



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



January 2018

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Attachments:

Marion County Southern Wildfire Assessment Risk Summary Report (SWRA)

Marion County Community Risk Assessments



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

Executive Summary

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, the number of homes that have been built in or adjacent to forested or wildland areas, can turn a wildfire under these weather conditions into a major disaster. Wildfires move fast and can quickly overwhelm the resources of even the best equipped fire department. Advance planning can save lives, homes and businesses.

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

The plan 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.

The plan will:

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

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

SIGNATURE PAGE

Honorable George Neal,
Chairman, Marion County Board of County Commissioners

Date

Travis Welch
Marion County Fire Chief

Date

Honorable Ralph Brown, Jr.
Mayor, City of Buena Vista

Date

Justin Brown
Marion County Chief Ranger
Georgia Forestry Commission

Date

I. WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE FIRE DISASTERS

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

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

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

CWPP PLAN PARTICIPANTS

Marion County CWPP Core Committee

Travis Welch, (County) Draneville VFD Fire Chief
John Mathews, Draneville VFD Deputy Chief
Stephen Mathews, Doyle VFD Fire Chief
Leonard Pough, Firefighter, Doyle VFD
K.J. Burns, Chief, Buena Vista Fire Department
Mason L. Smith, Tazewell VFD
Rod Aide, Marion County Interim EMA Director
George Neal, County Commissioner, Marion County

GFC Representatives

Justin Brown, Chief Ranger
Gerard Powell, Ranger I, GFC
Jim Harrell, CWPP Program Specialist
Beryl Budd, Wildfire Prevention Specialist (revised 2017)

Meeting Dates

Initial Core Committee Meeting: May 20, 2010
Follow-Up Meeting #1: June 21, 2010
Follow-Up Meeting #2: September 13, 2010
Follow-Up Meeting #4: October 4, 2010

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE CWPP

There are several great reasons to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). First and foremost, a successful Community Wildfire Protection Plan provides a community with a set of objectives and actions specifically designed to address the threat of wildfire. These objectives and actions can help:

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

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan is a critical tool required to obtain hazard mitigation grants through the National Fire Plan, FEMA mitigation grants and other national funding sources. Under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003, communities that seek grants from the federal government for hazardous fuels reduction work are required to prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The minimum requirements for a Community Wildfire Protection Plan as described in the HFRA are:

- **Collaboration:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must be collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies* and other interested parties.
- **Prioritized Fuel Reduction:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure.
- **Treatment of Structural ignitability:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

It is important that a collaborative approach be taken in the development of a successful Community Wildfire Protection Plan. This means allowing for the involvement of multiple interested parties in the Core CWPP Committee that develops the CWPP and providing the opportunity for other interested stakeholders in the community (county) to review and comment on the CWPP. Collaboration is a requirement of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. During development of the Marion County CWPP, opportunities for collaboration were provided by:

- Major stakeholders were invited to participate as members of the CWPP Core Committee.
- A news release appeared in the local paper (*Tri-County Journal*) explaining the objectives of the Marion County CWPP, the planning process and the procedure for obtaining a copy for review and/or comment.

III. HISTORY OF MARION COUNTY

Marion County, in west central Georgia, was established by an act of the state legislature in 1827,



two years after the Creek Indians signed the Treaty of Indian Springs (1825). Marion, the state's seventy-second county, was created from a large tract of land ceded from Lee and Muscogee counties, both established in 1826. Named for the Revolutionary War (1775-83) hero General Francis "Swamp Fox" Marion of South Carolina, Marion County originally contained almost all the land that now makes up Schley and Chattahoochee counties and part of Macon and Taylor counties.



Marion County Courthouse

A committee of nine local citizens designated the town of Horry as the county seat, but Horry eventually lost the distinction to the township of Tazewell, in 1838. After years of political intrigue, the county seat was wrested from Tazewell and bestowed on Pea Ridge in 1849. Local residents felt that the name Pea Ridge did not elicit the respect befitting its new standing and decided to change its name to Buena Vista, in honor of U.S. president Zachary Taylor's recent victory in the Mexican War (1846-48).

Many of the earliest white settlers of the county were enticed by the combination of the 1827 land lottery and the rich soil that yielded profitable cotton crops. Marion County would see its greatest growth during the 1840s and 1850s. By 1850 the population climaxed at 10,280, of which 3,604 were slaves. Although ready market access by river or railway was nonexistent, the county's farms prospered by sending their commodities westward thirty-three miles to Columbus.

The end of the Civil War (1861-65) was a period of adjustment for Marion County. Reconstruction involved the reordering of political, social, and economic life, which led to fundamental changes in agriculture. Finding itself economically surpassed by more diversified counties, Marion tried to modernize by completing the Buena Vista and Ellaville Railroad in 1884. The county's vision of a "New South" was never realized, however. Heavily dependent upon agriculture, the county suffered through bank panics, the boll weevil crisis, and the Great Depression, and many residents were forced to start life anew in other, more urban locales.

One such emigre was Mark Gibson, the father of legendary Negro League baseball player Josh Gibson (1911-47). Josh Gibson, known as the "Black Babe Ruth," was born in Buena Vista and attended public schools there until his family relocated to Pittsburgh in search of stable employment during the 1920s. Though Gibson's talent blossomed in Pittsburgh, its seeds were sown on the farmlands of Buena Vista.

Another was Eddie Owens Martin. Like the Gibsons, Martin fled Georgia in the 1920s, forsaking life as a sharecropper for greater prospects in the North. During the 1950s Martin adopted the name St. EOM and returned to Buena Vista to live on his inherited property. Martin transformed his estate into a

Zen-like environment that he called Pasaquan. By using religious and archetypal symbols reflecting influences from Africa, Asia, South America, and Easter Island, St. EOM created a mystic and artistic world in which he brought the past and future together. Pasaquan has been called one of the most important folk art centers in America.



Pasaquan

According to the 2010 census, the population of Marion County was 8,742, an increase from the 2000 population of 7,144. Total area of Marion County is 367.0 square miles (234,880 acres).

Forestry is a significant industry in Marion County. The county's 183,794 forested acres added \$9,289,000 to the local economy in 2008. The county's 185 farms had a 2008 production in excess of \$50 million.

WILDFIRE HISTORY

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) is the state agency responsible for providing leadership, service, and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources. Commission professionals provide a wide variety of services including fire detection, issuing burn permits, wildfire suppression and prevention services, emergency and incident command system expertise, rural fire department assistance, forest management assistance to landowners and communities, the marketing and utilization of forest resources and nature services, and growing and selling quality tree seedlings for planting. Forestry is a \$28.7 billion a year industry in the State of Georgia creating 128,000 jobs statewide. Forestry is a valuable part of the Marion County economy.

GFC County Office

The Georgia Forestry Commission office serving Marion and Chattahoochee Counties is located at: 324 South Broad Street, Buena Vista, Georgia, 31803. Telephone: (229) 649-2289.

