directly to volunteer; combination and career fire departments to help the departments increase their cadre of firefighters (enhance their ability for 24-hour response).

- 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.
- Individual Homeowners:

1. The elimination of hazardous conditions around a structure must ultimately be the responsibility of the community and the homeowner. They will bear the cost and reap the benefit from properly implemented mitigation efforts.

2. GEMA: Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

## 5) Action Plan

***In addition to the steps listed below each station should utilize individual community assessments for their response area to change individual line items to lessen the score of that line whenever possible. For example, if street signs are missing or marked with less than 4 inch letters or non reflective, the score could be reduced should the steps be taken to improve street signage.***

## Steps to implement Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Priorities

| Hazard | Specific Action and Responsible Party |
|---|---|
| Incendiarism | The Georgia Forestry Commission and USDA Forest Service should conduct investigations on all fires determined to be caused by incendiarism on their jurisdictions. Cooperation and resource sharing (investigators) should be made standard practice. The use of local law enforcement should be standard practice especially when arson is identified as a problem in a specific area. The use of reward based incentives to locate arsonists should be considered. |
| Lack of Defensible Space | Using the risk summaries referenced in section 3, each department should conduct inspections of communities at risk in their jurisdiction or area of response for lack of defensible space. Findings will be conveyed to residents and treatment methods will be recommended in accordance with Firewise principles. This would probably be best accomplished by approaching homeowners associations or organizations. Ultimately, the message should reach individual homeowners in each community. Should local organizations not exist, the builder or developer could be contacted. Such contacts would also influence future projects or developments |
| Access problems | Using individual Communities at Risk maps for each station, the Georgia Forestry Commission and Habersham County Fire officials should visit all identified communities at risk for the purpose of locating and resolving access difficulties. This inspection should extend into the wildland adjacent to the communities at risk looking for hindrances and most effective approaches to suppression tactics |
| Structural Ignitability | Habersham County Fire officials should examine structures for structural ignitability concerns at the time when the communities at risk are inspected for lack of defensible space. Using Firewise guidelines for reducing structural ignitability, (a checklist could be formulated and used), structures should be assessed and findings conveyed to residents. This could be through use of media or by direct contact with residents or homeowners associations. |
| Codes and Ordinances | Habersham County and municipal Fire Marshalls should closely examine all codes and ordinances for gaps and oversights which could cause problems in the wildland fire arena. Examples include proximity of propane tanks to structures, accumulations of debris, lack of proper identification pertaining to address or street names, set back distances from wildland fuels, road widths in new developments. |

In regard to priority, the above steps should first extend to the higher numbers in the extreme category from the risk summary as these communities are at a higher degree of risk.

## 5) Action Plan

### Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

| Hazard | Specific Action and Responsible Party |
|---|---|
| Hazardous Wildland Fuel Accumulations | The Georgia Forestry Commission will prioritize prescribed burning projects adjacent to Communities at risk where burning is determined to be appropriate. Prescribed burn goals set by the U S Forest Service should also take fuel reduction near communities at risk into consideration as part of the prescription. Both agencies should work toward planning to see any proposed burn projects could be done concurrently. This will require changes in how these burns are carried out as regards logistics and technique. |
| Fuel Continuity between Federal Wildland and Woodland Communities | In areas where the need exists and fuel reduction by burning is determined to be inappropriate, permanent or semi-permanent fuel breaks could be established. These breaks should be maintained annually prior to the arrival of prime burning times. Their locations should be mapped and made known to local, state, and federal response personnel. Residents of the Communities adjacent to these breaks should be advised of their purpose and their cooperation in protecting them should be gained. These breaks could be installed by the USDA Forest Service in cooperation with and assisted by the Georgia Forestry Commission. |
| Hazardous Fuel Accumulations in communities and hindrances to suppression | Using the risk summary in section 3, Fire departments could conduct community clean up days in communities at risk in their respective jurisdictions aimed at reducing hazardous fuels and hindrances to suppression in shared community space. Residents would be provided with guidance and access to disposal alternatives for materials removed. |

### Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

| Improvement needed | Responsible Party and specific action |
|---|---|
| Improve training and qualification of Habersham County Wildland firefighters | The Habersham County Chief Ranger and Habersham County Fire Chief should examine all training records for personnel under their supervision. All current or potential wildland personnel should be certified Georgia Basic Wildland Firefighters or higher in qualification. Additional training and qualification should be sought for personnel identified in the Habersham County Fire plan who are assigned specific Incident Command System (ICS) functions. Sources for available funds for training should be sought at State and Federal levels. |
| Improve or acquire wildland firefighting equipment | All stations for Habersham County Fire Departments should inventory their present equipment relating to their wildland capability. Funding sources should be investigated from available grants or other sources. Needs for job specific wildland responsibilities should be examined by the GFC Chief Ranger and the Habersham County Fire Chief. Specific needs are listed in the appendix. |

## 5) Action Plan

Steps to educate or inform the Public regarding wildland fire prevention and responsibilities.

