



Community Wildfire Protection Plan

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

Seminole County, Georgia



July 2017

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Attachments:

Seminole County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary report (SWRA)

Seminole County Risk Assessments

Executive Summary

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

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

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

The plan will:

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

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

SIGNATURE PAGE

Sheila Williams
Sheila Williams
Chairman of the County Commission

7-21-17
Date

Dean King
Chief Dean King
Donalsonville Fire Department

7-21-17
Date

Phillip Hornsby
Chief Phillip Hornsby
Iron City Volunteer Fire Department

7-21-17
Date

Bruce Temples
Chief Bruce Temples
Spring Creek Volunteer Fire Department

7-21-17
Date

Rodney Heard
Rodney Heard, Chief Ranger
Georgia Forestry Commission

7-21-17
Date

WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE FIRE DISASTERS

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

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

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



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

IV. CWPP PARTICIPANTS

The development of this plan was a collaborative effort for the people of Seminole County. The individuals listed below made up the “CWPP Core Committee” and are responsible for much of the Plan’s content.

CWPP Core Committee

Chief Dean King, Donalsonville Fire Department

Bruce Temples, Spring Creek VFD

Phillip Hornsby, Iron City VFD

Paula Granger, City Manager, Donalsonville

Crystal Barber, Seminole County Clerk

Rodney Heard, Chief Ranger, GFC

Georgia Forestry Commission Representatives:

Rodney Heard, Chief Ranger

Jim Harrell, CWPP Program Specialist

Beryl Budd, Wildfire Prevention Specialist (revised 2017)

Meeting Dates

Initial Core Committee Meeting: September 15, 2009

Follow-Up Meeting #1: November 19, 2009

Follow-Up Meeting #2: February 17, 2010

The CWPP Core Committee contributed to the CWPP development by:

Initiation	Agreed on the need to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan
Risk Assessment	Assessed the wildfire hazard of communities-at-risk
Fuels Reduction	Identified and prioritized areas for fuel treatment projects
Structure Ignitability	Identified strategies for reducing the ignitability of structures within the wildland/urban interface
Emergency Response	Updated and improved strategies for coordinated wildland fire response
Education and Outreach	Outlined a public education initiative to increase citizen awareness of residential wildfire protection (<i>Firewise Communities Program</i>)

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE CWPP

The objective of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is to improve public safety and reduce structural losses from wildfire in wildland/urban interface areas of Seminole County.

There are three types of interface areas:

- 1. “Boundary” wildland/urban interface** areas are characterized by development where groups of homes, subdivisions or other structures create a distinct and easily identified border with public or private wildlands, forests or parks.
- 2. “Intermix” wildland/urban interface** areas are places where parcels of improved property and/or structures are scattered and interspersed within wildlands, forests or parks. Frequently, this is a subdivision that is not yet “built-out” with many undeveloped lots interspersed among occupied homes.
- 3. “Island” wildland/urban interface** (also called “occluded interface”) are typically very small pockets of wildland or natural areas surrounded by development or even situated within an incorporated area. A park or greenspace within a city is an example of an island interface area.

This CWPP will provide Seminole County with an evaluation of the wildland fire susceptibility of wildland/urban interface “communities-at-risk” and can be a valuable guide and action plan to address the increasing threat of wildfire. The plan will:

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

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan will be very important to County applications for hazard mitigation grants through the National Fire Plan, FEMA mitigation grants, and others. Under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003, communities (counties) that seek grants from the federal government for hazardous fuels reduction work are required to prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

The minimum requirements for a Community Wildfire Protection Plan as described in the HFRA are:

- **Collaboration:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must be collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties.

- **Prioritized Fuel Reduction:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure.
- **Treatment of Structural ignitability:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.

This plan should be looked at as a working document (i.e.; a guide) for local, state and federal agencies to reach common wildfire protection goals. A CWPP committee should meet on a continuing basis from year to year to review accomplishments, discuss impediments, revise outdated portions of the CWPP and develop new, meaningful wildfire protection goals for Seminole County.

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

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

During development of the Seminole County CWPP, opportunities for collaboration were provided by:

- Major stakeholders were invited to participate as members of the CWPP Core Committee.
- A news release appeared in the local paper (*Donalsonville News*) on January 10, 2010 explaining the objectives of the Seminole County CWPP, the planning process and the procedure for interested citizens to obtain a draft copy of the CWPP for review and/or comment.

VI. SEMINOLE COUNTY DESCRIPTION & INFORMATION

Seminole County was created by the State Legislature on July 8, 1920 from portions of Early and Decatur Counties. It was named for the Seminole Indians, members of the Lower Creek Confederacy. Seminole County is located in the extreme southwest corner of Georgia. It is a short distance from Panama City and Tallahassee, Florida, the Gulf of Mexico, Dothan, Alabama, Albany and Bainbridge, Georgia.

Seminole County is part of the Chattahoochee Trace, an 18-county region in Alabama and Georgia, comprised of counties which border the Chattahoochee River. The County Seat of Seminole County is Donalsonville, named for Jonathon F. Donalson a prominent early resident of the area. Iron City, the only other incorporated municipality, is located 5 miles east of Donalsonville on Highway 84, was chartered in 1900.

The total land area of Seminole County is 257 square miles of which 238 square miles is land and 19 square miles is water. The population in 2008 (estimate) was 9,091. The county is very rural with an estimated density of 39 people per square mile. Seminole County has historically been a major agricultural producer of timber, peanuts, corn, cotton and livestock.

