



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

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



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Appended Documents:

Laurens County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report

Laurens County Wildfire Pre-suppression Plan

NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.

I. OBJECTIVES

The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Laurens 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 on May 11th, 2009 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:

Laurens County Government
Laurens County Fire Department
Emergency Management
Board of County Commissioners

City of Dublin
Dublin Fire Department,

City of East Dublin
East Dublin Fire Department

Georgia Forestry Commission

It was decided to conduct community assessments on the basis of selected communities and individual fire districts in the county. The chiefs of the fire departments in the county assessed their districts and reconvened on July 2nd, 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 & WILDFIRE HISTORY



Laurens County, in middle Georgia, was established by an act of the state legislature in 1807 and named in honor of Colonel John Laurens (1754-82) of South Carolina. Laurens was an aide to General George Washington and was killed by a British patrol near the end of the American Revolution (1775-83).

With an area of 812 square miles, Laurens is the state's third largest county. The county was originally created from Wilkinson County, and in 1811 portions of Washington and Montgomery counties were added to it. A temporary county seat was established at Sumpterville near Turkey Creek. When additional lands were added to the county, the justices of the inferior court chose a central location on a bluff overlooking the Oconee River and laid out the town of Dublin, the permanent county seat, in 1812. Once new lands in western and southwestern Georgia were opened, however, settlers began to bypass Laurens County.

Among the leading citizens of Laurens County in its early development were George Troup and David Blackshear. Troup, an early advocate of states' rights, was Georgia's first popularly elected governor. He nearly precipitated a war with the United States over the issue of Indian lands. Blackshear was a general in the War of 1812 (1812-15) and led the movement to remove the Seminole Indians from southern Georgia. Another early resident, Mirabeau B. Lamar, who became the second president of the Republic of Texas, lived in Troup's household as his personal secretary.

Laurens County, in the Upper Coastal Plain, was primarily a cotton plantation community. By 1850 slaves accounted for 45 percent of the county's population. Laurens County residents fought in every major battle of the Civil War (1861-65). One Laurens County soldier, Private Bill Yopp, is the only African American Confederate soldier buried in the National Confederate Cemetery in Marietta. George Linder, an African American minister, was elected to the Georgia legislature in 1868, during Reconstruction.

The establishment of five railroads in the county lifted the area from the economic depression of the late 1800s. By 1900 Laurens County was one of the fourteen most populous counties in the state. When timber companies clear-cut tens of thousands of acres of timber, farmers began to plant even more cotton. In 1911 Laurens County farmers produced more than 31 million pounds of cotton. The county's economy collapsed in 1919, following the infestation of the boll weevil. According to the U.S. agricultural census, between 1920 and 1930 only Carroll County had more farms than Laurens. Black tenant farmers left in masses because of the dramatic drop in cotton production and the increased opportunities for industrial employment in the North after World War I (1917-18). Among them was the family of Walker Smith Jr., who later changed his name to Sugar Ray Robinson and went on to become a six-time world boxing champion.

Laurens resident Captain Bobbie Brown was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroism in World War II (1941-45). The county also produced an unusually large number of men who were awarded the silver star for service during World War II and the Vietnam War (1964-73).

According to the 2000 U.S. census, the county population was 44,874 (63.4 percent white, 34.5 percent black, and 1.2 percent Hispanic). Among the places of interest are the Ocute Indian Mounds at Blackshear's Ferry. The county also hosts several annual festivals, including the St. Patrick's Festival, Possum Hollow Country Fair, and Dublin Antique Fair Show and Sale. Laurens is also home to the Heart of Georgia Technical College. The county's economy today is a mix of industrial, professional, and agricultural businesses.

Wildfire History

Laurens County located in the heart of middle Georgia, despite its well known agricultural presence, is still 65% forested. With the exception of the large blocks of woodlands along the Oconee River, there are homes and communities scattered throughout the county. The risks and hazards from the wildland urban interface are fairly general and substantial throughout the county even on the edges of the two major population centers of Dublin and East Dublin.

Laurens County is protected by organized fire departments within the city of Dublin and 15 well-spaced volunteer fire departments in the remainder of the county. The Georgia Forestry Commission maintains a county protection unit located about eight miles south of Dublin off Hwy 117 to respond to wildfires throughout the county. The cities of Dublin, East Dublin, Dudley, Cadwell, Dexter, Montrose and Rentz and some adjacent areas of the county are serviced by a pressurized water system with hydrants available.

Over the past fifty years, Laurens County has averaged 161 reported wildland fires per year. The occurrence of these fires shows a pronounced peak during the months of February and March accounting for 33% of the annual fires and a slight decrease during the summer months. These fires have burned an average of 685 acres annually. The monthly acreage burned fairly well corresponds with the number of fires. Interestingly during the past 10 years, (FY2008-FY2017), the annual average number of fires increased to 182 while the annual acreage lost appears to have decreased to 427 acres. This increase in numbers perhaps is due to increases of population in the rural areas while the reduction in average size from over four acres per fire to just over 2 acres per fire is perhaps the result of better response and equipment from both the Georgia Forestry Commission and the increased presence of rural fire departments. Despite this welcome trend in fire behavior, more homes are being built outside of traditional communities into the wildland urban interface.

Over the past 10 years, the leading causes of these fires, was debris burning and machinery use causing 38% and 26% respectively of the fires and 49% and 18% respectively of the acres burned. Over the past six years records show that over 57% of the debris fires originated from residential burning.

Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Records show that in the past five years, FY2014-FY2018, 11 homes have been lost or damaged by wildfire in Laurens County resulting in estimated losses of \$163,200 along with 31 outbuildings valued at \$67,000. According to reports during this period 558 homes have been directly or indirectly threatened by these fires. Additionally 42 vehicles valued at \$192,700 and 12 other pieces of mechanized equipment valued at \$173,500 were lost. Additionally \$13,370 in agricultural crops was lost. This is a substantial loss of non-timber property attributed to wildfires in Laurens County.

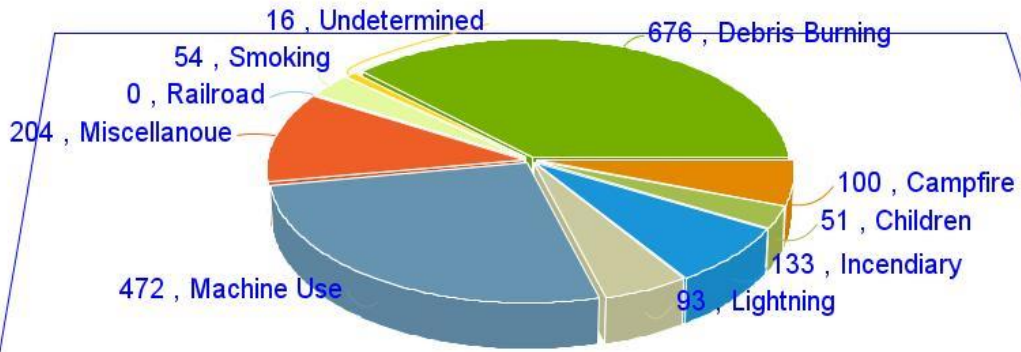
Wildfire activity for the last complete fiscal year, July 1, 2017 thru June 30, 2018

| County = Laurens | Cause | Fires | Acres | Fires 5 Yr Avg | Acres 5 Yr Avg |
|--|---|-------|--------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Campfire | Campfire | 12 | 7.65 | 10.20 | 24.60 |
| Children | Children | 1 | 0.90 | 2.80 | 2.94 |
| Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc | Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc | 12 | 31.24 | 8.80 | 39.47 |
| Debris: Construction Land Clearing | Debris: Construction Land Clearing | 1 | 0.50 | 2.60 | 6.98 |
| Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn | Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn | 12 | 154.87 | 6.80 | 47.02 |
| Debris: Household Garbage | Debris: Household Garbage | 8 | 57.26 | 4.00 | 12.75 |
| Debris: Other | Debris: Other | 0 | 0.00 | 1.20 | 10.83 |
| Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc | Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc | 12 | 14.89 | 19.20 | 49.05 |
| Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related | Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related | 18 | 102.03 | 11.60 | 81.34 |
| Incendiary | Incendiary | 1 | 0.04 | 4.80 | 15.12 |
| Lightning | Lightning | 3 | 92.84 | 5.20 | 41.44 |
| Machine Use | Machine Use | 24 | 84.63 | 28.60 | 80.65 |
| Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding | Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding | 3 | 38.73 | 1.20 | 7.84 |
| Miscellaneous: Fireworks/Explosives | Miscellaneous: Fireworks/Explosives | 2 | 5.62 | 1.00 | 1.61 |
| Miscellaneous: Other | Miscellaneous: Other | 5 | 10.62 | 2.60 | 5.37 |
| Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences | Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences | 5 | 10.19 | 13.40 | 23.33 |
| Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires | Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires | 2 | 0.07 | 1.60 | 0.19 |
| Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes | Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes | 6 | 12.09 | 4.40 | 9.64 |
| Railroad | Railroad | 0 | 0.00 | 5.00 | 13.96 |
| Smoking | Smoking | 1 | 6.00 | 2.60 | 2.16 |
| Undetermined | Undetermined | 7 | 111.82 | 3.80 | 29.83 |
| Totals for County: Laurens Year: 2018 | | 135 | 741.99 | 141.40 | 506.13 |

| Acreage Burned /Number of Fires For Laurens County For FY 2008-2017 | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Year | Acreage Burned | Number of Fires | Average Size | Statewide Average Size |
| 2008 | 588.13 | 222 | 2.65 | 4.56 |
| 2009 | 275.45 | 226 | 1.22 | 3.90 |
| 2010 | 190.04 | 161 | 1.18 | 3.93 |
| 2011 | 715.26 | 295 | 2.42 | 17.56 |
| 2012 | 435.74 | 194 | 2.24 | 5.08 |
| 2013 | 276.89 | 156 | 1.78 | 4.53 |
| 2014 | 523.01 | 145 | 3.61 | 5.02 |
| 2015 | 334.15 | 165 | 2.02 | 4.42 |
| 2016 | 271.83 | 72 | 3.78 | 6.29 |
| 2017 | 659.65 | 190 | 3.47 | 11.60 |