| Opportunity | Responsible Party and Specific Action |
|---|---|
| Improve Public Education through direct contact | Prior to the onset of fire season(s) rangers of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Habersham County Fire personnel should conduct Firewise meetings in conjunction with normally scheduled fire department meetings. People living in or near extreme and high risk communities should be invited to these meetings by use of door to door campaigns or by mailouts. Notices regarding these meetings could be placed in local post offices or stores near communities at risk. A Firewise display should be acquired and utilized at this meeting. This display would be retained by the Habersham County unit of the Georgia Forestry Commission and used for all Firewise meetings in the County. Local news media should be invited to these meetings. Goals for potential Firewise certified communities in Habersham County could be considered after these meetings are completed. |
| Improve Public Education through use of media | Prior to the onset of fire season(s) or during periods of particularly high fire danger use of the media should be stepped up by personnel of the Georgia Forestry Commission. This should include use of all available media in the County. PSA's should be run weekly during periods of high to extreme fire danger. Signs or poster boards could be developed for display in public spaces near communities at risk advising residents that they live in areas that are susceptible to wildland fire and directing them to sources of information regarding wildland fire and their role in improving their own personal safety. |
| Improve Public Education through formal certification | Before the end of each calendar year Habersham County should seek and acquire Firewise certification for **at least one community in the extreme to high risk category**. Should lack of interest or other problems prevent certification of any community an effort should be made with another community listed on the Communities at Risk list. |

## 5) Action Plan

### Timetables for Actions

### Steps to implement Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Priorities

- Steps to standardize and coordinate investigation practices should begin as soon as possible between agencies involved.
- Steps to examine communities at risk for defensible space and structural ignitability should take place as manpower and scheduling permits.

- Pre-planning to examine access and suppression problems should take place at any time during the current burning season.
- Codes and Ordinances should be examined as soon as possible in order for the legal workings of changes to take place.

### Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

- Any identified prescribed burn projects should take place in late winter to early spring. Any other priority burn projects or installation of pre suppression fuel breaks should take place during this same window.
- Steps to reduce fuels in communities at risk should coincide with steps to improve defensible space and reduce structural ignitability. Timing of these actions would be dependent upon Fire station availability during the late winter to early spring.

### Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

- Cooperation between state and local wildland suppression forces regarding improvements to training and equipment should begin immediately.

### Steps to educate or inform the Public regarding wildland fire prevention and responsibilities

- Direct contact with residents in Communities at risk should take place as soon as possible during early calendar year 2017
- The use of media should coincide with the above action.
- Certification of Firewise communities should follow the timetable associated with the action plan

## 5) Action Plan

### Assessment of Actions

### Reduction of Community hazard and structural ignitability

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- Direct measurement of the number of communities assessed would be the appropriate measure of success
- Any meetings that result in cooperation between wildland departments should be logged along with minutes of those meetings. Goals should be set and reviewed after each meeting.
- Any changes to or additions to codes and ordinances would be an obvious measure of success.
- Steps to achieve cooperation across law enforcement agencies would be the most obvious measure of success as regards incendiarism reduction.

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### Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

- Acres burned would be the appropriate measure for fuel reduction. A direct measure of linear feet of firebreaks would be an appropriate measure for pre suppression breaks.
- Fuel reduction in communities at risk would be measured by the number of communities affected and number of projects completed.

### Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

- A direct measure of the number of capabilities or qualifications gained would be the appropriate measure of success.
- Any equipment acquired or any equipment brought up to national standards would be the appropriate measure of success.

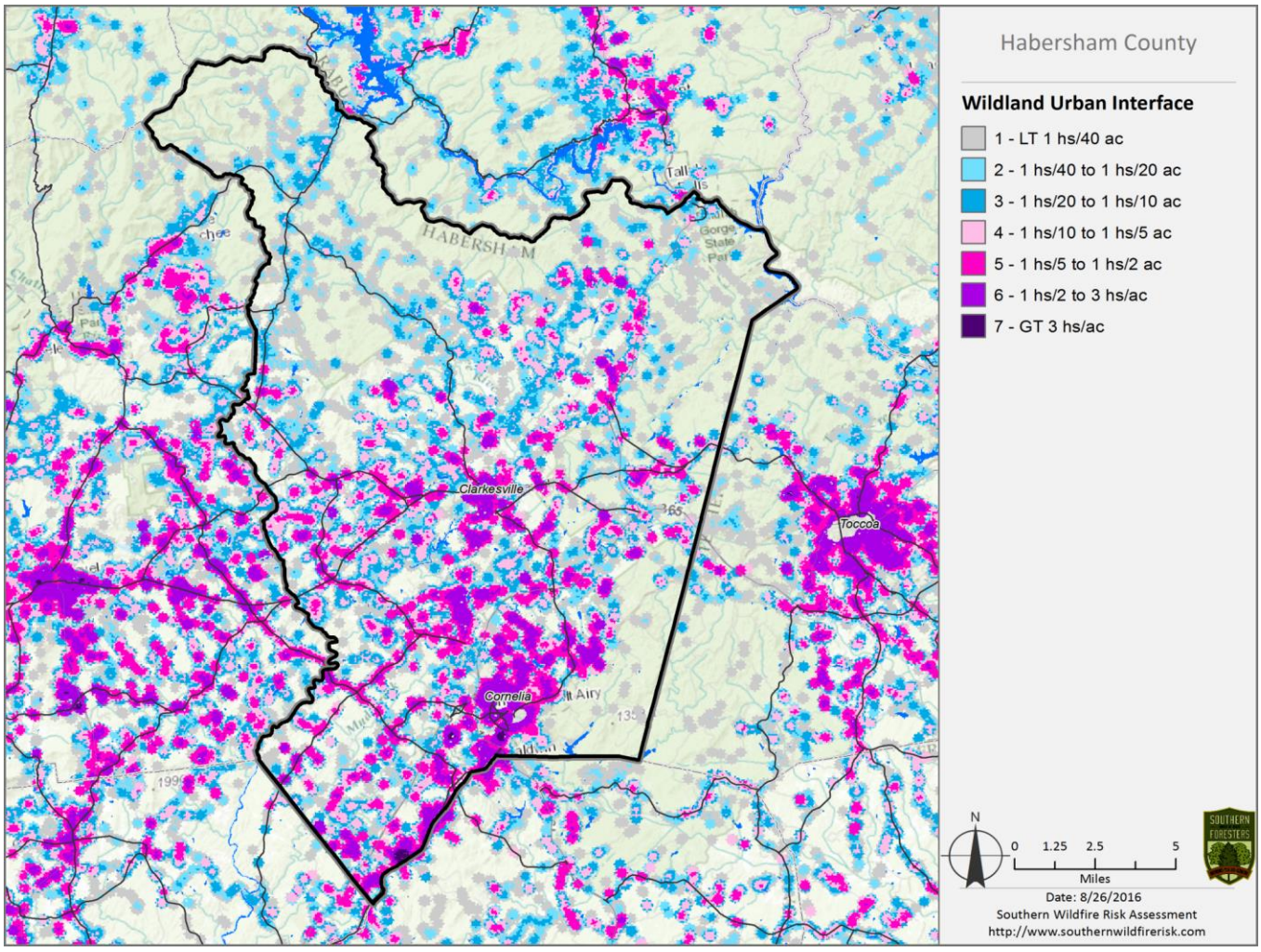
### Steps to educate or inform the Public regarding wildland fire prevention and responsibilities