Personnel

Justin Brown, Chief Ranger
Christopher Dunn, Ranger/Forest Technician
Gerard Powell, Ranger 1
Franklin Bair, Ranger 1
Nicholas Lucas*, TDL Fire Tower Operator
Debra Barricks*, TDL Fire Tower Operator

GFC Wildland Firefighting Equipment

John Deere 550J
John Deere 650K Tractor Plow
John Deere 450G Tractor Plow
Ford F-250 Type 7 Engine John Deere 450G Tractor Plow

Wildfire Causes

On a year-to-year basis, the leading cause of wildfires in Marion County is wildfires resulting from careless debris burning , machine use (example: harvesting combines, logging equipment, etc). is second and Incendiary (arson) is third.

County = Marion	Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	1	0.05	1.40	4.01
Children	Children	2	0.33	0.60	0.37
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	2	1.40	1.80	6.34
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	0	0.00	0.20	1.44
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	3	9.74	4.20	66.81
Debris: Household Garbage	Debris: Household Garbage	4	122.36	1.80	27.82
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	1	10.30	0.60	4.10
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	7	18.01	4.40	11.40
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	2	1.32	2.80	4.50
Incendiary	Incendiary	5	19.62	1.80	13.28
Lightning	Lightning	0	0.00	1.20	12.39
Machine Use	Machine Use	3	2.12	2.00	3.70
Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	0	0.00	0.20	2.34
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	1	60.40	0.80	14.86
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	1	0.92	1.20	3.14
Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	1	1.10	0.20	0.22
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	1	6.66	0.80	1.79
Smoking	Smoking	3	5.51	1.20	1.58
Undetermined	Undetermined	6	3.72	3.00	10.88
Totals for County: Marion Year: 2017		43	263.56	30.20	190.96

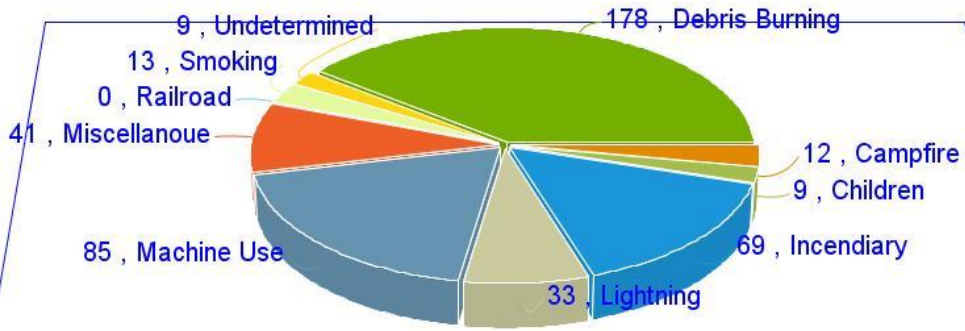
**Acreage Burned /Number of Fires
For Marion County For FY 2007-2016**

Year	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2007	311.04	57	5.46	18.64
2008	100.25	56	1.79	4.56
2009	143.01	46	3.11	3.90
2010	76.61	41	1.87	3.93
2011	296.99	81	3.67	17.56
2012	260.42	61	4.27	5.08
2013	150.22	32	4.69	4.53
2014	297.30	27	11.01	5.02
2015	143.77	35	4.11	4.42
2016	99.96	14	7.14	6.29

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

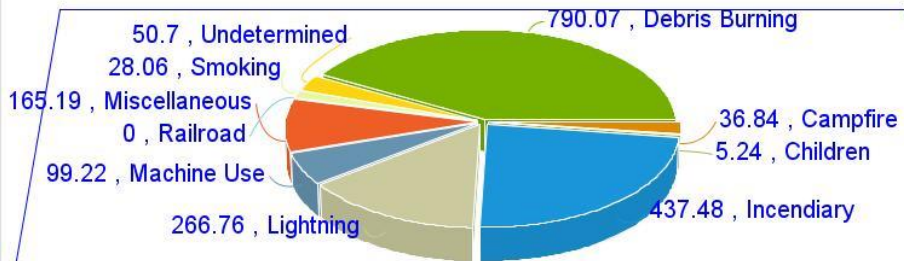
Year	Camp fire	Children	Debris Burning	Incendiary	Lightning	Machine Use	Misc.	Railroad	Smoking
2007	1	1	21	10	2	12	4	1	5
2008	0	3	17	7	3	19	4	0	3
2009	0	3	19	11	3	3	6	0	1
2010	0	0	17	5	6	10	3	0	0
2011	2	1	28	14	10	18	7	0	1
2012	3	0	16	18	3	16	5	0	0
2013	2	1	14	0	3	1	11	0	0
2014	1	0	17	1	0	3	3	0	2
2015	3	0	24	0	0	2	5	0	1
2016	0	0	5	3	3	1	2	0	0

Cause of Fire For Marion County For FY 2007-2016

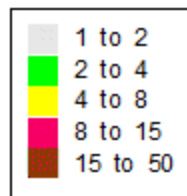
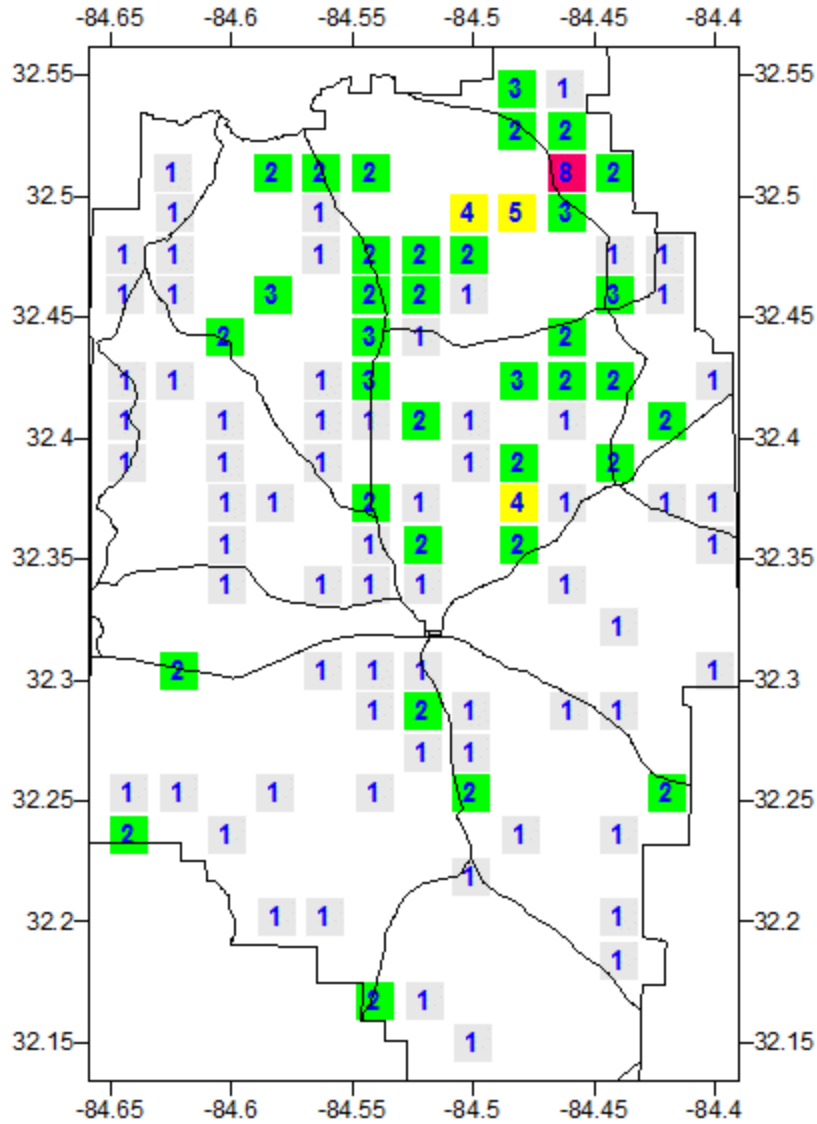


