GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources

Newton County, Georgia

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

JUNE, 2017

SIGNATURE PAGE

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Honorable Marcello Banes Date
Chairman
Newton County Board of Commissioners

_____ _____

Jody Nolan Date
EMA Director
Newton County

_____ _____

Michael Conner Date
Chief
Newton County Fire Services

_____ _____

Lloyd Kerr Date
County Manager
Newton County

_____ _____

Michael Sapp Date
Chief Ranger
Georgia Forestry Commission

Prepared by:

Michael Sapp, Newton/Rockdale Chief Ranger
Eric Mosley, Community Wildfire Protection Specialist
Georgia Forestry Commission
2707 Access Road
Covington GA 30016

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

County Commission Chair, Newton County

Newton County Emergency Management Director

Newton County Fire Chief

Michael Sapp
Chief Ranger, Newton/Rockdale County Forestry Unit
Georgia Forestry Commission

Eric Mosley
Community Wildfire Protection Specialist
Georgia Forestry Commission

Beryl Budd (revised 2017)
Wildfire Prevention Specialist
Georgia Forestry Commission

PLAN CONTENTS

Appended Documents:

Newton County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary (SouthWRAP)

Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Forms

Newton County Wildfire Pre-suppression Plan

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

I. OBJECTIVES

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 Newton County. The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect this community and its essential infrastructure. It also includes a plan for wildfire suppression. Specifically, the plan includes community-centered actions that will:

- Educate citizens on wildfire, its risks, and ways to protect lives and properties,
- Support fire rescue and suppression entities,
- Focus on collaborative decision-making and citizen participation,
- Develop and implement effective mitigation strategies, and
- Develop and implement effective community ordinances and codes.

II. COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Wildfire risk reduction strategies are most effective when approached collaboratively – involving groups of residents, elected officials, community decision makers, emergency managers, and natural resource mangers –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 in early March 2012 to assess risks and develop the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The group is comprised of representatives from local county government, local fire authorities, and the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Below are the groups included in the task force:

Newton County Government
County Fire Department
Emergency Management
Georgia Forestry Commission

It was decided to conduct community assessments on the basis of the high risk communities and the individual fire districts in the county. The Newton County Fire Department Stations and the representative of the local Georgia Forestry Commission office reconvened in Mid April for the purpose of completing the following:

Risk Assessment	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.

III. COUNTY BACKGROUND AND WILDFIRE HISTORY

Newton County

Newton County lies approximately thirty miles east of Atlanta along Interstate 20. Its irregular star shape encompasses 276.4 miles. Named for Sergeant John Newton, a Revolutionary War (1775-83) hero, the county was formed on December 24, 1821, from parts of Henry, Jasper, and Walton counties. In 1821 the center of the area's activity was a settlement called Winton at the Brick Store, a general store and stagecoach stop. The Brick Store still stands, but U.S. Highway 278, which alternately parallels and crisscrosses the newer Interstate 20 eastward to Augusta, now lies over the stagecoach route.

Downtown Covington

State law required that the seat of the new county be as close as possible to the geographical center of the county, so a site between the Ulcoufatchee (later Alcovy) and Yellow rivers was designated the county seat, and the surrounding lots were auctioned. Dried Indian Creek, so named from the settlers' discovery of the body of an Indian tied to a tree and dried by the sun, crossed this land. The new town was named Newtonsboro, but eight months later, in December 1822, the name was changed to Covington, in honor of General Leonard Covington, a hero in the War of 1812 (1812-15).

The county's other incorporated towns date from throughout the nineteenth century. Newborn was settled around 1819 while still part of Jasper County.

Seney Hall, Oxford College

Porterdale, settled in the 1820s to establish a foundry, held to its industrial roots until late in the twentieth century, when its large textile mill finally closed. Oxford was incorporated in 1839 to support Emory College, chartered in 1836; a second campus, opened in Atlanta in 1919, became Emory University, and the original campus is now called Oxford College of Emory University. Mansfield flourished from about 1896. Newton County's unincorporated areas today are Almon, Brick Store, Cornish Mountain, Dial Town, Gum Creek, Magnet, Rocky Plains, Salem, Starrsville, and Stewart.

In 1864 Union general William T. Sherman and his troops passed through Covington and Oxford on the way to Savannah. Numerous historical markers in the county attest to related events, and several well-known written accounts describe this period.

Newton County has had a railroad since 1836, when planters, mill owners, and professional men organized a line from Madison, east of Covington, to the Chattahoochee River near Atlanta.

Central of Georgia Railway

This route is still heavily traveled by long freight trains. Covington Municipal Airport, located near a large industrial park north of Covington, provides facilities for small planes, and I-20 offers easy access to Interstates 75 and 85, and to Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. Though the cotton plantations are long gone, some farms remain in the county. Due to the location, transportation connections, and ready labor force, many employers find the county appealing.

The county's population has steadily grown since the mid-twentieth century. According to the U.S. census, the population in 2010 was 99,958, an increase from the 2000 population of 62,001. Farmland has been supplanted by housing developments, as families have moved in either to work in the county's industry or to commute to jobs in Atlanta.

Brick Store

In recent years Newton County's landmarks and landscape have become recognizable to people across the United States. Two popular television series of the late twentieth century, *The Dukes of Hazzard* and *In the Heat of the Night*, were filmed in the county, as were scenes from various motion pictures, including *My Cousin Vinny* (1992), and several television specials.

Wildfire History

Recent data show that a majority of the fastest growing areas in the U.S. are in wildfire-prone environments. It is not a surprise that some of these fastest growing areas are in Georgia. In last decade of the 20th Century, Georgia's population increased substantially. Homeowners in Georgia must contend with natural hazards including wildfire, tornados, and flooding. This combination of factors – burgeoning population, abundant natural areas, development pressures, and lack of public awareness makes Georgia a perfect state for creating solutions to various hazards. Georgia is looked to throughout the southern region as a leader in comprehensive and hazard mitigation planning.

Many of Georgia's existing and new residents living in the urban interface are unaware of the vital role fire plays in our landscape and that their homes are extremely vulnerable to wildfire damage. Balancing development pressures with wildfire risk reduction and education creates a unique challenge for local governments, emergency managers, and wildfire management agencies such as the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Over the past ten years, Newton County has averaged 20 reported wildfires per year. The occurrence of these fires is fairly uniform throughout the year with a slight peak in the months of February and March and a slight decrease during the fall months. These fires have burned an average of 78.93 acres annually. While the numbers of fires remain fairly similar every month, there is a marked difference in the monthly acreage lost. The monthly acres lost during the late winter through summer period show a tenfold increase over the acres lost during the fall and early winter. Additionally while the annual numbers of fires have not increased noticeably during the 10 year period that records are available, the annual acreage lost appears to have decreased in later years. Despite their work, more homes are being built outside of traditional communities into the