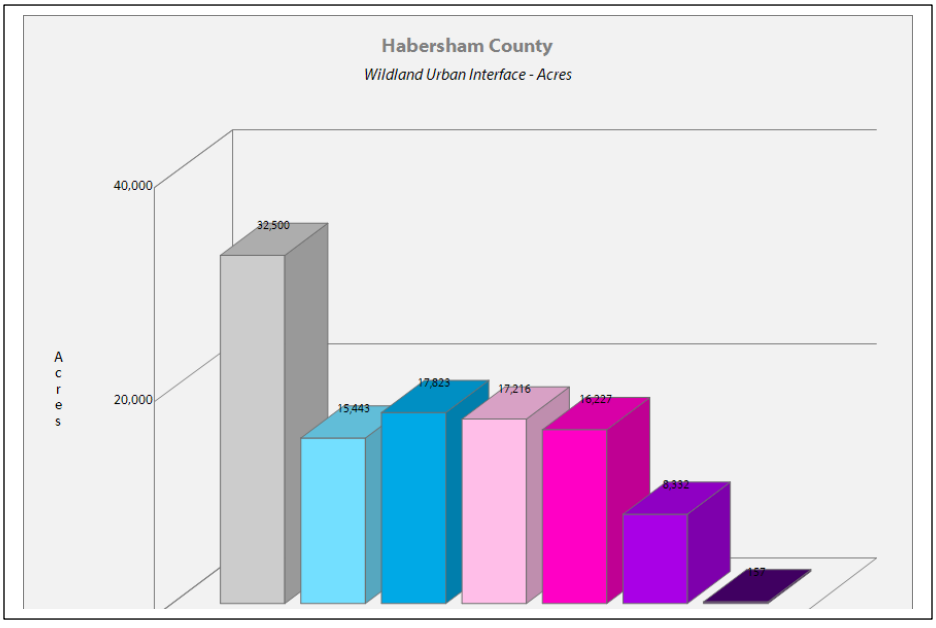
- Direct measurement of the number of persons contacted, literature distributed, public notices posted, and news articles published, radio programs aired, etc. would be the best measure of success. The number of communities that achieve Firewise status would be an obvious measure of success.