Fire Cause

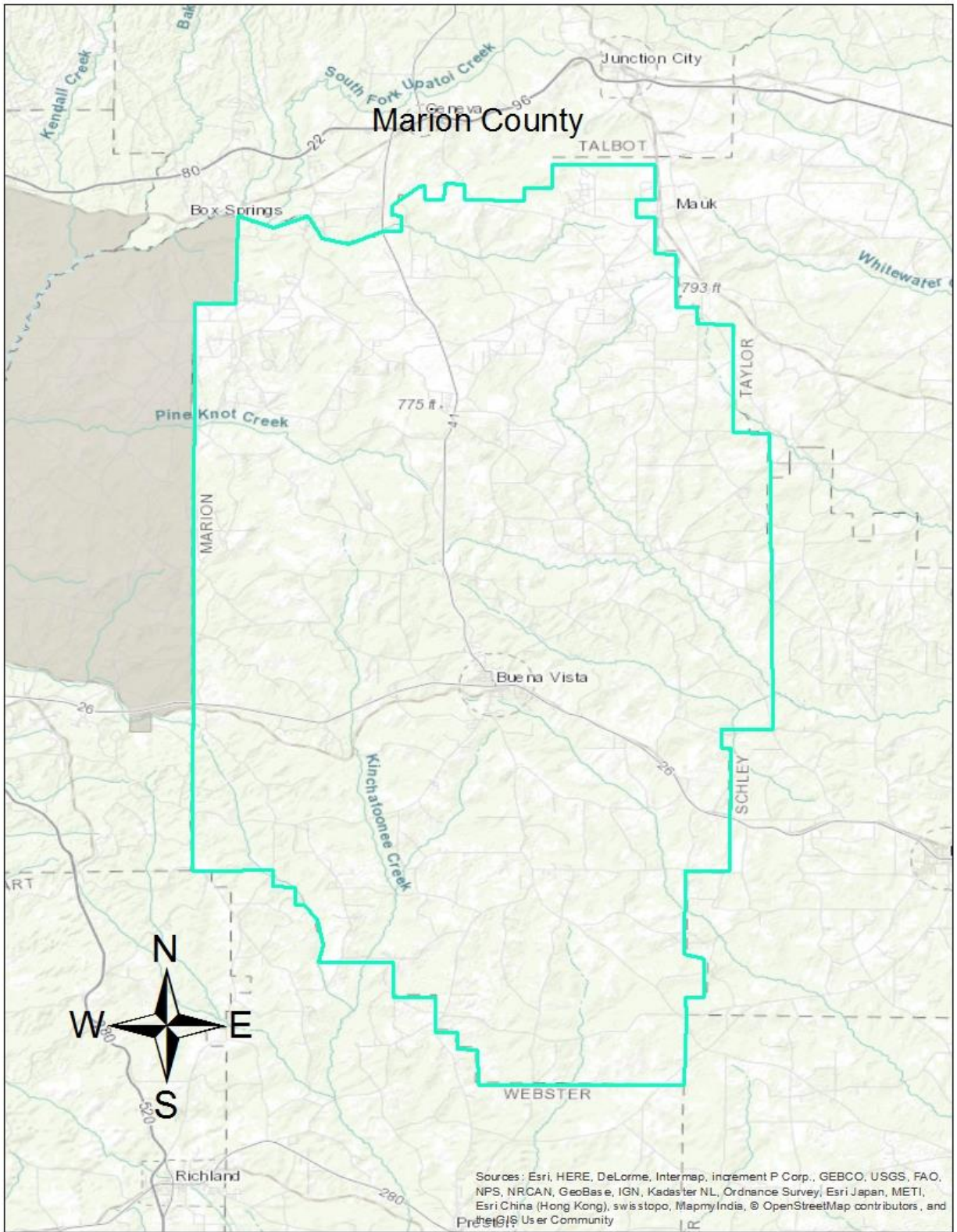
Acreage Burned by Cause of Fire For Marion County For FY 2007-2016