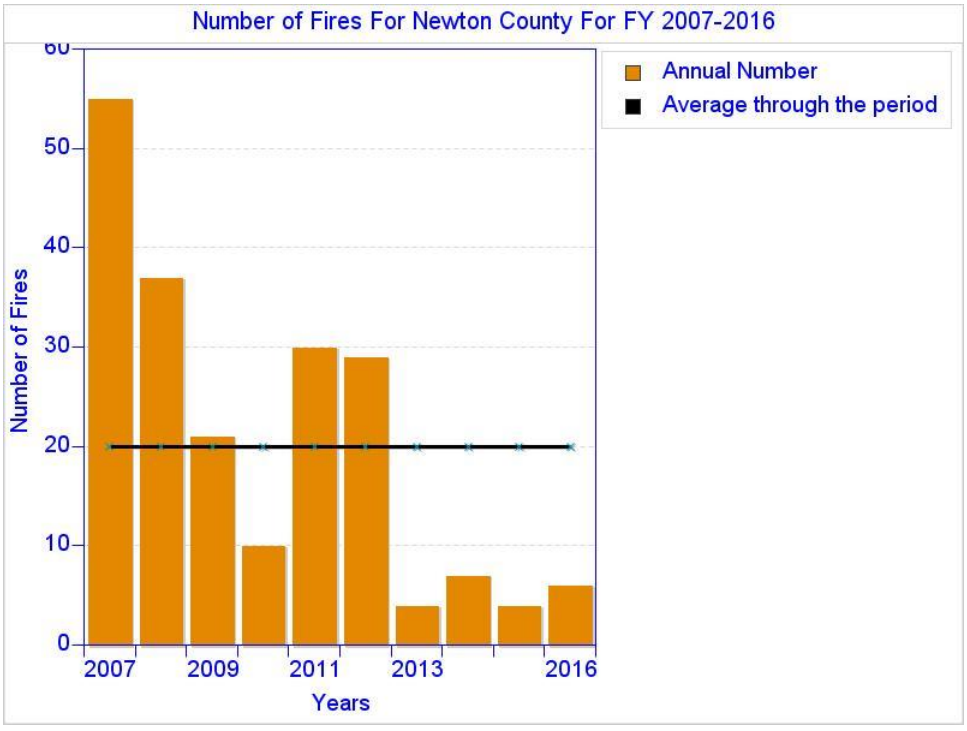
wildland urban interface. With this migration of people to the wildland urban interface the potential for a wildfire disaster continues to increase for Newton County.

The table below indicates wildfire activity during the current 2017 fiscal year, July 1, 2016 thru June 30, 2017. The number of fires and acres burned is compared to the five year average.

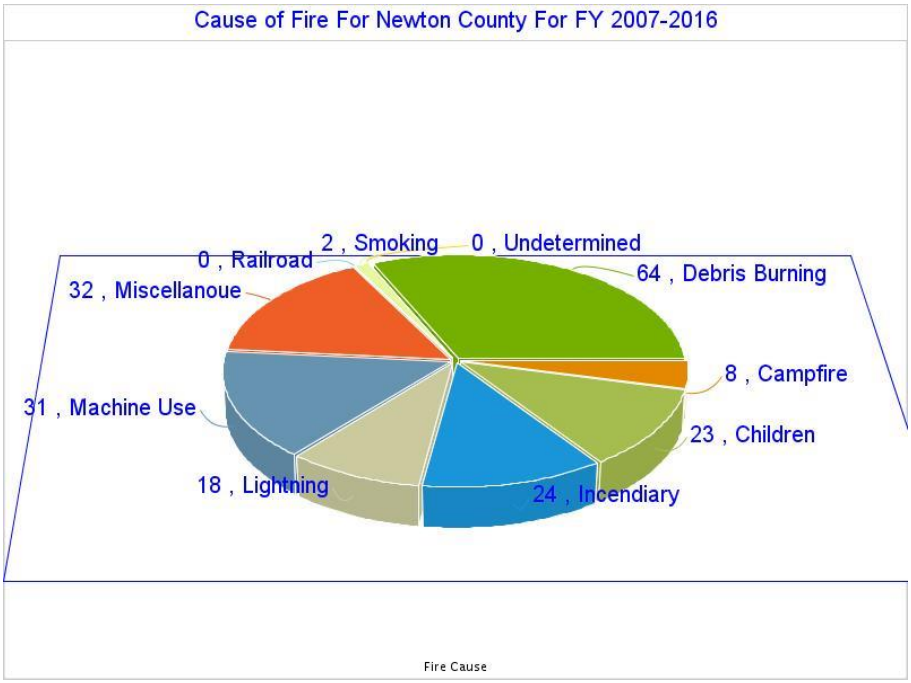
County = Newton	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	2		2.73	0.80	0.75
Children	Children	2		0.70	1.20	1.76
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	1		1.30	0.20	0.26
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	0		0.00	0.80	4.72
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	2		3.97	1.00	1.51
Incendiary	Incendiary	0		0.00	0.60	17.90
Lightning	Lightning	1		0.05	0.40	0.03
Machine Use	Machine Use	0		0.00	0.40	1.80
Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	1		0.90	0.20	0.18
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	3		2.20	0.60	0.44
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	2		1.90	0.40	0.38
Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	1		1.10	0.20	0.22
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	3		0.90	0.80	1.08
Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	0		0.00	0.20	0.04
Railroad	Railroad	1		0.70	0.20	0.14
Totals for County: Newton Year: 2017		19		16.45	8.00	31.21

The following table and graph indicates wildfire activity in Newton County during fiscal years 2007 thru 2016. The yearly average size wildfire is compared to the Statewide average. The State has experienced record breaking years of wildfire activity during 2007 and 2011 with large wildfires in SE Georgia and the Okefenokee Refuge. The State has had record breaking low wildfire activity during 2009, 2010, and 2015 with above average rainfall during these years.

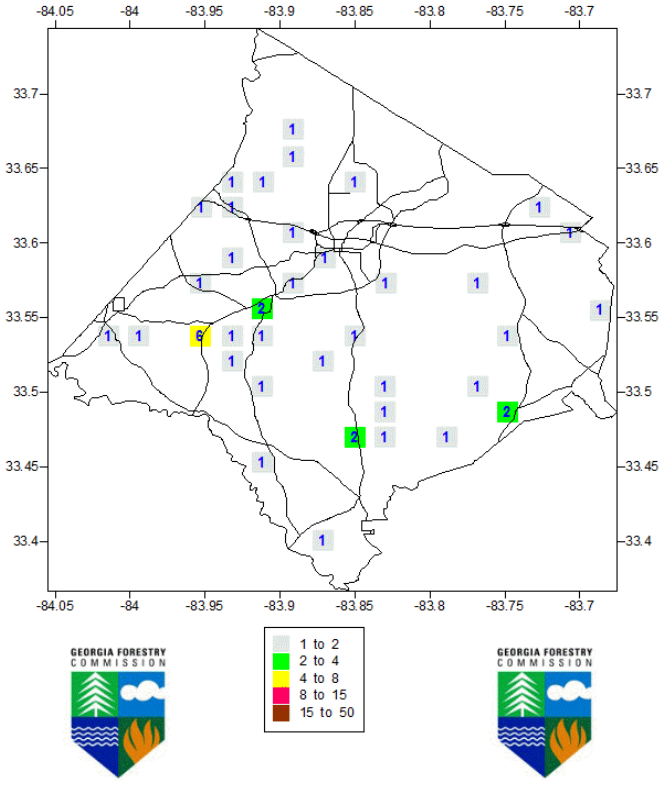
Year	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires	Average size	Statewide Average Size
2007	212.74	55	3.87	18.64
2008	127.06	37	3.43	4.56
2009	43.81	21	2.09	3.90
2010	11.17	10	1.18	3.93
2011	124.27	30	4.14	17.56
2012	92.73	29	3.20	5.08
2013	6.60	4	1.65	4.53
2014	119.70	7	17.10	5.02
2015	2.60	4	.65	4.42
2016	10.70	6	1.78	6.29