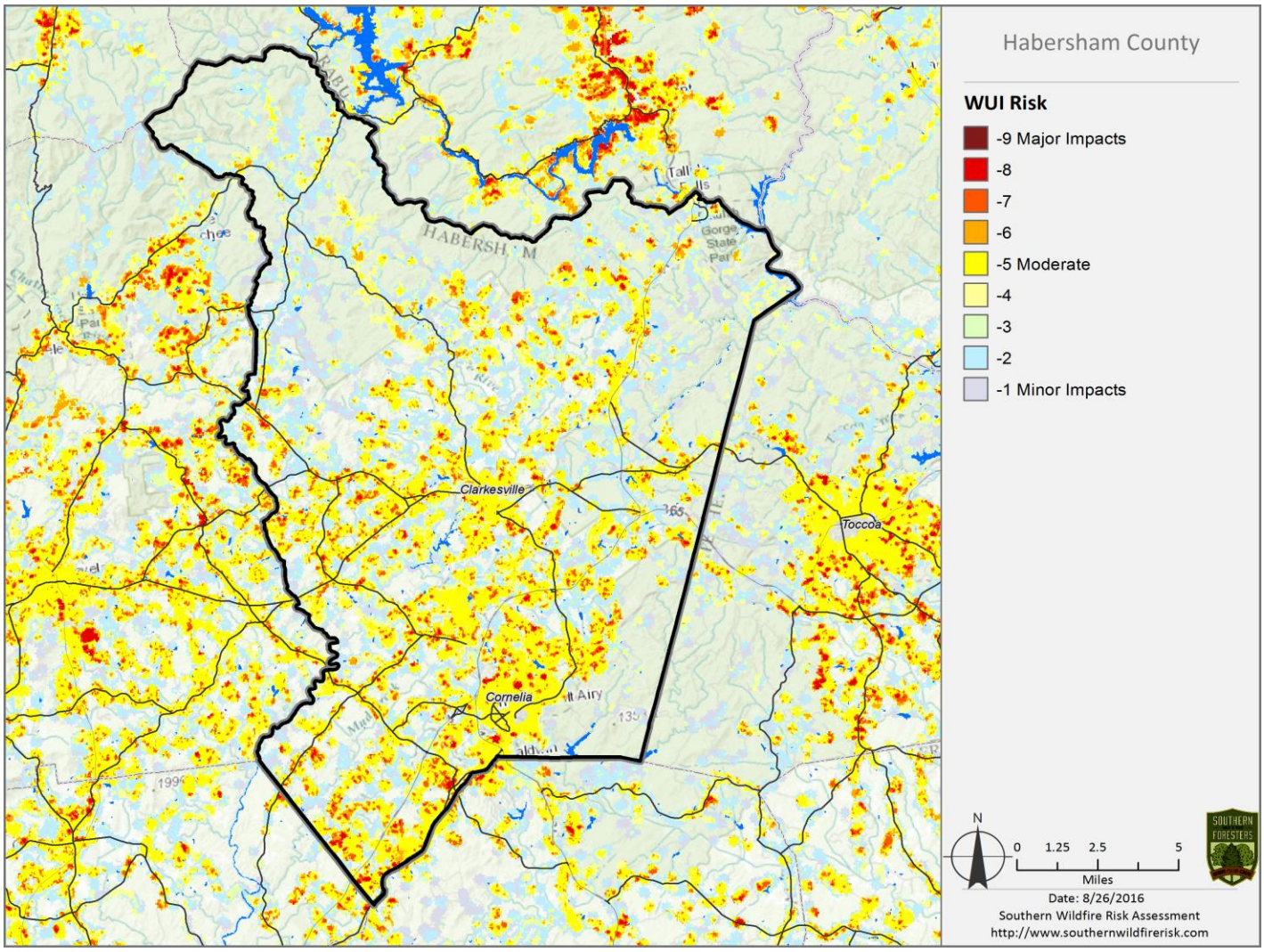
## 6) Wildfire Pre-Suppression Plan

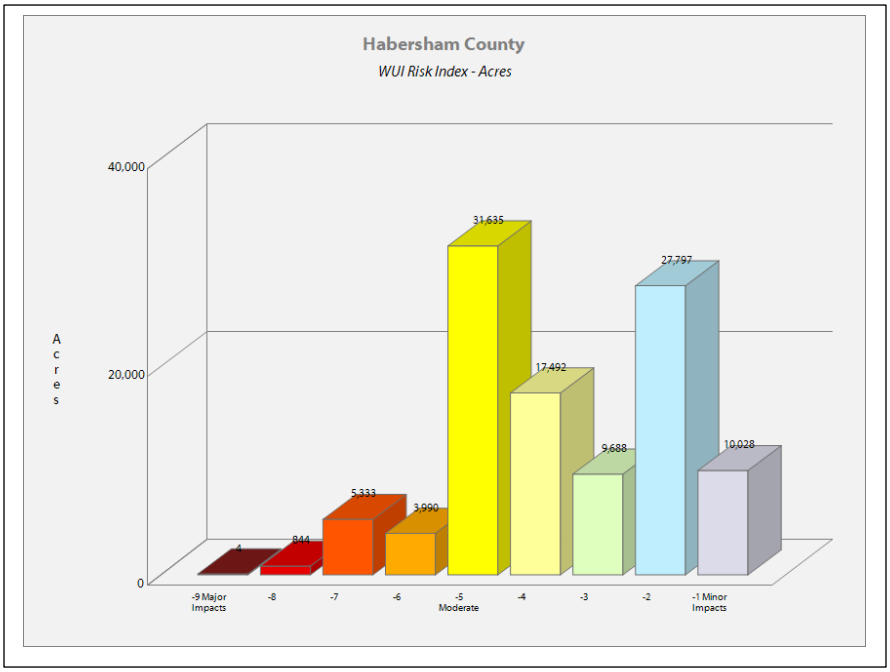
This document is located in the appendix of this plan