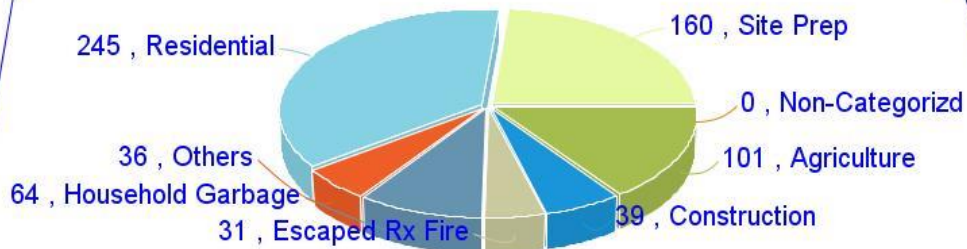
| Acreage Burned /Number of Fires by Fire Cause For Laurens County For FY 2008-2017 | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Fire Cause | Acreage Burned | Number of Fires |
| Campfire | 243.93 | 100 |
| Children | 65.76 | 51 |
| Debris Burning | 2,050.14 | 676 |
| Incendiary | 340.87 | 133 |
| Lightning | 365.16 | 93 |
| Machine Use | 737.92 | 472 |
| Miscellaneous | 267.70 | 204 |
| Railroad | 0.00 | 0 |
| Smoking | 66.46 | 54 |
| Undetermined | 61.77 | 16 |
| Total | 4,199.71 | 1,799 |

Cause of Fire For Laurens County For FY 2008-2017



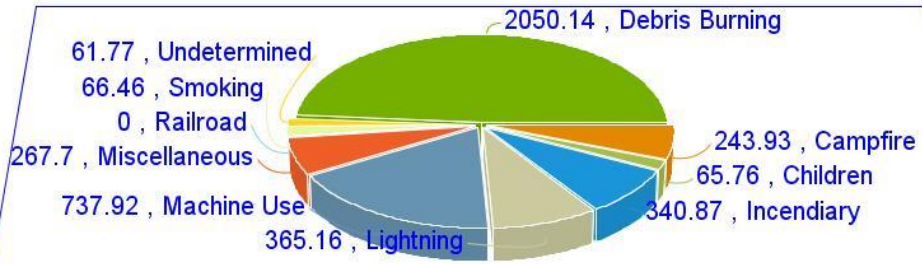
Fire Cause

Debris Burning Sub Cause For Laurens County For FY 2008-2017

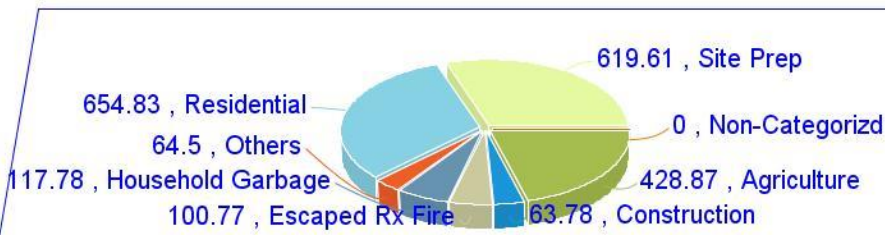


Fire Cause

Acreage Burned by Cause of Fire For Laurens County For FY 2008-2017

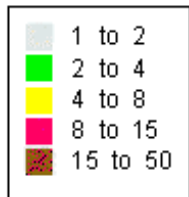
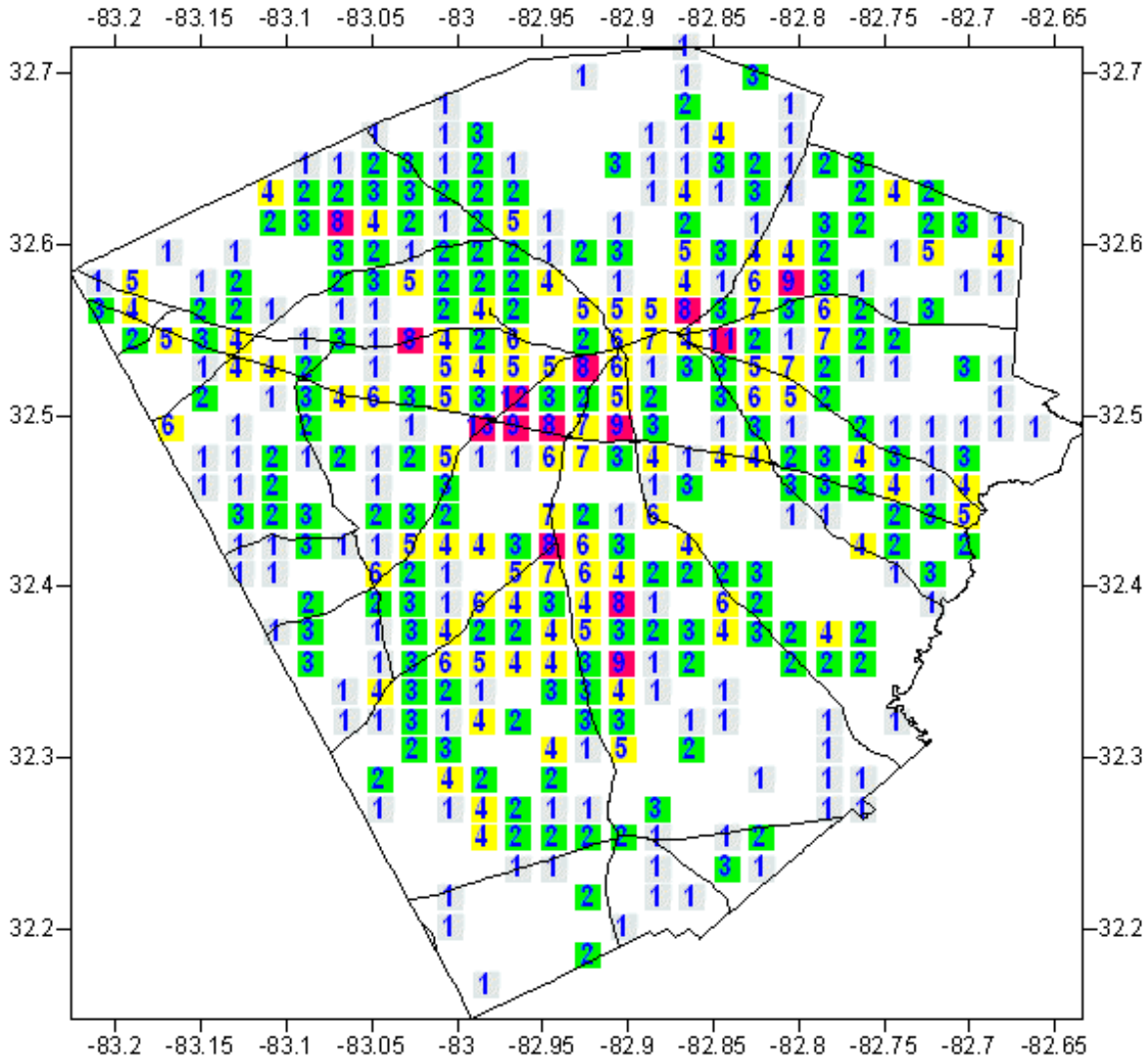


Acreage Burned By Debris Burning Sub Cause For Laurens County For FY 2008-2017

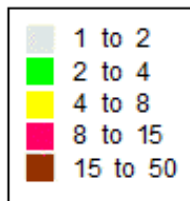
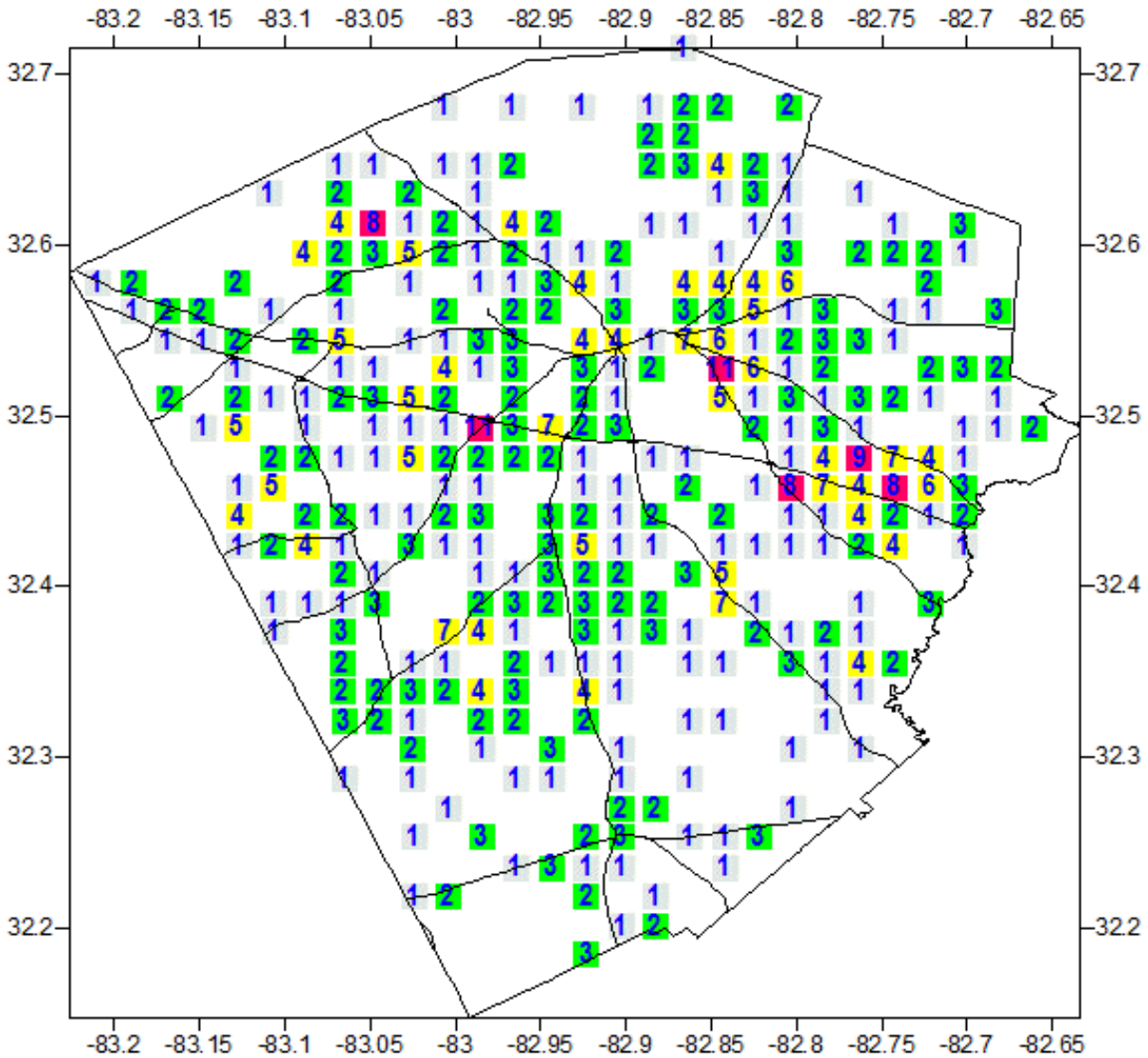


