

GEORGIA FORESTRY  
COMMISSION



# Community Wildfire Protection Plan

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

### Monroe County

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



Prepared by:

Robert Hargrove, Chief Ranger, Butts-Monroe County Unit, Georgia Forestry Commission

Beryl Budd, Wildfire Prevention Specialist, Georgia Forestry Commission

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

**County Representatives:**

Mike Bilderback, Chairman, Monroe County Commission

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Larry Evans, District 1 Monroe County Commission

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

James Ham, Vice Chairman/District 2, Monroe County Commission

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

John Ambrose, District 3, Monroe County Commission

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Jared Lovett, District 4, Monroe County Commission

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Emergency Service Representatives:**

Donny Mercer, Fire Chief, Monroe County

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew Perry, EMA Director, Monroe County

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Georgia Forestry Commission Representatives:**

Robert Hargrove, Chief Ranger

Georgia Forestry Commission

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Beryl Budd, Wildfire Prevention Specialist

Georgia Forestry Commission

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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Monroe County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SouthWRAP)

## I. OBJECTIVES AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) provides a community with a road map to reduce its risk from wildfire. A CWPP is designed through collaboration between state and local fire agencies, homeowners and landowners, and other interested parties such as city councils, utilities, homeowners associations, environmental organizations, and other local stakeholders. The plan identifies strategic sites and methods for risk reduction and structural protection projects across jurisdictional boundaries.

Comprehensive plans provide long-term guidance for growth, reflecting a community's values and future expectations. The plan implements the community's values and serves to protect natural and community resources and public safety. Planning also enables communities to address their development patterns in the Wildland Urban Interface and determine how they can reduce their risk through alternative development patterns. The formal legal standing of the plan and its central role in local government decision making underscores the opportunity to use this planning process as an effective means for reducing wildfire risk.

The mission of the following plan is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Monroe 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.

Wildfire risk reduction strategies are most effective when approached collaboratively – involving groups of residents, elected officials, community decision makers, emergency managers, and natural resource managers –and when combined with effective outreach approaches. Collaborative approaches make sense as the initial focus of any community attempting to work toward wildfire risk reduction. In all Community Wildfire Protection Plan collaborations, the goal is to cooperatively identify problems and reach a consensus for mutual action. In the case of wildfire mitigation, a reduction in the wildfire risk to the community's lives, houses, and property is the desired outcome.

The collaborative core team convened on July 23, 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:

Monroe County Government  
*County Fire Department*  
*County Emergency Management*  
*Board of County Commissioners*  
Georgia Forestry Commission

It was decided to conduct community assessments on the basis of locating high risk communities within the individual fire districts in the county. Monroe County Fire Department, Georgia Forestry Commission, Monroe/Butts County Unit, and the Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Protection Specialist reconvened for the purpose of completing the following:

- Risk Assessments: Assessed wildfire hazard risks and prioritized mitigation actions. The wildfire risk assessment will help homeowners, builders, developers, and emergency personnel whether the area needs attention and will help direct wildfire risk reduction practices to the areas at highest risk.
- 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. Outreach and education programs are designed to raise awareness and improve audience knowledge of wildfire risk reduction needs and practices. In the best cases, education and outreach programs will influence attitudes and opinions and result in effective action.

## II. COMMUNITY BACKGROUND & WILDFIRE HISTORY

### Monroe County History



Monroe County, located in west central Georgia about fifty miles south of Atlanta and twenty-five miles north of Macon, is the state's fiftieth county. It was named for James Monroe, the fifth president of the United States. Creek Indians held the land until 1821, when they surrendered it in the treaty resulting from their defeat at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814. Portions of Monroe County later went to the formation of Bibb, Butts, Lamar, and Pike counties.

Many of the first settlers were Scottish Highlanders who had lived previously in eastern Georgia. Others were of English and Irish descent, and many came from eastern Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia. Their rural community dates back to 1739, but it was decades before the settlement became a town, first called Cullodenville to honor William Culloden, a merchant who settled there in 1780. The name was shortened to Culloden when the town was incorporated in 1887.



The state legislature designated the county seat as Forsyth in 1823, and the first courthouse, built in 1825, was replaced by the current structure in 1896. Still in use, the courthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

The Monroe Railroad, begun in 1838, was the first railroad in Georgia and connected Forsyth to Macon. A later depot for the Central of Georgia Railway in Forsyth has been restored and now serves as the county's historical museum.

#### Monroe County Courthouse

Monroe County was an active site during the Civil War (1861-65). A skirmish was fought at a Towaliga River bridge on November 17, 1864. The Battle of Culloden on April 19, 1865, was fought ten days after the surrender of Confederate general Robert E. Lee at Appomattox, Virginia, as the word about the war's end had not yet reached Monroe County. Confederate soldiers wounded in battles at Atlanta were brought to a special hospital camp in Forsyth—said to be the first such camp in Georgia—and 300 soldiers are buried in a Confederate cemetery in the town. Monroe County escaped much of the destruction associated with the Civil War, possibly because of its reputation as a center for healing and respite.

Although there is not currently an institute of higher learning in Monroe County, its citizens have historically been interested in providing their children with educations of high quality. Within the decade of the 1830s at least three schools were founded in Culloden alone: Culloden Academy in 1830, Culloden Female Academy in 1834, and Culloden Male and Female Academy in 1837. Other early schools included the Darby Rosenwald School. The Montpelier Institute, founded in 1842, was the state's second-oldest school for girls until it closed in 1876. Tift College was first chartered in 1849 under the name Forsyth Female Collegiate Institute. In 1986 it merged with Mercer



University, which maintains its campus in Macon. The Forsyth Normal and Industrial School, founded in 1902 as a church-sponsored project, became a state responsibility in 1922. In 1931 its name was changed to State Teachers and Agricultural College, and its mission changed to concentrate on the preparation of black teachers. In 1939 the college merged with Fort Valley Normal and Industrial School to become Fort Valley State College. Today Fort Valley State University maintains its campus in Fort Valley.



Monroe County logging

Agriculture was a substantial part of the county's economy until the era of the boll weevil, whose destruction of the county's cotton caused many farmers to turn to commercial dairy farming. However, agriculture declined in favor of timber-related industries and textile production. In 1968 the construction of Interstate 75 cemented the county's departure from agriculture in favor of manufacturing. Today one of the largest employers is Georgia Power Company.

Noteworthy residents have included Alfred Blalock, an internationally renowned research scientist and surgeon whose work on surgical shock saved many lives during World War II (1941-45). His later contributions included solving the "blue baby syndrome." William Morrill Wadley, president of the Central of Georgia Railway, and Emory Speer, a federal jurist and late-nineteenth-century U.S. congressman, were also county residents.

Places of interest include the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest (Monroe County is one of the eighteen counties over which this national forest spreads); High Falls State Park, a 1,050-acre park that features waterfalls, camping, and hiking trails; and Lake Juliette, a 3,600-acre reservoir operated by Georgia Power and is popular for fishing and open for waterfowl hunting. Many sites in Monroe County are on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Hil'ardin/Sharp-Hardin-Wright House in Forsyth; the Montpelier Female Institute, west of Macon; and the State Teachers and Agricultural College for Negroes Women's Dormitory and Teachers' Cottage in Forsyth. Juliette, an abandoned railroad town in the county, was reconstructed as the fictional town of Whistle Stop for the making of the film *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991). Today Juliette offers several souvenir shops as well as the operational Whistle Stop Café.