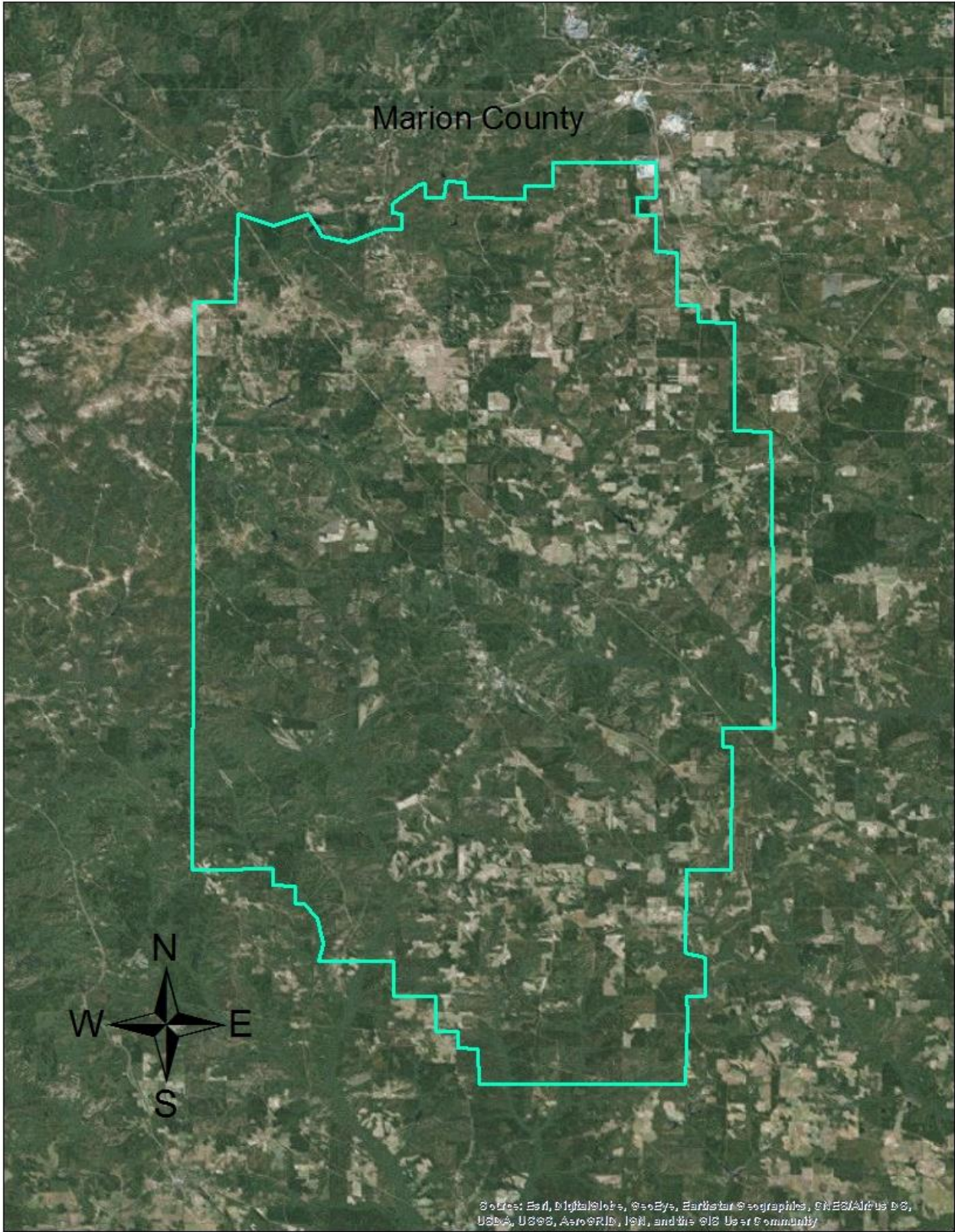


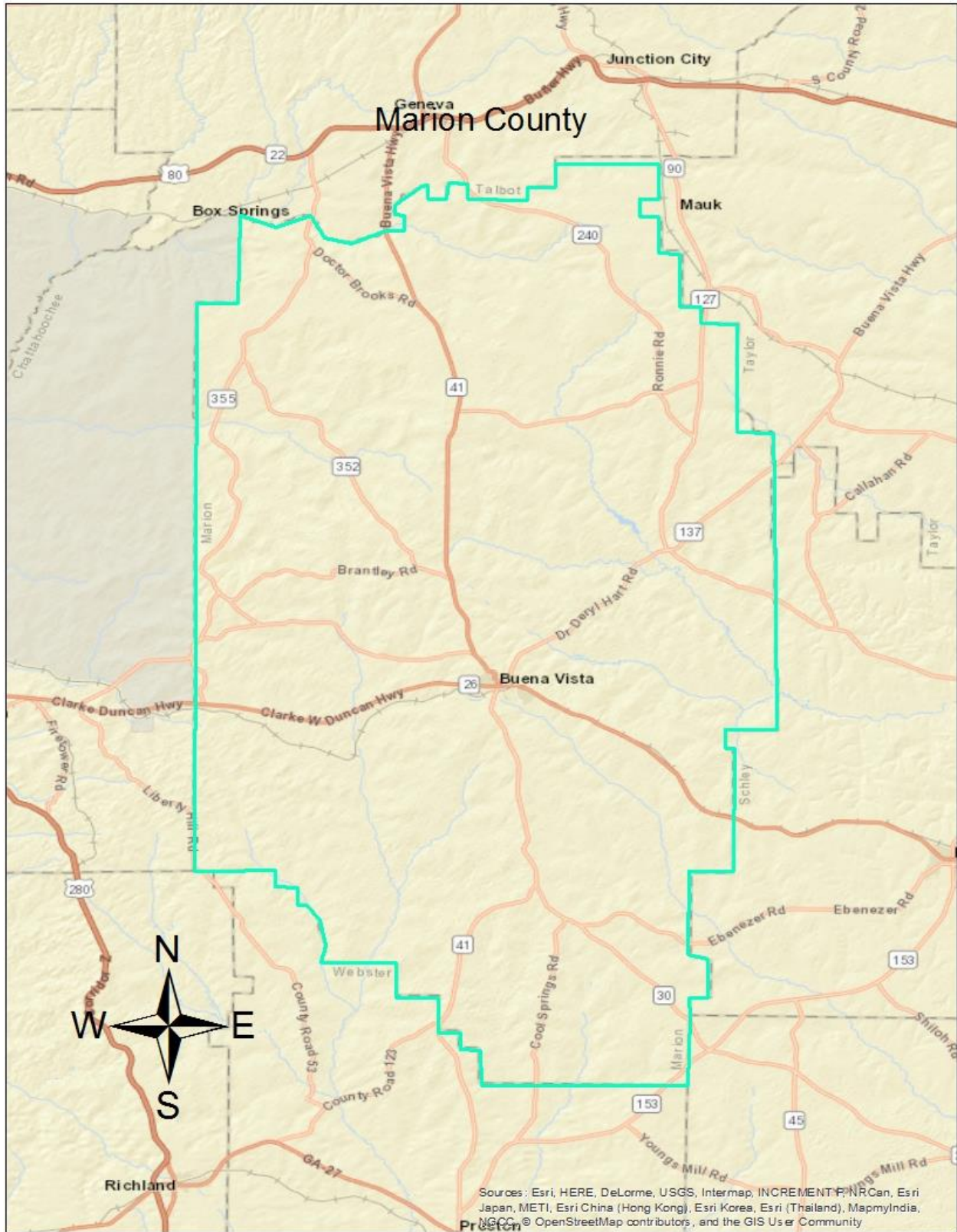
Fire Occurrence Map for Marion County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



IV. COUNTY BASE MAPS







V. WHAT ARE “COMMUNITIES-AT-RISK”?

Communities-at-risk are locations where a group of two or more structures in close proximity to a forested or wildland area places homes and residents at some degree of risk from wildfire. Other characteristics of the “community” such as the closeness of structures, building materials, accumulated debris near the structures, access in and out and the distance from the nearest fire station or a permanent water source such as a pond or dry hydrant may contribute to the risk.

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

In Marion County, there are many more individual (isolated) homes and outbuildings on farms and small properties that could be damaged or destroyed in the event of a disastrous wildfire. On these properties, the owners must assume a greater responsibility for wildfire protection - - - by making improvements to the landscape and structures that will provide some degree of wildfire protection until the fire department can arrive. This can only be accomplished if rural residents know how to make their homes and properties “Firewise”.

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

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

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

VI.MARION COUNTY COMMUNITY RISK ASSESSMENTS

Community	Score	Hazard Rating
Sam & Allen Dr.	147	Extreme
Woody Stubbs	140	High/Extreme
Whispering Pines	131	High
Cactus Court Road	117	Moderate
Fire House Road	116	Moderate
Butter Cup Lane	106	Moderate
Pine Place	100	Moderate
Pond Road	95	Moderate
Sunny Side Drive	92	Moderate
Andrew Jackson	84	Moderate
Deer Trail	80	Moderate
Harold Harris Road	74	Low
Watkins Woods	67	Low
Hickory Nut Hollow	64	Low
Oakland Way	59	Low