Fire Cause

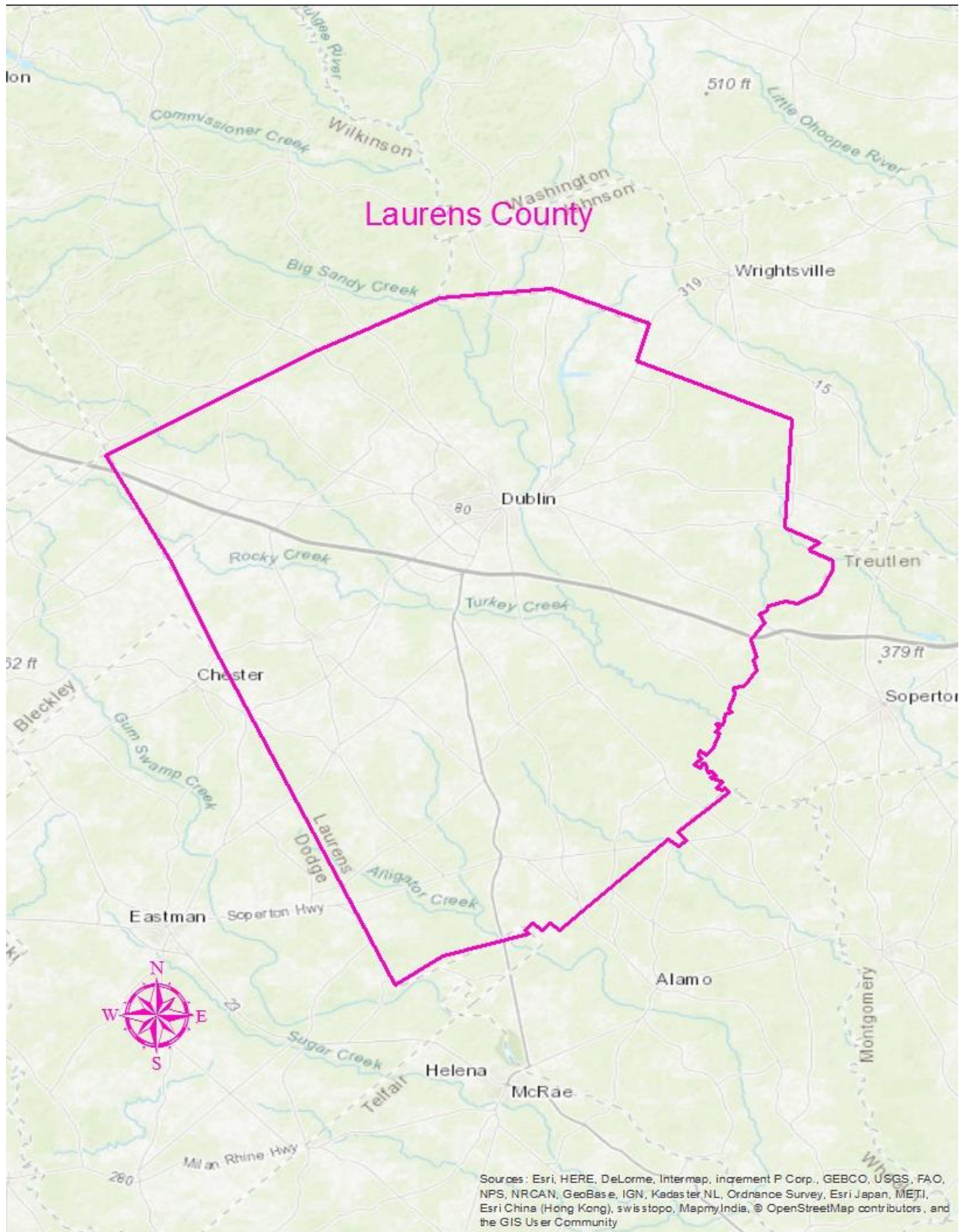
Fire Occurrence Map for Laurens County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011