Lake Juliette

According to the 2000 U.S. census, the population of Monroe County is 21,757 (70.4 percent white, 27.9 percent black, and 1.3 percent Hispanic), an increase of 27.1 percent since 1990.

The above material is courtesy of the New Georgia Encyclopedia

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**Wildfire History**

<b>County = Monroe Fiscal Year 2016</b>	<b>Cause</b>	<b>Fires</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Fires 5 Yr Avg</b>	<b>Acres 5 Yr Avg</b>
<a href="#">Campfire</a>	Campfire	0	0.00	1.20	10.12
<a href="#">Children</a>	Children	0	0.00	1.80	3.27
<a href="#">Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc</a>	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	0	0.00	0.40	1.44
<a href="#">Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn</a>	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	2	0.30	3.60	20.60
<a href="#">Debris: Other</a>	Debris: Other	0	0.00	0.20	0.02
<a href="#">Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc</a>	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	1	1.00	2.40	5.44
<a href="#">Debris: Site Prep – Forestry Related</a>	Debris: Site Prep – Forestry Related	2	1.25	2.20	3.31
<a href="#">Incendiary</a>	Incendiary	0	0.00	2.20	3.15
<a href="#">Lightning</a>	Lightning	1	0.10	1.20	2.48
<a href="#">Machine Use</a>	Machine Use	1	0.10	3.00	5.28
<a href="#">Miscellaneous</a>	Miscellaneous	0	0.00	1.40	1.45
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition</a>	Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	0	0.00	0.20	0.02
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Other</a>	Miscellaneous: Other	0	0.00	0.60	0.50
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences</a>	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	0	0.00	1.40	1.35
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion</a>	Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	0	0.00	0.20	1.12
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires</a>	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	1	5.70	0.80	1.36
<a href="#">Railroad</a>	Railroad	0	0.00	0.20	0.30
<a href="#">Smoking</a>	Smoking	0	0.00	0.20	0.06
<b>Totals for County: Monroe Year: 2016</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>8.45</b>	<b>23.20</b>	<b>61.27</b>

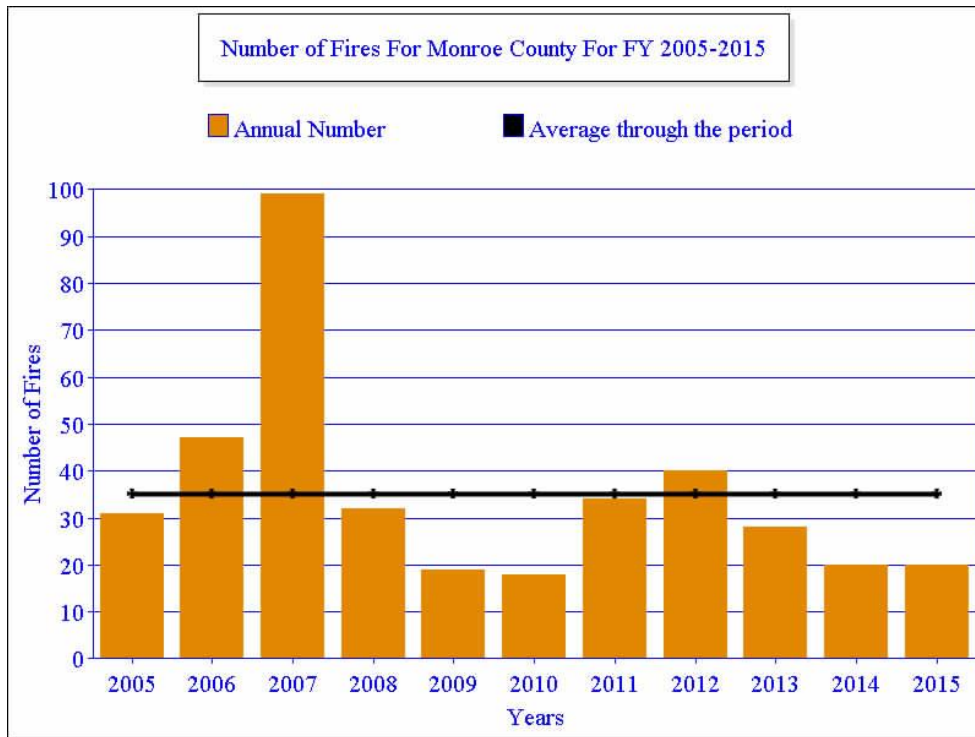
Wildland fire traditionally has not been a serious problem in Monroe County when compared to some counties in Georgia. The table above reflects the activity during fiscal year 2016 (July 2015 thru June 2016). This was a record low for Monroe County, due to above average precipitation, with only 8 wildfires burning 8.45 acres. The following table outlines fire activity in Monroe County for the past 10 complete fiscal years. It should be remembered that the statewide average in FY 2007 was influenced by the Sweat Farm, Big Turnaround, and Bugaboo Fires that burned in the Okefenokee

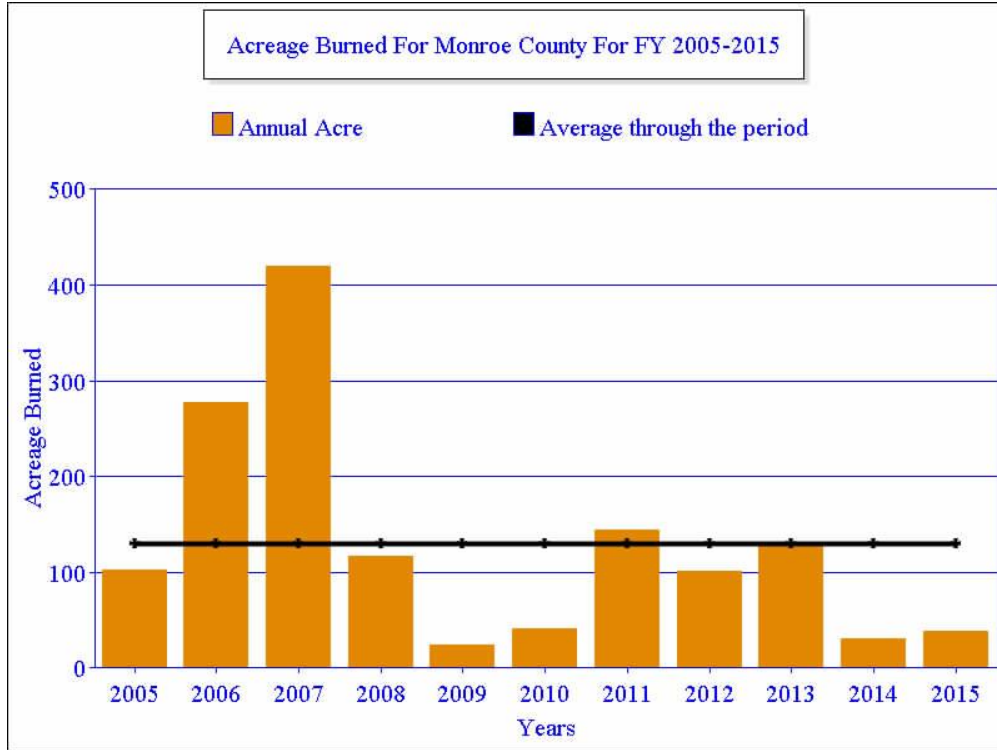


and Southeast Georgia. These large fires caused the statewide average size to be greatly increased. Overall, FY 2007 was a year of increased fire activity due to prolonged drought. Again in 2011 the State experienced large fires in SE Georgia and record breaking wildfire activity. During the same 10 year period the State also experienced two record breaking years of low wildfire occurrence, 2010 and 2015, due to above average precipitation throughout Georgia.