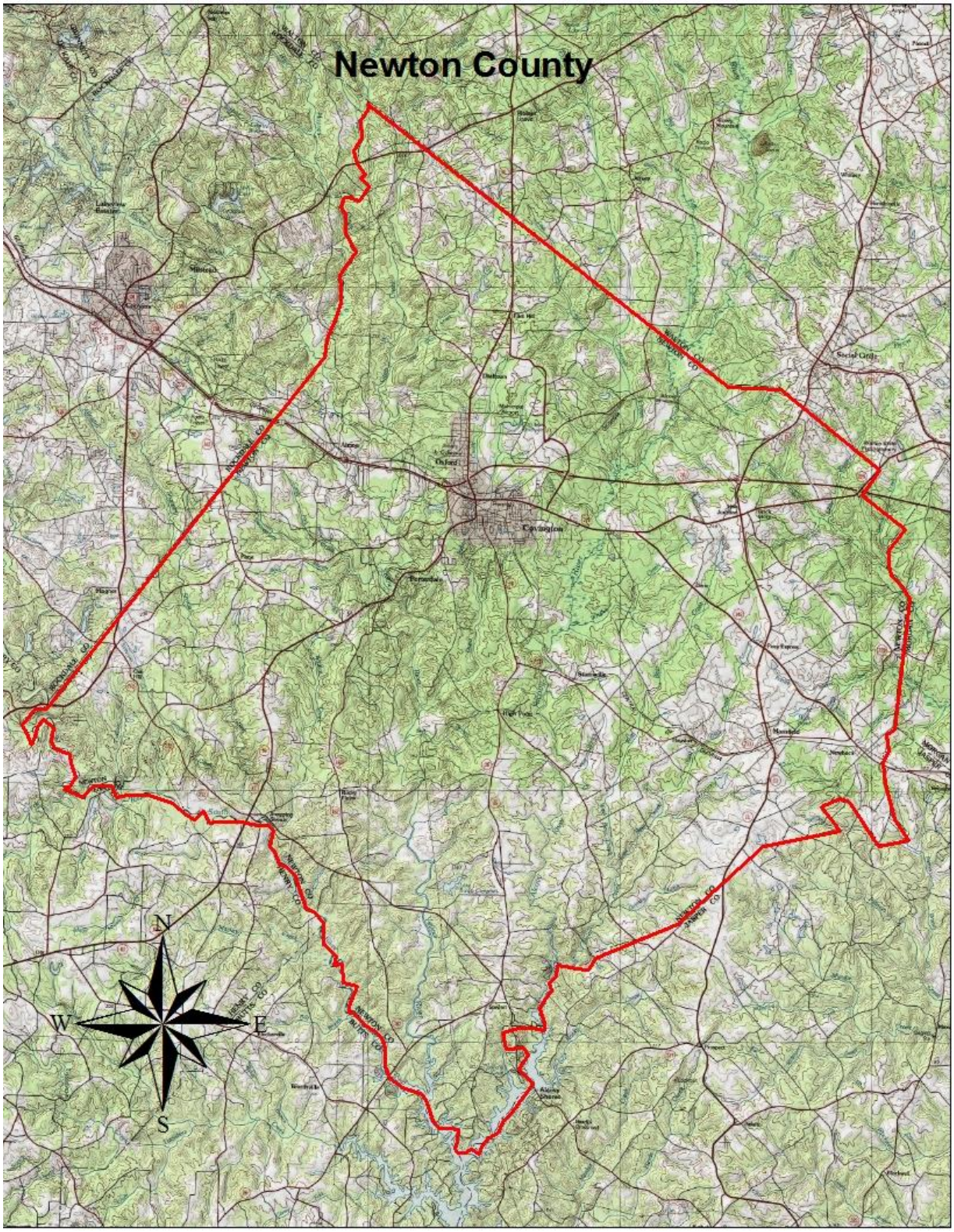
Debris Burning was the leading cause of wildfire in Newton County during 2007 thru 2016. The second leading cause was Machine Use followed by Incendiary (arson).

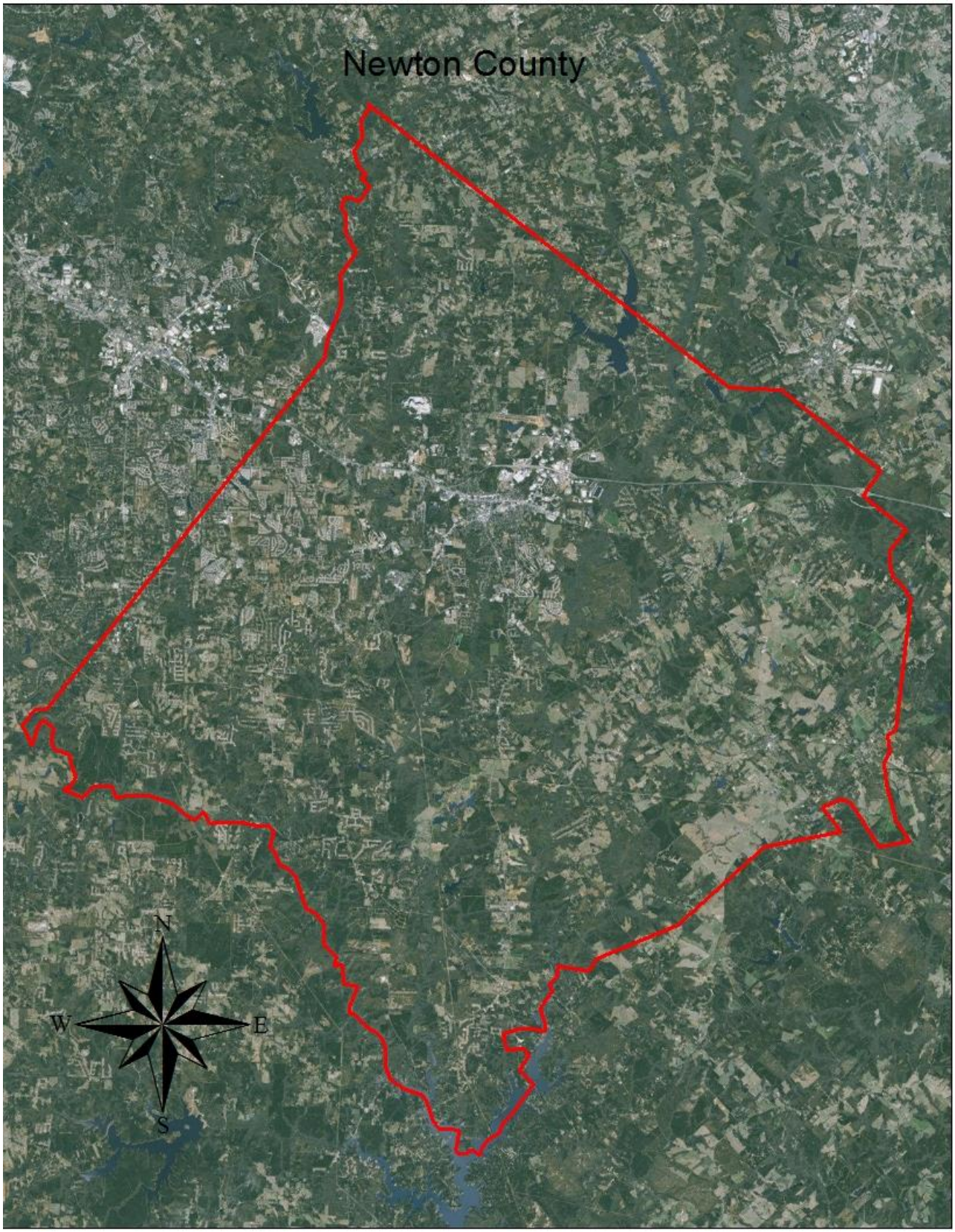


Fire Occurrence Map for
Newton County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