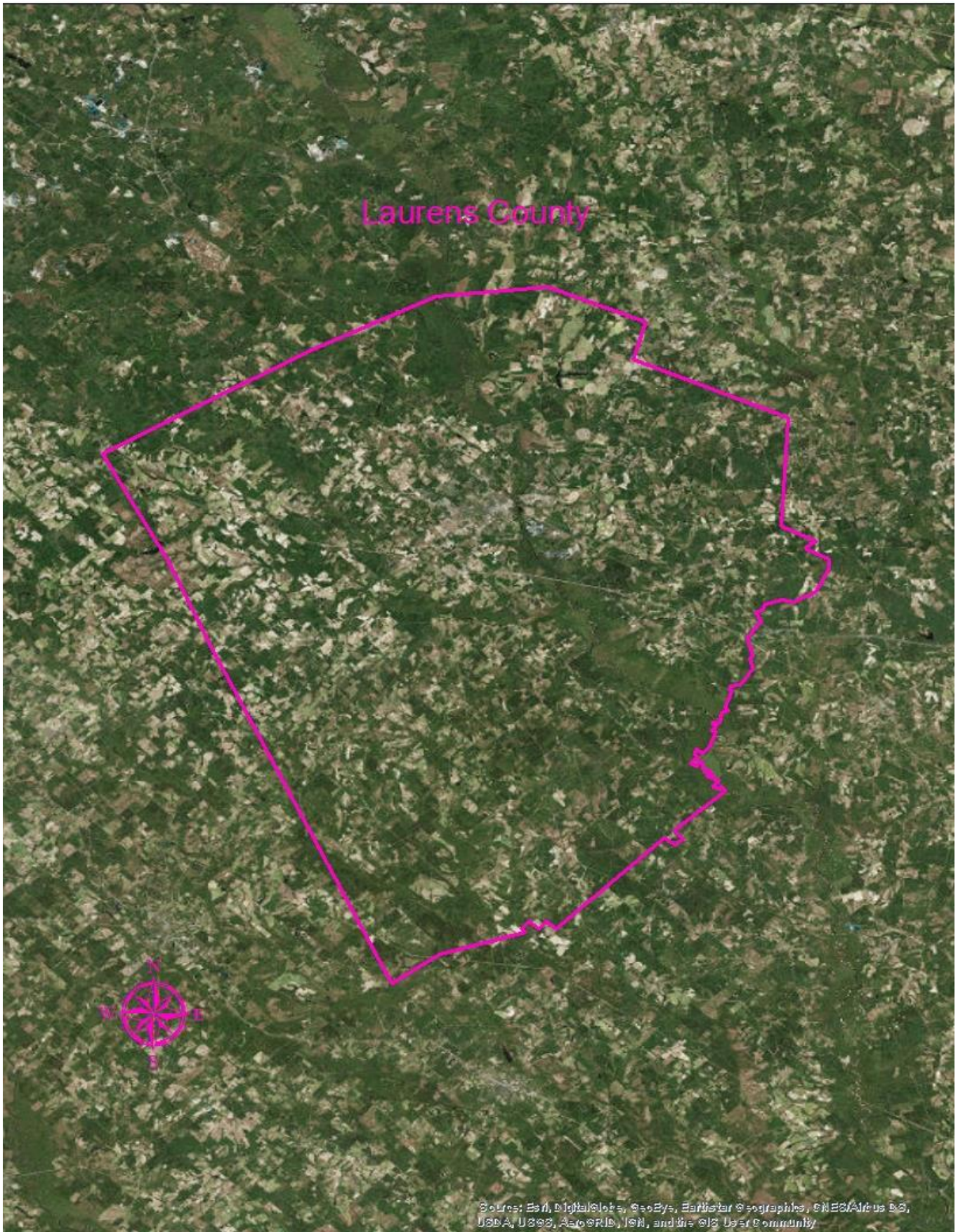


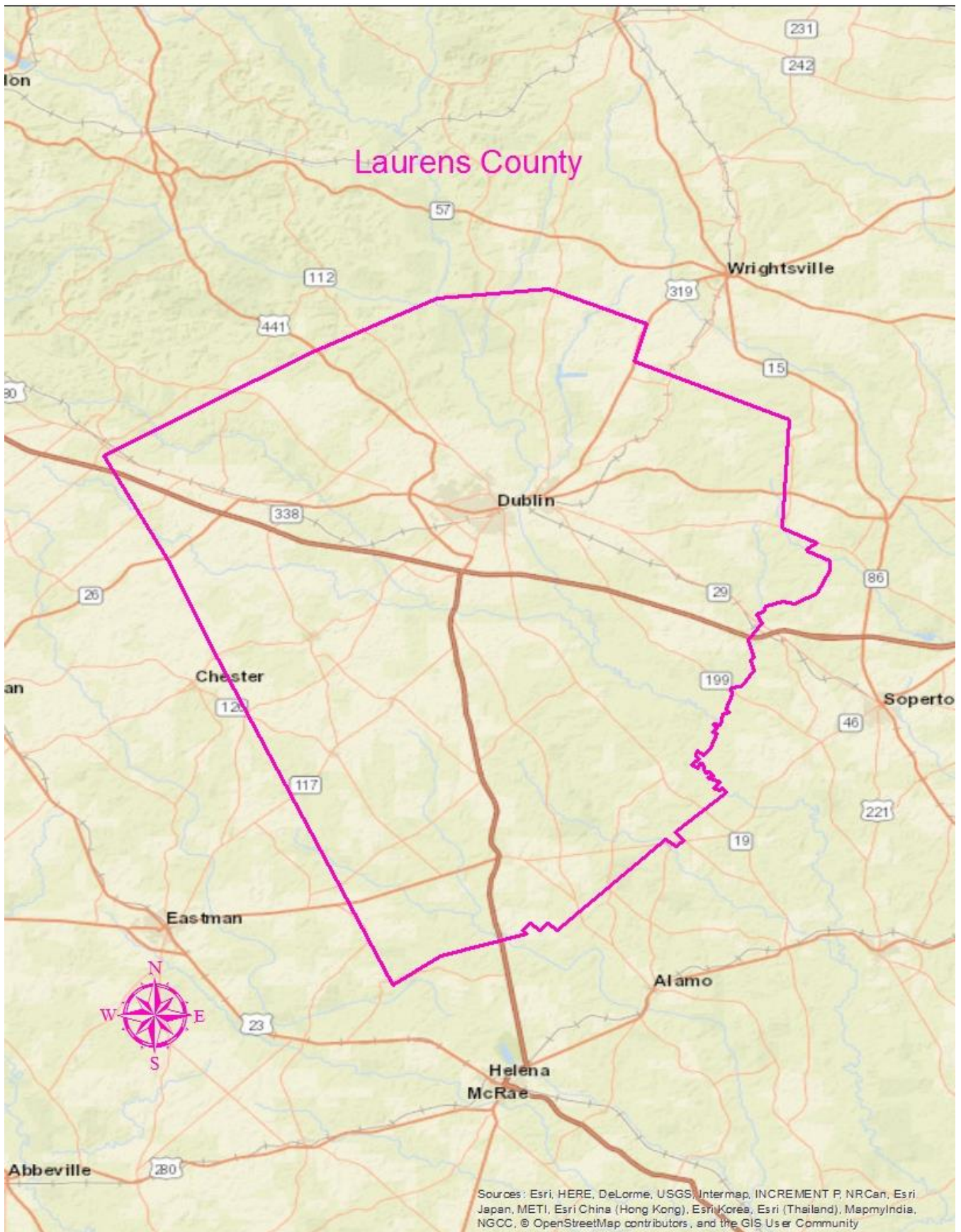
Fire Occurrence Map for Laurens County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



IV. COMMUNITY BASE MAP







V. COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

The Wildland-Urban Interface

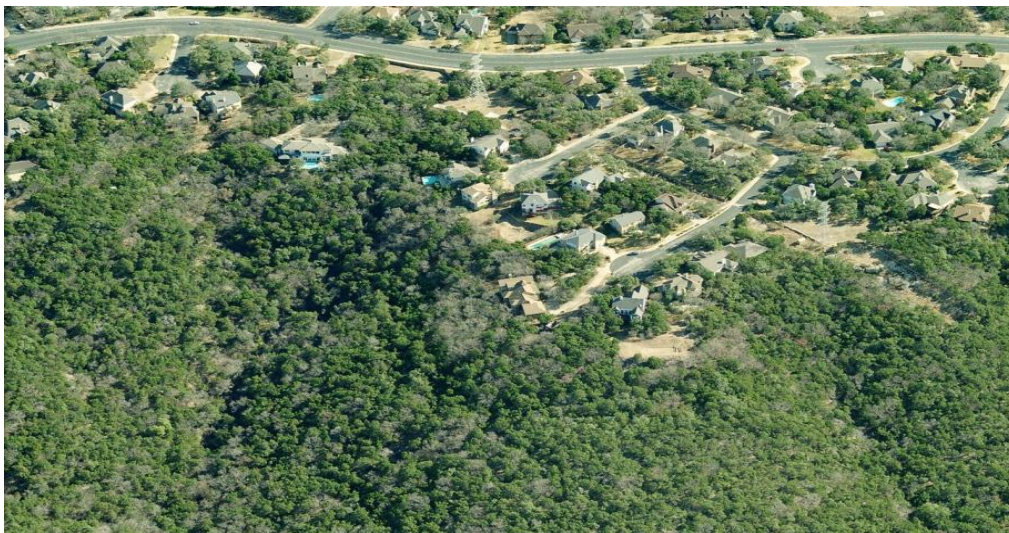
There are many definitions of the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), however from a fire management perspective it is commonly defined as an area where structures and other human development meet or intermingles with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. As fire is dependent on a certain set of conditions, 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.

The wildland fire risk assessments conducted in 2009 by the Laurens County Fire Departments returned an average score of 83, placing Laurens County in the “high” hazard range. The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Laurens County’s WUI was the Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Checklist. The instrument takes into consideration accessibility, vegetation (based on fuel models), 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 Laurens County:

- Dead end roads with inadequate turn arounds
- Narrow roads without drivable shoulders
- Missing street signs and homes not clearly addressed
- Inadequate driveway access
- Minimal defensible space around structures
- Homes with wooden siding and roofs with heavy accumulations of vegetative debris
- Unmarked septic tanks in yards
- No pressurized or non-pressurized water systems available
- Above ground utilities
- Large, adjacent areas of forest or wildlands
- Heavy fuel buildup in adjacent wildlands
- Undeveloped lots comprising half the total lots in many rural communities.
- High occurrence of wildfires in the several locations
- Lack of homeowner or community organizations



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

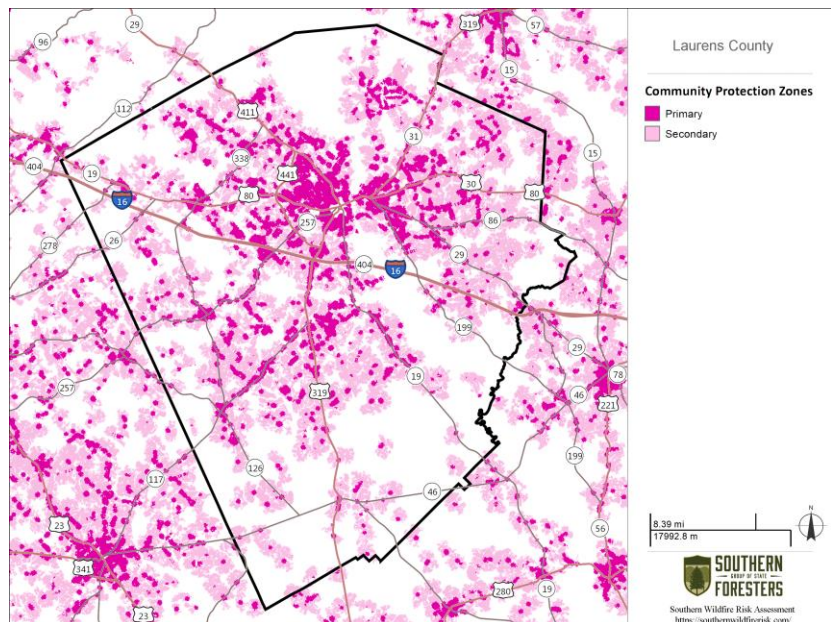
Summary of Laurens County Assessments

| Area/Community | Fire District | Community Access | Surrounding Vegetation | Bldg Construction | Fire Protection | Utilities | Add. Factors | Score | Hazard Rating |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|--------------|-------|---------------|
| Outskirts of Dublin | Dublin | 3 | 15 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 22 | 50 | Low |
| Live Oak/Claxton Dairy | City of Dublin East | 5 | 15 | 20 | 5 | 3 | 28 | 76 | Moderate |
| City Limits | Dublin East | 11 | 15 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 28 | 67 | Moderate |
| Outside City | Dublin | 10 | 15 | 15 | 4 | 4 | 27 | 75 | Moderate |
| Shewmaker Est | Dudley | 14 | 30 | 5 | 17 | 3 | 25 | 94 | High |
| Palmetto Lakes | Dudley | 7 | 30 | 15 | 17 | 3 | 21 | 93 | High |
| Northwood | Dudley | 5 | 10 | 30 | 8 | 5 | 24 | 82 | High |
| Tanglewwods West | Dudley | 17 | 20 | 30 | 13 | 3 | 34 | 117 | Very High |
| Tanglewwods East | Dudley | 19 | 20 | 25 | 13 | 9 | 29 | 115 | Very High |
| Hatchee Ridge | Dudley | 19 | 30 | 25 | 17 | 3 | 29 | 123 | Extreme |
| Old Hawkinsville Rd | Dudley | 23 | 20 | 5 | 15 | 3 | 17 | 83 | High |
| Old Pine Rd | Poplar Springs | 13 | 30 | 10 | 15 | 4 | 25 | 97 | High |
| Bellflower Rd | Poplar Springs | 22 | 45 | 30 | 15 | 9 | 29 | 150 | Extreme |
| The Lakes at Evergreen | Poplar Springs | 22 | 45 | 15 | 13 | 3 | 26 | 124 | Very High |
| The Woodlands at Evergreen | Poplar Springs | 17 | 45 | 15 | 15 | 1 | 20 | 113 | Very High |
| The Plantation at Evergreen | Poplar Springs | 21 | 45 | 15 | 17 | 3 | 10 | 111 | Very High |
| Fordhams Crossing | Poplar Springs | 10 | 30 | 10 | 10 | 4 | 0 | 64 | Moderate |
| Blackshear Ferry Circle | Poplar Springs | 2 | 20 | 20 | 15 | 1 | 25 | 83 | High |
| Saxony Forest/Greystone | Poplar Springs | 8 | 20 | 22 | 20 | 3 | 26 | 99 | High |
| Heritage Place | Poplar Springs | 12 | 20 | 30 | 15 | 4 | 20 | 101 | Very High |
| Cambridge Subdivision | Poplar Springs | 15 | 30 | 10 | 15 | 3 | 32 | 105 | Very High |
| Sherwood Estates | Poplar Springs | 12 | 20 | 30 | 15 | 7 | 26 | 110 | Very High |
| Thundering Springs | Buckeye | 0 | 15 | 20 | 15 | 5 | 7 | 62 | Moderate |
| Shannon Drive | Buckeye | 2 | 15 | 20 | 20 | 4 | 9 | 70 | Moderate |
| Village Cove | Buckeye | 19 | 15 | 20 | 22 | 4 | 18 | 98 | High |
| Buckeye | Buckeye | 3 | 20 | 10 | 22 | 4 | 28 | 87 | High |
| Fordham Rd | Rentz | 18 | 5 | 10 | 11 | 6 | 13 | 63 | Moderate |
| Wingate | Rentz | 16 | 15 | 20 | 20 | 4 | 12 | 87 | High |
| Kitta Square | Rentz | 17 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 9 | 5 | 61 | Moderate |
| Rentz | Rentz Rock | 5 | 15 | 15 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 47 | Low |
| Rock Springs Est | Rock Springs | 8 | 20 | 0 | 15 | 3 | 22 | 68 | Moderate |
| Scotland Country Est | Rock Springs | 5 | 20 | 5 | 20 | 6 | 22 | 78 | Moderate |
| Hitchiti MHP | Dexter | 16 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 2 | 15 | 78 | Moderate |
| Eagle Ridge | Minter | 2 | 15 | 5 | 20 | 4 | 11 | 57 | Moderate |
| Brewton | Brewton | 0 | 15 | 5 | 17 | 4 | 12 | 53 | Moderate |