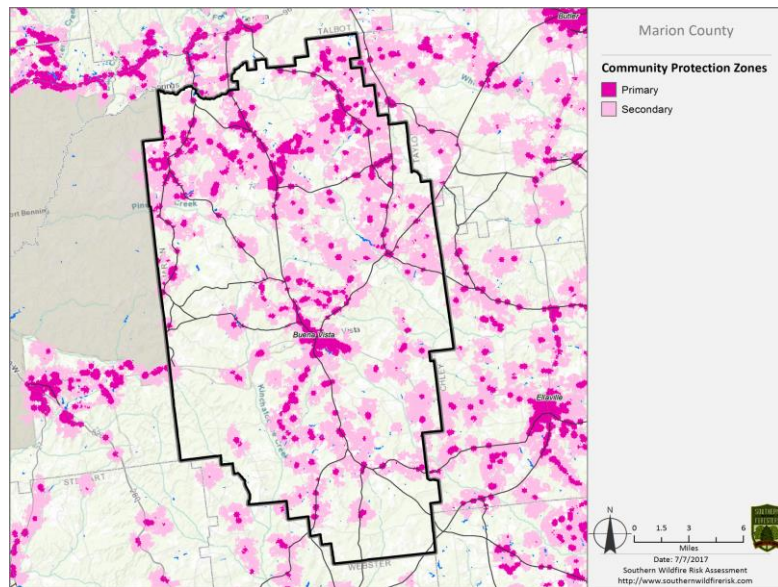
These hazard ratings were completed by Chief Ranger R.T. Lumpkin and Ranger I Mark Rodgers during the month of July, 2010. The Georgia Forestry Commission Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Scoresheet was used. This document evaluates communities (groups of homes) based upon four criteria: subdivision design, site hazard, building construction and additional rating factors. The cumulative wildfire hazard rating scores range from a low rating of 0 to 75 points to an extreme hazard rating with over 140 points.

The cumulative wildfire hazard rating scores help establish priorities for mitigation activities in the CWPP Action Plan.

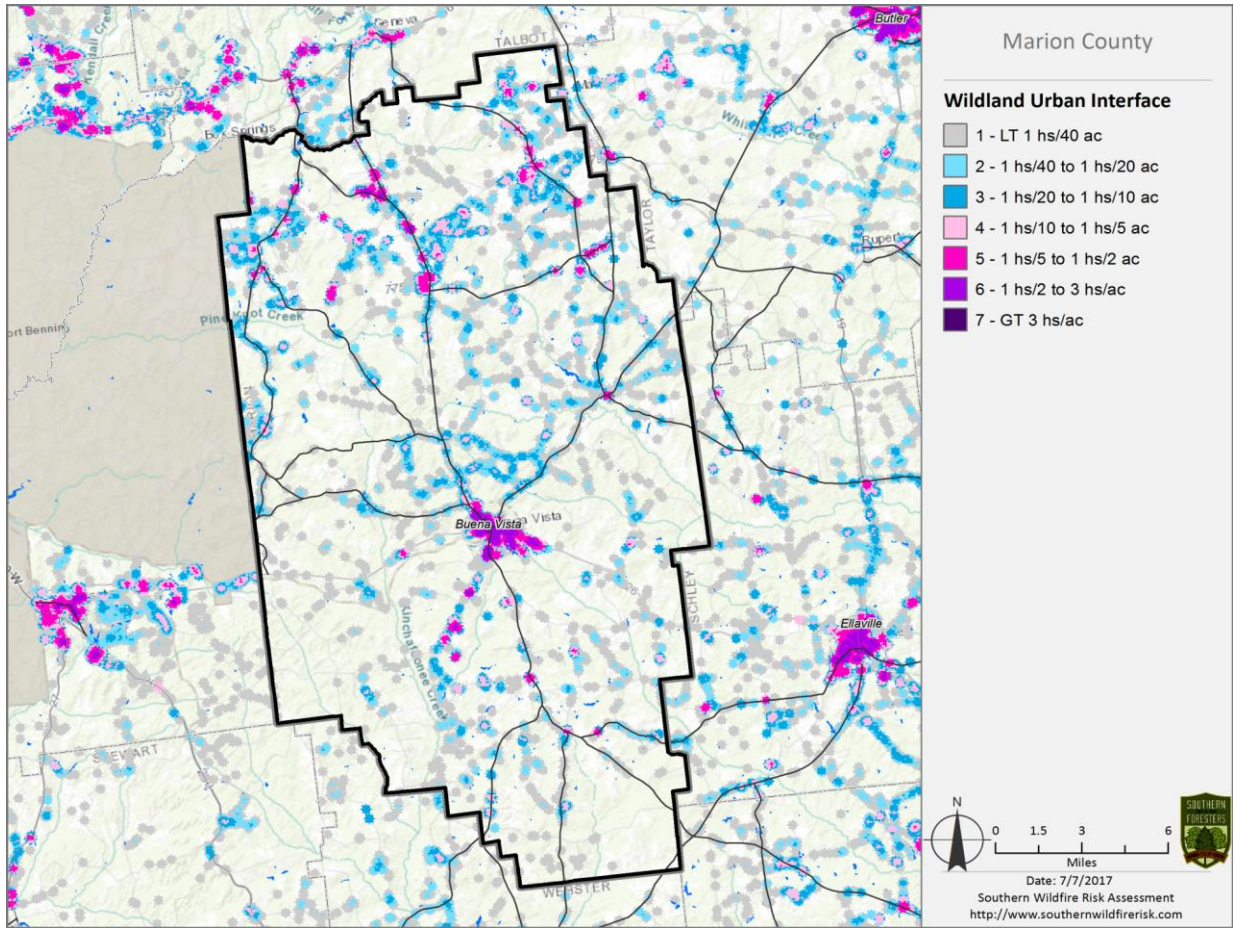
VII. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

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

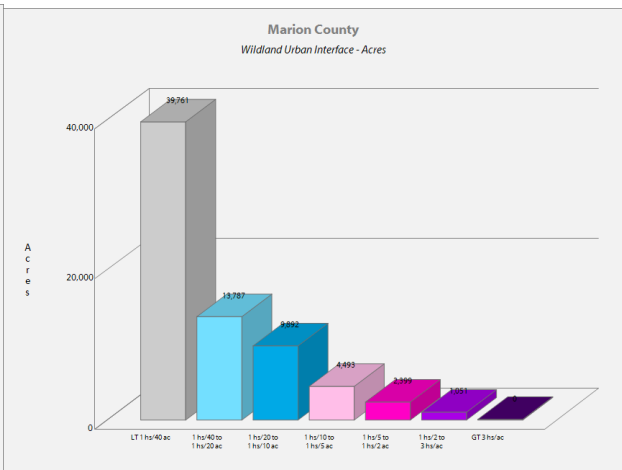
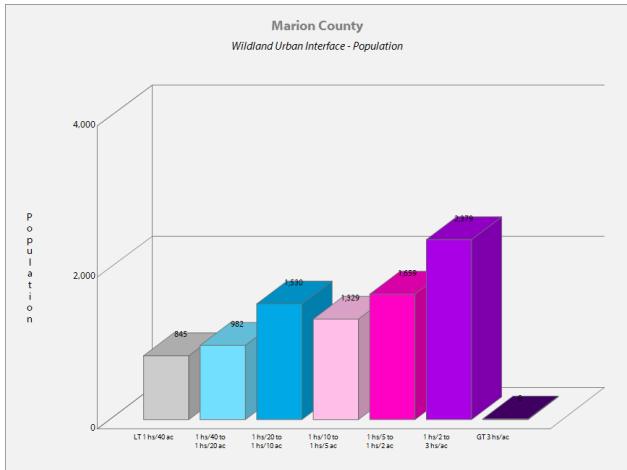
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests
- Allow agencies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