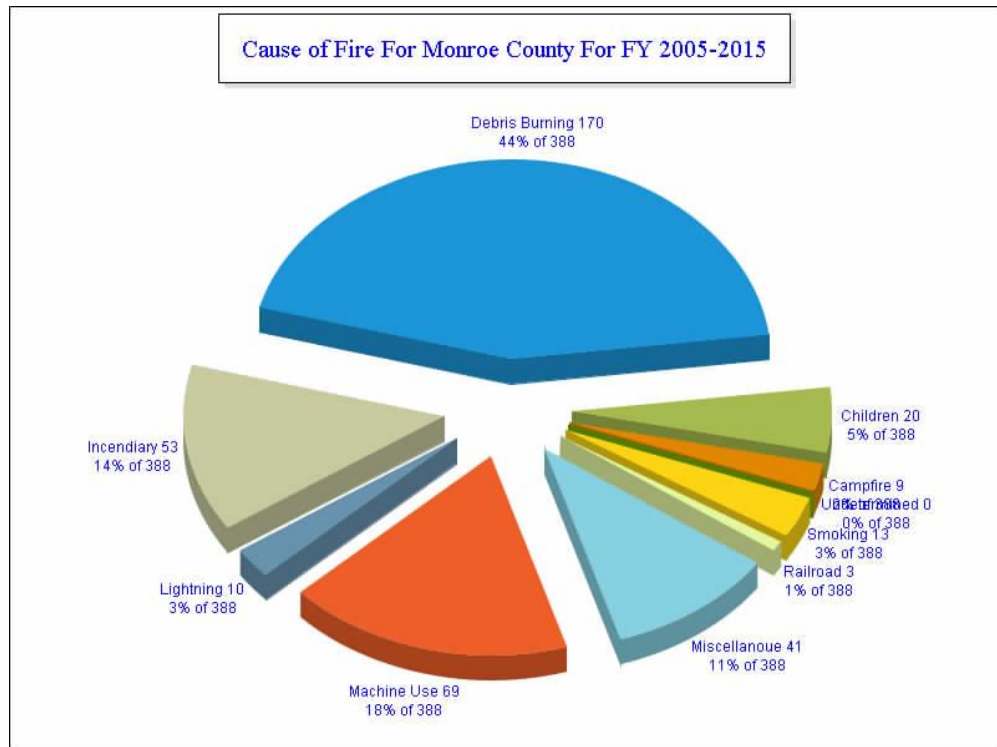
Fiscal Year	Number of Fires	Acres	Average size	Statewide average size
2015	20	38.65	1.93	4.50
2014	20	30.68	1.53	5.02
2013	28	127.65	4.59	4.75
2012	40	100.92	2.52	4.98
2011	34	143.86	4.23	16.16
2010	18	41.35	2.30	3.56
2009	19	24.01	1.26	3.90
2008	32	116.73	3.65	4.56
2007	99	420.04	4.24	18.64
2006	47	277.67	5.91	3.93

The following graphs indicate the average number of fires and acreage burned during fiscal years 2005 through 2015. During this time Monroe County had an average of 35 wildfires burning about 130 acres annually.



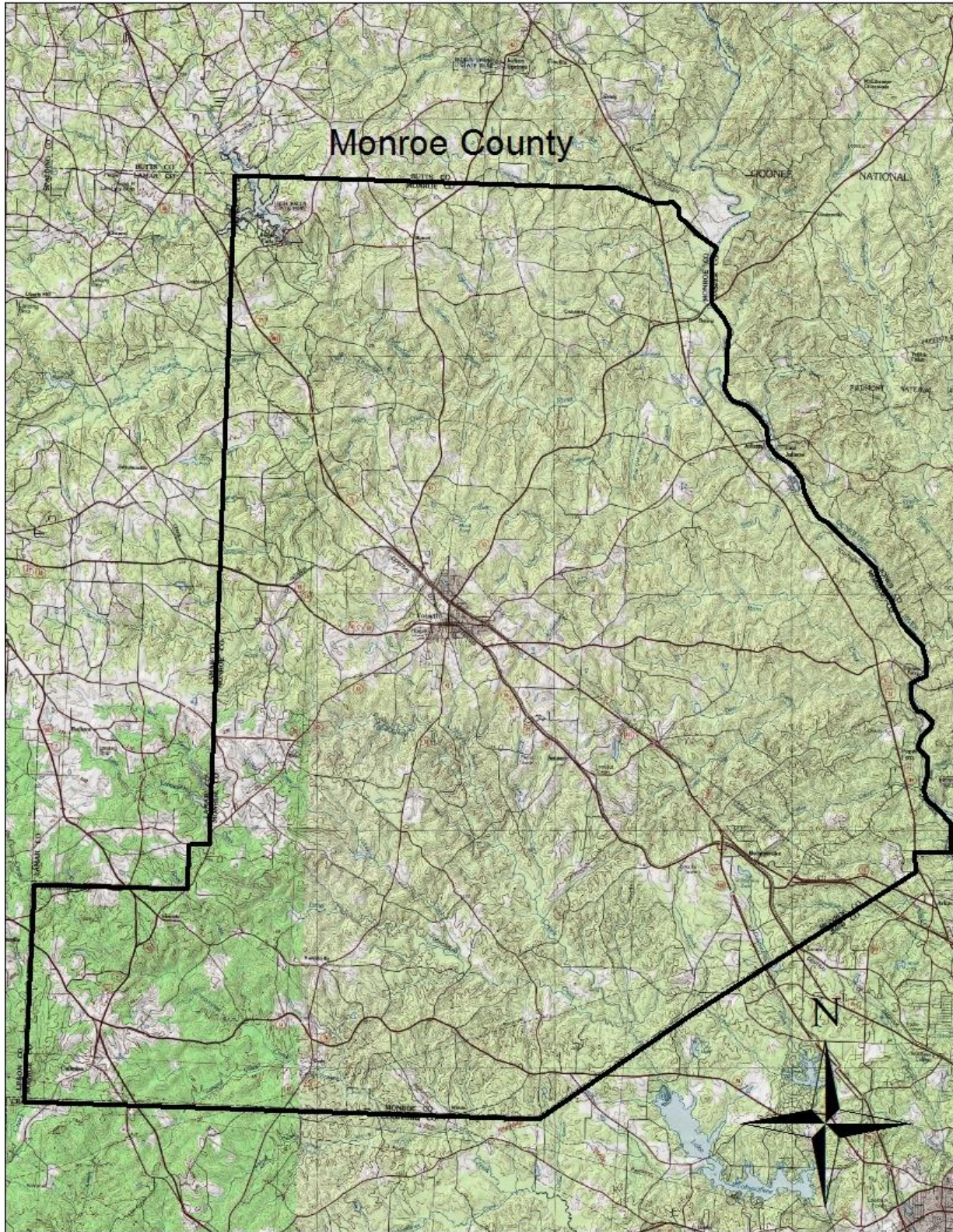


The pie chart below indicates by percentage the causes of wildfires from 2005 through 2015. The primary cause was careless debris burning accounting for 44%. Debris burning typically accounts for about 50% of Georgia's wildfires. The Secondary cause was machine use causing 18% followed by incendiary (arson) accounting for 14%.