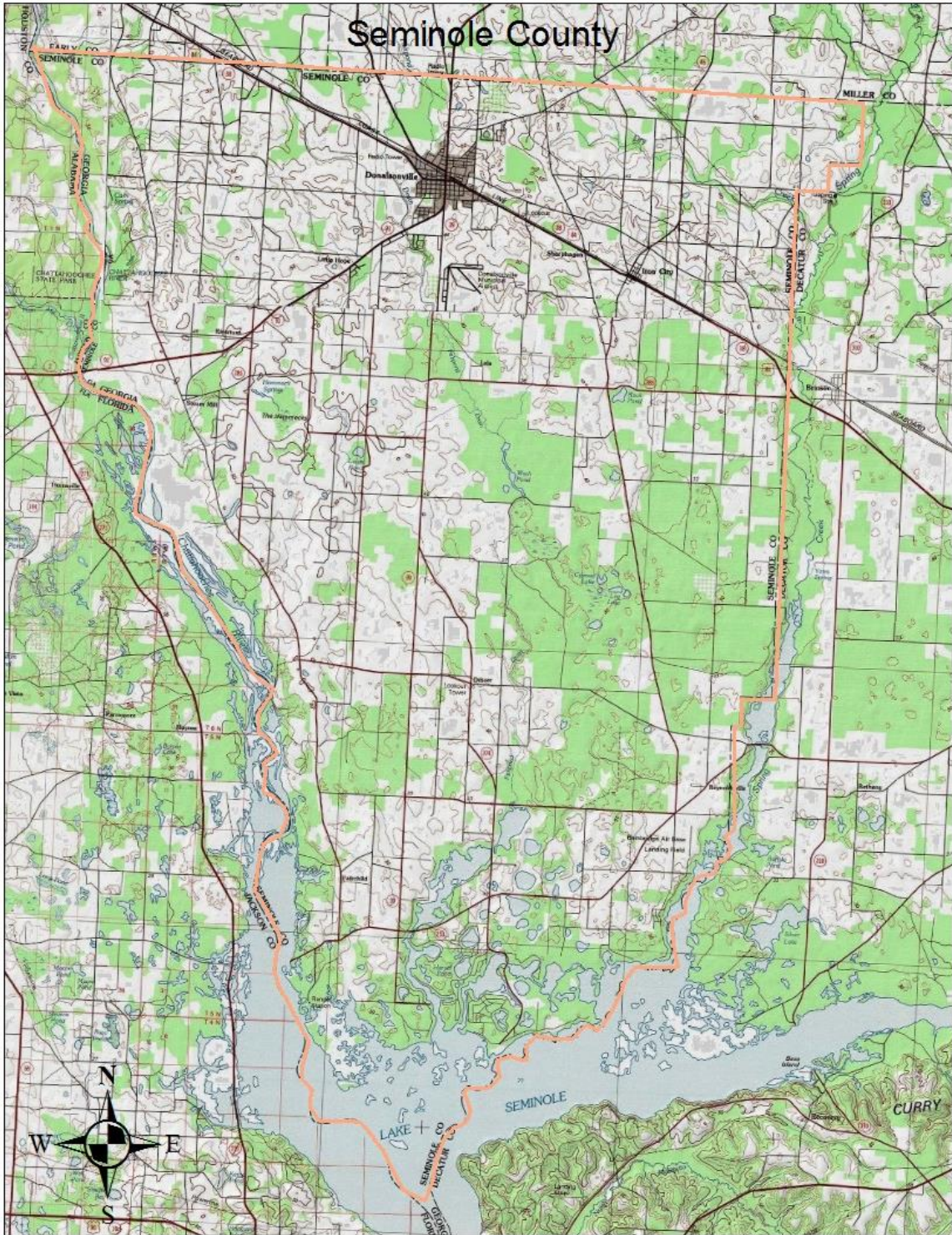
A dominant geographical feature of the county, Lake Seminole is a 37,500 acre impoundment completed in 1957. The reservoir created by Jim Woodruff Lock and Dam offers a variety of recreational activities to county residents and is a favorite fishing and camping area for visitors from other states. Fairchild Park, Spring Creek Park and Seminole State Park are all located on the Seminole County portion of the lakeshore. The 604-acre Seminole State Park located 16 miles south of Donalsonville features cottages, campsites, and picnic shelters, all located near the water's edge. Visitors can also enjoy a 2.2 mile Gopher Tortoise nature trail, a wetlands boardwalk, and one of the largest Longleaf Pine forests in a Georgia State Park.

The historical "Three Notch Trail" (now "Three Notch Road") runs through Seminole County. The old military road was blazed along remnants of an old Indian Trail by units of General Andrew Jackson's army in 1814 during the first of the Seminole Indian Wars.

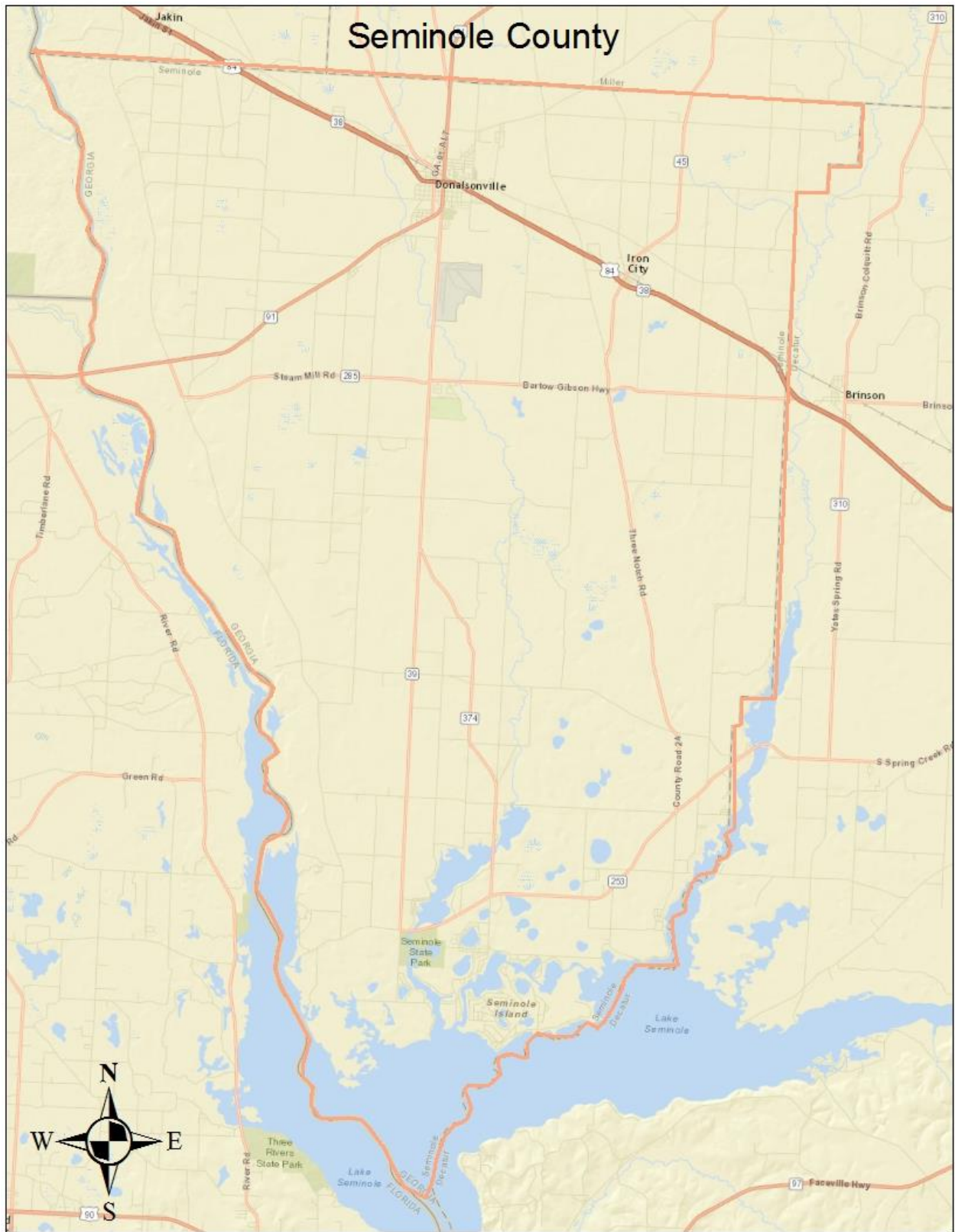
Local festivals include: Harvest Festival (October), Spirit of Christmas Festival, Shellcracker Tournament & Festival and 4th of July Celebration.

