

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



Community Wildfire Protection Plan

An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources

Lowndes County, Georgia

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



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Prepared by;
Buck Kline, Chief Ranger, GFC (Initial Plan 2010)
Will Fell, CWPP Specialist, GFC (Initial Plan 2010)
Stephen Spradley, Chief Ranger, GFC (Revised Plan 2018)
Beryl Budd, Wildfire Prevention Specialist (Revised Plan 2018)

Georgia Forestry Commission
3011 US Hwy 84 East
Valdosta, GA 31606

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

Ashley Tye
Lowndes County EMA Director (229) 671-2790
Fire Chief, Lowndes County FD (229) 671-2737
atye@lowndescounty.com

Stephen Spradley
Chief Ranger, Echols, Lanier, Lowndes County Forestry Unit (229) 333-5267
sspradley@gfc.state.ga.us

J. D. Felty
Chief Moody AFB FD (229) 257-4413
jeffrey.felty@moody.af.mil

Gary Williams
Captain, Lowndes County FD (229) 671-2730
gwilliams@lowndescounty.com

Steven Seward
Deputy Chief Moody AFB FD (229) 257-4414
steven.steward@moody.af.mil

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Appended Documents:

Lowndes County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Lowndes County Wildfire Pre-suppression Plan

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

Preface

The extreme weather conditions that are conducive to wildfire disasters (usually a combination of extended drought, low relative humidity and high winds) can occur in this area of Georgia as infrequently as every 10-15 years. This is not a regular event, but as the number of homes that have been built in or adjacent to forested or wildland areas increases, it can turn a wildfire under these weather conditions into a major disaster. Wildfires move fast and can quickly overwhelm the resources of even the best equipped fire department. Advance planning can save lives, homes and businesses.

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) includes a locally assessed evaluation of the wildland urban interface areas of the county, looking at the critical issues regarding access to these areas, risk to properties from general issues such as building characteristics and “fire wise” practices and response from local fire fighting resources. It further incorporates a locally devised action plan to mitigate these risks and hazards through planning, education and other avenues that may become available to address the increasing threat of wildland fire. The CWPP does not obligate the county financially in any way, but instead lays a foundation for improved emergency response if and when grant funding is available to the county.

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

This plan will:

- Enhance public safety
- Raise public awareness of wildfire hazards and risks
- Educate homeowners on how to reduce home ignitability
- Build and improve collaboration at multiple levels

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

I. OBJECTIVES

The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Lowndes 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 Dec 17th, 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:

Lowndes County Government
Lowndes County Fire Department
Emergency Management
 US Department of Defense, USAF
Moody AFB Fire Department,
 Georgia Forestry Commission

It was decided to conduct community assessments on the basis individual fire districts in the county. The chiefs of the fire departments in the county assessed their districts and reconvened on March 9th, 2010 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. COUNTY HISTORY & WILDFIRE HISTORY



Lowndes County in southwest Georgia was created in 1825 by an act of the state legislature. The county was named for William Jones Lowndes, whose father, Rawlins Lowndes, had been a Revolutionary War (1775-83) leader from South Carolina. Lowndes County was originally bordered by Irwin County to the north, Ware County to the east, Florida to the south, and Thomas County to the west.

In 1827 settlers established the first town, Franklinville, and designated it the county seat. In 1833 a courthouse was built at

Lowndes County Courthouse Lowndesville (located at the junction of the Little and Withlacoochee Rivers), which then became the new county seat. Four years later Lowndesville was renamed Troupville, in honor of Georgia governor George Troup. According to the 1840 census, there were 4,394 whites and 1,180 blacks in the county at that time. On December 12, 1859, Lowndes County commissioners purchased 140 acres for \$1,250 to establish a new county seat, which they named Valdosta after Val d'Aosta, Troup's plantation home. The reason for the move was to connect with a railroad line from Savannah. The first train passed through Valdosta on July 4, 1860. Between 1890 and 1916, Valdosta became the largest inland market for Sea Island cotton in the world. The arrival of the boll weevil in 1915 caused the eventual destruction of cotton crops across the state.

One of the largest employers in early Lowndes County was the Strickland Cotton Mills, put into operation in 1900 by B. F. Strickland, the company's president. Employees of the mill lived in a company town named Remerton, which still exists today, although the mill has been torn down. In addition to textiles, timber and turpentine were major industries in Lowndes County in the early 1900s. The American Turpentine Farmers Association was founded in 1936, with its headquarters in Valdosta. Judge Harley Langdale began buying timberland and formed the Langdale Forest Products Company, one of the largest companies in Lowndes County. The second plant to bottle Coca-Cola in the world was located in Lowndes County. By 1936 the plant was one of the first modern plants in south Georgia and served a seven-county area. In 1906 South Georgia State Normal College was founded in Valdosta to provide higher education opportunities for women in the area. The school was renamed Georgia State Women's College in 1922. After World War II (1941-45) many men wanted to attend college. The school became coeducational in 1950 and was renamed Valdosta State College. The college became Valdosta State University in 1993. The administrative campus of Wiregrass Georgia Technical College, which serves an eleven-county area, is also located in Valdosta. Besides Valdosta and Remerton, Lowndes County also is home to the city of Hahira (incorporated in October 1891), famous for its Honey Bee Festival; Lake Park, a city surrounded by lakes that is home to several outlet malls; and Dasher. Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta is home to the 23d Wing. According to the 2000 U.S. census, the population of Lowndes County was 92,115 (62 percent white, 34 percent black, and 2.7 percent Hispanic), a 21 percent increase since 1990.

Wildfire History

Lowndes County located in deep south Georgia, despite being home to the largest urbanized area along the southern tier of counties, is still almost 64% forested. Perhaps with the exception of the large blocks of woodlands in the flatwoods of northeastern Lowndes County, 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 incorporated cities.

Lowndes County is protected by organized fire departments within the cities of Valdosta, Hahira and Moody Air Force Base along with 17 volunteer fire departments in the unincorporated areas of the county. The Georgia Forestry Commission maintains a county protection unit located just east of Valdosta on Hwy 84 to respond to wildfires throughout the county. The cities of Valdosta, Hahira and Lake Park and some adjacent areas of the county are serviced by a pressurized water systems with hydrants available.

Over the past fifty two years, Lowndes County has averaged 126 reported wildland fires per year, burning an average of 594 acres per years. Using more recent figures over the past 10 years, this number has declined considerably to an average of 51 fires per year burning 215 acres annually. The following table indicates wildfire activity in Lowndes County during the 10 year period FY 2007 through FY2016.

Acres Burned /Number of Fires For Lowndes County Fiscal Year 2007-2016				
Year	Acres Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2007	660.47	126	5.24	18.64
2008	139.88	55	2.54	4.56
2009	116.41	45	2.59	3.90
2010	83.70	31	2.70	3.93
2011	291.18	93	3.13	17.56
2012	173.54	53	3.27	5.08
2013	175.74	40	4.39	4.53
2014	41.79	19	2.20	5.02
2015	246.99	34	7.26	4.42
2016	215.18	20	10.76	6.29

The chart below outlines wildfire activity during the most recent complete fiscal year 2017. The data includes the number of wildfires, cause, acres burned, and 5 year averages.