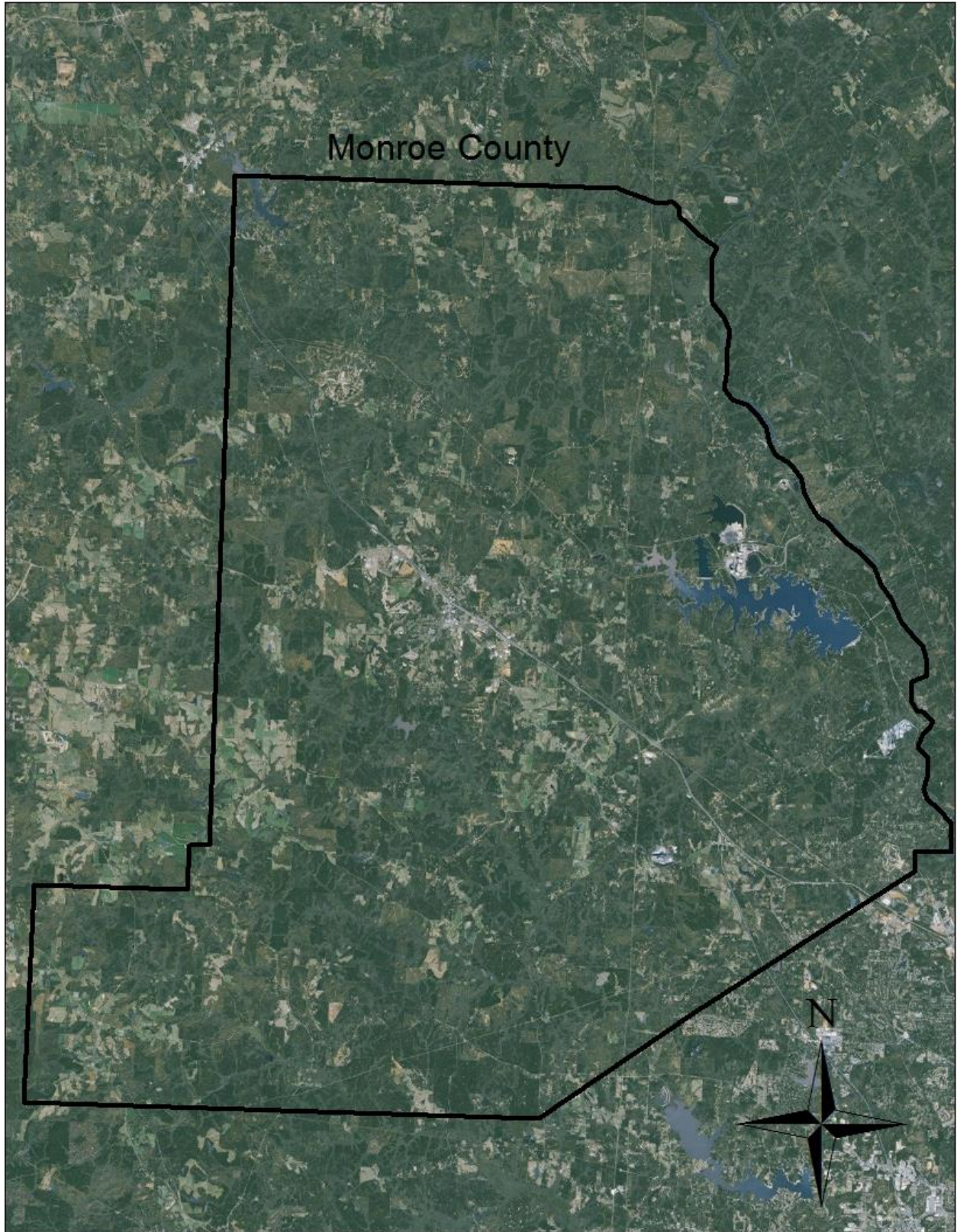




### III. COMMUNITY BASE MAPS

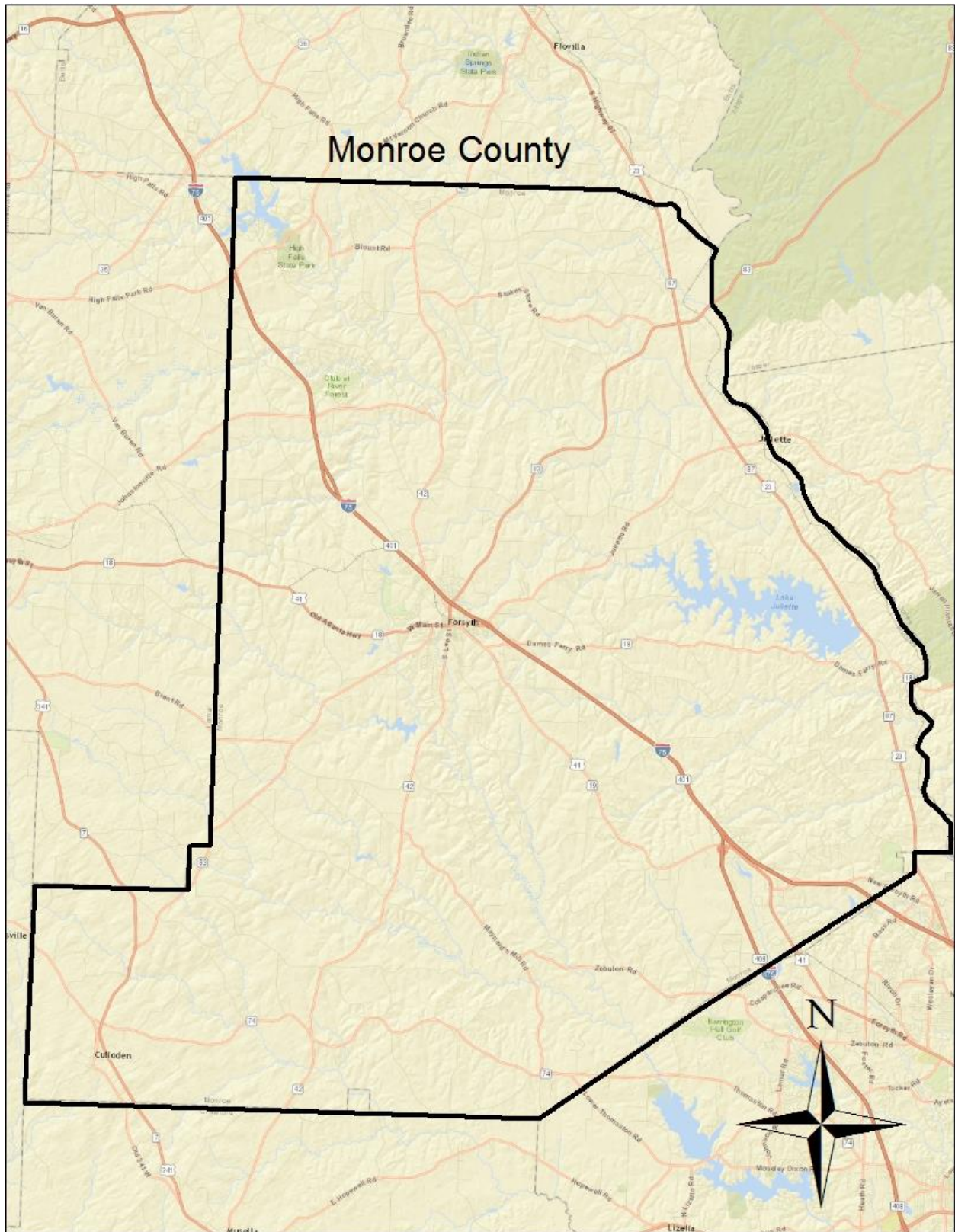








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## IV. COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