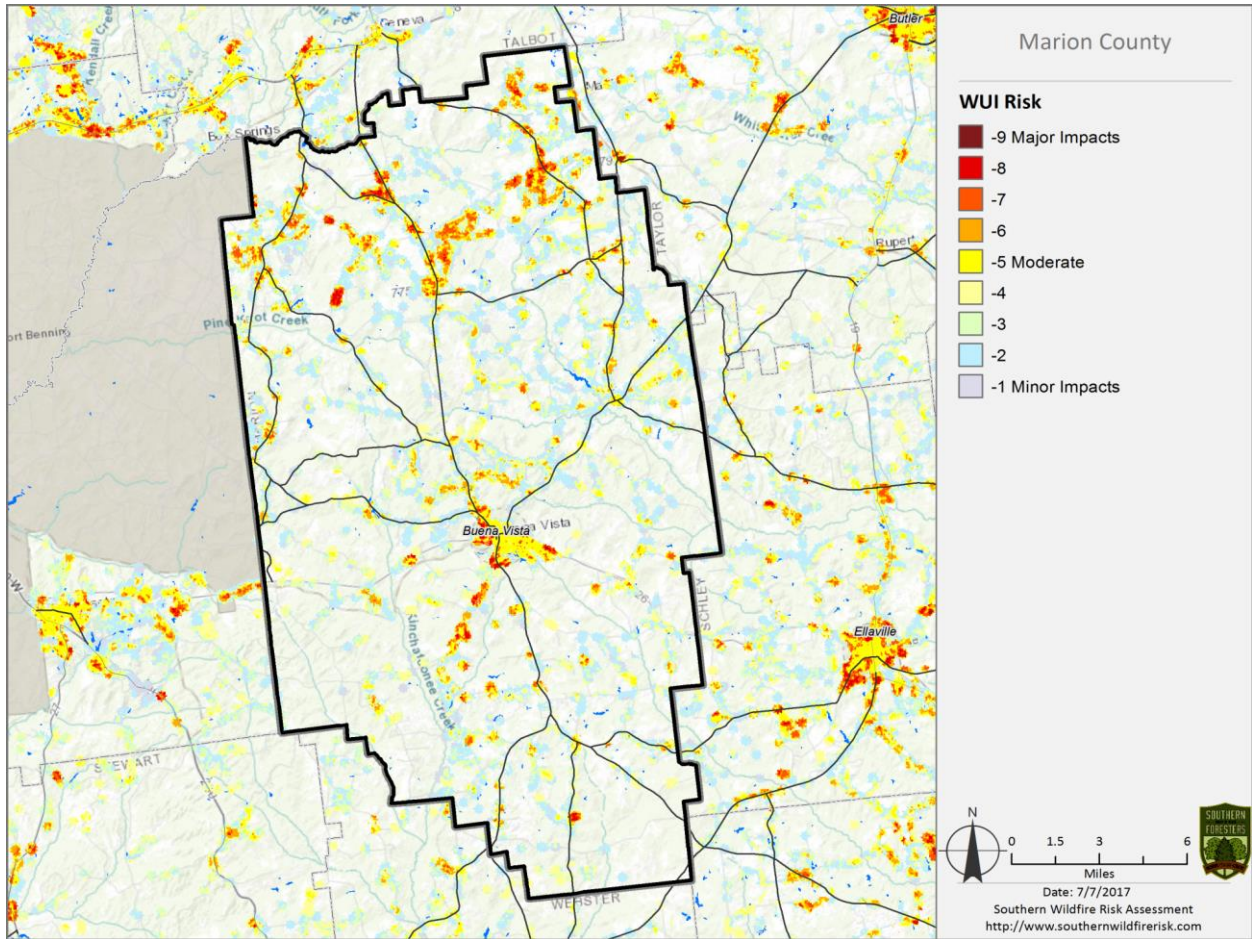


Community Protection Zones map from the Marion County SWRA

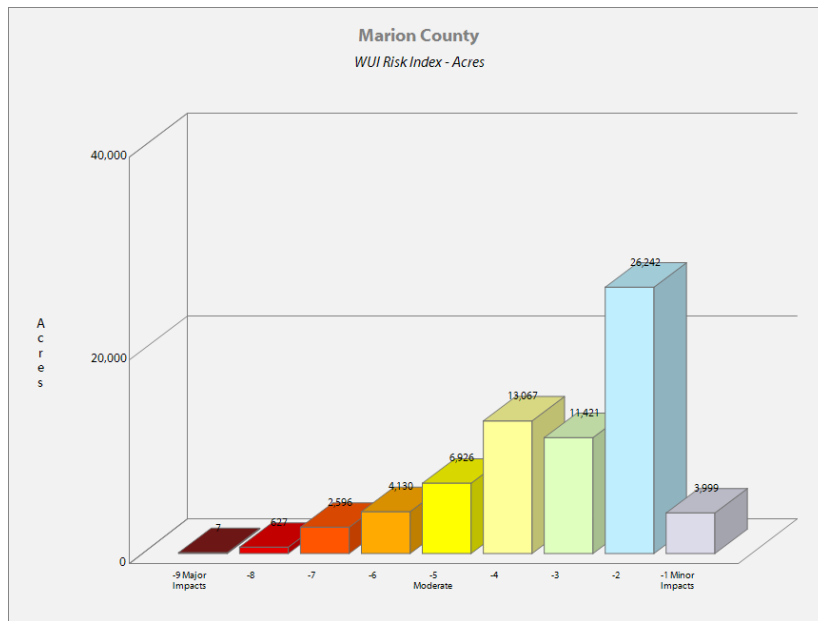


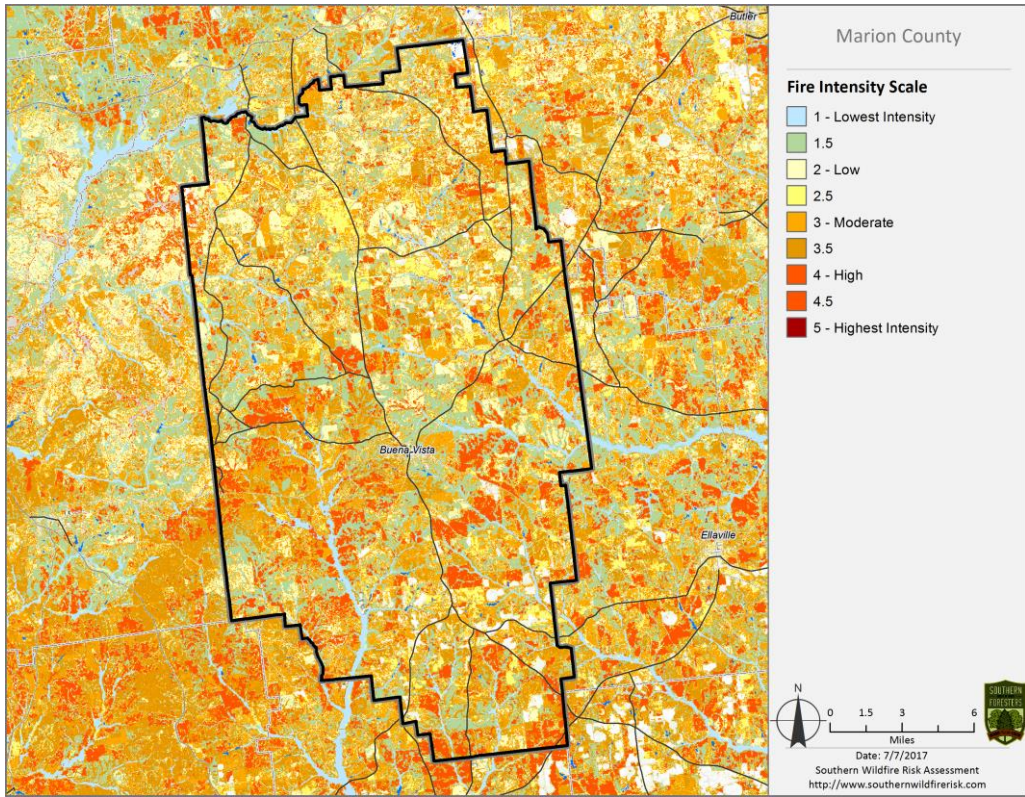
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map
 Below Left: WUI Population graph
 Below Right: WUI Acres graph