Sources: www.en.wikipedia.org
www.quickfacts.census.gov
www.naco.org

VII. COUNTY BASE MAP







VIII. WILDFIRE HISTORY

Major Causes of Wildfires

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) is the state agency responsible for providing leadership, service, and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources. Commission professionals provide a wide variety of services including fire detection, issuing burn permits, wildfire suppression and prevention services, emergency and incident command system expertise, rural fire department assistance, forest management assistance to landowners and communities, the marketing and utilization of forest resources and nature services, and growing and selling quality tree seedlings for planting.

Forestry is a \$28.7 billion a year industry in the State of Georgia creating 128,000 jobs statewide.

Forestry is a valuable commodity to the taxpayer in Seminole County.

Vision: Healthy sustainable forests providing clean air, clean water and abundant products for future generations.

Mission: To provide leadership, service and education in protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources.

The Georgia Forestry Commission office serving Seminole County is located at 5194 Highway 39 N., Donalsonville, GA 39845.

Personnel

Chief Ranger Rodney Heard
Ranger II Hewlett Powell
Ranger I Brian Barbree
Ranger II David Cottles
Ranger III Terry Heard
Ranger III Van Smith

The number of forested acres under protection is 45,900 or 30.12% of the land area of the county.

On a year-to-year basis, the leading cause of wildfires in Seminole County is debris burning of various types followed by fires originating from equipment /machine use. During Fiscal Year 2017, debris burning accounted for 13 wildfires that burned a total of 18.04 acres. Wildfires from Machine use totaled 7 on 18.31 acres. Wildfire activity has been at an all time low during 2013 – 2016 due to above average rainfall during peak wildfire seasons.

<u>Causes</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>5 Year Average</u>
Debris Burning (Ag fields)	1/ 4.79 acres	.80 / 6.89 acres
Debris Burning / Forestry (escaped prescribed burn)	2 / .69 acres	.80 / 2.49 acres
Debris burning/ Forestry (site prep)	2/1.61 acres	.40/ .32 acres
Debris Burning Residential (leaf piles)	8 / 8.05 acres	1.80 / 1.83 acres
Equipment/Machine Use	7 / 18.31 acres	1.80 / 10.16 acres

Table of wildfire activity during the 2017 fiscal year, July 1, 2016 thru June 30, 2017.

County = Seminole	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	0		0.00	0.20	0.00
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	1		4.79	0.80	6.89
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	0		0.00	0.20	0.39
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	2		0.69	0.80	2.49
Debris: Household Garbage	Debris: Household Garbage	0		0.00	0.20	0.01
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	0		0.00	0.40	0.39
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	8		8.05	1.80	1.83
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	2		1.61	0.40	0.32
Incendiary	Incendiary	1		2.90	0.40	1.02
Lightning	Lightning	1		88.10	0.20	17.62
Machine Use	Machine Use	7		18.31	1.80	10.16
Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	1		0.20	0.20	0.04
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	0		0.00	0.40	0.33
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	0		0.00	0.20	0.01
Undetermined	Undetermined	2		2.18	1.00	2.02
Totals for County: Seminole Year: 2017		25		126.83	9.00	43.52

FIRE SERVICES CAPABILITY

Structural fire protection in Seminole County is provided by one full-time staffed fire department (Donalsonville Fire Department) and three volunteer fire departments:

- Donalsonville Volunteer Fire Department
- Iron City Volunteer Fire Department
- Spring Creek Volunteer Fire Department

Fire Department Resources

Donalsonville Fire Department (9 firefighters) is equipped with:

1995 International Pumper (1,000 gallon) – Engine #6

1981 Ford Pumper (750 gallon) – Engine #5

2002 Ford F-250 4x4 Brush Truck

Freightliner (1,000 gallon) – Engine #7

Donalsonville Volunteer Fire Department (12 firefighters) is equipped with:

1 engine (950 gallon)

1 tanker (1650 gallon)

1 Fire Knocker (1250 gallon)

1 Type VI Engine (brush truck))

Iron City Volunteer Fire Department (12 firefighters) is equipped with:

1 Engine (1500 gallon)

1 Engine (1650 gallon)

1 Type VI Engine (brush truck)

Spring Creek Volunteer Fire Department (15 firefighters) is equipped with:

1 Fire Knocker (1650 gallon – front mount pump)

1 tanker (1650 gallon)

1 tanker (3,000 gallon)

1 Type VI Engine (brush truck -250 gallon)

Needed Resources

There is a need for wildland Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), fire shelters, hand tools and wildland fire training for the fire services.