IV. COMMUNITY BASE MAP

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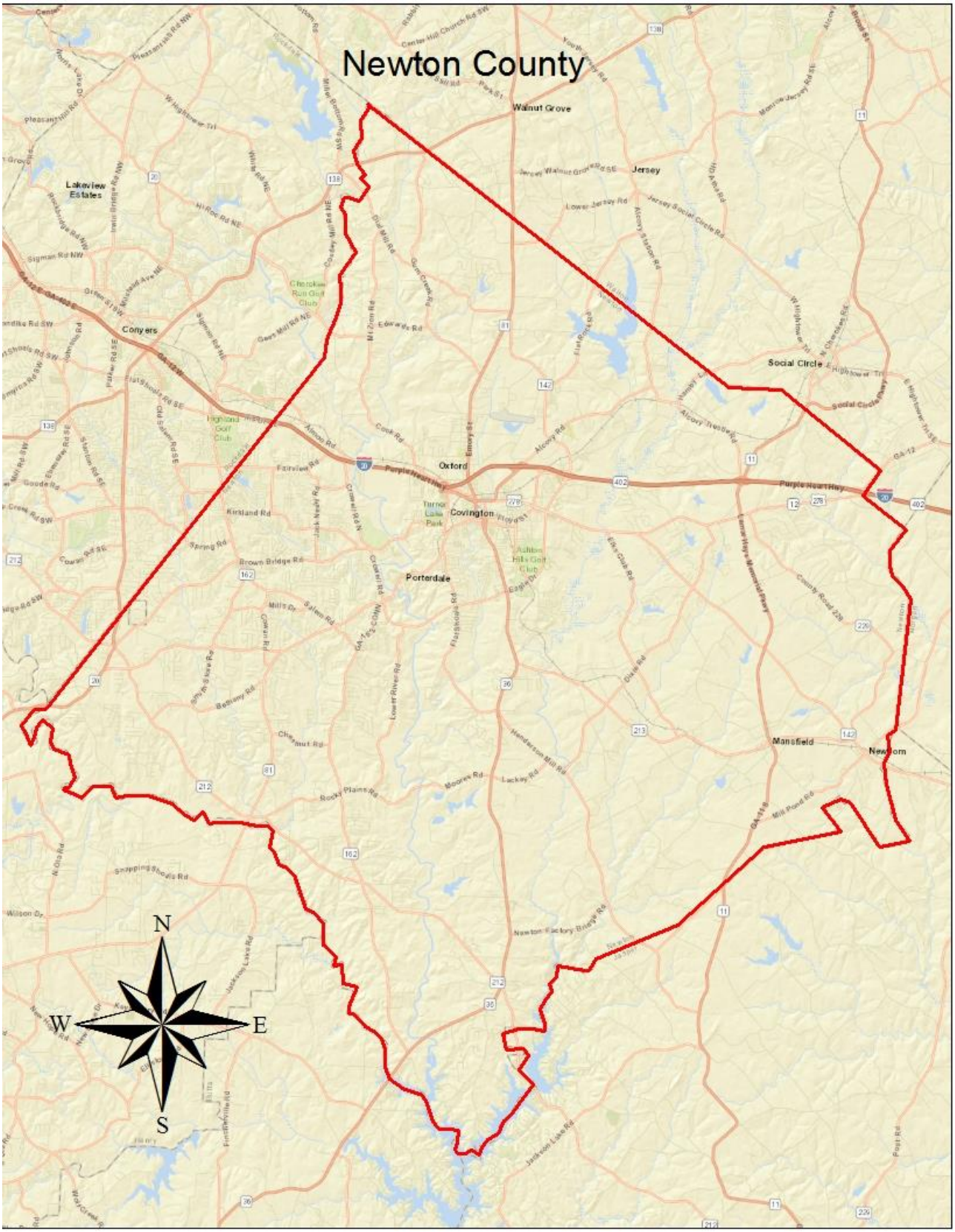

Newton County
Walnut Grove
Jersey
Lakeview Estates
Conyers
Social Circle
Oxford
Covington
Porterdale
Mansfield
Newborn
N
W
E
S

V. COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

The Wildland-Urban Interface

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

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

1. "Boundary" wildland-urban interface is characterized by areas of development where homes, especially new subdivisions, press against public and private wildlands, such as private or commercial forest land or public forests or parks. This is the classic type of wildland-urban interface, with a clearly defined boundary between the suburban fringe and the rural countryside.

2. "Intermix" wildland-urban interface areas are places where improved property and/or structures are scattered and interspersed in wildland areas. These may be isolated rural homes or an area that is just beginning to go through the transition from rural to urban land use.

3. "Island" wildland-urban interface, also called occluded interface, are areas of wildland within predominately urban or suburban areas. As cities or subdivisions grow, islands of undeveloped land may remain, creating remnant forests. Sometimes these remnants exist as parks, or as land that cannot be developed due to site limitations, such as wetlands.

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

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

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.

The wildland fire risk assessments conducted in 2012 by the Newton County Fire Department and the Georgia Forestry Commission returned an average score of 88, placing Newton County in the "moderate risk" hazard range. The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Newton County's WUI was the Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Checklist. The instrument takes into consideration accessibility, vegetation (based on fuel models), roofing assembly, building construction, and availability of fire protection resources, placement of gas and electric utilities, and additional rating factors. The following factors contributed to the wildfire hazard score for Newton County:

- Dead end roads with inadequate turn arounds
- Narrow roads without drivable shoulders
- Long, narrow, and poorly labeled driveways
- Limited street signs and homes not clearly addressed
- Thick, highly flammable vegetation surrounding many homes
- Minimal defensible space around structures
- Homes with wooden siding and roofs with heavy accumulations of vegetative debris
- No pressurized or non-pressurized water systems available
- Above ground utilities
- Large, adjacent areas of forest or wildlands
- Heavy fuel buildups in adjacent wildlands
- Undeveloped lots comprising half the total lots in many rural communities.
- High occurrence of wildfires in the several locations
- Distance from fire stations
- Lack of homeowner or community organizations

Additionally five communities have been certified as **Firewise Communities** since the Newton County CWPP was first completed in 2012. These Firewise Communities and assessment hazard ratings are listed in the table below. Each of these communities has met the requirement to recertify annually.