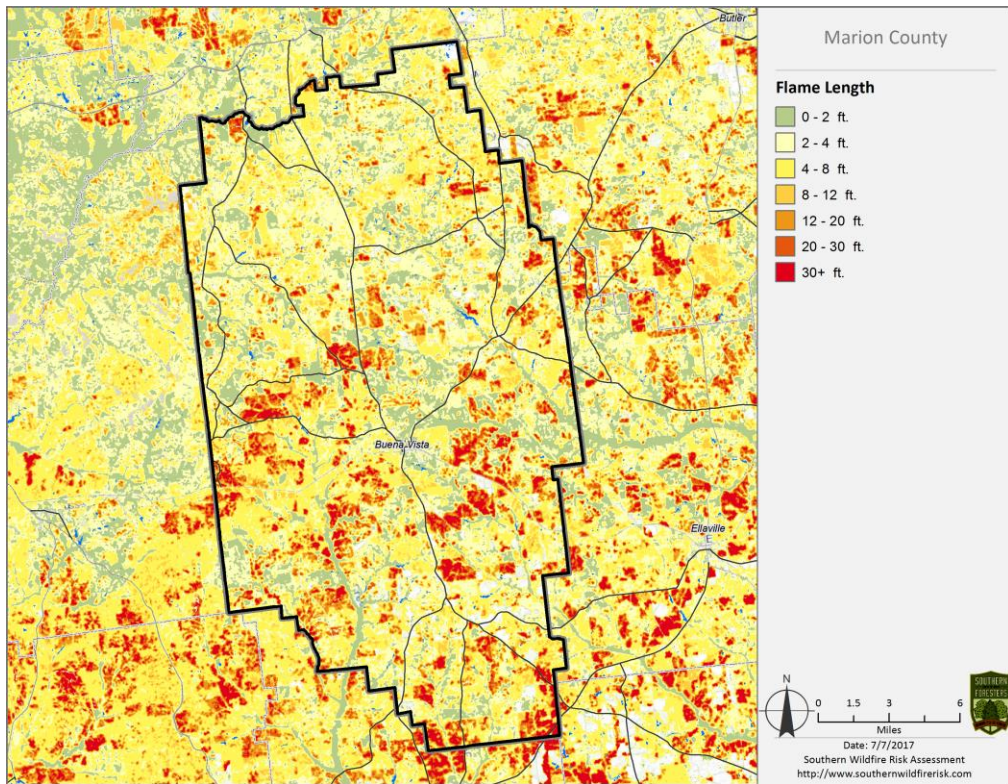


Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map Below: WUI Risk Index Acres graph





Above: Fire Intensity Scale map Below: Flame Length map



VIII. MITIGATION & ACTION PLAN

PROTECTING EXISTING STRUCTURES

Critical Facilities

Critical facilities are unique structures which may require special consideration in the event of an emergency such as a wildland/urban interface fire. Every county will have some critical facilities and some more urbanized counties will have many. Critical facilities include: a nursing home that may need special consideration because the smoke accompanying a wildfire may be hazardous to the health of elderly residents, a law enforcement dispatch center is a critical facility that will need special consideration to insure there is no disruption of emergency communications in the event of a disastrous wildfire. Other examples of critical facilities are ethanol plants, auto junkyards and facilities that produce chemicals that could be hazardous to the local population if released into the atmosphere. Owner/operators of critical facilities need to be aware of the hazards that an approaching wildfire could present. There may be immediate action that could be taken by owner/operators to lessen the impact of a wildfire in the immediate area (such as the elimination of encroaching wildland vegetation in and around the critical facility).

Marion County Critical Facilities:

Marion County Airport

Oak Crest Lumber & Hardwood Flooring

Magnolia Manor Nursing Home

Marion County Middle/High School

West Central GA Headstart

Partner's Propane on Hwy 26 W

Tower Point Road Communications Repeater

Marion County Jail

Tyson Company

Ferrell Gas at Hwy 26 E

Clifford's Auto Salvage

RECOMMENDATION:

Contact owner/operators of Critical Facilities in person or by letter to provide an evaluation of any hazards and suggest what owner/operators might do to mitigate the hazards and improve wildfire protection.

Public Education Needs

"Firewise" structures are homes and other buildings in the wildland/urban interface that have been built, designed and maintained to survive a wildfire event even in the absence of firefighters on the scene.

Over the past fifty years, many Georgia residents have left the city or the suburbs to build homes in or adjacent to forested areas with a desire to be "close to nature". Unfortunately, this has resulted in neighborhoods or single-family dwellings with one way in and out, with long narrow driveways, no pressurized hydrants or draft source for water and so close to vegetative wildland fuel that even the best equipped fire department could not be successful in a severe wildfire event.

The key to the reduction of structural losses in the wildland/urban interface cannot rest solely with improved response by the local fire services. There will never be enough fire trucks and firefighters to adequately protect homes in the wildland/urban interface. A major part of the solution to this problem lies with the homeowner – homeowners in the wildland/urban interface must become "partners" with the fire services and assume more responsibility for maintaining their home (structure) and landscape (yard) so that ignitions in and around the home are less likely should a wildfire occur in the immediate

area. This means a home with no debris on the roof and in the gutters, wood decks that are skirted underneath, chunky bark or lava rock mulch near the house instead of pine straw or cypress mulch and a “lean, clean and green” landscape of less-flammable plants within 30 feet of the structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Initiate a wildfire protection (Firewise Communities) education program for Marion County residents living in 15 designated “Communities-at-Risk”.
- Make Firewise Communities brochures available to the public at central locations such as: Farm Services Agency, Chamber of Commerce and the County Courthouse.
- Encourage communities (neighborhoods) that qualify to apply for recognition as a Firewise Community/USA.

Reduction of Hazardous Fuels

Because about 78 percent of Marion County is forested, the accumulation of brush and other (mostly ground) vegetation can create conditions over extensive areas that could fuel a disastrous wildfire. Treatment of forested areas with prescribed fire can significantly reduce this hazard while improving pulpwood and sawtimber production and enhancing wildlife habitat. Prescribed burning, however, must be conducted by experienced personnel, when weather conditions are conducive to a safe burn and when an authorization has been obtained from the local office of the Georgia Forestry Commission. Other ways to reduce wildland fuel (vegetation) include:

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

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

Smoke on the highway from prescribed burning or wildfires can create hazardous conditions on roadways when certain weather conditions exist. It is important that motorists be warned when visibility deteriorates due to smoke.