County = Lowndes	Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	3	4.84	1.00	1.27
Children	Children	1	0.40	1.20	2.78
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	2	14.10	1.20	3.73
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	1	2.36	1.00	3.72
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	8	45.90	4.40	29.63
Debris: Household Garbage	Debris: Household Garbage	1	2.50	1.00	1.00
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	2	1.25	1.20	0.51
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	10	14.92	7.40	19.31
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	0	0.00	0.20	1.00
Incendiary	Incendiary	1	6.40	1.80	37.92
Lightning	Lightning	4	27.20	2.40	49.78
Machine Use	Machine Use	3	4.30	2.00	2.05
Miscellaneous: Fireworks/Explosives	Miscellaneous: Fireworks/Explosives	0	0.00	0.20	0.09
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	0	0.00	0.60	0.42
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	2	2.64	0.60	0.55
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	1	0.93	0.40	0.21
Railroad	Railroad	3	8.00	1.60	3.56
Smoking	Smoking	0	0.00	0.20	0.11
Undetermined	Undetermined	6	9.53	3.80	7.36
Totals for County: Lowndes Year: 2017		48	145.27	32.20	164.99

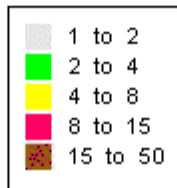
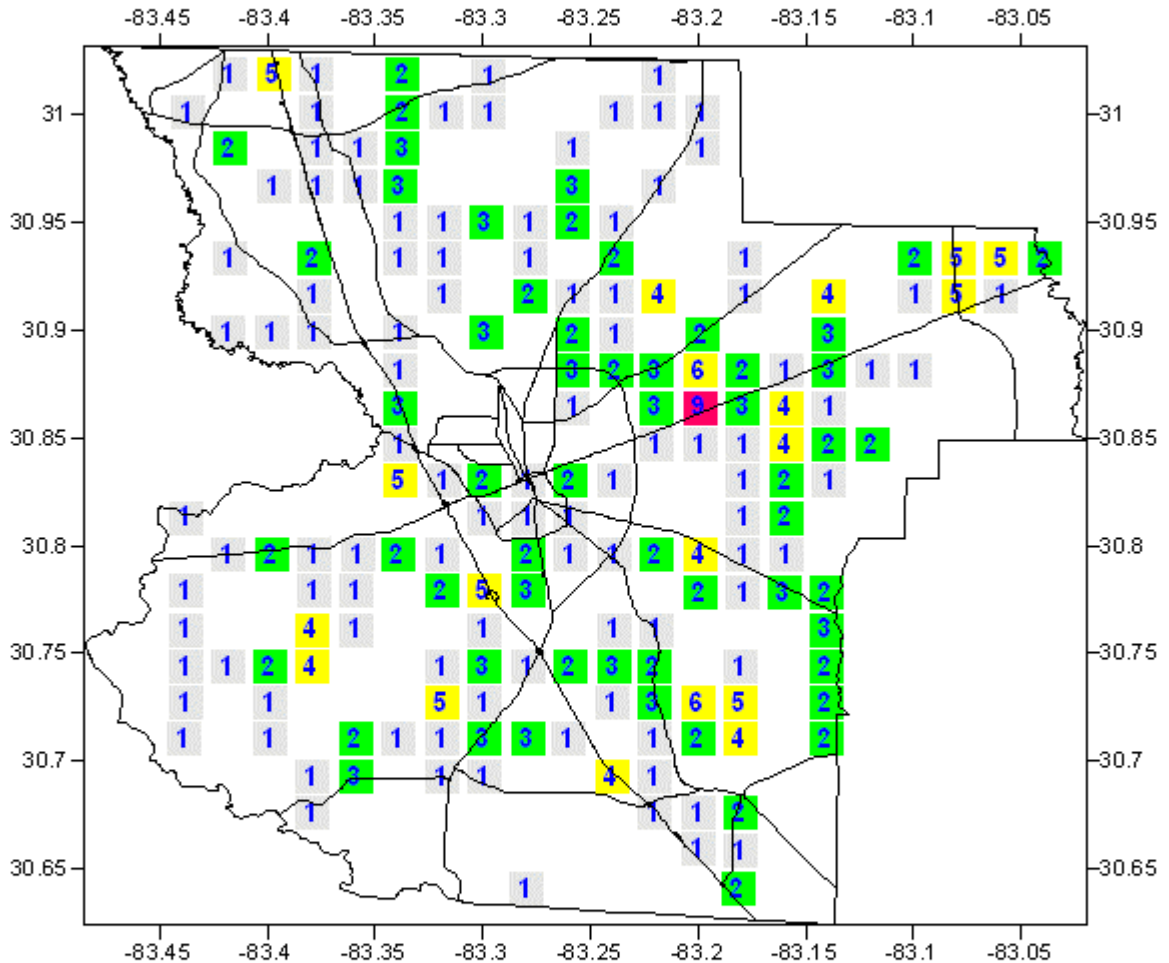
Over the past 10 years, (FY 2007 – FY 2016) the leading causes of these fires, was debris burning and arson causing 50% and 19% respectively of the fires and 68% and 16% respectively of the acres burned.

Acreage Burned /Number of Fires by Fire Cause For Lowndes County For FY 2007-2016		
Fire Cause	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires
Campfire	31.97	15
Children	25.77	19
Debris Burning	1,070.83	239
Incendiary	480.11	94
Lightning	311.32	24
Machine Use	86.35	48
Miscellaneous	11.29	25
Railroad	0.00	0
Smoking	43.54	17
Undetermined	27.28	13
Total	2,088.46	494

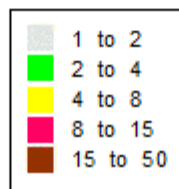
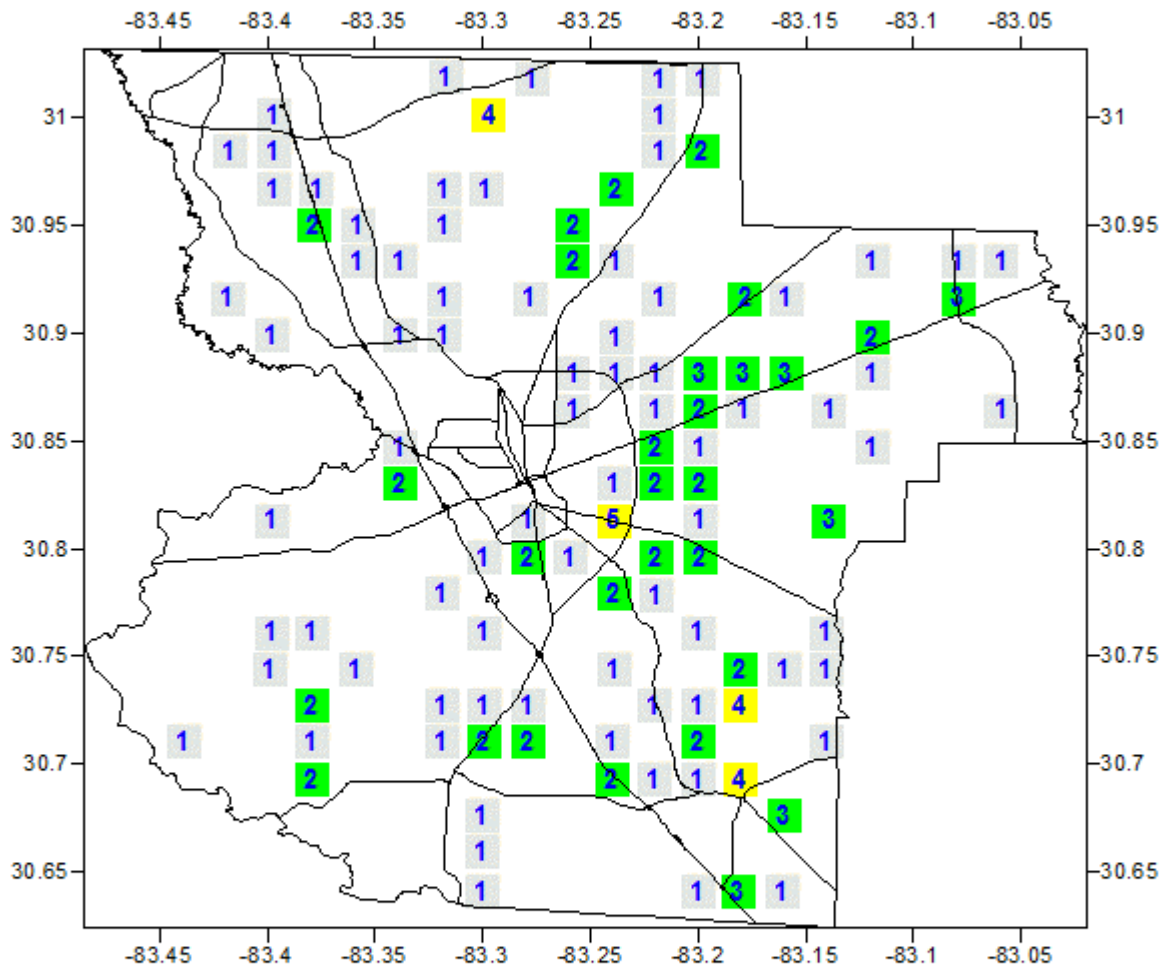
Number of Fires by Cause for Lowndes County for FY 2007 to 2016