Community certified as a Firewise Community / Year	Risk Score	Hazard Rating
FFA-FCCLA Center / 2013	96	Moderate
Mansfield / 2013	71	Low
Porterdale / 2013	93	Moderate
Newborn / 2016	89	Moderate
Johnson Terrace / 2016	107	Moderate

In the table below are the Communities-at-Risk within Newton County that led to its overall **Moderate Hazard** risk rating:

Community	Risk Score	Hazard Rating
Peach Blossom	71	Low Risk
Stone Lea	101	Moderate Hazard
Highland Meadow	39	Low Risk
Gun Creek Landing	69	Low Risk
Shenandoah Estates	59	Low Risk
Spring Side Commons	67	Low Risk
Mountain View Estates	81	Moderate Risk
Lakeside	129	Moderate Risk
Fairfield	136	Extreme Risk
Hidden Pines	112	Moderate Risk
High Point Forest	119	Moderate Risk
Sautee Bluff	104	Moderate Risk
Tanyard Court	107	Moderate Risk
Brookhollow Way/Spring Courty	115	Moderate Risk
Postime Lakes Subdivision	108	Moderate Risk
Newborn Meadows	107	Moderate Risk
Brown Terrace	78	High Hazard
Postime Lakes Subdivision 2	99	Moderate Risk
Reserve at Bear Creek	113	Moderate Risk
Mt. Moriah Estates	95	Moderate Risk
Quail Valley	146	Extreme Risk
Willow Wood	136	Extreme Risk
Hidden Forest	99	Moderate Risk
Asford Cove	40	Low Risk
Beacon Hill	89	Moderate Risk
Newton Ridge	111	Moderate Risk
Vinnys Lake Estate	59	Low Risk
Cotton Farms Subdivision	62	Low Risk
Savoy Park Subdivision	80	Moderate Risk
Pebble Ridge Subdivision	89	Moderate Risk
Stewart Glen Subdivision	65	Low Risk
Meadows at River Trace Sub.	100	Moderate Risk
Avery Place Subdivision	71	Low Risk
Long Branch Meadows	58	Low Risk
Apple Blossom	58	Low Risk
Oxford College Area	43	Low Risk
Keel Street	66	Low Risk
Taber Forest	68	Low Risk
Newton County Average	**88**	**Moderate Hazard Risk**

These hazard ratings were completed by the Georgia Forestry Commission's local office and Community Wildfire Protection Specialist during the month of May. The Georgia Forestry Commission Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Score Sheets were used. This document evaluates communities (groups of homes) based upon six criteria: community access, surrounding vegetation, building construction, fire protection, utilities and additional rating factors. The cumulative wildfire hazard rating scores range from a low rating of 0 to 50 points to an extreme hazard rating with over 120 points. The cumulative wildfire hazard rating scores help establish priorities for mitigation activities in the CWPP Action Plan. Those various mitigation recommendations are provided below the action plan created for Newton County.

Prescribed burning (pictured above) of woodlands is the best management practice to reduce hazardous fuel accumulation. The Georgia Forestry Commission can provide a prescribed burning plan, establish fire breaks, and can also provide equipment standby and assist with burning when personnel are available.

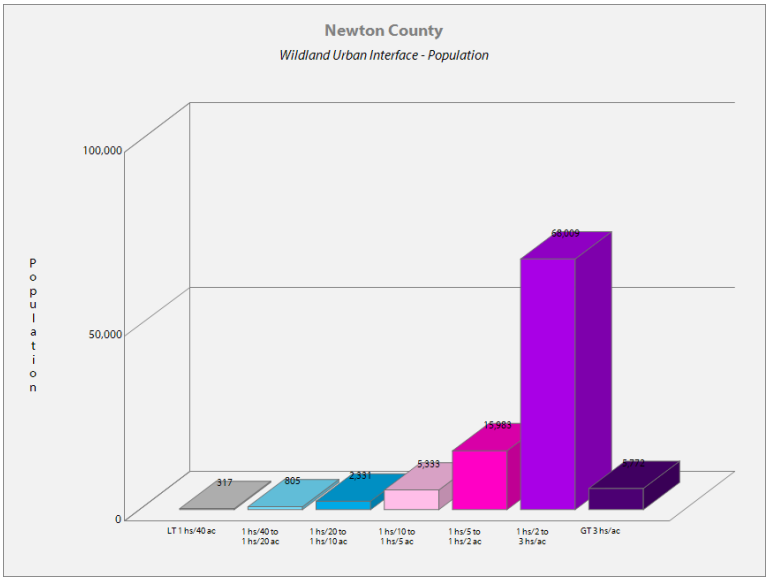
Equipment can also be used to reduce hazardous fuel accumulation. A forestry mower (pictured below) is mowing and grinding understory fuels to reduce the risk of a wildfire spreading to nearby homes.

VI. Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment & Risk Hazard Maps

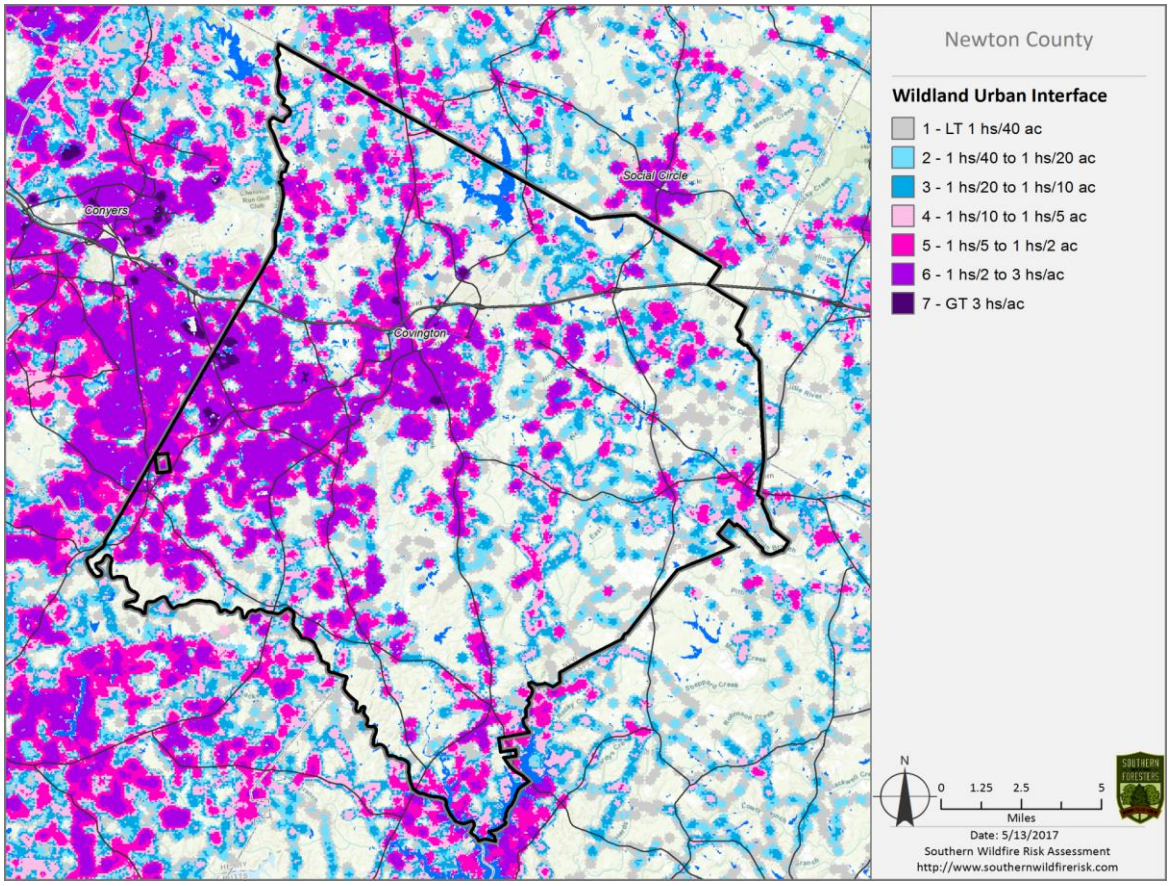
The Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment tool, developed by the Southern Group of State Foresters, was released to the public in July 2014. This tool allows users of the Professional Viewer application of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA) web Portal (SouthWRAP) to define a specific project area and summarize wildfire related information for this area.