### The Wildland-Urban Interface

There are many definitions of the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), however from a fire management perspective it is commonly defined as an area where structures and other human development meet or intermingles with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. As fire is dependent on a certain set of conditions, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group has defined the wildland-urban interface as a set of conditions that exists in or near areas of wildland fuels, regardless of ownership. This set of conditions includes type of vegetation, building construction, accessibility, lot size, topography and other factors such as weather and humidity. When these conditions are present in certain combinations, they make some communities more vulnerable to wildfire damage than others. This “set of conditions” method is perhaps the best way to define wildland-urban interface areas when planning for wildfire prevention, mitigation, and protection activities.

There are three major categories of wildland-urban interface. Depending on the set of conditions present, any of these areas may be at risk from wildfire. A wildfire risk assessment can determine the level of risk.

- 1. “Boundary” wildland-urban interface** is characterized by areas of development where homes, especially new subdivisions, press against public and private wildlands, such as private or commercial forest land or public forests or parks. This is the classic type of wildland-urban interface, with a clearly defined boundary between the suburban fringe and the rural countryside.
- 2. “Intermix” wildland-urban interface** areas are places where improved property and/or structures are scattered and interspersed in wildland areas. These may be isolated rural homes or an area that is just beginning to go through the transition from rural to urban land use.
- 3. “Island” wildland-urban interface**, also called occluded interface, are areas of wildland within predominately urban or suburban areas. As cities or subdivisions grow, islands of undeveloped land may remain, creating remnant forests. Sometimes these remnants exist as parks, or as land that cannot be developed due to site limitations, such as wetlands.

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





The **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)** reflects housing density depicting where humans and their structures meet or intermix with wildland fuels. For the **Monroe County** project area, it is estimated that **26,617** people or **99 percent** of the total project area population (26,993) live within the WUI.

### **Wildland Urban Interface Hazards**

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

#### ● Hazardous Materials

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

#### ● Illicit Activities

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

#### ● Propane tanks

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

- Utility lines
  - Utility lines may be located above and below ground and may be cut or damaged by tools or equipment. Don't spray water on utility lines or boxes.
  
- Septic tanks and fields
  - Below-ground structures may not be readily apparent and may not support the weight of engines or other apparatus.
  
- New construction materials
  - Many new construction materials have comparatively low melting points and may "off-gas" extremely hazardous vapors. Plastic decking materials that resemble wood are becoming more common and may begin softening and losing structural strength at 180° F, though they normally do not sustain combustion once direct flame is removed. However, if they continue to burn they exhibit the characteristics of flammable liquids.
  
- Pets and livestock
  - Pets and livestock may be left when residents evacuate and will likely be highly stressed, making them more inclined to bite and kick. Firefighters should not put themselves at risk to rescue pets or livestock.
  
- Evacuation occurring
  - Firefighters may be taking structural protection actions while evacuations of residents are occurring. Be very cautious of people driving erratically. Distraught residents may refuse to leave their property, and firefighters may need to disengage from fighting fire to contact law enforcement officers for assistance. In most jurisdictions firefighters do not have the authority to force evacuations. Firefighters should not put themselves at risk trying to protect someone who will not evacuate!
  
- Limited access
  - Narrow one-lane roads with no turn-around room, inadequate or poorly maintained bridges and culverts are frequently found in wildland urban interface areas. Access should be sized-up and an evacuation plan for all emergency personnel should be developed.

**Risk Assessments:**

Following a meeting of Monroe County officials and representatives of the Georgia Forestry Commission on July 23, 2009 assessments were made of communities at risk within the county. Areas designated for assessment were selected using the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SouthWRAP) Communities at risk layer and supported by local knowledge. It should be noted that not all communities within the SouthWRAP layer were assessed. The SouthWRAP information was used to assist local fire departments in locating areas that could be assessed. In all 10 areas were assessed using the Georgia Forestry Commission Form 140 for Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment. Two communities were recognized as being at extreme risk, one was designated at high risk, four were designated as moderate and three were classified as being low. Information on these areas is presented in tabular form in a document entitled 'Risk Summary for Areas of Concern Monroe County, Georgia' located below. These communities represent a portion of communities at risk in Monroe County. Other opportunities for Community assessment exist within the county and should be pursued as time and manpower allows.

Risk Summary for Areas of Concern Monroe County

Community Name or Location	Map #	Latitude	Longitude	Number of Homes	Hazard Rating	Risk Category	Jurisdiction
Buck Creek Rd. North	1	33.18605272	-84.03552521	25	186	Extreme	Station 2
Berner Community	2	33.1523953	-83.83619659	6	144	Extreme	Stations 3 and 6
Pioneer Trail	3	33.18666347	-84.01808195	25	133	High	Station 2
Brushy Creek / Brushy Creek Circle	4	33.19156129	-84.03894217	50	119	Moderate	Station 2
Camella Subdivision	5	33.029436	-83.8541194	17	100	Moderate	Station 1, 7,10
Harbor Shores Drive	6	33.19690266	-84.02665608	50	97	Moderate	Station 2
Calloway Rd. Subdivision	7	33.19690266	-84.02665608	40	82	Moderate	Smarr
East Redding Rd West side of Hwy 87	8	33.0972221	-83.8060222	9	64	Low	Juliette
Wadley Station Lane	9	32.93752521	-83.78436354	23	56	Low	Bolingbroke 4
Buck Creek Rd South	10	33.17983439	-84.02957033	75	45	Low	Station 2

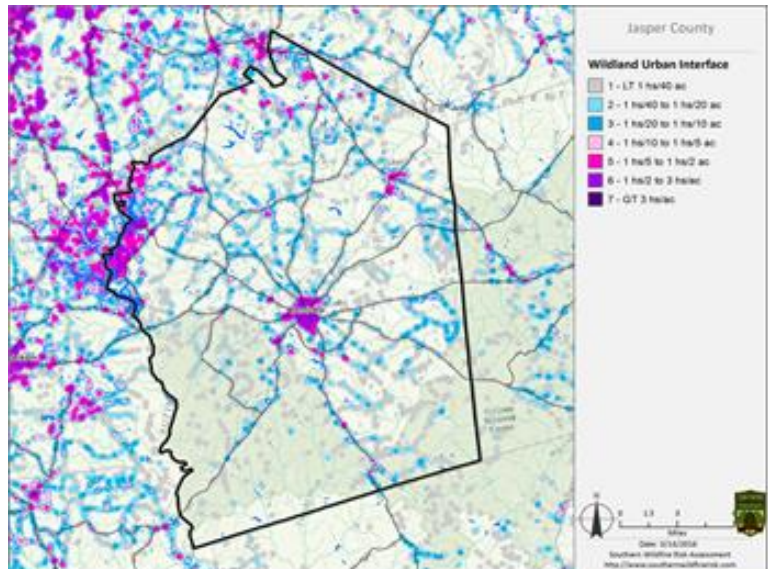
Prescribed burning is a best management practice for the reduction of hazardous fuel accumulation. The Georgia Forestry Commission can provide a prescribed burning plan, installation of fire breaks, and can assist with burning and equipment standby when personnel are available.