Year	Campfire	Children	Debris Burning	Incendiary	Lightning	Machine Use	Miscellaneous	Railroad	Smoking
2007	3	5	60	20	2	17	9	5	5
2008	1	1	27	9	1	5	5	4	2
2009	0	2	22	6	2	4	1	8	0
2010	1	1	11	15	0	3	0	0	0
2011	5	3	42	18	8	8	4	0	5
2012	3	2	19	18	3	4	0	0	4
2013	0	2	20	6	1	1	8	2	0
2014	1	3	7	1	0	4	2	1	0
2015	1	0	20	0	6	1	5	1	0
2016	0	0	11	1	1	1	4	1	1

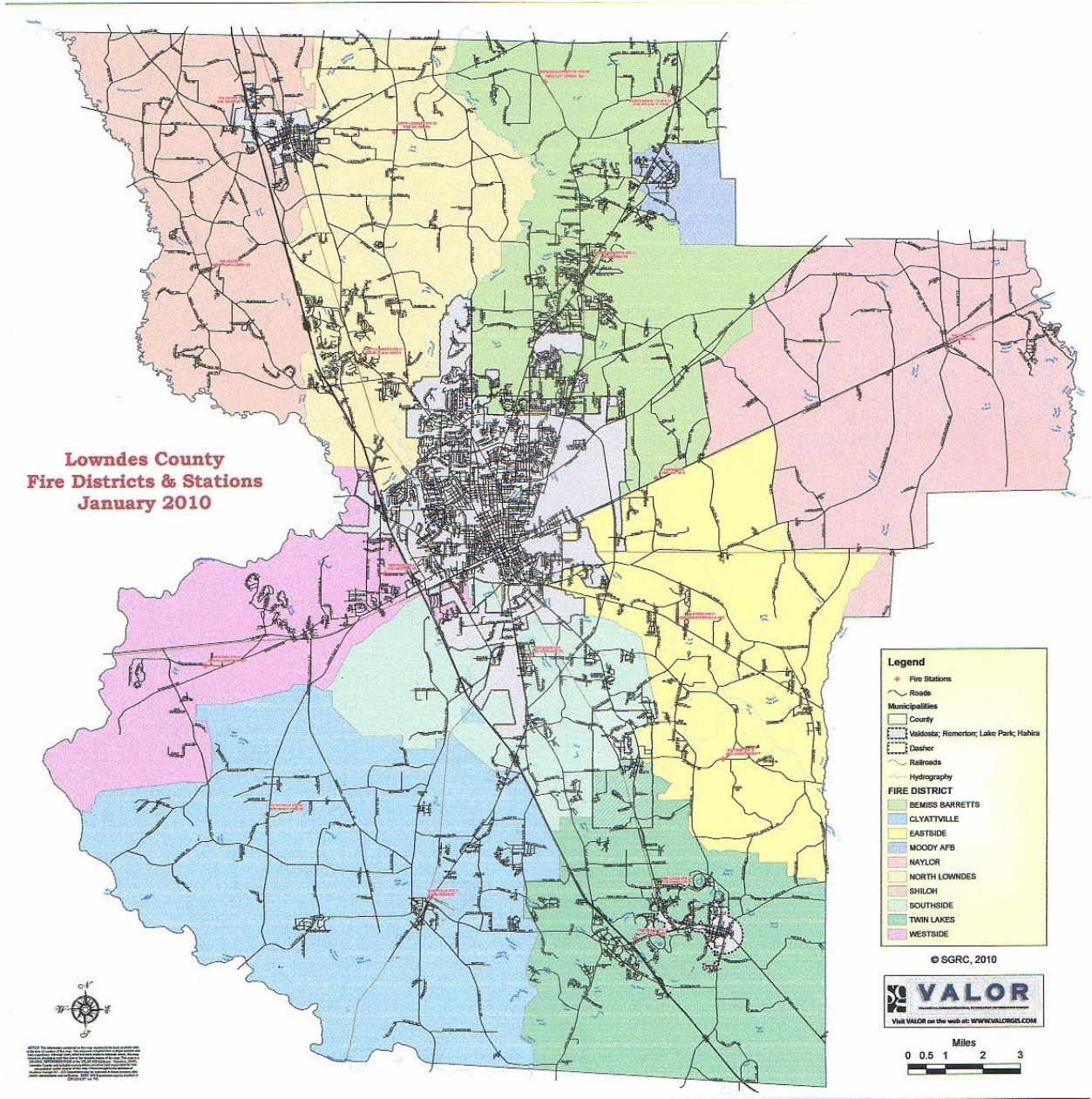
Fire Occurrence Map for Lowndes County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011