Fire Hydrants

Pressurized fire hydrants currently exist only within the city limits of Donalsonville and Iron City.

Dry Hydrants – There are 9 existing dry hydrants, all located in the north end of Seminole County.

A minimum of 5 new/additional dry hydrants should be installed and located at:

1) Holly Island 2) Riverside Acres 3) Nichol's Subdivision 4) Paradise Acres 5) Crackneck Landing

The table below indicates wildfire activity in Seminole County during fiscal years 2007-2016. The County averaged 20 wildfires which burned 54.73 acres annually during this period. The County totals are compared to the statewide average size wildfire.

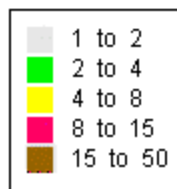
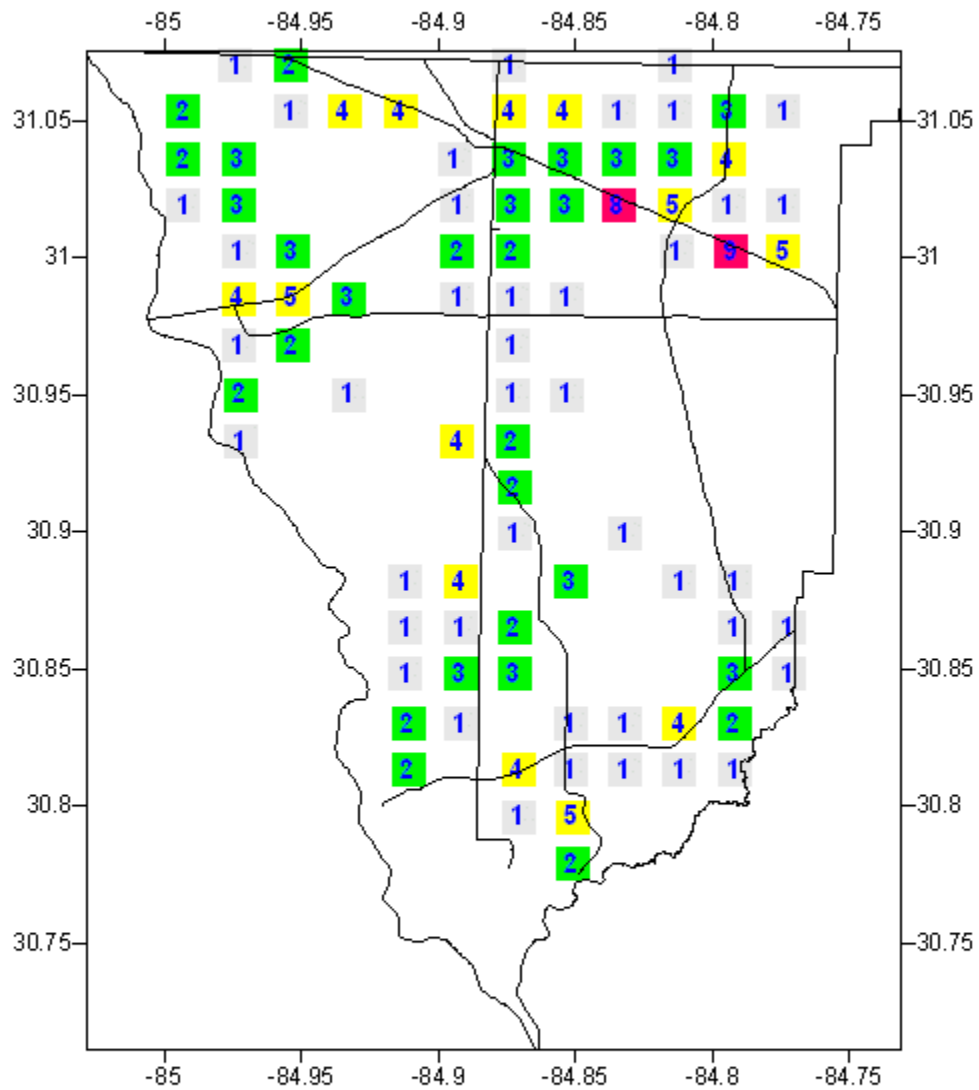
Year	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2007	147.61	64	2.31	18.64
2008	73.82	22	3.36	4.56
2009	25.73	19	1.35	3.90
2010	80.05	19	4.21	3.93
2011	100.95	37	2.73	17.56
2012	28.38	22	1.06	5.08
2013	38.81	6	6.47	4.53
2014	3.70	2	1.85	5.02
2015	35.24	6	5.87	4.42
2016	13.04	6	2.17	6.29

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

The primary cause during the 10 year period was Debris Burning (42%). The 2nd leading cause was Machine Use (36%) followed by Incendiary/Arson (12%).

Year	Camp Fire	Children	Debris Burning	Incendiary	Lightning	Machine Use	Miscellaneous	Railroad	Smoking
2007	0	1	18	9	1	34	1	0	0
2008	0	0	12	1	2	7	0	0	0
2009	0	0	11	1	0	6	1	0	0
2010	0	0	6	6	0	7	0	0	0
2011	0	0	18	1	2	11	5	0	0
2012	0	1	8	5	1	5	1	0	1
2013	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	0
2014	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
2015	0	0	4	0	0	1	1	0	0
2016	0	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	0