## V. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & HAZARD RISK MAPS

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

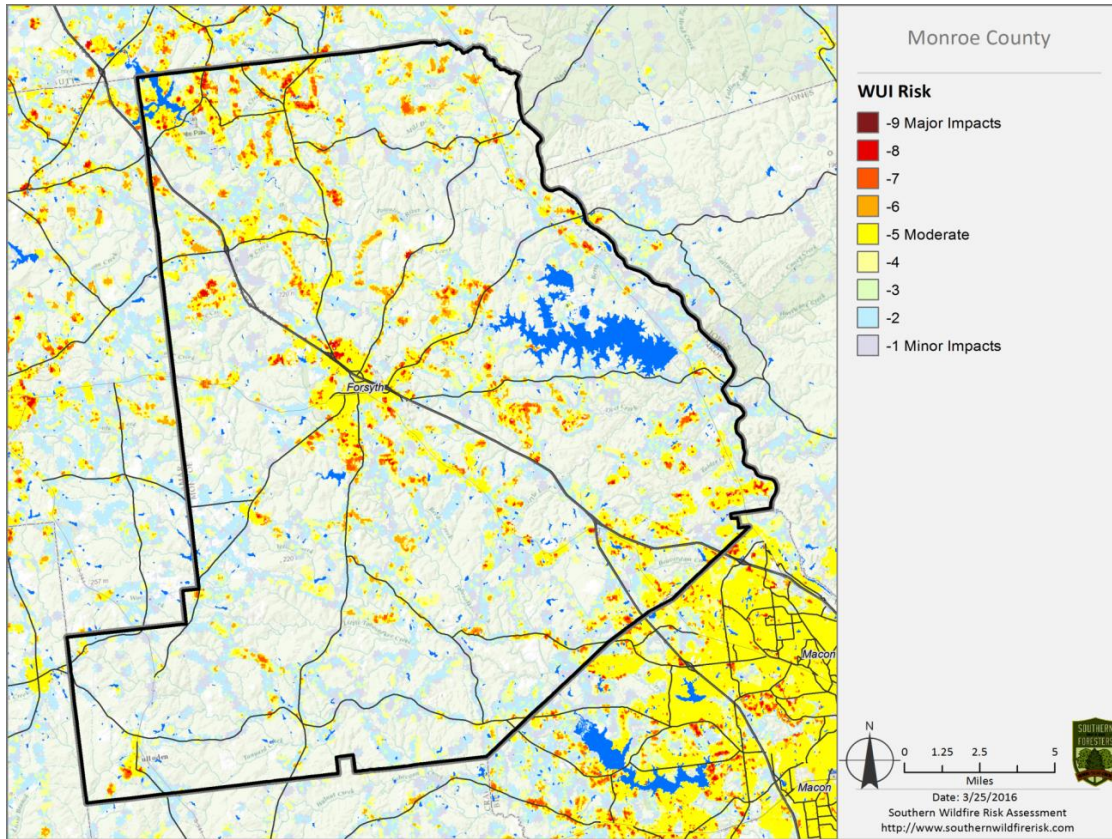
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests
- Allow agencies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



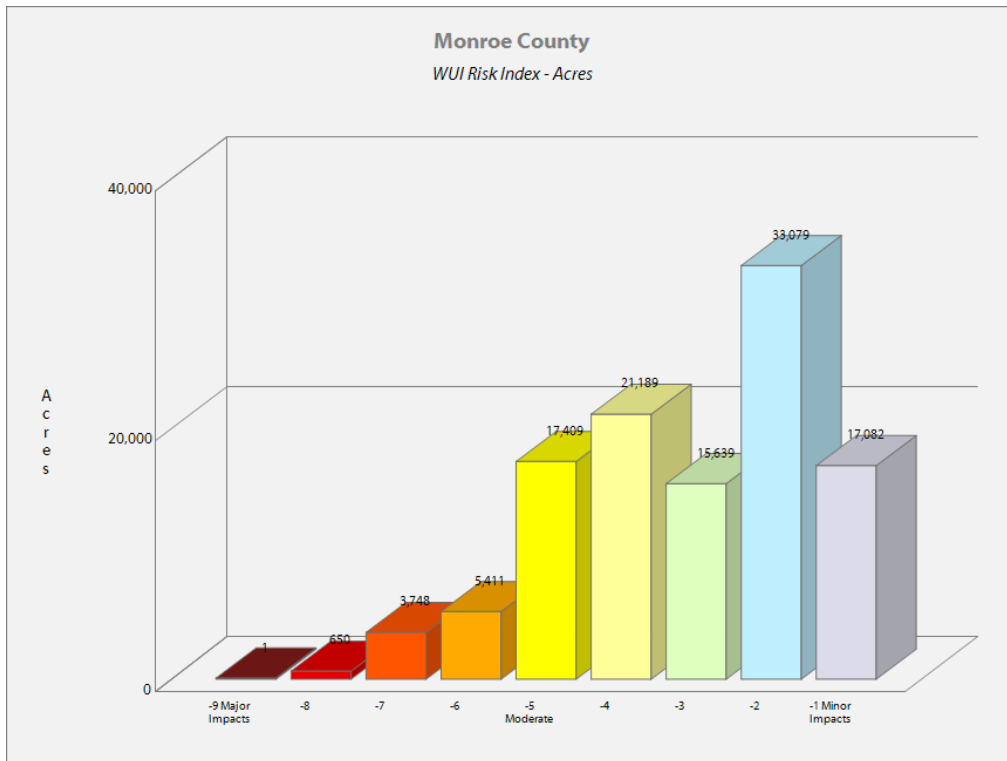
Wildland Urban Interface map from the Monroe SWRA Report