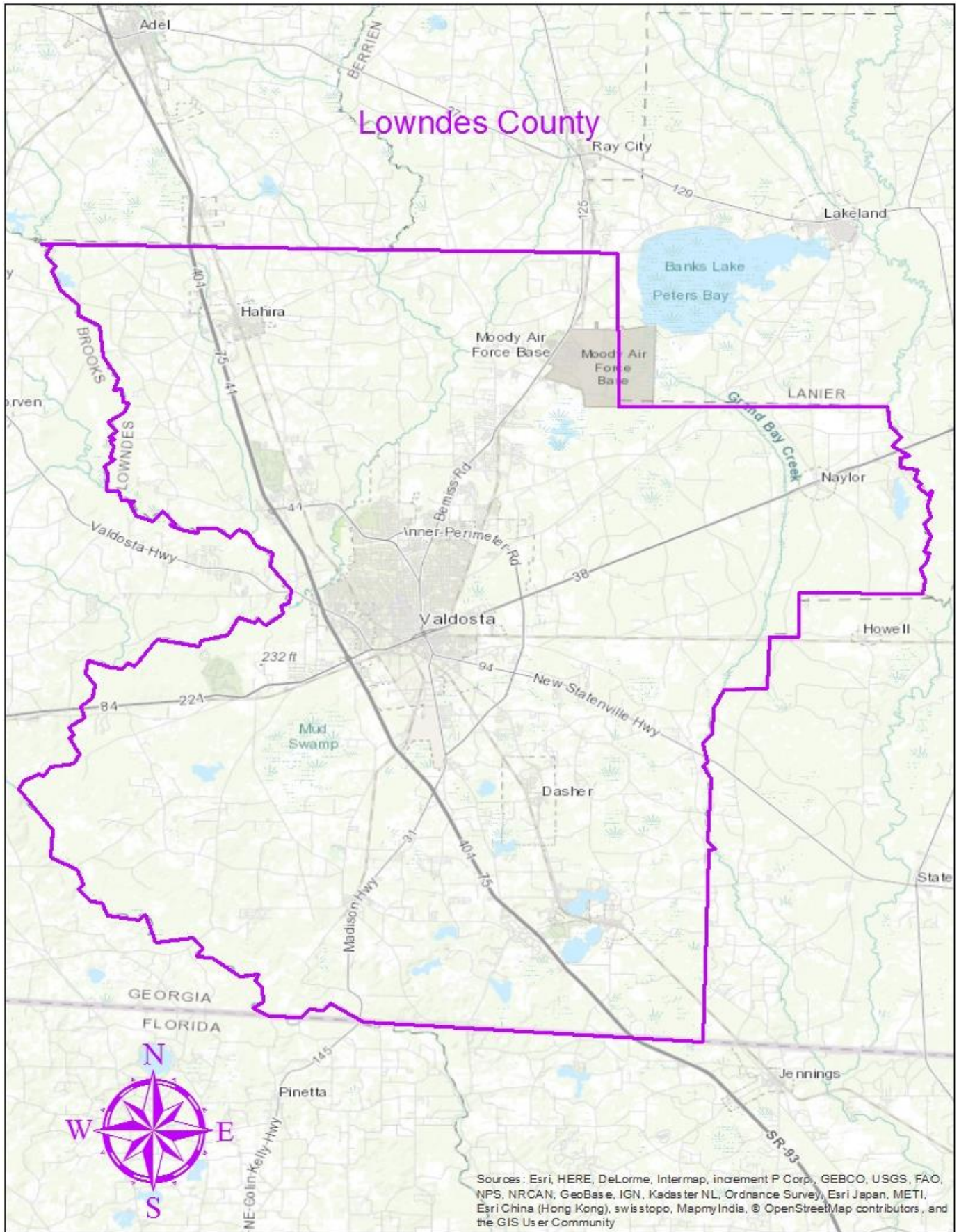


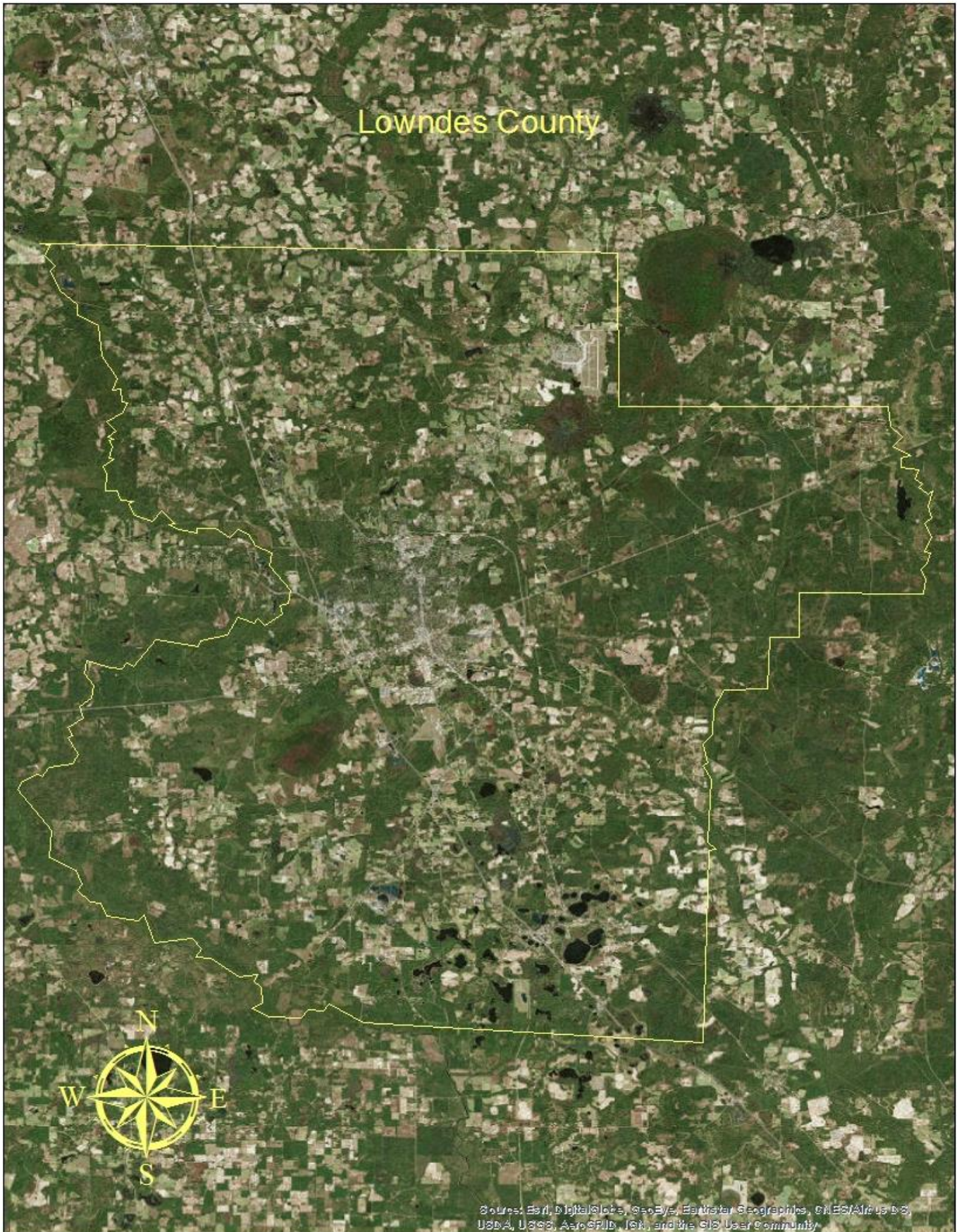
Fire Occurrence Map for Lowndes County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016