Fire Occurrence Map for Seminole County for Fiscal Year 2005-2009



IX. 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.

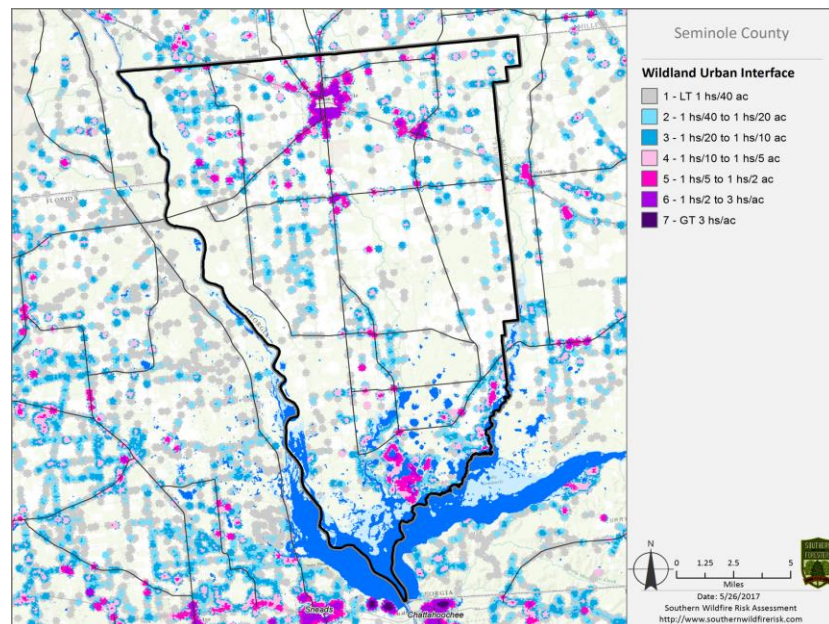
- 1. “Boundary” wildland-urban interface** is characterized by areas of development where homes, especially new subdivisions, press against public and private wildlands, such as private or commercial forest land or public forests or parks. This is the classic type of wildland-urban interface, with a 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)

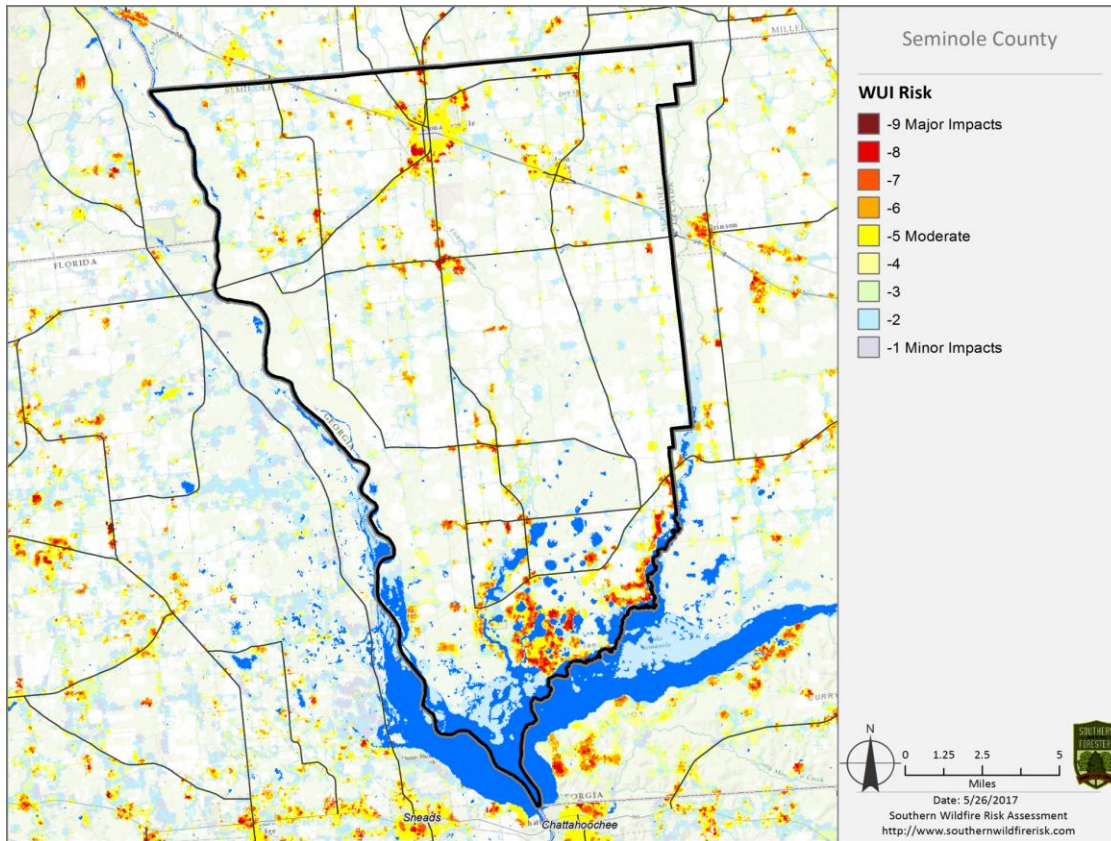
X. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT SUMMARY & RISK HAZARDS MAPS

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

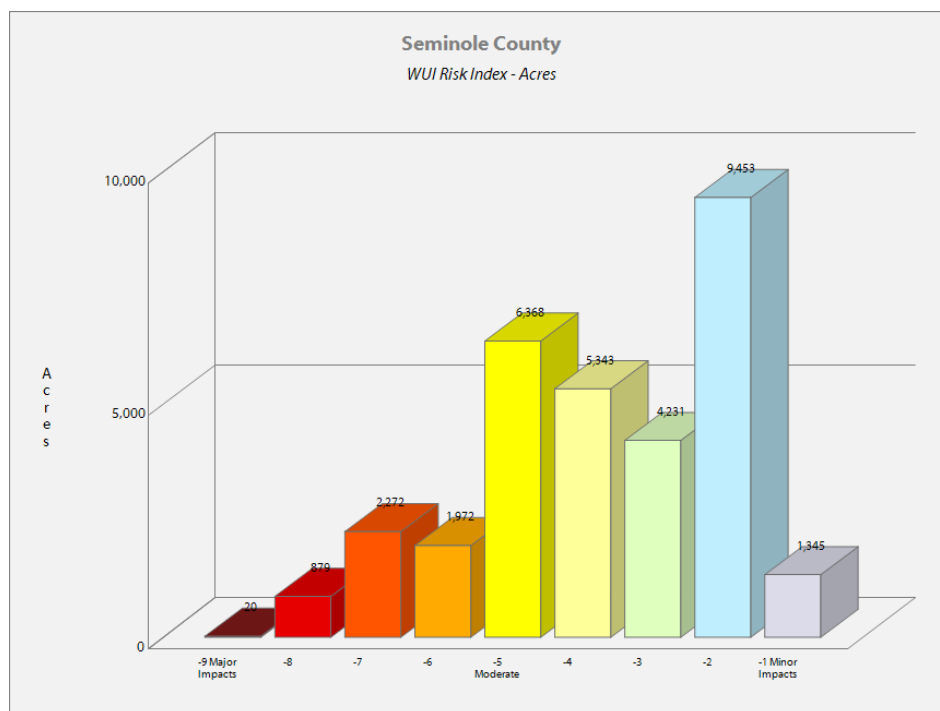
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests
- Allow agencies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