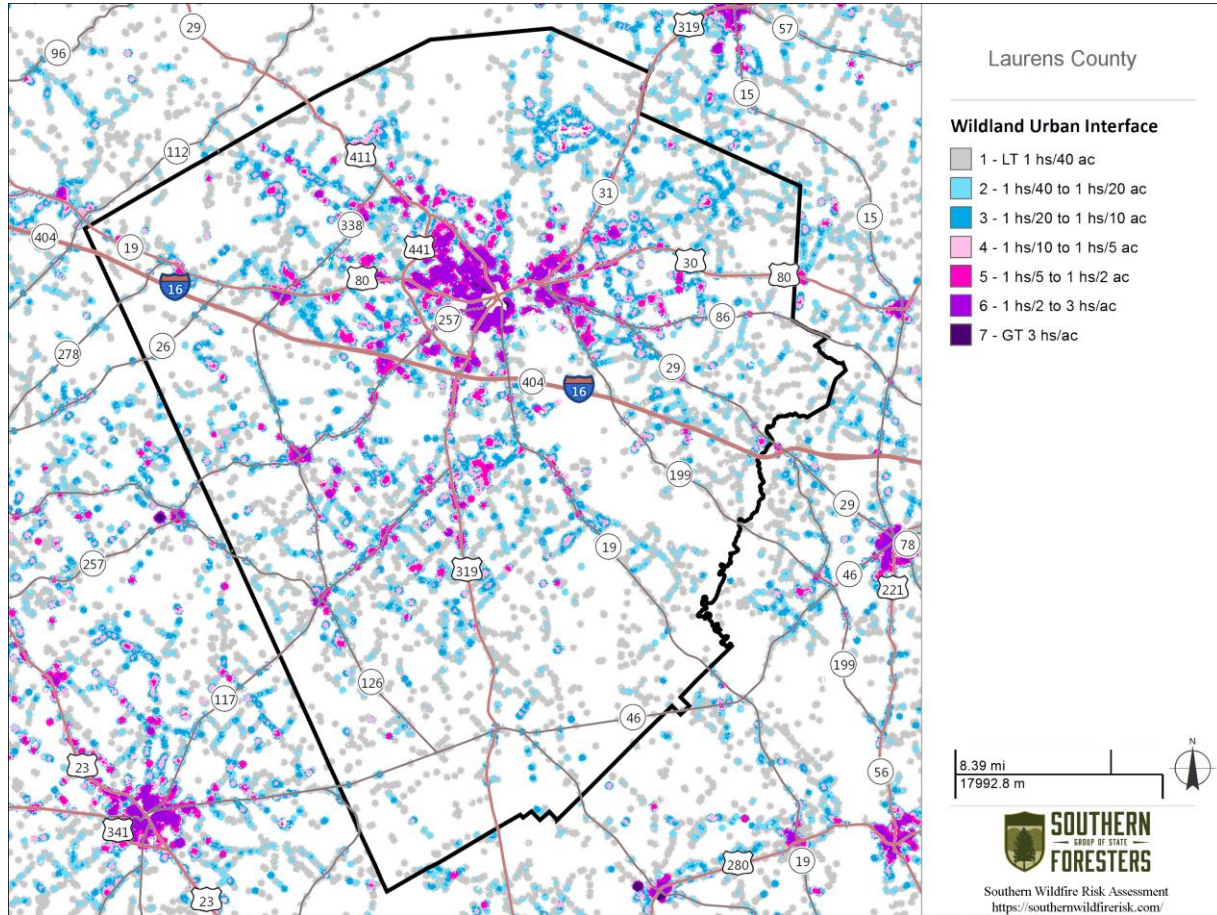
VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

The Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment tool, developed by the Southern Group of State Foresters, was released to the public in July 2014. This tool allows users of the Professional Viewer application of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA) web Portal (SouthWRAP) to define a specific project area and summarize wildfire related information for this area. A detailed risk summary report is generated using a set of predefined map products developed by the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment project which have been summarized explicitly for the user defined project area. A risk assessment summary was generated for Laurens County. The SouthWRAP (SWRA) products included in this report are designed to provide the information needed to support the following key priorities:

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

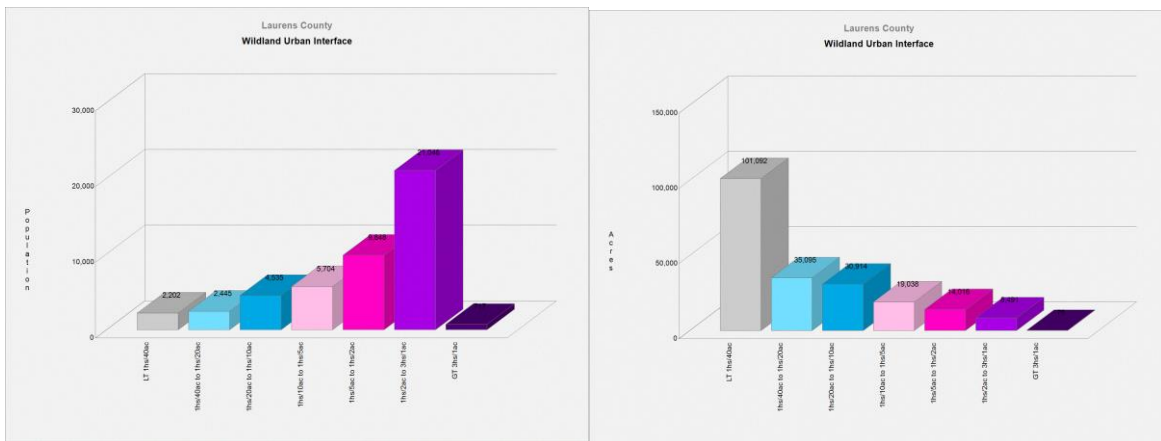


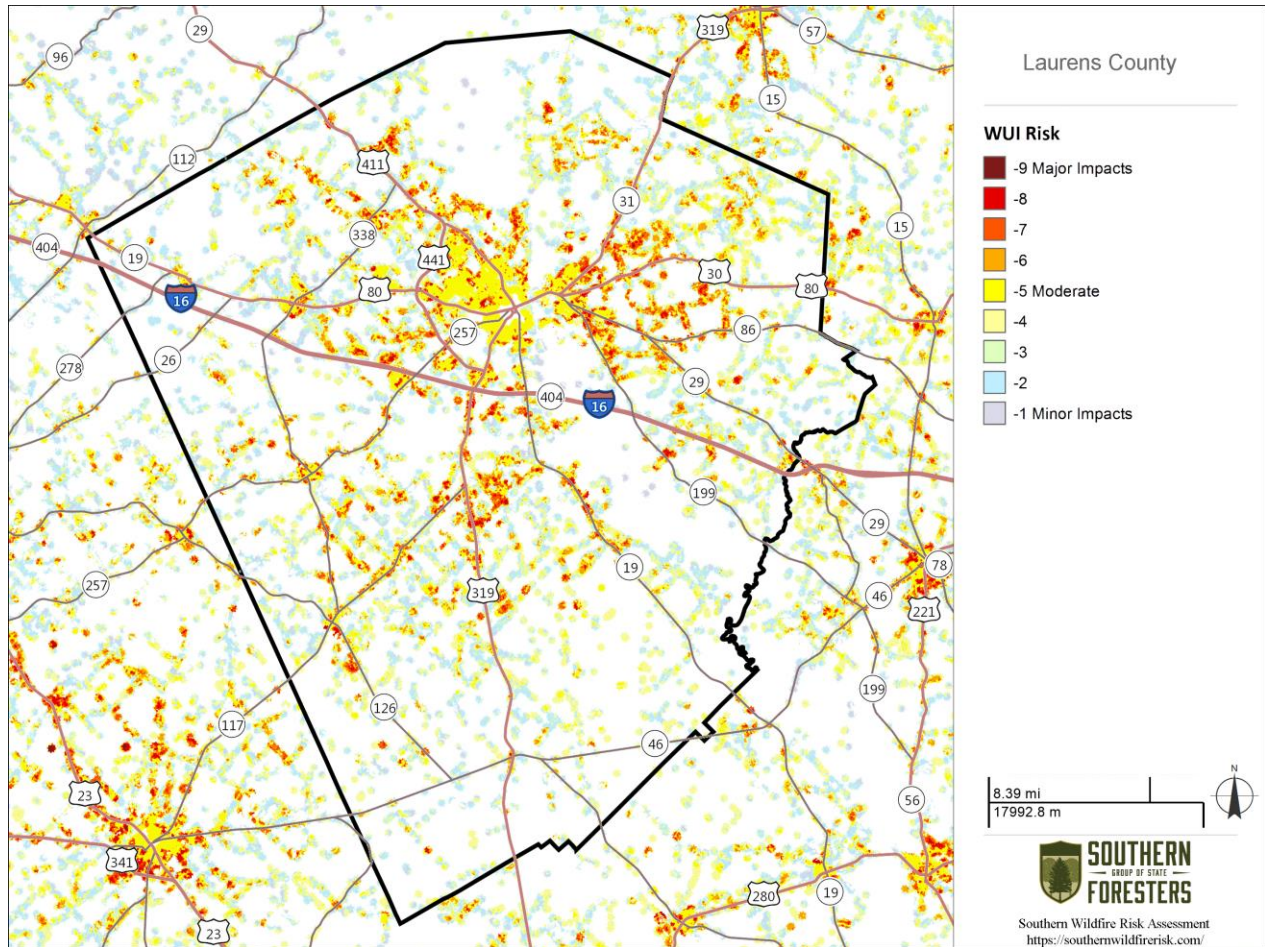
Community Protection Zones map from the Laurens County SWRA