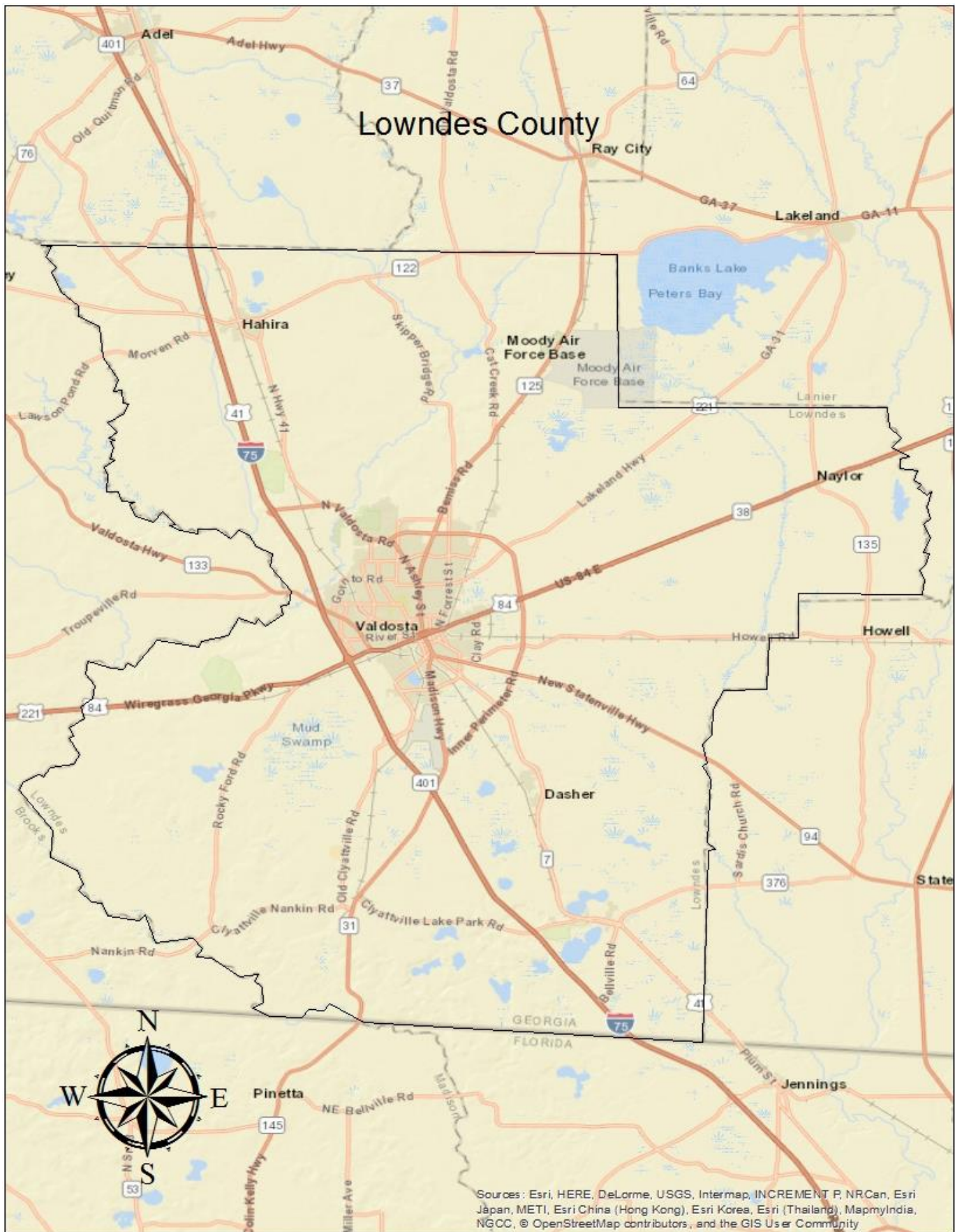


IV. COMMUNITY BASE MAPS









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.

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 a 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 smoke from burning structures and any unknown sources such as trash piles.

Illicit Activities

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

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, including electrical, natural gas, fiber optics, phone and cable, 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. The Sabal Trail gas line is a 36" underground natural gas pipeline that runs through Lowndes County into Florida. There are also numerous other underground lines located throughout the county.

Septic Tanks and Fields

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

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 degrees 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 protect 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.



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

The wildland fire risk assessments conducted in 2010 by the Lowndes County Fire Departments returned an average score of 44, placing Lowndes County in the “Low” hazard range. The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Lowndes 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 Lowndes County:

- Unpaved roads and private driveways
- Narrow roads without drivable shoulders
- Inadequate driveway access
- Minimal defensible space around structures
- Homes with wooden siding
- Unmarked septic tanks in yards
- Lack of pressurized or non-pressurized water systems available
- 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

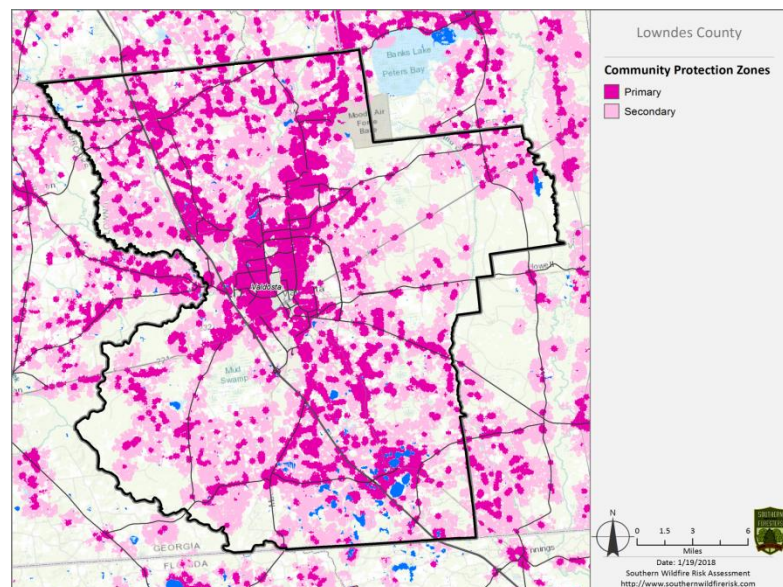
Summary of Lowndes County Assessments

Area/Community	Fire District	Community Access	Surrounding Vegetation	Bldg Construction	Fire Protection	Utilities	Add. Factors	Score	Hazard Rating
Southside	1	4	15	5	10	7	3	44	Low
Clyattville	2	4	15	5	10	7	3	44	Low
Twin Lakes	3	4	15	5	10	7	3	44	Low
North Lowndes	4	4	15	5	10	7	3	44	Low
Bemiss Barretts	5	4	15	5	10	7	3	44	Low
Shiloh	6	4	15	5	10	7	3	44	Low
Eastside	7	4	15	5	10	7	3	44	Low
Naylor	8	4	15	5	10	7	3	44	Low
Westside	9	4	15	5	10	7	3	44	Low
Quiet Pines/Magnolia Grove	Moody AFB	8	10	0	0	2	5	25	Low

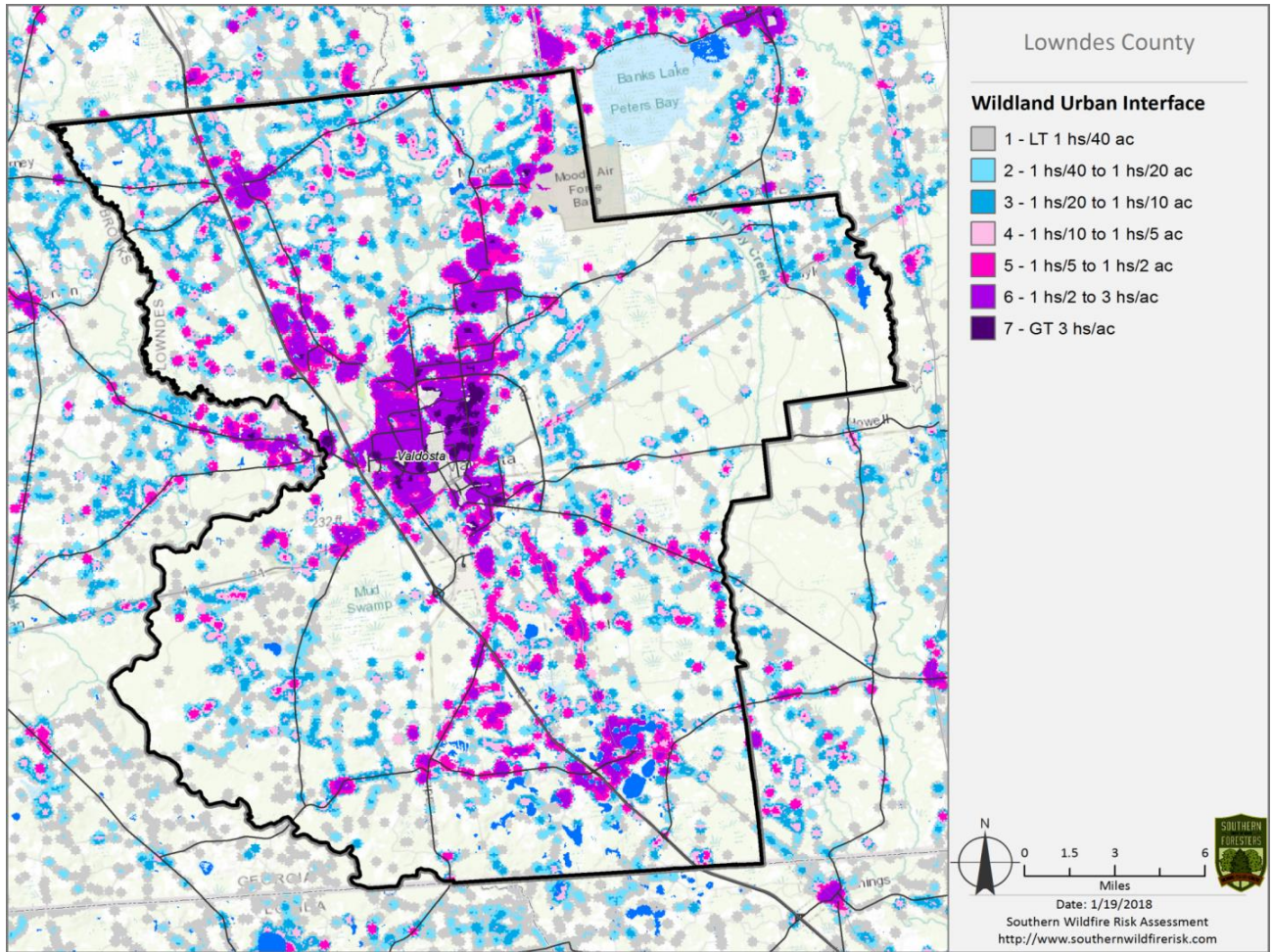
VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