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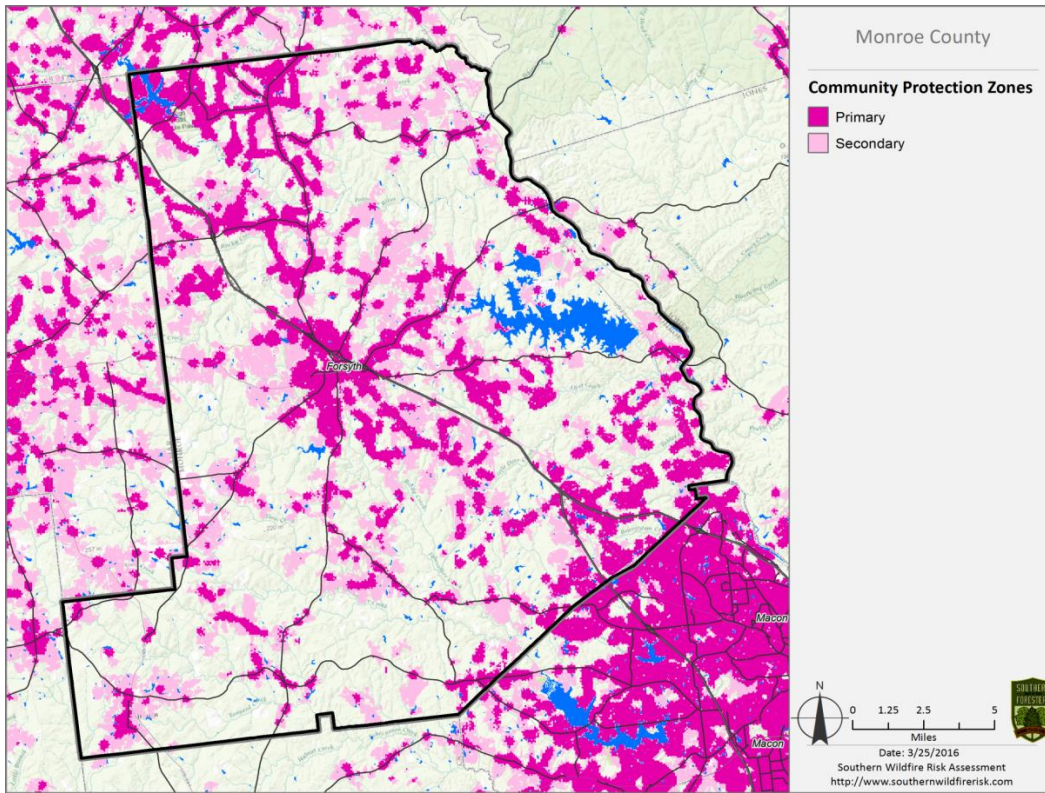


Wildland Interface Risk Map from the Monroe County SWRA report and graph below indicates WUI Risk Index acreage.

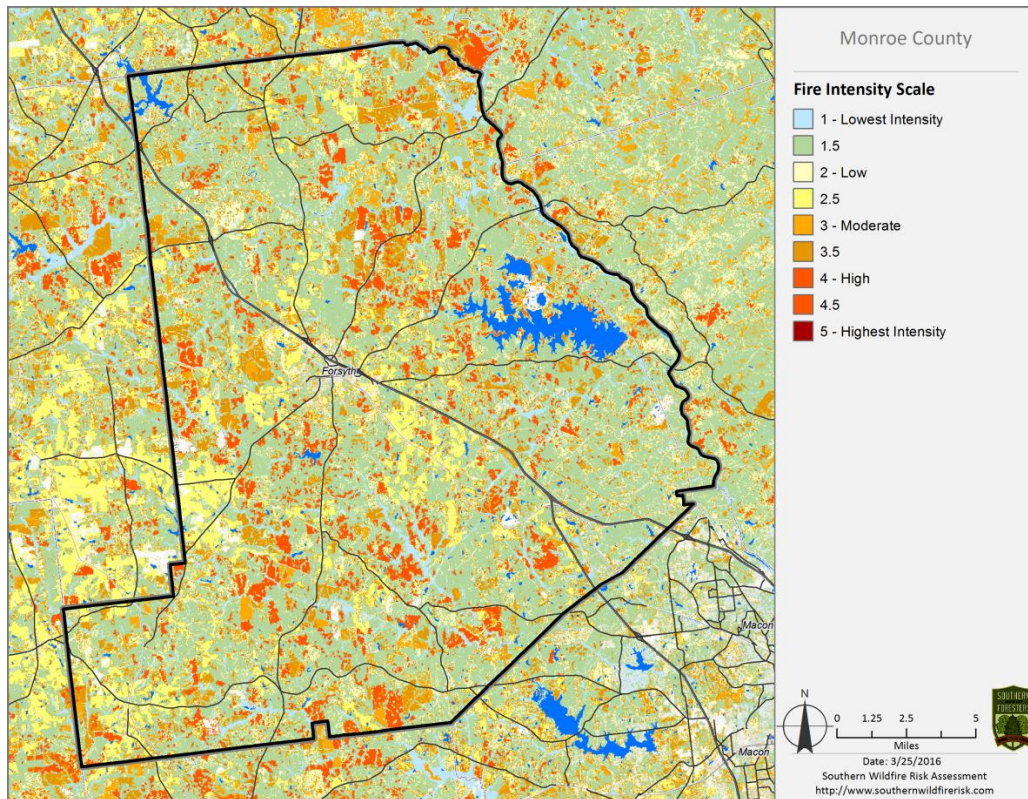




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Community Protection Zone map (above) and Fire Intensity Scale map (below)





## VI. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

### Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

Hazard	Mitigation	Method
Lack of defensible space	Improve defensible space around structures in communities at risk	All departments should examine structures in communities at risk in their response areas. Improvements to defensible space as referenced in Firewise guidelines should be conveyed to residents through media or direct contact.
Access problems for initial attack	Improve access problems	All County response agencies and the Georgia Forestry Commission should closely examine access in all communities identified to be at risk. When problems are identified corrective measures should be made.

### Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

Hazard	Mitigation	Method
Structural Ignitability	Reduce structural ignitability	Citizens in communities at risk should be educated regarding methods to reduce structural ignitability as referenced in Firewise guidelines. This can be accomplished through media or direct contact.
Local Codes and Ordinances	Improve and amend to codes and ordinances pertaining to infrastructure and community protection from wildland fire.	Examine all existing codes and ordinances for problems regarding direct conflicts to wildland safety or lack of needed codes or enforcement. The International Wildland-Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) was adopted in Georgia in 2014.

**Proposed Wildland Fuel Reduction or modification Priorities**

Hazard	Mitigation	Method
Fuel Hazards near Communities at risk	Prescribed Burning	Determine Communities at risk where Prescribed burning would be appropriate to use. Seek cooperation from adjacent landowners. Find funding to cover cost of burning. Prioritize burn compartments and execute.
Fuel continuity near communities at risk	Permanent and semi-permanent Fire breaks	Determine communities at risk where prescribed burning is not appropriate or desired. Install fire breaks and modify fuel continuity near these communities.
Fuel Hazard in public or shared spaces	Fuel Modification or reduction	Determine where hazards exist. Determine appropriate method for modification or reduction. Chipping, raking and piling, County pick-up, Organized Community Clean-up days could be beneficial.