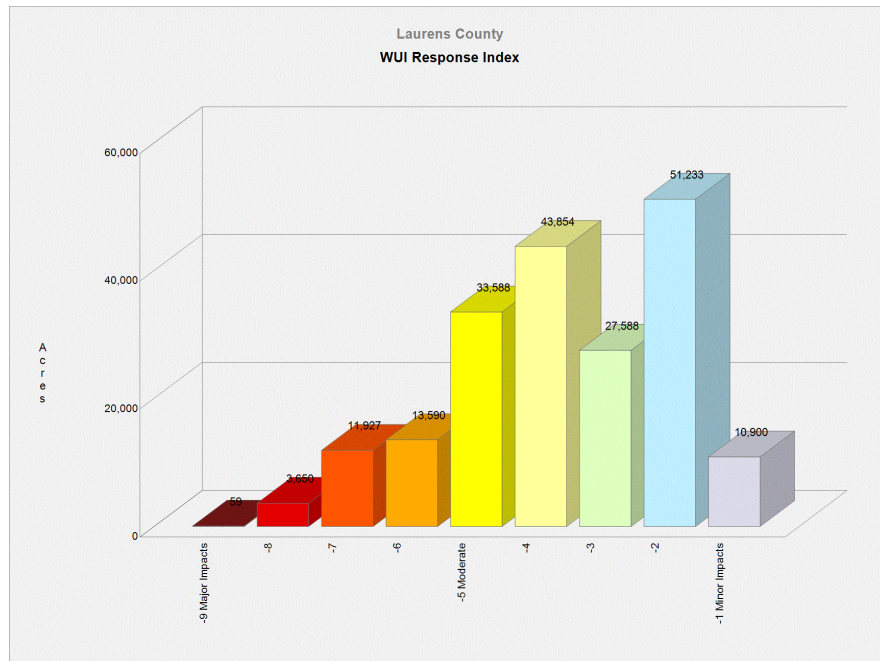
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map

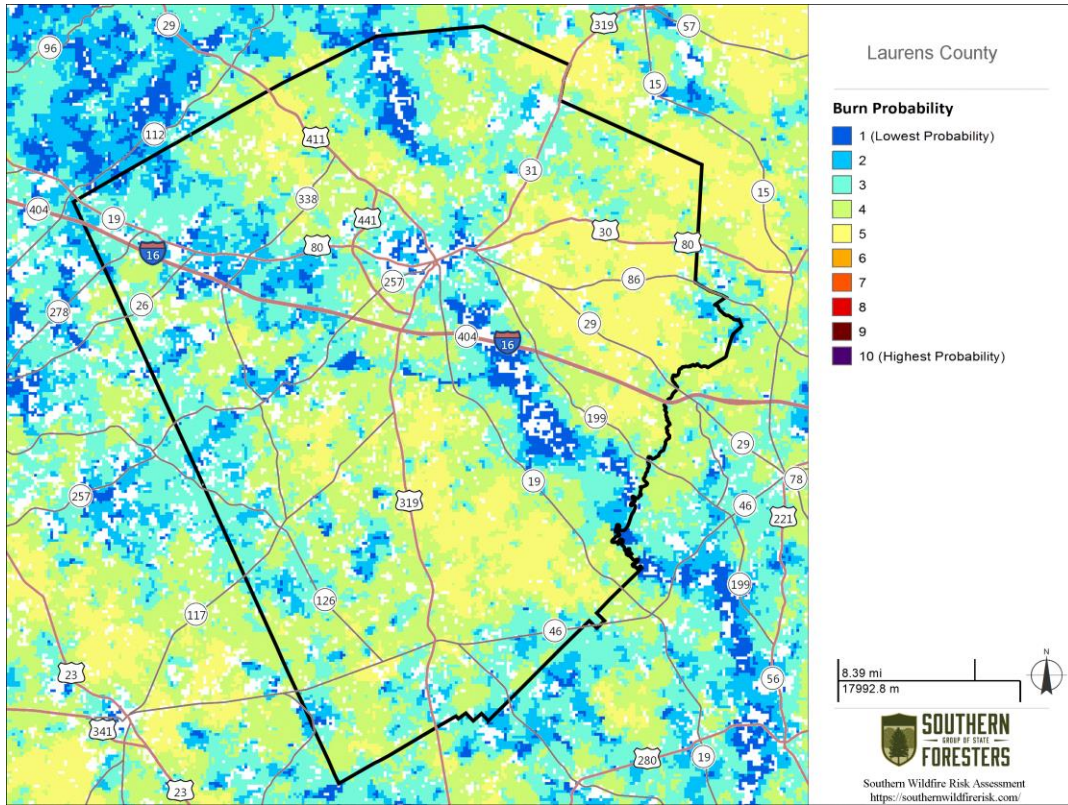
Below: Left – WUI Population
Right – WUI Acres