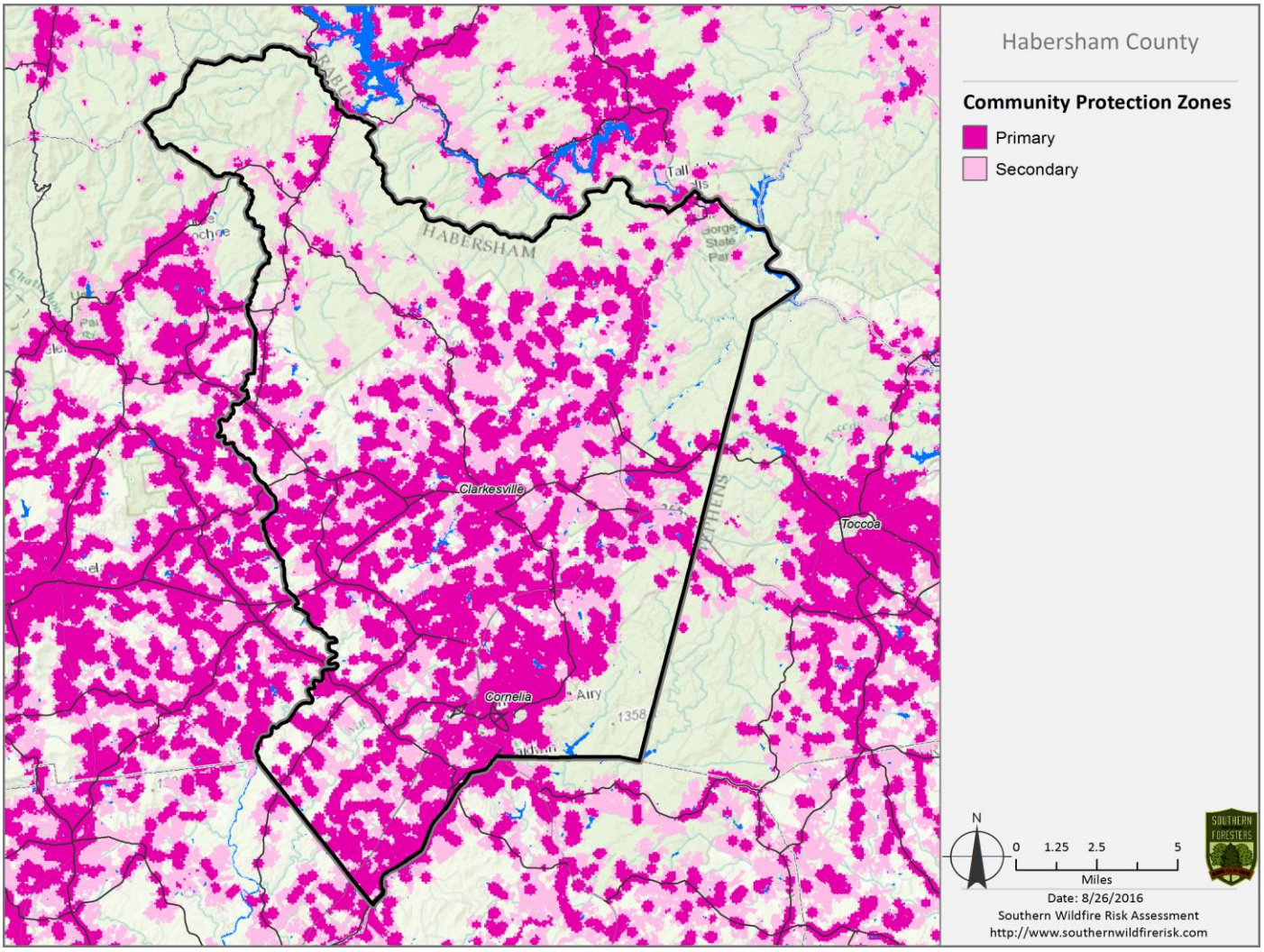
## 7) County Base and Hazards Maps

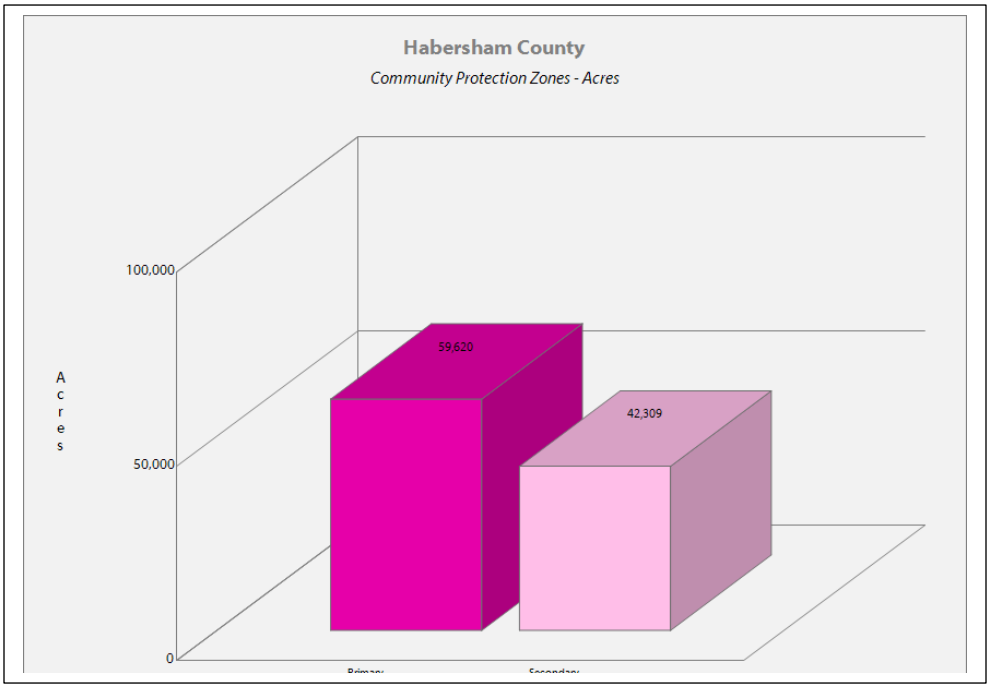


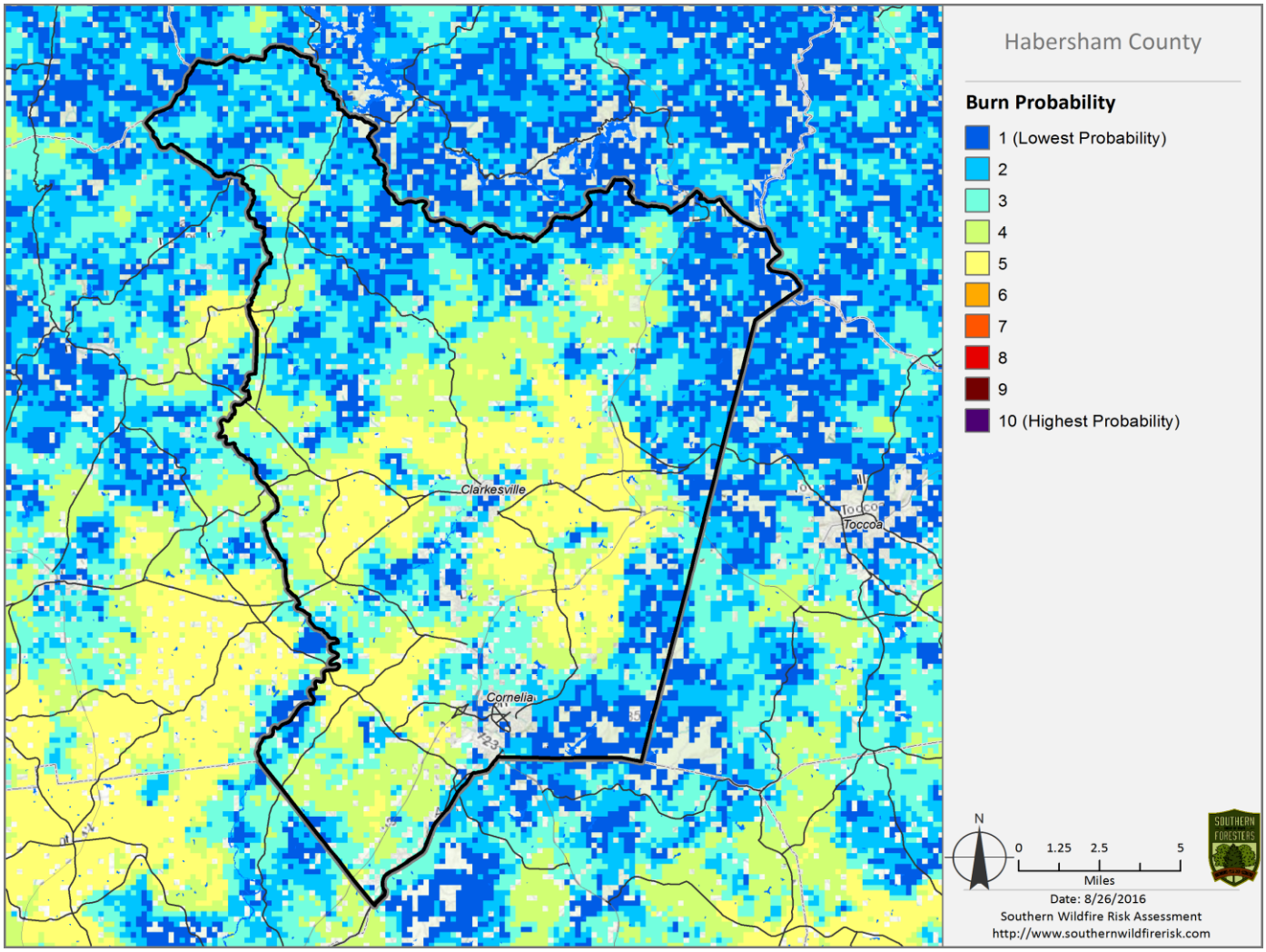



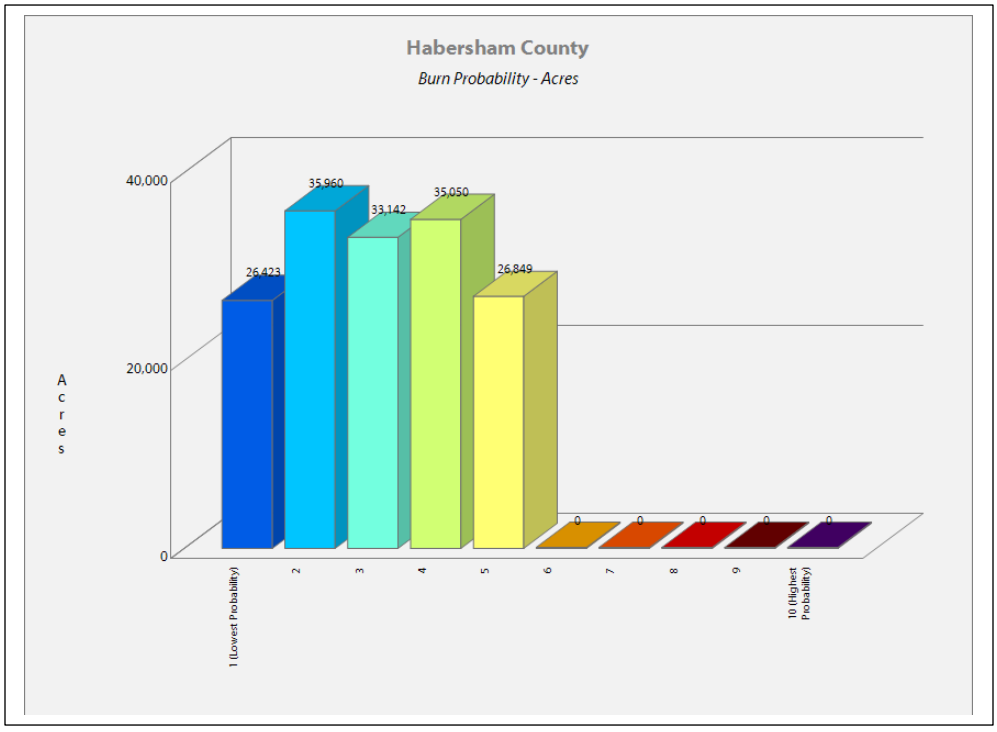

Habersham County
WUI Risk
-9 Major Impacts
-8
-7
-6
-5 Moderate
-4
-3
-2
-1 Minor Impacts
Clarkesville
Cornelia
Toccoa
Gorge State Park
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles
Date: 8/26/2016
Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment
http://www.southernwildfirerisk.com