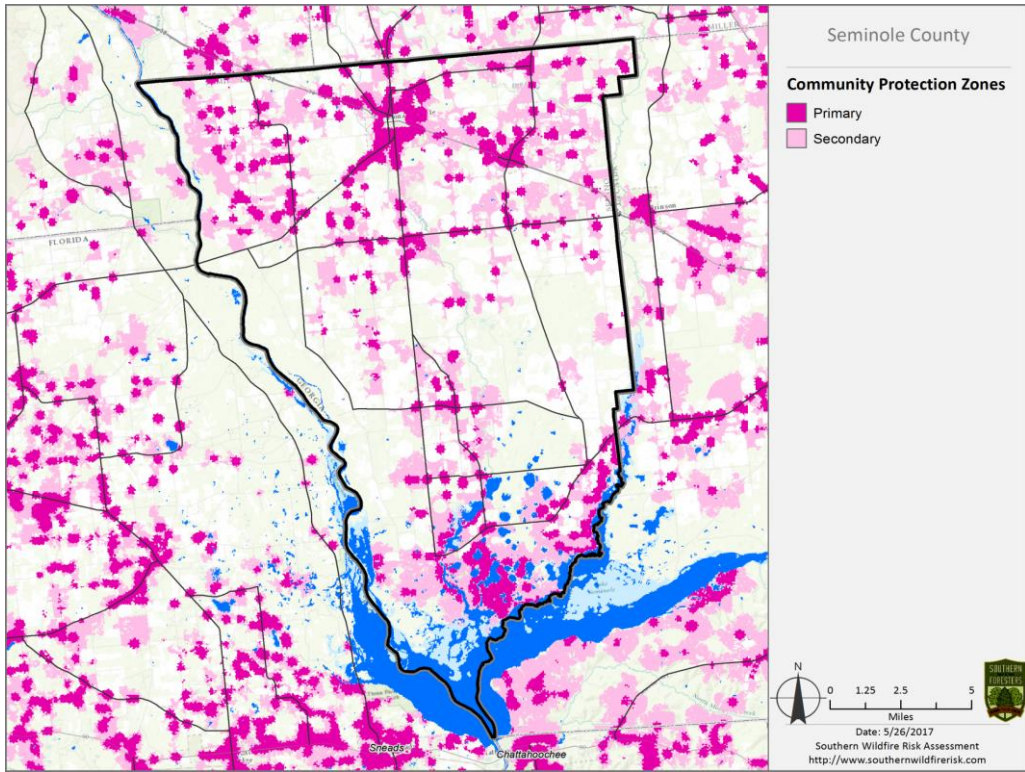


Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map from the Seminole County SWRA Summary

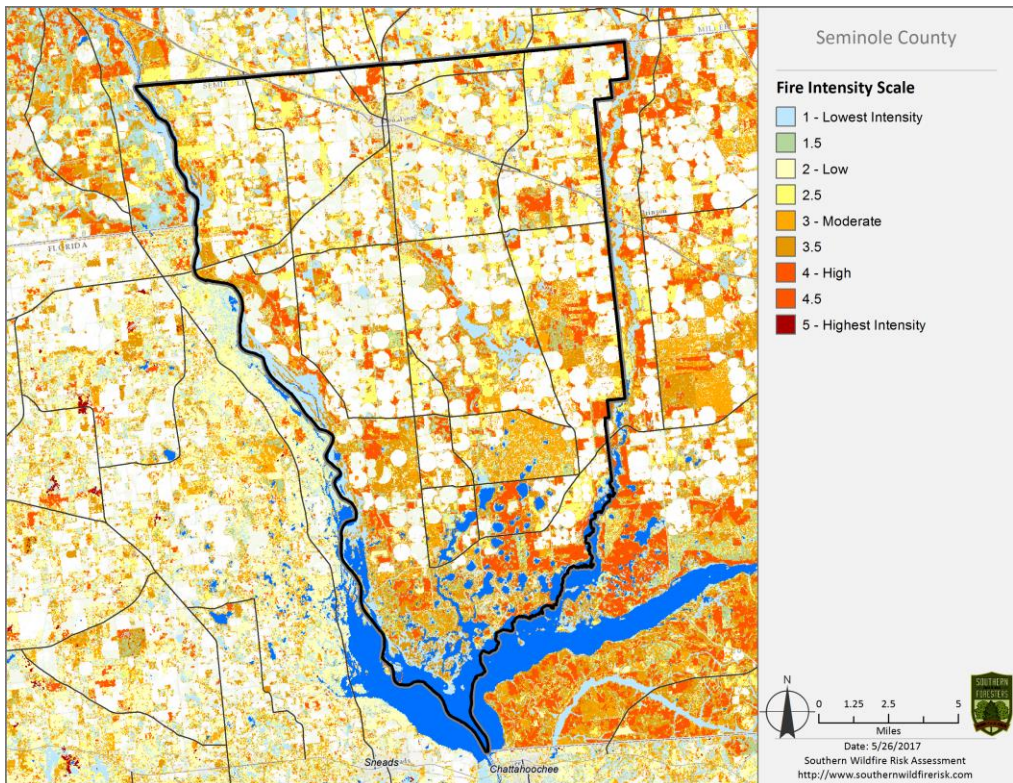


Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map (above) and WUI Risk Acres graph (below)





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



XI. SEMINOLE COUNTY RISK ASSESSMENTS

Community	Score	Hazard Rating
Holly Island	121	Extreme Hazard
Riverside Acres	120	Very High Hazard
Crackneck Landing	108	Very High Hazard
Nichol's Subdivision	103	Very High Hazard
Paradise Acres	101	Very High Hazard
Sealy's Island	87	High Hazard
Harvel Pond Area	78	High Hazard

These hazard ratings were completed by GFC Ranger II Royce Davis and Bob Godwin of Spring Creek VFD, during the months of September and October, 2009. The Georgia Forestry Commission's Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Scoresheet was used. This document evaluates communities (groups of homes) based upon four criteria: subdivision design (infrastructure), site hazard, building construction and additional factors. The quantitative wildfire hazard ratings range from a low rating of less than 50 points to an extreme rating with over 120 points.