A detailed risk summary report is generated using a set of predefined map products developed by the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment project which have been summarized explicitly for the user defined project area. A risk assessment summary was generated for Newton County. The SouthWRAP (SWRA) products included in this report are designed to provide the information needed to support the following key priorities:

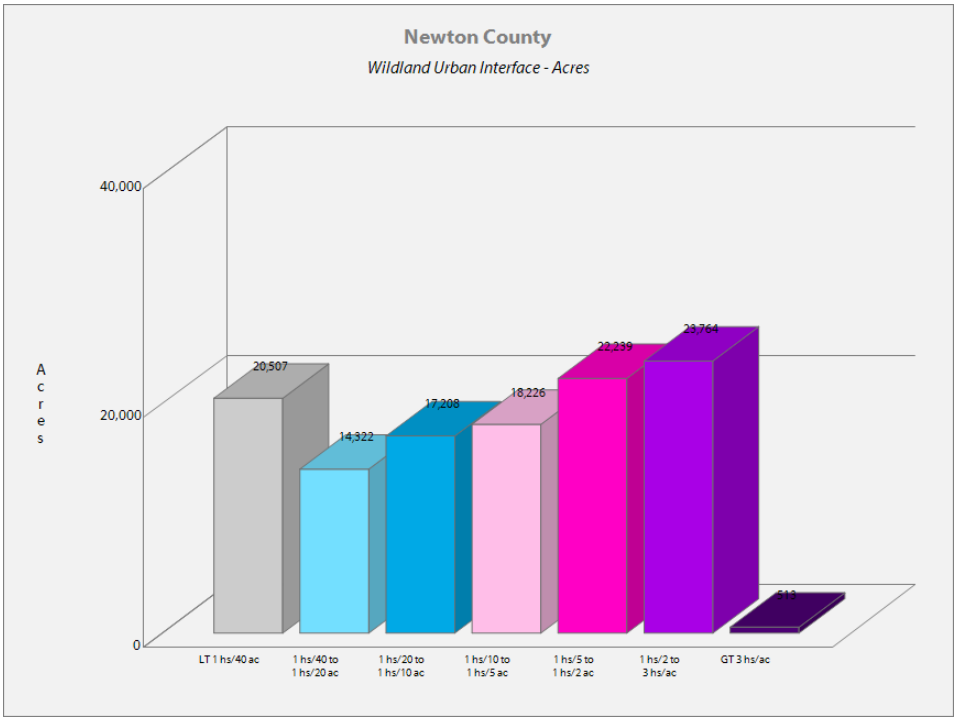
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests
- Allow agencies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

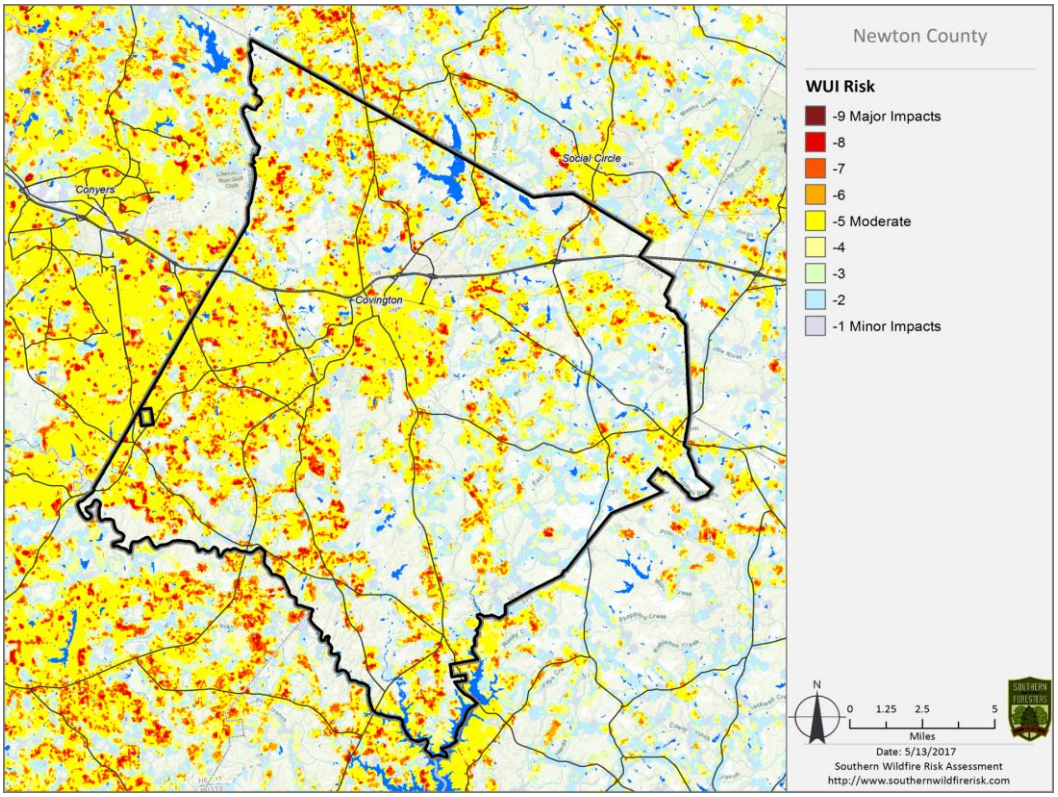


Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Population graph from the SWRA summary