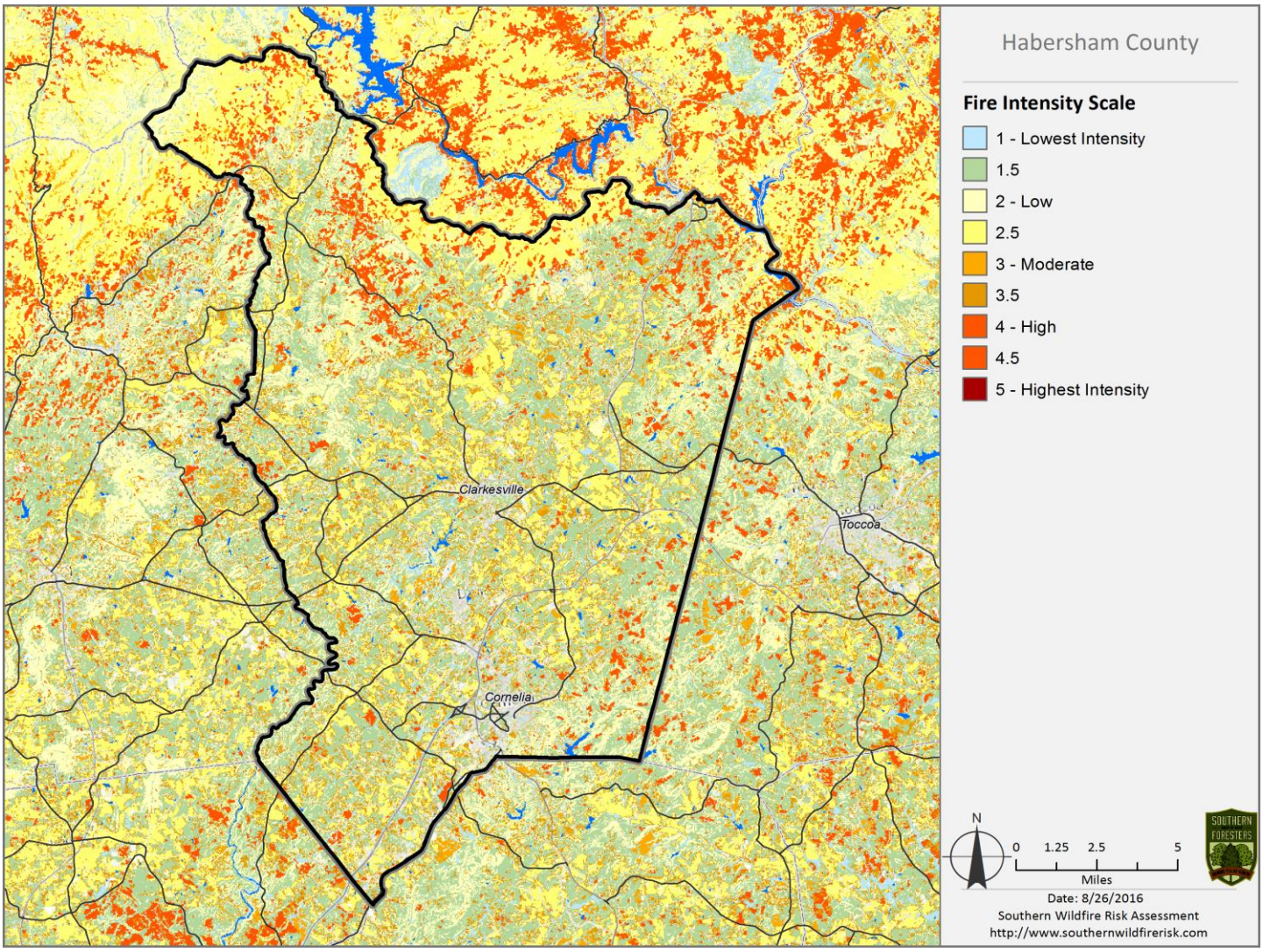

Habersham County
WUI Risk Index - Acres
Acres
40,000
20,000
0
4
844
5,333
3,990
31,635
17,492
9,688
27,797
10,028
-9 Major Impacts
-8
-7
-6
-5 Moderate
-4
-3
-2
-1 Minor Impacts

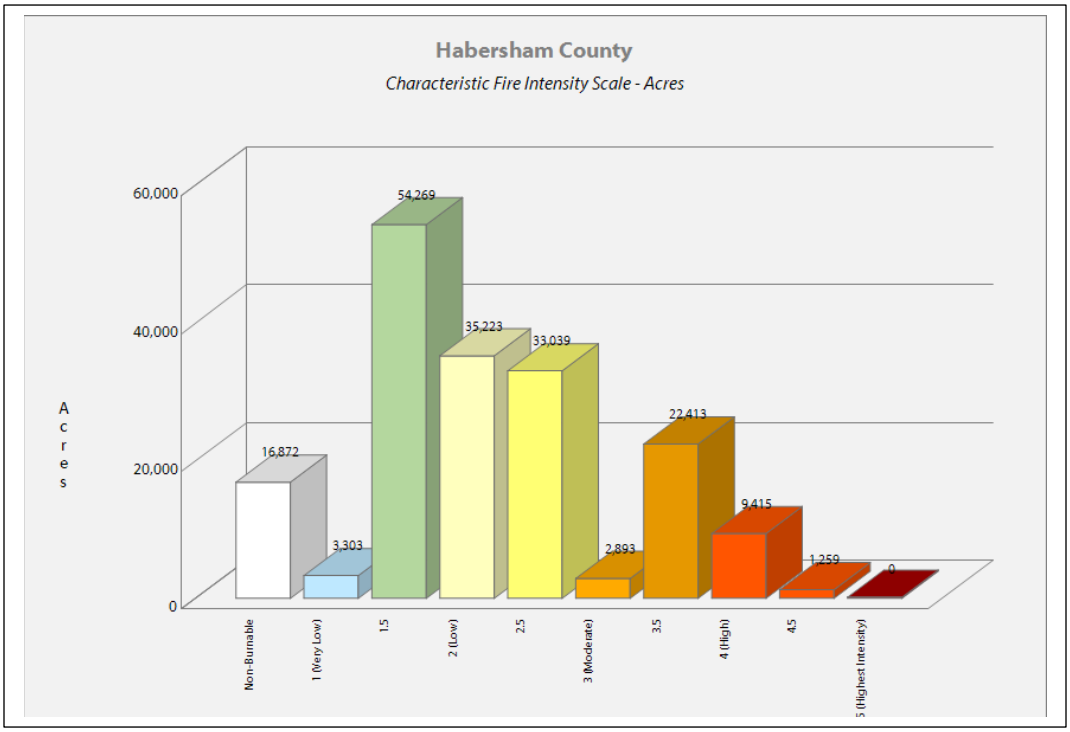

Habersham County
Community Protection Zones
Primary
Secondary
HABERSHAM
Clarkesville
Toccoa
Cornelia
Tallulah Falls
Airy
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles
Date: 8/26/2016
Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment
http://www.southernwildfirerisk.com


Habersham County
Community Protection Zones - Acres
Acres
100,000
50,000
0
59,620
42,309


Habersham County
Burn Probability
1 (Lowest Probability)
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10 (Highest Probability)
Clarkesville
Toccoa
Cornelia
N
0
1.25
2.5
5
Miles
Date: 8/26/2016
Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment
http://www.southernwildfirerisk.com


Habersham County
Burn Probability - Acres
Acres
40,000
20,000
0
26,423
35,960
33,142
35,050
26,849
0
0
0
0
0
1 (Lowest Probability)
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10 (Highest Probability)


Habersham County
Fire Intensity Scale
1 - Lowest Intensity
1.5
2 - Low
2.5
3 - Moderate
3.5
4 - High
4.5
5 - Highest Intensity
Clarkesville
Toccoa
Cornelia
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles
Date: 8/26/2016
Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment
http://www.southernwildfirerisk.com


Habersham County
Characteristic Fire Intensity Scale - Acres
Acres
60,000
40,000
20,000
0
16,872
3,303
54,269
35,223
33,039
2,893
22,413
9,415
1,259
0
Non-Burnable
1 (Very Low)
1.5
2 (Low)
2.5
3 (Moderate)
3.5
4 (High)
4.5
5 (Highest Intensity)

## 8) Appendix

- Risk Summary table organized by station
- County maps of surface fuels, wildfire susceptibility (north and south), historical fire occurrence, and Aspect
- Habersham County Pre-Suppression plan.
- Equipment needs identified

GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION

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**Macon, GA 31202**
**1-800-GA-TREES**
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