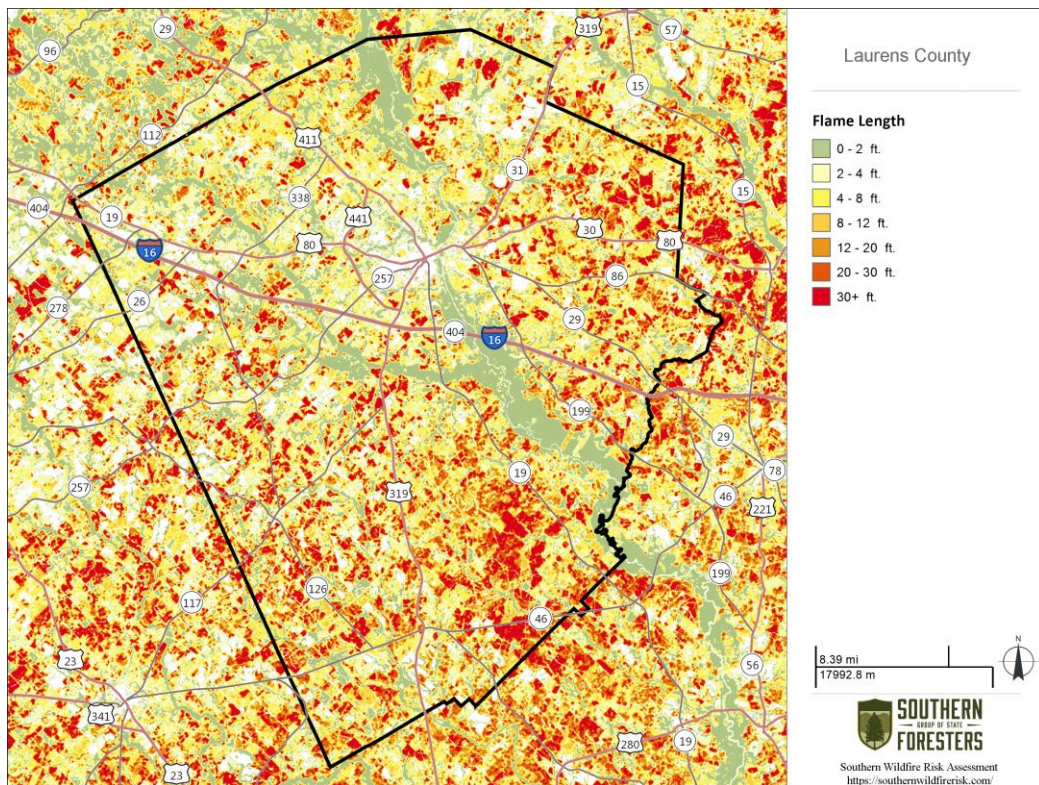


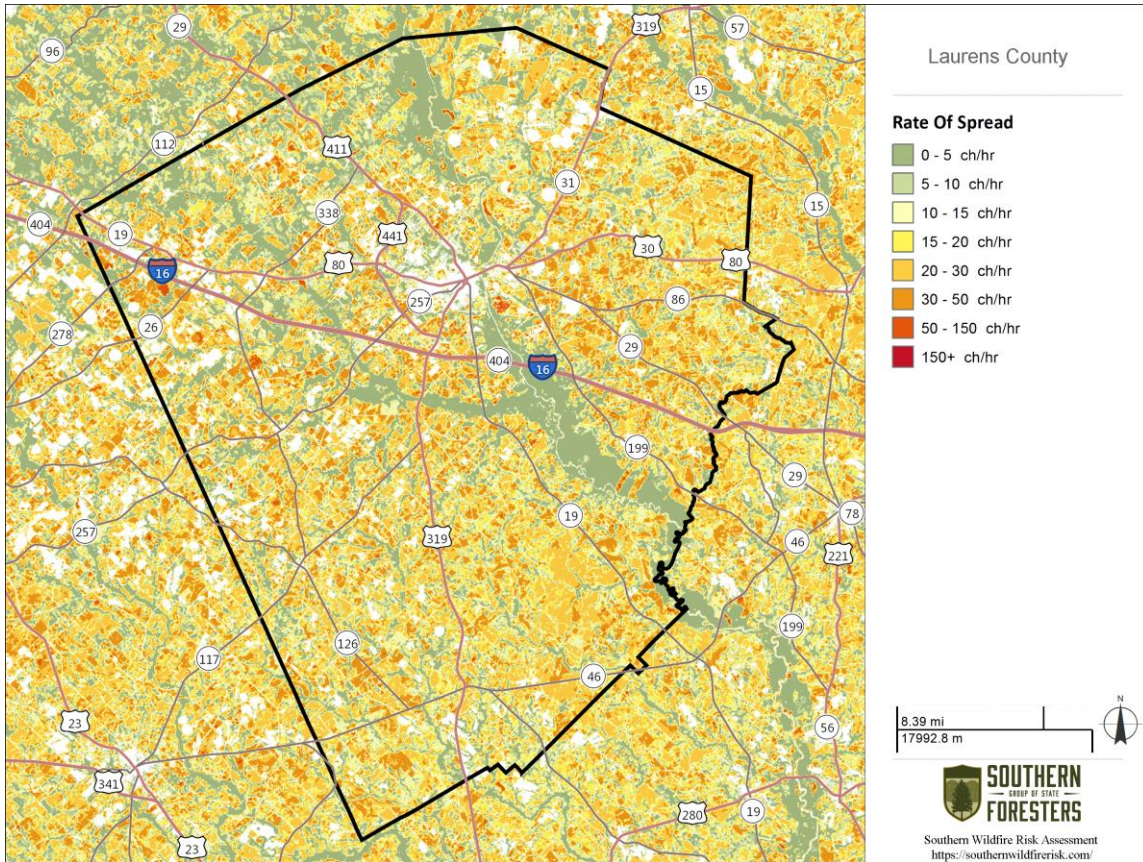
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map
Below: WUI Risk Index Acres



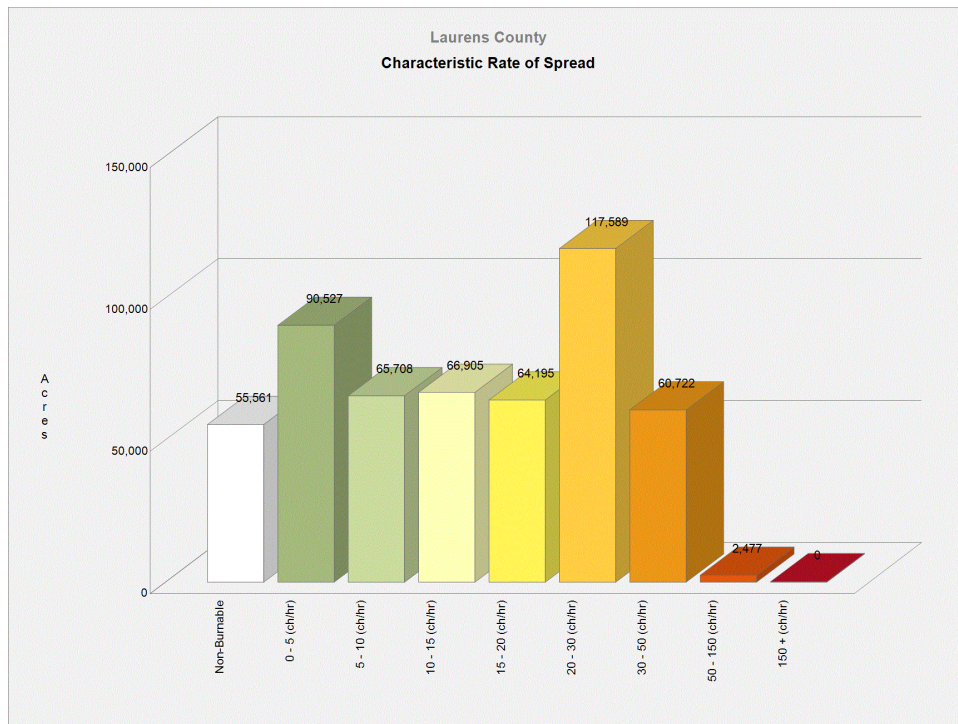


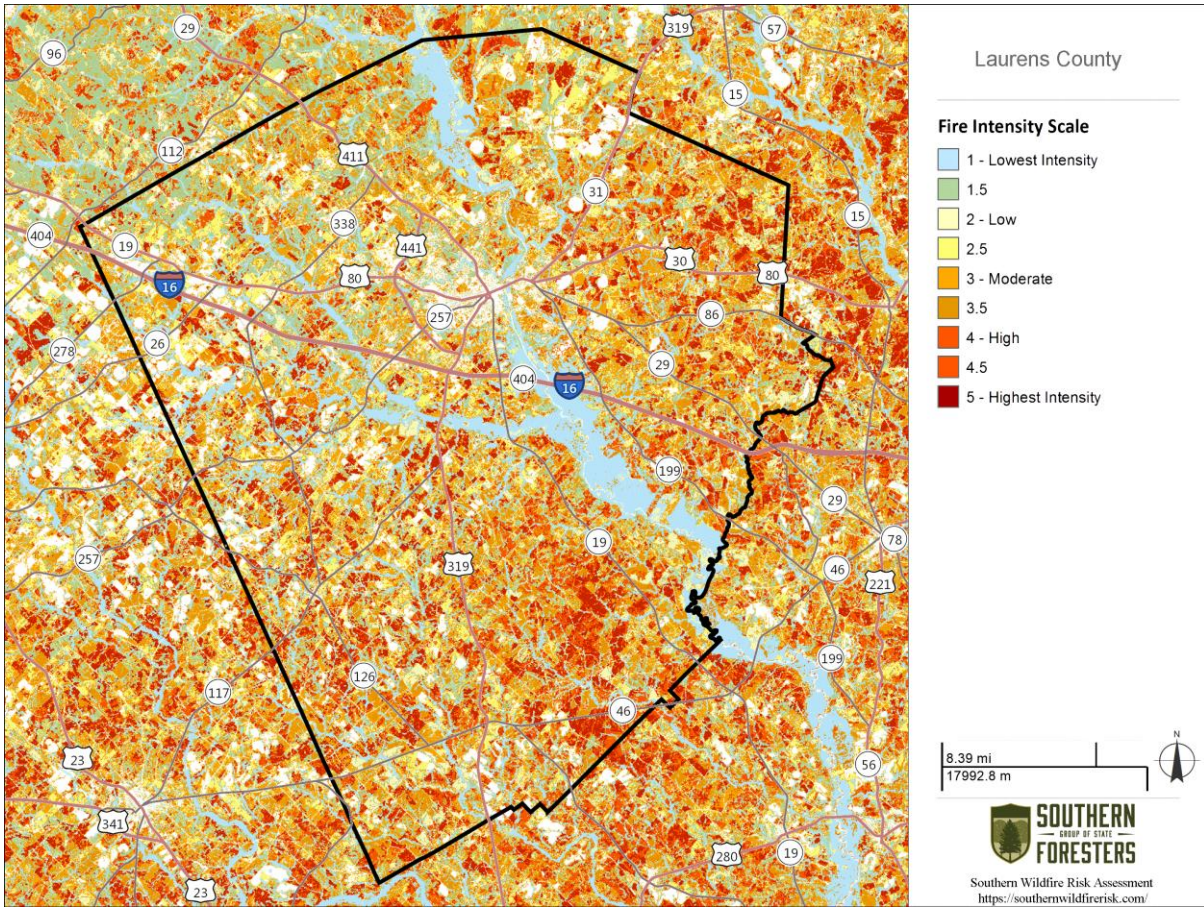
Above: Burn Probability map Below: Flame Length map