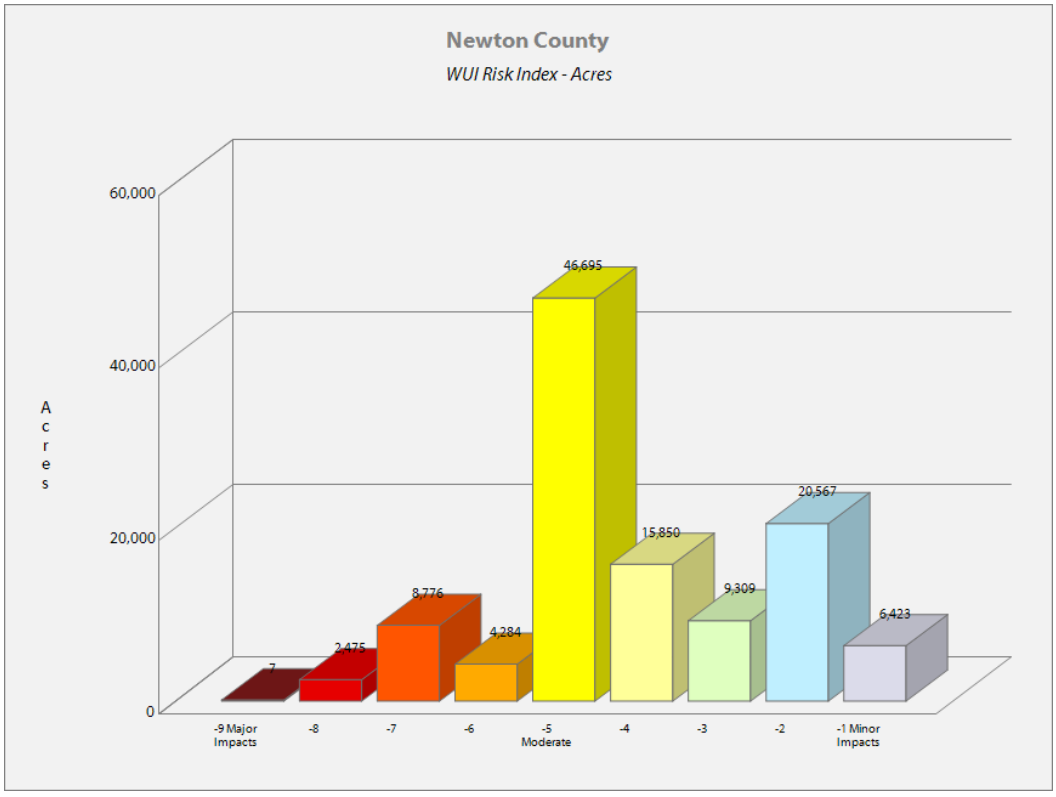


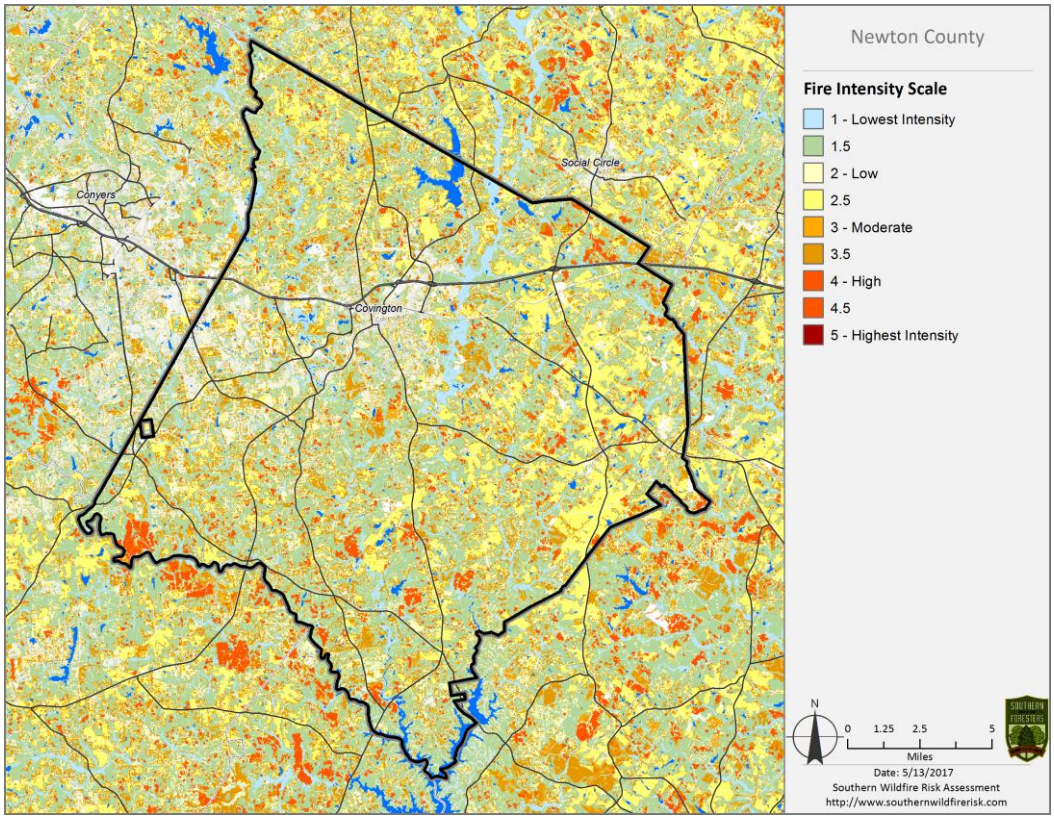
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map (above) and WUI Acres graph (below)



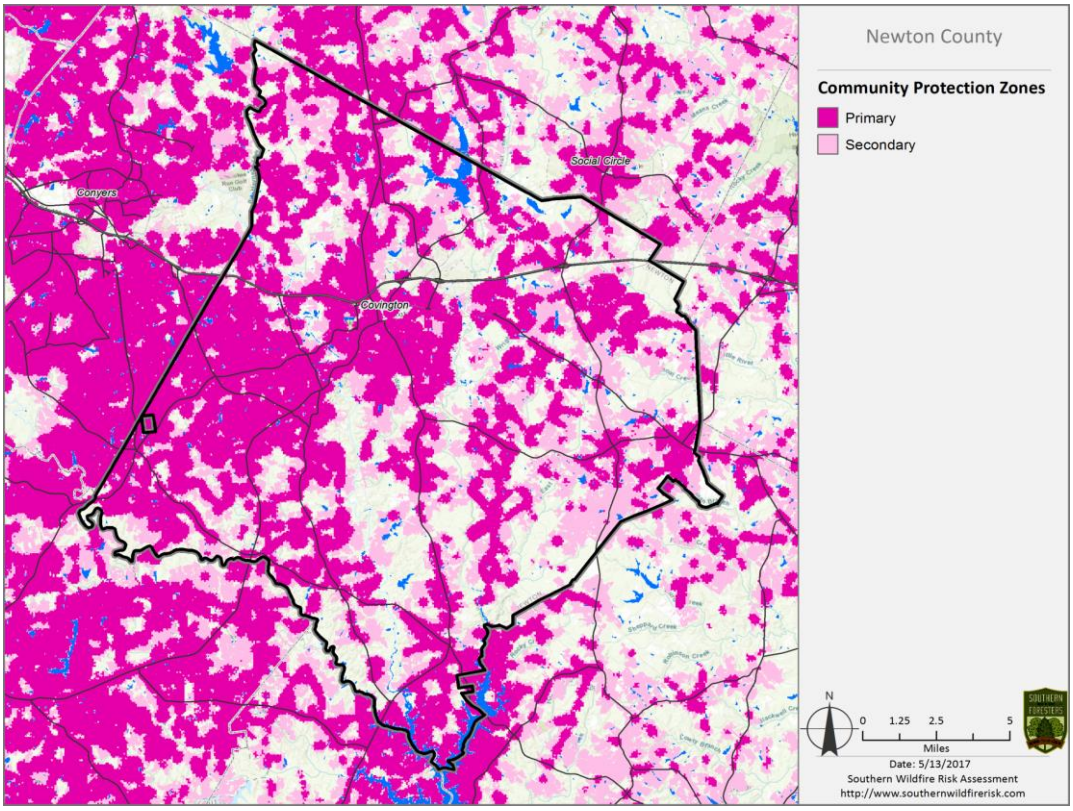


Wildland Urban Interface Risk map (above) and WUI Risk Index Acres graph (below)





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



VII. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

As Central Georgia continues to see increased growth from other areas seeking less crowded and warmer climes, new development will occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. The County will have an opportunity to significantly influence the wildland fire safety of new developments. It is important that new development be planned and constructed to provide for public safety in the event of a wildland fire emergency.

Over the past 20 years, much has been learned about how and why homes burn during wildland fire emergencies. Perhaps most importantly, case histories and research have shown that even in the most severe circumstances, wildland fire disasters can be avoided. Homes can be designed, built and maintained to withstand a wildfire even in the absence of fire services on the scene. The national Firewise Communities program is a national awareness initiative to help people understand that they don't have to be victims in a wildfire emergency. The National Fire Protection Association has produced two standards for reference: NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.

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

The following recommendations were developed by the Newton County CWPP Core team as a result of surveying and assessing fuels and structures and by conducting meetings and interviews with county and city officials. A priority order was determined based on which mitigation projects would best reduce the hazard of wildfire in the assessment area.

Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

Primary Protection for Community and Its Essential Infrastructure		
Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. All Structures	Create minimum of 30-feet of defensible space**	Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet from structures, trim overhanging limbs, replace flammable plants near homes with less flammable varieties, remove vegetation around chimneys.