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

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

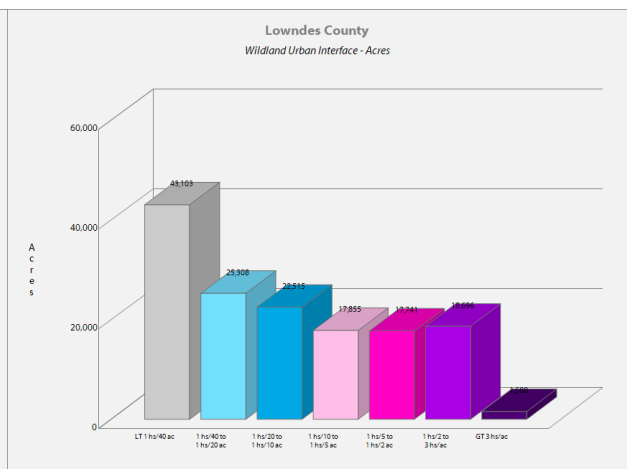
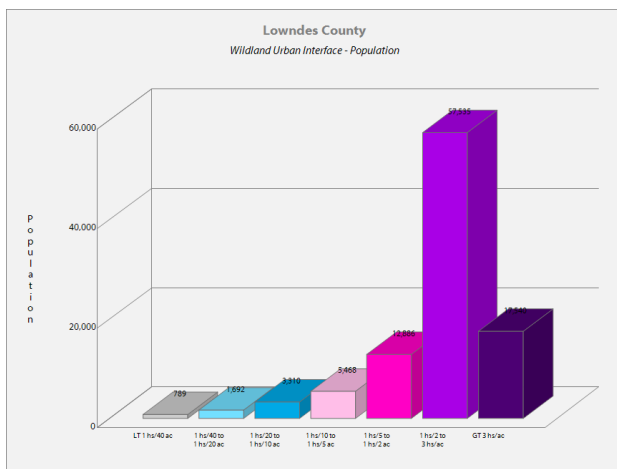


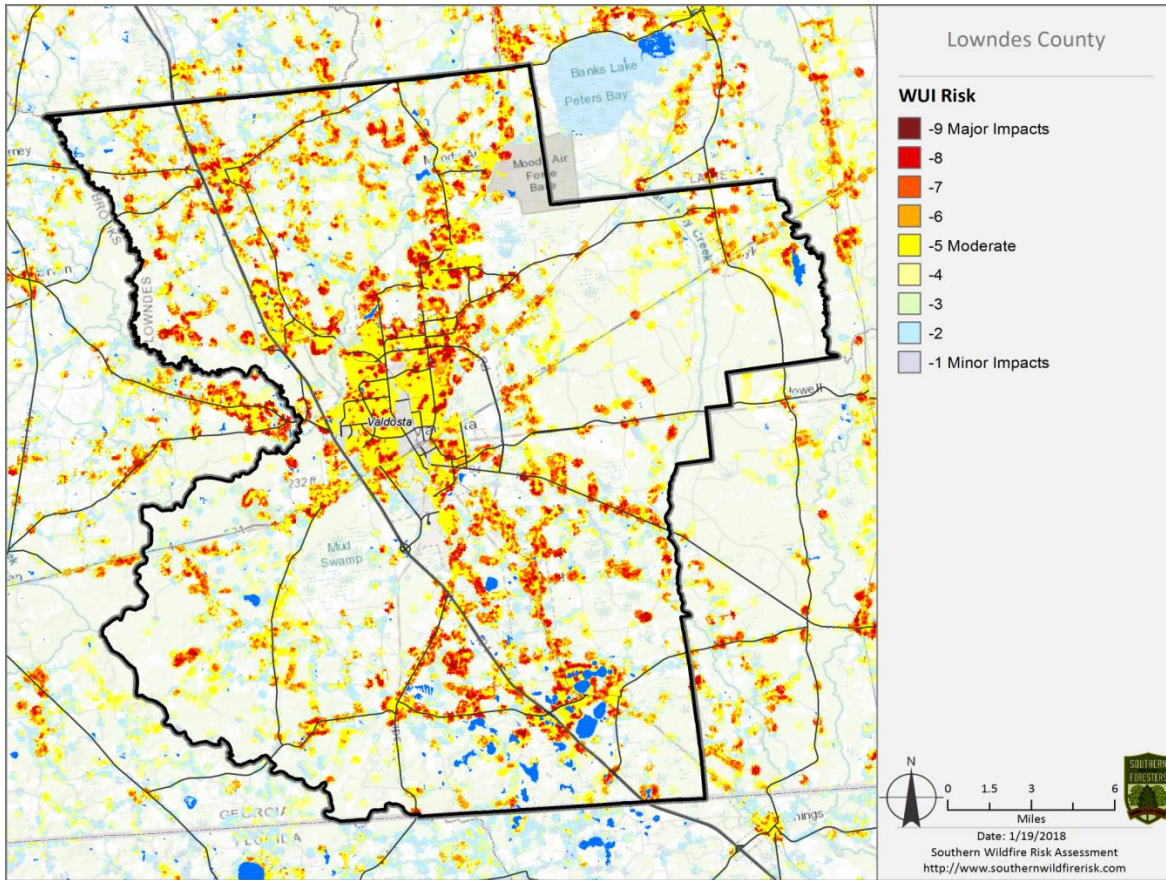
Community Protection Zones map from the Lowndes County SWRA