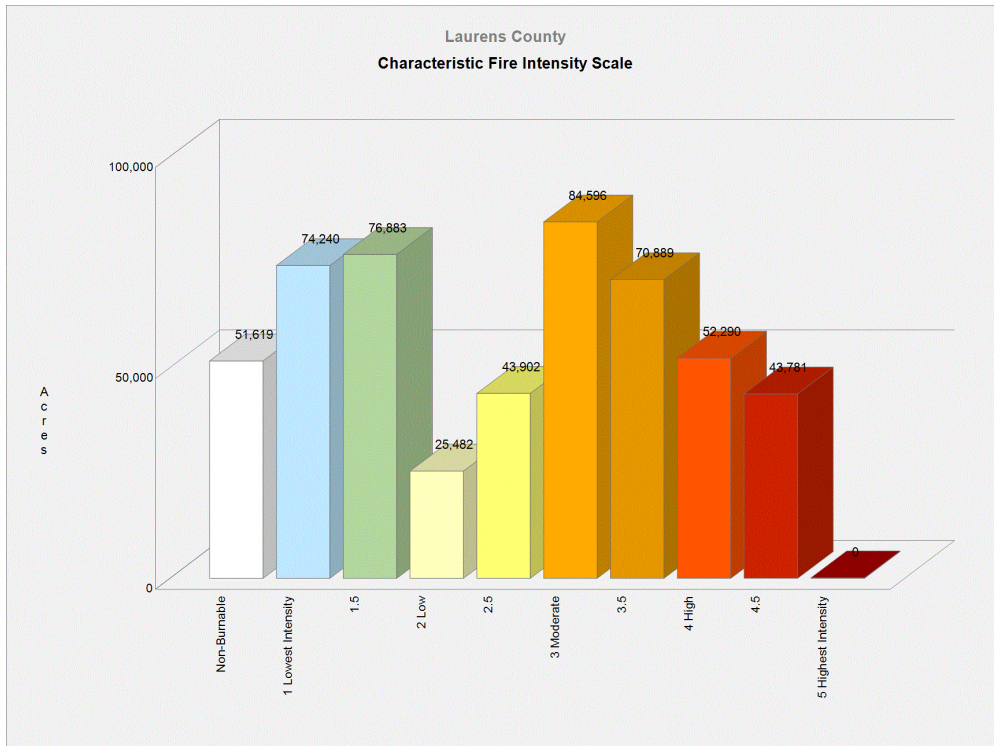


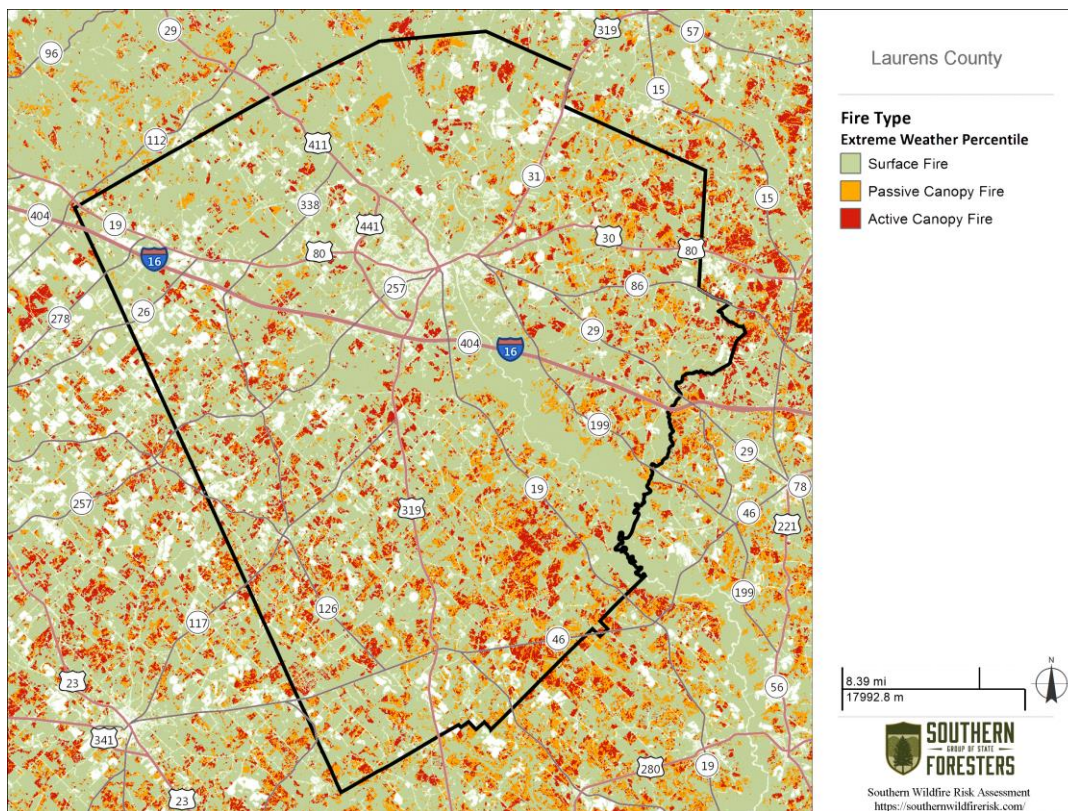
Above: Rate of Spread map
Below: Rate of Spread Acres





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





Above: Fire Type map

Surface Fire

A fire that spreads through surface fuel without consuming any overlying canopy fuel. Surface fuels include grass, timber litter, shrub/brush, slash and other dead or live vegetation within about 6 feet of the ground.



Passive Canopy Fire

A type of crown fire in which the crowns of individual trees or small groups of trees burn, but solid flaming in the canopy cannot be maintained except for short periods (Scott & Reinhardt, 2001).



Active Canopy Fire

A crown fire in which the entire fuel complex (canopy) is involved in flame, but the crowning phase remains dependent on heat released from surface fuel for continued spread (Scott & Reinhardt, 2001).



VII. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

As Southeast Georgia continues to see increased growth from other areas seeking less crowded and warmer climates, new development will occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. Laurens County 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.

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

In 2012 the International Code Council developed the International Wildland Urban Interface Code. The code is endorsed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and in 2014 the code was adopted by the Georgia Legislature to be used by counties to help lower fire risk in the higher risk areas in the WUI.

The following recommendations were developed by the Laurens 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, and replace pine straw and mulch around plantings with less flammable landscaping materials. |
| 3. Community Clean-up Day National Wildfire Preparedness Day 1 st Saturday in May | Cutting, mowing, pruning** | Cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces. |
| 4. Driveway Access | Right of Way Clearance | Maintain vertical and horizontal clearance for emergency equipment. See that adequate lengths of culverts are installed to allow emergency vehicle access. |
| 5. Road Access | Identify needed road improvements | As roads are upgraded, widen to minimum standards with at least 50 foot diameter cul de sacs or turn arounds. |
| 6. Codes and Ordinances | Examine existing codes and ordinances. Utilize the International Wildland Urban Interface Code IWUIC | 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 Review Subdivision and development ordinances for public safety concerns. Enforce uniform addressing ordinance. Need effective skirting ordinance. |
| 7. Burn Permits | Education and Enforcement | Greater Burn Permit enforcement and education from the Georgia Forestry Commission. |

| Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities | | |
|--|------------------------|--|
| Treatment Area | Treatment Types | Treatment Method(s) |
| 1. Adjacent WUI Lands | Reduce hazardous fuels | Encourage prescribed burning for private landowners and industrial timberlands particularly adjacent to residential areas. Seek grant for prescribed burning in WUI areas. Seek grant for WUI mitigation team. |
| 2. Railroad Corridors | Reduce hazardous fuels | Encourage railroads to better maintain their ROW eliminating brush and grass through herbicide and mowing. Maintain firebreaks along ROW adjacent to residential areas. |
| 3. Existing Fire Lines | Reduce hazardous fuels | Clean and re-harrow existing lines. |
| Proposed Improved Community Wildland Fire Response Priorities | | |
| 1. Water Sources | Dry Hydrants | Inspect, maintain and improve access to existing dry hydrants. Add signage along road to mark the hydrants. Locate additional dry hydrants as needed. Locate and pre-clear helicopter dip sites |
| 2. Fire Stations | Equipment | Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland PPE Gear. Investigate need for “brush” trucks. |
| 3. Water Sources | Drafting equipment | Investigate need for trailered drafting pumps. |
| 4. Mapping | GIS | Up do date mapping of roads and water sources. |
| 5. Road Names | Road Signage | Improved Road Signage at Crossroads. “Dead End” or “No Outlet” Tags on Road Signs |
| 6. Personnel | Training | Obtain Wildland Fire Suppression training for Fire Personnel. Ready Set Go training |
| 7. Water Handling | Tanker Capacity | Access need for additional tanker capacity |
| **Actions to be taken by homeowners and community stakeholders | | |

Proposed Education and Outreach Priorities

| |
|--|
| <p>1. Conduct “How to Have a Firewise Home” Workshop for Laurens County Residents</p> |
| <p>Set up and conduct a workshop for homeowners that teach the principles of making homes and properties safe from wildfire. Topics for discussion include defensible space, landscaping, building construction, etc. Workshop will be scheduled for evenings or weekends when most homeowners are available and advertised through local media outlets.</p> <p>Distribute materials promoting firewise practices and planning through local community and governmental meetings.</p> |
| <p>2. Conduct “Firewise” Workshop for Community Leaders</p> |
| <p>Arrange for GFC Firewise program to work with local community leaders and governmental officials on the importance of “Firewise Planning” in developing ordinances and codes as the county as the need arises. Identify “Communities at Risk” within the county for possible firewise community recognition.</p> |
| <p>3. Spring Clean-up Event (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1st Saturday in May annually)</p> |
| <p>Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Laurens County Fire Departments and community residents. Set up information table with educational materials and refreshments. Initiate the event with a morning briefing by GFC Firewise coordinator and local fire officials detailing plans for the day and safety precautions. Activities to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters • Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet away from structures • Trim overhanging limbs • Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties <p>Celebrate the work with a community cookout, with Community officials, GFC and Laurens County Fire Departments discussing and commending the work accomplished.</p> |
| <p>4. Informational Packets</p> |
| <p>Develop and distribute informational packets to be distributed by realtors and insurance agents. Included in the packets are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Firewise Around Your Home • Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction • Firewise Communities USA Brochures • Ready Set Go materials • Fire Adapted Community information |

5. Wildfire Protection Display

Create and exhibit a display for the general public at the St. Patricks Day Festival and other local events. Display can be independent or combined with the Georgia Forestry Commission display. Hold Open House at individual Fire Stations to promote Community Firewise Safety and develop community support and understanding of local fire departments and current issues.

6. Media

Invite the Dublin news media to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Laurens County. Utilize TV, radio, cable access, and social media to reach the public.



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

Forestry mowers and mastication brush cutters, such as pictured here, can be very effective in reducing understory fuels in areas where prescribed fire is not practical. This practice can lower risk near homes in the wildland urban interface. Private contractors can provide this service.



VIII. ACTION PLAN

Roles and Responsibilities

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

| Role | Responsibility |
|--|--|
| Hazardous Fuels and Structural Ignitability Reduction | |
| Laurens County WUI Fire Council | Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC officials, Laurens County and Dublin Fire department officials, a representative from the city and county governments and the EMA Director for Laurens 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 Radio and TV PSA's for area stations and TV-35 3 Personal Contacts 4 Key messages and prevention tips 5 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters |

| | |
|--|--|
| Spring Clean-up Day (National Wildfire Preparedness Day) | |
| 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, Laurens County Fire Departments, and Emergency Management Agency. Procure needed equipment and supplies. In cooperation with local city and county officials, develop safety protocol. Supervise work and monitor activities for safety the day of the event. |

Funding Needs

The following funding is needed to implement the action plan:

| Project | Estimated Cost | Potential Funding Source(s) |
|--|----------------|---|
| 1. Create a minimum of 30 feet of defensible space around structures | Varies | Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties. |
| 2. Reduce structural ignitability by cleaning flammable vegetation from roofs and gutters; appropriately storing firewood, installing skirting around raised structures, storing water hoses for ready access, 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 Business Donations. |
| 5. Fuel Reduction Activities | \$35 / acre | FEMA & USFS Grants |

Assessment Strategy

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness for the action plan, the Laurens 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, and 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 Laurens County WUI Council 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 Laurens County WUI Council meeting. Needed actions will be discussed and delegated.

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

IX. MITIGATION ASSISTANCE & GRANT FUNDING

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

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

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

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

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

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

X. GLOSSARY

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

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

CWPP – The Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XI. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Publications/Brochures/Websites:

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

Appended Documents:

Laurens County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Laurens County Wildfire assessment scoresheets

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

GEORGIA FORESTRY
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