2. Applicable Structures	Reduce structural ignitability**	Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters, store firewood appropriately, install skirting around raised structures, store water hoses for ready access, and replace pine straw and mulch around plantings with less flammable landscaping materials.
3. Community Clean-up Day	Cutting, mowing, pruning**	Cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces.
4. Driveway Access	Culvert installation	See that adequate lengths of culverts are installed to allow emergency vehicle access.
5. Road Access	Identify needed road improvements	As roads are upgraded, widen to minimum standards with at least 50 foot diameter cul de sacs or turn arounds.
Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities		
Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. Adjacent WUI Lands	Reduce hazardous fuels	Encourage prescribed burning for private landowners and industrial timberlands particularly adjacent to residential areas. County resolution to state recommending that the Ga Forestry Commission not charge for prescribed burning in WUI areas. Seek grant for WUI mitigation team.
2. Railroad Corridors	Reduce hazardous fuels	Encourage railroads to better maintain their ROW eliminating brush and grass through herbicide and mowing. Maintain firebreaks along ROW adjacent to residential areas.
3. Existing Fire Lines	Reduce hazardous fuels	Clean and re-harrow existing lines.

Proposed Improved Community Wildland Fire Response Priorities		
1. Water Sources	Dry Hydrants	Inspect, maintain and improve access to existing dry hydrants. Add signage along road to mark the hydrants. Locate additional dry hydrants as needed.
2. Fire Stations	Equipment	Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland PPE Gear. Investigate need for "brush" trucks near communities at risk.
3. Water Sources	Drafting equipment	Investigate need for additional drafting pumps.
4. Personnel	Training	Obtain Wildland Fire Suppression training for fire personnel to include S130, S190, and S215. Ready Set Go training
**Actions to be taken by homeowners and community stakeholders		

Proposed Education and Outreach Priorities

1. Conduct "How to Have a Firewise Home" Workshop for County Residents
Set up and conduct a workshop for homeowners that teach the principles of making homes and properties safe from wildfire. Topics for discussion include defensible space, landscaping, building construction, etc. Workshop will be scheduled for evenings or weekends when most homeowners are available and advertised through local media outlets. Distribute materials promoting Firewise practices and planning through local community and governmental meetings.
2. Conduct "Firewise" Workshop for Community Leaders
Arrange for GFC Firewise Coordinator to work with local community leaders and governmental officials on the importance of "Firewise Planning" in developing ordinances and codes as the county as the need arises. Identified "communities-at-risk" including: Willow Wood, Quail Valley, and Fairfield should be sought after for inclusion in the National Firewise Communities Program.

3. Spring Clean-up Event
Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Newton County Fire Departments, and local residence of rural Newton County. Set up information table with educational materials and refreshments. Initiate the event with a morning briefing by GFC Firewise coordinator and local fire officials detailing plans for the day and safety precautions. Activities to include the following: • Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters • Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet away from structures • Trim overhanging limbs • Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties
4. Informational Packets
Develop and distribute informational packets to be distributed by realtors and insurance agents. Included in the packets are the following: • Be Firewise Around Your Home • Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction • Firewise Communities USA program materials • Fire Adapted Community materials • Ready Set Go brochures
5. Wildfire Protection Display
Create and exhibit a display for the general public at the local events. Display can be independent or combined with the Georgia Forestry Commission display.
6. Press
Invite the local and regional news media to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Newton County.

VIII. ACTION PLAN

Roles and Responsibilities

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

Role	Responsibility
Hazardous Fuels and Structural Ignitability Reduction	
Newton County WUI Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC officials, County Fire department officials, a representative from the city and county government and the EMA Director for Newton County. Meet periodically to review progress towards mitigation goals, appoint and delegate special activities, work with federal, state, and local officials to assess progress and develop future goals and action plans. Work with residents to implement projects and Firewise activities.
Key Messages to focus on	1 Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping 2 Debris Burning Safety 3 Firewise information for homeowners 4 Prescribed burning benefits
Communications objectives	1 Create public awareness for fire danger and defensible space issues 2 Identify most significant human cause fire issues 3 Enlist public support to help prevent these causes 4 Encourage people to employ fire prevention and defensible spaces in their communities.
Target Audiences	1 Homeowners 2 Forest Landowners and users 3 Civic Groups 4 School Groups
Methods	1 News Releases 2 Personal Contacts 3 Key messages and prevention tips 4 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters

Spring Clean-up Day	
Event Coordinator	Coordinate day's events and schedule, catering for cookout, guest attendance, and moderate activities the day of the day of the event.
Event Treasurer	Collect funds from residents to cover food, equipment rentals, and supplies.
Publicity Coordinator	Advertise event through neighborhood newsletter, letters to officials, and public service announcements (PSAs) for local media outlets. Publicize post-event through local paper and radio PSAs.
Work Supervisor	Develop volunteer labor force of community residents; develop labor/advisory force from Georgia Forestry Commission, Newton County Fire Departments, and Emergency Management Agency. Procure needed equipment and supplies. In cooperation with local city and county officials, develop safety protocol. Supervise work and monitor activities for safety the day of the event.

Funding Needs

The following funding is needed to implement the action plan:

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
1. Create a minimum of 30 feet of defensible space around structures	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
2. Reduce structural ignitability by cleaning flammable vegetation from roofs and gutters; appropriately storing firewood, installing skirting around raised structures, storing water hoses for ready access, replacing pine needles and mulch around plantings with less flammable material.	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
3. Amend codes and ordinances to provide better driveway access, increased visibility of house numbers, properly stored firewood, minimum defensible space brush clearance, required Class A roofing materials and skirting around raised structures, planned maintenance of community lots.	No Cost	To be adopted by city and county government.
4. Spring Cleanup Day	Varies	Community Business Donations.
5. Fuel Reduction Activities	$15 / acre	FEMA & USFS Grants

IX. GRANT FUNDING & 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.

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 a*ction that moderates the severity of a fire hazard or risk.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XI. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Publications/Brochures/Websites:

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

Appended Documents:

Newton County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SouthWRAP)

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

Assessment Strategy

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness for the action plan, the Newton County WUI Fire Council will implement the following:

- Annual wildfire risk assessment will be conducted to re-assess wildfire hazards and prioritize needed actions.

- Mitigation efforts that are recurring (such as mowing, burning, and clearing of defensible space) will be incorporated into an annual renewal of the original action plan.

- Mitigation efforts that could not be funded in the requested year will be incorporated into the annual renewal of the original action plan.

- Continuing educational and outreach programs will be conducted and assessed for effectiveness. Workshops will be evaluated based on attendance and post surveys that are distributed by mail 1month and 6 months following workshop date.

- The Newton County WUI Council will publish an annual report detailing mitigation projects initiated and completed, progress for ongoing actions, funds received, funds spent, and in-kind services utilized. The report will include a "state of the community" section that critically evaluates mitigation progress and identifies areas for improvement. Recommendations will be incorporated into the annual renewal of the action plan.

- An annual survey will be distributed to residents soliciting information on individual mitigation efforts on their own property (e.g., defensible space). Responses will be tallied and reviewed at the next Newton County WUI Council meeting. Needed actions will be discussed and delegated.

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

Georgia Forestry Commission
5645 Riggins Mill Rd.
Dry Branch, GA 31020
800-GA-TREES
GaTrees.org

The Georgia Forestry Commission provides leadership, service, and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources.

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