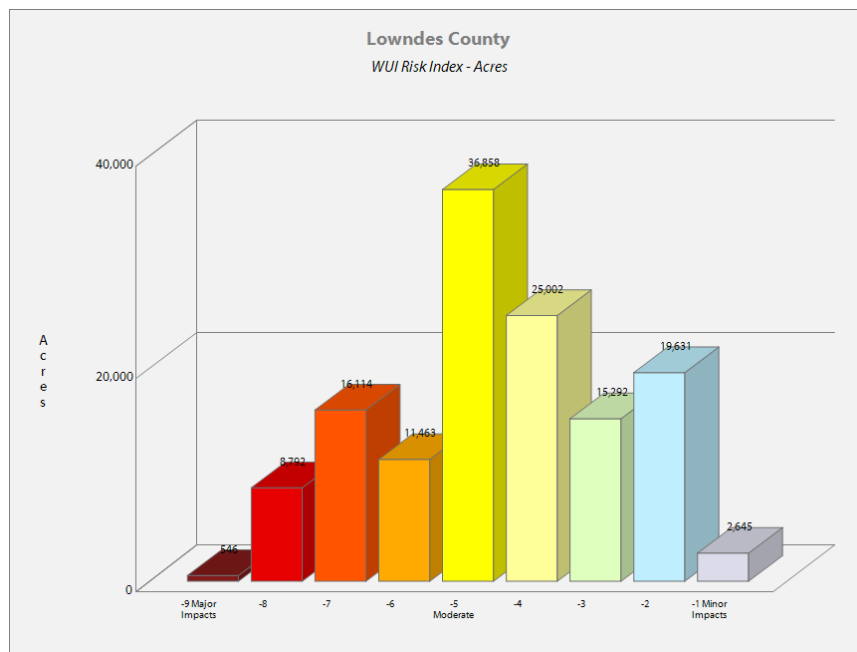
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map

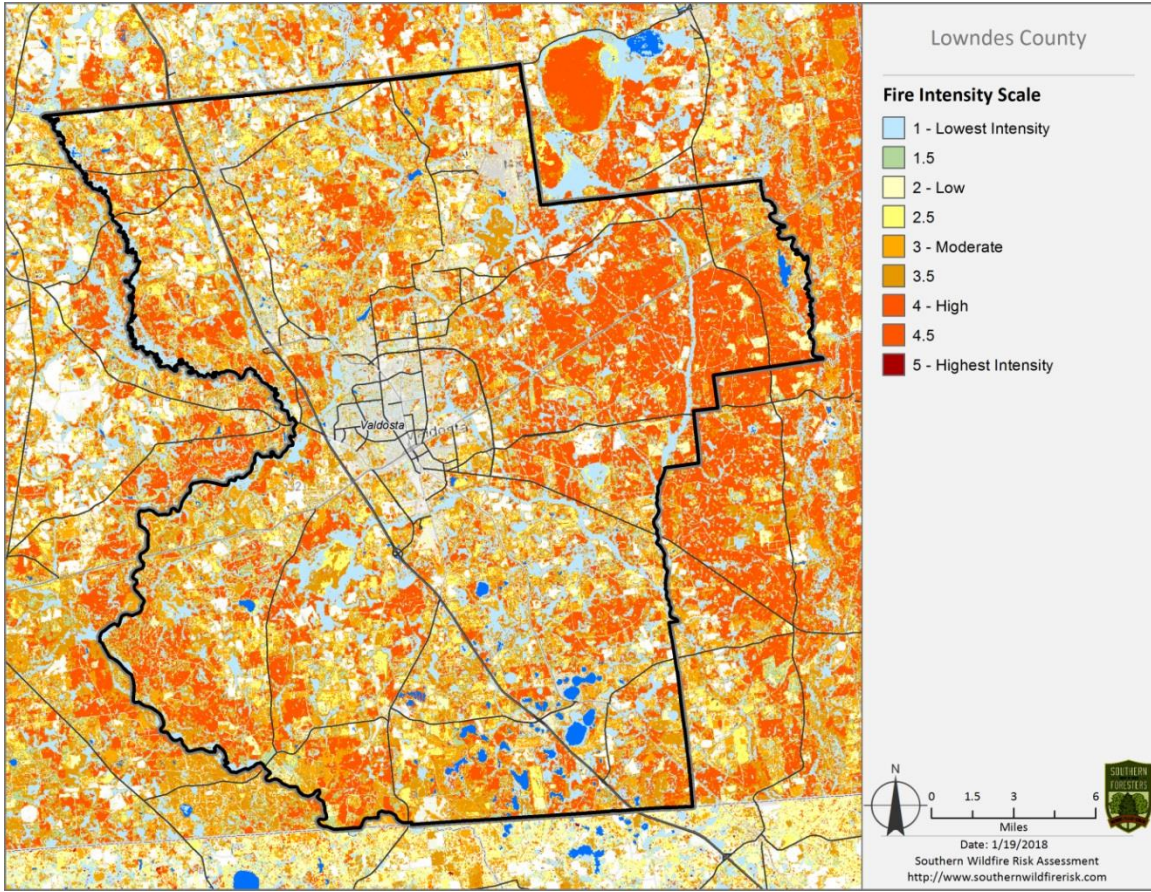
Below: WUI Population (left) WUI Acres (right)