Holly Island (Extreme Hazard)

This community has only one way in and out (over a bridge) via narrow roads (some paved and some graded dirt roads). The roads are typified by having long (G.T. 300 ft.) dead end spurs with small cul-de-sacs turnarounds. Most homes have 30 ft. to 100 ft. of defensible space and fire resistant siding/soffits with a Class A roof. There are no pressurized fire hydrants. Mobile homes are in need of skirting to prevent the accumulation of flammable debris beneath the structure. The community is in and among a large area of woodland.

Riverside Acres (Very High Hazard)

The Riverside Acres Community has two ways in and out (ingress/egress) via graded dirt roads. Dead end roads are greater than 300 ft. in length with small (L.T. 50 ft. diameter) cul-de-sac turnarounds. A majority of the homes have between 30 ft. and 100 ft. of defensible space. About half of the homes have fire resistant siding/soffits and a Class A roof. There are no pressurized fire hydrants. A large area of woodland is adjacent to the community and the location of an inlet (cove) of Lake Seminole between the streets could restrict access in the event of a Wildfire emergency. Due to the proximity of the lake, there is ample opportunity for drafting of water for firefighting.

Crackneck Landing (Very High Hazard)

This neighborhood bordering Lake Seminole has one way in and out. Fire services access would be an issue in the event of an emergency as streets are narrow, graded dirt roads that are less than 20 feet wide. Dead end roads are longer than 300 ft. in length and have cul-de-sac turnarounds that are less than 50 ft. in diameter. Most of the homes have fire resistant siding and soffits and Class A roofing. About half of the mobile homes need skirting to prevent debris from accumulating under the structure. No pressurized hydrants exist. This is an area with a history of higher than average wildfire occurrence.

Nichol's Subdivision (Very High Hazard)

This is a one street neighborhood (one way in and out) via a graded dirt road that is less than 20 ft. in width. There is inadequate turn around area (for emergency vehicles) at the end of Nichols Subdivision Road. A majority of the homes have between 30 ft. and 100 ft. of defensible space. About one-half of the homes have fire resistant siding/soffits and a Class A fire resistant roof. Mobile homes are in need of skirting to prevent flammable debris from accumulating underneath the structure. Although there are ample locations to draft water, there are no pressurized fire hydrants.

Paradise Acres (Very High Hazard)

This community has more than one way in and out (ingress/egress) although the alternate exits are far apart. The road system is composed of hard surface (all weather) roads without drivable shoulders. There is at least one dead end spur that is in excess of 300 ft. in length with small (L.T. 50 ft. diameter) cul-de-sacs. About one-half of the homes have fire resistant siding/soffits and a Class A fire resistant roof. Mobile homes are in need of skirting to prevent flammable debris from accumulating underneath the structure. There are no pressurized fire hydrants.

Sealy's Island (High Hazard)

This community has only one way in and out (ingress/egress) via a bridge over an arm of Lake Seminole. The homes are along hard surface roads that are between 20 ft. and 24 ft. wide. About one-half of the homes have fire resistant siding/soffits and a Class A fire resistant roof. Mobile homes are in need of skirting to prevent flammable debris from accumulating underneath the structure. Although there are ample locations to draft water, there are no pressurized fire hydrants.

Harvel Pond Area (High Hazard)

This community has only one way in and out (ingress/egress) and is situated on a peninsula with water (Lake Seminole) on three sides. The road system is characterized by paved (hard surface) roads with no drivable shoulders. There are several dead end spurs which are over 300 ft. in length. The average defensible space for the homes is between 30 ft. and 100 ft. About one-half of the homes have fire resistant siding/soffits with a Class A roof. There are no pressurized fire hydrants. This area is surrounded by forest and wildland. Mobile homes are in need of skirting to prevent flammable debris from accumulating underneath the structure.

XII. MITIGATION & ACTION PLAN

The following recommendations were developed by the Seminole 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.

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. Seek grants for WUI mitigation.

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 for high risk areas.
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.

PROTECTING EXISTING STRUCTURES

Critical Facilities

Critical facilities are unique structures which require special consideration in the event of an emergency such as a wildland/urban interface fire. Every county will have some critical facilities and some more urbanized counties will have many. Critical facilities include: a nursing home that may need special consideration because the smoke accompanying a wildfire may be hazardous to the health of elderly residents, a law enforcement dispatch center is a critical facility that will need special consideration to insure there is no disruption of emergency communications in the event of a disastrous wildfire. Other examples of critical facilities are ethanol plants, auto salvage yards and facilities that produce chemicals that could be hazardous to the local population if released into the atmosphere.

Owner/operators of critical facilities need to be aware of the hazards that an approaching wildfire could present. There may be immediate action that could be taken by owner/operators to lessen the impact of a wildfire in the immediate area (such as the elimination of encroaching wildland vegetation in and around the critical facility).