RECOMMENDATION: Promote prescribed burning in Marion County.

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

NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTY

Site Plan Review

Growth pressure will undoubtedly increase new home starts in Marion County over the next 20 years and will probably occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. The County Planning and Zoning Board will have an opportunity to significantly influence the wildland fire safety of new developments. It is important that new development be planned and constructed to provide for public safety in the event of a wildland fire emergency.

Over the past 20 years, much has been learned about how and why homes are lost during wildland fire disasters. Perhaps most importantly, case histories and research have shown that even in the most severe circumstances, structural losses can be minimized or prevented altogether. Homes can be designed, built and maintained to withstand a wildfire even in the absence of fire services on the scene. The National Firewise Communities program is a national awareness initiative to help people understand that they don't have to be victims in a wildfire emergency. The National Fire Protection Association has produced two standards for reference: NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas. In 2012 the International Code Council developed the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC). This code was adopted by Georgia Legislature in 2013 for use by Georgia Counties to reduce structural loss in high risk areas. When new multi-unit subdivisions are built in rural areas (sometimes referred to as the Wildland/Urban Interface), a number of public safety challenges may be created for the local fire services: (1) the water supply in the immediate areas may be inadequate for fire suppression; (2) if the Development is in an outlying area, there may be a longer response time for emergency services; (3) in a wildfire emergency, the access road(s) may need to simultaneously support evacuation of residents and the arrival of emergency vehicles; and (4) when wildland fire disasters strike, many structures may be involved simultaneously, quickly exceeding the capability of even the best equipped fire departments,

RECOMMENDATION:

Strengthen the site plan review and approval process for multi-unit residential development in rural areas subject to wildfires.

- Evaluate the wildfire hazard of proposed new development in rural areas as part of the site plan review process (GFC Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Scoresheet)
- Consider the "adoption by reference" of NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas. Adopt the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC)

FIRE SERVICES CAPABILITY

The citizens of Marion County are very fortunate to have one of the best Rural Fire Department - Cooperators in the state. They are not only very well equipped and professionally staffed, but have either dealt with or assisted the Forestry Unit on numerous open land and forest fires. With trucks and tankers supplied either in part or completely by grant money obtained through the Georgia Forestry Commission, the County Fire is able to ensure a quicker response time from any of the 7 VFD stations that are strategically located throughout Marion County. Although the number of volunteer firefighters can fluctuate from year to year, the total number of volunteer firefighters in 2010 is sixty nine.

While the primary responsibility of these firefighters is structural protection, the firefighters regularly provide support to the Georgia Forestry Commission or find themselves the first units on the scene fighting brush fires (wildfires) that threaten homes and businesses.

<u>VFD</u>	<u>Engines</u>	<u>Number of firefighters</u>
Buena Vista	(3) Class A Engines/No Tankers	15
Draneville	(2) Engines/(1) 1,000-gal. Tanker	13
Doyle	(1) Class A Engine/(1) 1,250-gal. Tanker	5
Tazewell	(1) Class A Engine/(1) 1,500-gal. Tanker	8
Brown Springs	(1) Class A Engine/ (1) 2,000-gal. Tanker	5
Ft. Perry	(3) Class A Engines/(1) 1,200-gal. Tankers	15
Oakland	(2) Class A Engines	8

Equipment & Training

Countywide Nomex type wildland personal protective equipment (PPE) is not available for use by volunteer firefighters and none of the VFD's are equipped with fire shelters. The VFD engines have some wildland fire hand tools.

All of the volunteer firefighters have completed the Incident Management Training Courses, I-100 & I-700, and some of the county's volunteer firefighters have had the NWCG courses (S-130, Standards for Survival and S-190, Basic Wildfire Behavior).

Ready Set Go training is available through the International Fire Chiefs Association.

Fire Hydrants

Pressurized fire hydrants exist near all communities and most developments countywide.

There are 17 dry hydrants in the county, but many are not tested on a regular basis. These should be tested annually.

Water Tankers

The county VFD's have five water tankers (water tenders) with capacities ranging from 1,000 gallons to 2,000 gallons available to transport water for structural fire suppression in remote areas of Marion County. The ability to provide large quantities of water in the southwestern portion of the county could be an issue due to older bridges that cannot support the weight of water tankers.

ACTION PLAN

Community/Area	Project	Agency	Funding Needs	Priority	Recommendation
Sam & Allen Drive Woody Stubbs Cactus Court Road	Wildfire Hazard Mitigation	County/GFC	\$25,000	High	Reduce wildland fuel levels and improve emergency access in 3 neighborhoods
Countywide	8 Water Dump Tanks	County	\$32,000 (\$400 ea.)	High	Improve water availability in remote areas of the county
Countywide	Firefighter Training	GFC/County	\$15,000	High	Two courses for volunteer firefighters: Standards for Survival (S-130) & Wildland Fire Behavior (S-190)
Countywide	Wildland Fire PPE & Hand Tools	County	\$20,000 PPE \$5,000 Hand Tools	High	Personal Protective Equipment & Fire Shelters plus hand tools
Countywide	Communications	County	\$400	High	85 handheld radios for firefighters
Countywide	Dry Hydrants	County	\$15,000	Medium	Maintenance and repair of existing system of 17 dry hydrants
Countywide	Class A Foam	County	\$28,000	Low	14 – 55 gallon drums of Class A foam
Countywide	Wildland Fire Hose	County	\$5,000 Hose & \$23,000 Nozzles	High	1 ¾ inch fire hose with nozzles (200 ft. per station) and 30 nozzles

The above table summarizes a recommended course of action for implementation of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Although some actions could be implemented at little or no added cost, the County (or assigned agency) will be able to implement most projects only if grant funding is available.

ASSESSMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness of the action plan, Marion County would implement the following:

- An annual wildfire risk assessment (of “communities-at-risk”) would be conducted by the CWPP Committee to reassess wildfire hazards and prioritize needed actions.
- Mitigation efforts that are recurring (such as mowing, burning or clearing of defensible space) would be incorporated into annual revisions of the original CWPP Action Plan.
- Mitigation efforts that could not be funded in the requested year will be incorporated into the annual revision/update of the original CWPP Action Plan.
- Continuing education and outreach programs will be conducted and assessed for effectiveness. Workshops will be evaluated based upon attendance and post-workshop surveys that are distributed by mail.
- The CWPP Core Committee will continue a year-to-year focus on the wildland/urban interface fire challenges in the County. The Committee will annually update this CWPP, summarizing mitigation projects initiated and completed, progress for ongoing actions, funds received, funds expended and in-kind services utilized. Recommendations will be incorporated into the CWPP Action Plan.



Prescribed burning is a best management practice to reduce hazardous fuel buildup. The Georgia Forestry Commission can assist by developing a prescribed burning plan, installation of firebreaks, and can provide equipment standby and burning assistance when personnel are available.

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:

Marion County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Marion County Wildfire assessment scoresheets

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



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