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

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

**Proposed Public Education Priorities**

Educational Priority	Responsible party	Method
Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through direct contact	County, State, and municipal governments	Conduct Firewise meetings by each fire response jurisdiction assisted by Georgia Forestry Commission (state). Conduct a door to door campaign in particularly hazardous communities

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<p>Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through use of media</p>	<p>County, State, and municipal governments</p>	<p>Use PSA's in local newspapers and local radio stations. Utilize Firewise displays in local post offices and banks. Seek use of local EMC newsletter for Firewise message. Create poster sized notices for use in common public places (stores, post offices, etc. adjacent to high hazard areas advising residents about the hazard and how to protect themselves and their property. Distribute public notices concerning Firewise at local sporting events and other public gatherings.</p>
<p>Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and Individual responsibility through formal certification</p>	<p>County, State, and municipal governments</p>	<p>Seek formal firewise certification for a selected community in the extreme or high risk category as determined in the risk assessment process.</p>



**In 2014 High Falls State Park received National certification as a Firewise Community. Pictured here are State Park employees attending a Firewise training class instructed by the Georgia Forestry Commission.**

## VII. Action Plan

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

Hazard	Specific Action and Responsible Party
Lack of Defensible Space	Using the risk summary in section 3, each department should conduct inspections of communities at risk in their jurisdiction or area of response for lack of defensible space. Findings will be conveyed to residents and treatment methods will be recommended in accordance with Firewise principles.
Access problems	Using the County Base map the Georgia Forestry Commission and Monroe County Fire officials should visit all identified communities at risk for the purpose of locating and resolving access difficulties. This inspection should extend into the wildland adjacent to the communities at risk looking for hindrances to suppression tactics
Structural Ignitability	Monroe County Fire officials should examine structures for structural ignitability concerns at the time when the communities at risk are inspected for lack of defensible space. Using Firewise guidelines for reducing structural ignitability, (a checklist from the Firewise web site could be used) structures should be assessed and findings conveyed to residents. This could be through use of media or by direct contact.
Codes and Ordinances	The Georgia Forestry Commission should provide assistance to Monroe County and municipal Fire Marshalls regarding County codes and ordinances for gaps and oversights which could cause problems in the wildland fire arena. Examples include proximity of propane tanks to structures, accumulations of debris, road widths in new developments, lack of proper identification pertaining to address or street names etc..

### Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

Hazard	Specific Action and Responsible Party
Hazardous Wildland Fuel Accumulations	The Georgia Forestry Commission will prioritize prescribed burning projects adjacent to Communities at risk where burning is determined to be appropriate. As the Berner community is in an area of high fire occurrence in the county it would be appropriate to pursue burning projects in natural and plantation pine stands nearby. It would be best to concentrate on stands that are south, west, to north of town as these would have the greatest potential for rapid spread. Should this objective be accomplished it could serve as a model for similar action near other communities at risk.
Wildland fuel continuity near communities at risk	The Georgia Forestry Commission supported by High Falls State Park personnel should determine locations and install permanent firebreaks on the North side of High Falls State Park to protect communities around High Falls Lake.
Hazardous Fuel Accumulations in communities and hindrances to suppression	Using the risk summary in section 3, Fire departments could conduct community clean up days in communities at risk in their respective jurisdictions aimed at reducing hazardous fuels and hindrances to suppression in shared community space. Residents would be provided with guidance and access to disposal alternatives for materials removed.

Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

Improvement needed	Responsible Party and specific action
Improve training and qualification of Monroe County Wildland firefighters	Chief Ranger Robert Hargrove, District Ranger Willie Boston of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Monroe Co Fire Chief Ronald Norris should examine all training records for persons identified as wildland firefighters under their supervision. All personnel should be certified Georgia Basic Wildland Firefighters or higher in qualification. Additional training and qualification should be sought for personnel identified in Monroe County who are assigned specific Incident Command System (ICS) functions. Sources for available funds for training should be sought at Local, State, and Federal levels.
Improve or acquire wildland firefighting equipment	All stations for Monroe County Fire Departments should inventory their present equipment relating to their wildland capability. Funding sources should be investigated from available grants or other sources. Needs for job specific wildland responses should be examined by Chief Ranger Hargrove and Fire Chief Norris

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

Opportunity	Responsible Party and Specific Action
Improve Public Education through direct contact	Prior to the onset of fire season(s) rangers of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Monroe County Fire personnel should conduct Firewise meetings in conjunction with normally scheduled fire department meetings. People living in or near extreme and high risk communities should be invited to these meetings by use of door to door campaigns or by mailbox flyers. Notices regarding these meetings could be placed in local post offices or stores near communities at risk. A Firewise display should be acquired and utilized at this meeting. This display would be retained by the Monroe office of the Georgia Forestry Commission and used for all Firewise meetings in Monroe County. Local news media should be invited to these meetings.
Improve Public Education through use of media	Prior to the onset of fire season(s) or during periods of particularly high fire danger use of the media should be stepped up by personnel of the Georgia Forestry Commission. This should include use of all available media in the County. PSA's should be run weekly during periods of high to extreme fire danger. Signs or poster boards could be developed for display in public spaces near communities at risk advising residents that they live in areas that are susceptible to wildland fire and directing them to sources of information regarding wildland fire safety. Firewise materials should be provided to the local building permit office for distribution to new home builders and developers.
Improve Public Education through Firewise certification	The Georgia Forestry Commission along with Monroe County Fire services should pursue Firewise Community USA certification for the community of Buck Creek Rd. North. High Fall State Park was certified as a Firewise Community in 2014.

## Timetables for Actions

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

- Steps to examine communities at risk for defensible space and structural ignitability should begin as soon as practical with existing work schedules. This should occur prior to the time when most citizens begin fall or spring cleanup projects in order for recommendations regarding improvements to defensible space and reduction of structural ignitability to coincide with these seasonal actions.
- Pre-planning to examine access and suppression problems should take place as soon as possible by fire department jurisdiction.
- Codes and Ordinances should be examined as soon as possible.

### Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

- The prescribed burn project to reduce fuels near the Berner Community should take place in late winter to early spring of 2016. Any other priority burn projects or installation of pre suppression fuel breaks should take place during this same window.
- Steps to reduce fuels in communities at risk should coincide with steps to improve defensible space and reduce structural ignitability at the earliest possible opportunity as manpower and schedules permit.

### Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

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

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

- Direct contact with residents in Communities at risk should take place as soon as possible.
- The use of media should coincide with the above action.
- The certification of the Buck Creek North community should begin as soon as scheduling and manpower permits.
- Continue mitigation efforts with High Falls State Park to maintain their Firewise Community certification.



## Assessment of Actions

### Reduction of Community hazard and structural ignitability

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

### Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

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

### Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

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

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

- Direct measurement of the number of persons contacted, literature distributed, public notices posted, news articles published, radio programs aired, etc. would be the best measure of success. Any community certified as a Firewise USA community would be an obvious measure of success.

## VIII. GRANT FUNDING AND MITIGATION ASSISTANCE

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

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

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

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

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

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

## IX. GLOSSARY

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

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

*CWPP – The Community Wildfire Protection Plan.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## X. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Publications/Brochures/Websites:

- FIREWISE materials can be ordered at [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)
- Georgia Forestry Commission [www.georgiafirewise.org](http://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](http://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](http://www.interfacesouth.org)
- Information on codes and standards for emergency services including wildfire can be found at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)
- Information on FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) can be found at [www.firegrantsupport.com](http://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](http://www.SouthernWildfireRisk.com)
- Fire Adapted Communities [www.fireadapted.org](http://www.fireadapted.org)
- Ready, Set, Go [www.wildlandfirersg.org](http://www.wildlandfirersg.org)
- National Wildfire Preparedness Day [www.wildfireprepdlay.org](http://www.wildfireprepdlay.org)

### Appended Documents:

Monroe County Southern Risk Assessment Summary Report (SouthWRAP)

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



**P. O. Box 819  
Macon, GA 31202  
1-800-GA-TREES  
GaTrees.org**

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