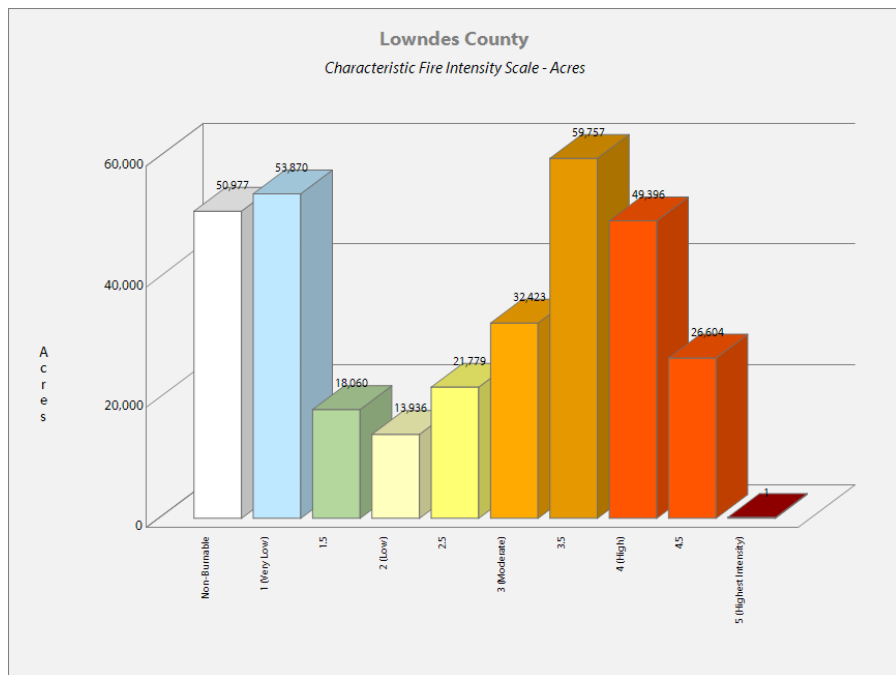


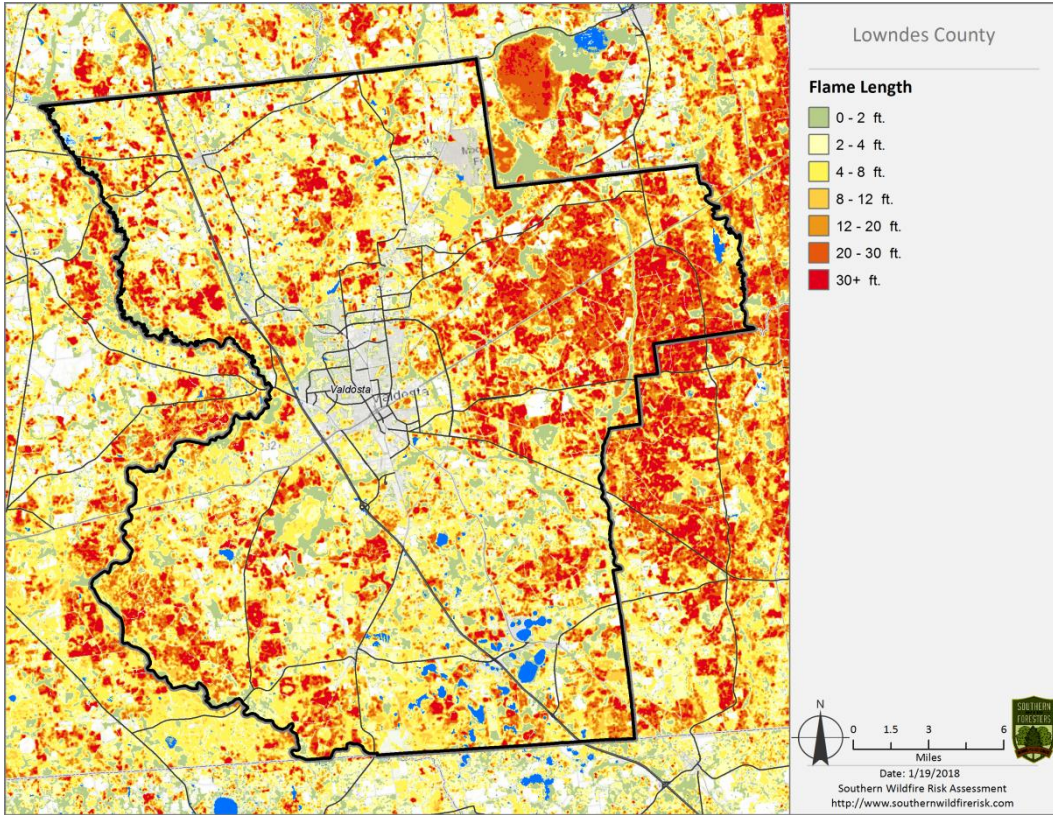
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map Below: WUI Risk Index - Acres



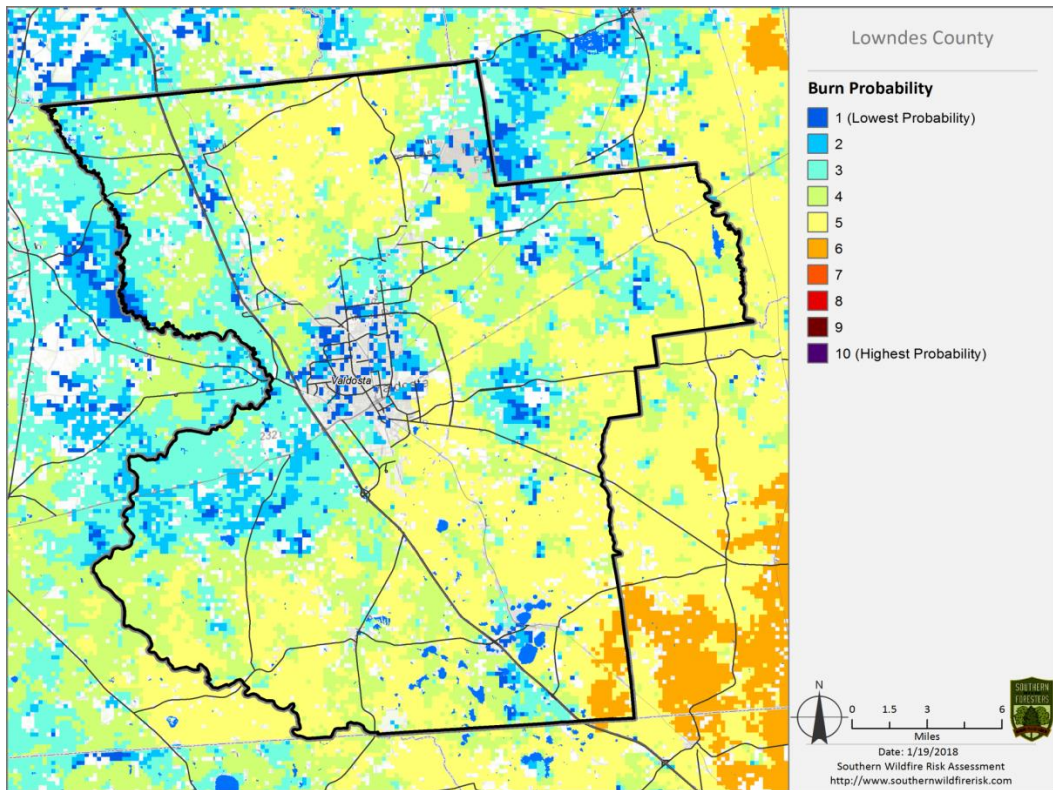


Above: Fire intensity Scale map Below: Fire Intensity Scale - Acres





Above: Flame Length map Below: Burn Probability map



VII. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

As South 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. The 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.

The following recommendations were developed by the Lowndes 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 annually)	Cutting, mowing, pruning**	Cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces.
4. Driveway Access	Culvert installation	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.

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. County resolution to state recommending that the Ga Forestry Commission not charge 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.
2. Fire Stations	Equipment	Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland PPE Gear. Investigate need for “brush” trucks near communities at risk.
3. Water Sources	Drafting equipment	Investigate need for additional drafting pumps.
4. Personnel	Training	Obtain Wildland Fire Suppression training for fire personnel to include S130, S190, and S215. Ready Set Go training
**Actions to be taken by homeowners and community stakeholders		

Proposed Education and Outreach Priorities

1. Conduct “How to Have a Firewise Home” Workshop for County Residents
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. Distribute materials promoting Firewise practices and planning through local community and governmental meetings.
2. Conduct “Firewise” Workshop for Community Leaders
Arrange for GFC Firewise Coordinator 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. Identified “communities-at-risk” including: Twin Lakes, Shiloh, and other communities should be sought after for inclusion in the National Firewise Communities Program.

3. Spring Clean-up Event (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1st Saturday in May)

Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Lowndes County Fire Departments, and local residence of rural Lowndes County. 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 may include the following:

- Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters
- Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet away from structures
- Trim overhanging limbs
- Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties
- Use chipper to mulch debris

4. Informational Packets

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

- Be Firewise Around Your Home
- Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction
- Firewise Communities USA program materials
- Fire Adapted Community materials
- Ready Set Go brochures
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) materials

5. Wildfire Protection Display

Create and exhibit a display for the general public at the local events. Display can be independent or combined with the Georgia Forestry Commission display.

6. Media

Invite the local and regional news media to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Lowndes County. Utilize radio and social media to reach new audiences.

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	
Lowndes County WUI Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC officials, County Fire Department officials, a representative from the city and county government and the EMA Director for Lowndes 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 5 Forest Industry
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 News Releases 2 Personal Contacts 3 Key messages and prevention tips 4 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters 5 Radio & Social Media

Spring Clean-up Day (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1 st Saturday in May annually)	
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. Seek grant opportunities.
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, Lowndes 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. Utilize the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC).	No Cost	To be adopted by city and county government.
4. Spring Cleanup Day	Varies	Community Business Donations. State Farm Grant.
5. Fuel Reduction Activities	\$15 / acre	FEMA & USFS Grants

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.*

International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) – *Established by the International Code Council in 2012. The State of Georgia approved this code for use within the State by County regulation.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XI. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Publications/Brochures/Websites:

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

Appended Documents:

Lowndes County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SouthWRAP)

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



Georgia Forestry Commission
5645 Riggins Mill Rd.
Dry Branch, GA 31020

1-800-GA-TREES
GaTrees.org

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