List of Critical Facilities:

Nursing Home (Donalsonville)
Hospital (Donalsonville)
Assisted Living Facility (Donalsonville)
2 Public Schools (Hwy 39)
Fertilizer & Chemical Storage Facility (Broome Avenue & Hwy 84)
LP Gas Transfer Station (Iron City)
Seminole State Park
Fairchild Park (Corps of Engineers)
Desser Park (Corps of Engineers)
Spring Creek Park (Seminole County)
Sealy's Landing (Seminole County)
Trail's End Park at Riverside Acres (private)
Bill Dismukes Junk Yard: S.R. 91 N and Burl Lane Rd.
Mikes Salvage Yard: S.R. 91 N and Grady Cobb Rd.
Dixie Sales Golf Carts at Holly Island and C.R. 374
Empire Gas at 603 S. Tennille Avenue, Donalsonville

RECOMMENDATION:

- Contact owners/operators of Critical Facilities by telephone, letter or in person to suggest what might be done to mitigate observed hazards and improve wildfire protection.

Public Education Needs

“Firewise” structures are homes and other buildings in the wildland/urban interface that have been built, designed or maintained to survive a wildfire event even in the absence of firefighters on the scene. Over the past fifty years, many Georgia residents have left the city or the suburbs to build homes in or adjacent to forested areas with a desire to be “close to nature”. Unfortunately, this has resulted in neighborhoods or single-family dwellings with one way in and out, with long narrow driveways, no pressurized hydrants or draft source for water and so close to wildland fuel that even the best equipped fire department could not be successful in a severe wildfire event. Most of these homeowners don’t understand the risk associated with living in the wildland/urban interface and expect to be rescued by the fire department in the event of a wildfire emergency.

The key to the reduction of structural losses in the wildland/urban interface cannot rest solely with improved response by the local fire services. There will never be enough fire trucks and firefighters to adequately protect homes in the wildland/urban interface. A major part of the solution to this problem lies with the homeowner – homeowners in the wildland/urban interface must become “partners” with the fire services and assume some responsibility for maintaining their home (structure) and landscape (yard) so that ignitions in and around the home are less likely should a wildfire occur in the immediate area. This means a home with no debris on the roof and in the gutters, wood decks that are skirted underneath, chunky bark or lava rock mulch near the house instead of pine straw or cypress mulch and a “lean, clean and green” landscape of less-flammable plants within 30 feet of the structure.

RECOMMENDATION:

Initiate a Wildland Fire Protection public education campaign for Seminole County residents using as a reference: NFPA 1144 *Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire, 2008 Edition.*

- Host a Firewise Workshop at a centrally-located facility with a meal and refreshments for those who attend.
- Make Firewise Communities brochures available to the public at central locations such as: Farm Services Agency, Chamber of Commerce, Seminole State Park and the County Courthouse.
- Encourage neighborhoods/communities that qualify to apply for recognition as a Firewise Community/ USA.

Mitigation of Wildland Fuel Hazard

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

Prescribed burning is the most economical, most effective and most ecologically sound way to reduce the accumulated wildland debris that could fuel a wildfire. It does, however, frequently present challenges to the land manager.

Much of the land area surrounding Lake Seminole is federal property managed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers. Prescribed burning of this area on a regular (3-5 year basis) would benefit the forest, the wildlife and would lessen the danger of a disastrous wildfire impacting communities in the immediate area.

Citizens may complain if the prevailing wind causes an accumulation of smoke and/or airborne ash in and around their homes. Additionally, smoke on the highway can quickly create visibility problems for motorists, requiring that warning signs be posted by law enforcement officers, but, the benefits of prescribed burning far outweigh any temporary inconveniences.

Other ways to reduce wildland fuel (vegetation) include:

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

The above alternatives to prescribed burning are more intensive and hence, more costly and generally suitable only for smaller acreages.

The goal for structural protection in these locations should be a "Firewise" landscape. A Firewise landscape is characterized by a reduced amount of vegetative fuel within 100 feet of structures - an area called the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ). Most critical is the space within 30 feet of a structure which is usually referred to as the area of Defensible Space. The Defensible Space should include a landscape of

less flammable plants, coarse bark or lava rock as mulch adjacent the structure, tree limbs trimmed away from the structure and any decks skirted so leaves and other debris cannot accumulate underneath. The idea is to create a landscape that will prevent flames or fire brands (aerial borne embers) from igniting the structure.

RECOMMENDATION:

Promote prescribed burning in Seminole County.

- Help county landowners understand how to prescribe burn legally and safely.
- Meet with Don Morgan of the U.S. Corps of Engineers to encourage management of the federal lakeshore property by regular prescribed burning.
- Educate the general public on the benefits of prescribed burning.
- Work with the Georgia State Patrol and local law enforcement to ensure motorists are alerted to smoke hazards on local roadways.

NEW DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE COUNTY

Site Plan Review

New home starts in Seminole County are expected to increase over the next 20 years, especially in areas bordering Lake Seminole. If farm and ranch land is conserved as a mainstay of the County's rural economy, new development will, by necessity, occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. The County Planning and Zoning Board will have an opportunity to significantly influence the wildland fire safety of new developments. It is important that new development be planned and constructed to provide for public safety in the event of a wildland fire emergency.

Over the past 20 years, much has been learned about how and why homes 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 multi-unit subdivisions are built in rural areas (sometimes referred to as the Wildland/Urban Interface), a number of public safety challenges may be created for the local fire services: (1) the water supply in the immediate areas may be inadequate for fire suppression; (2) if the Development is in an outlying area, there may be a longer response time for emergency services; (3) in a wildfire emergency, the access road(s) may need to simultaneously support evacuation of residents and the arrival of emergency vehicles; and (4) when wildland fire disasters strike, many structures may be involved simultaneously, quickly exceeding the capability of even the best equipped fire departments.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

- Evaluate (assess) the wildfire hazard of proposed new development in rural areas as part of the site plan review process. Use GFC “Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Scoresheet”.
- Consider the “adoption by reference” of NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.

ACTION PLAN

Community/ Area at Risk	Project	Agency	Funding Needs	Priority	Community Recommendation
Holly Island	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$10,000	(H)	Rent equipment for clean-up & removal of hazardous brush.
Riverside Acres	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$10,000	(H)	Rent equipment for clean-up initiative
Crackneck Landing	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$10,000	(H)	Rent equipment for clean-up initiative
Nichol’s Subdivision	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$10,000	(H)	Rent equipment for clean-up initiative
Paradise Acres	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$10,000	(H)	Rent equipment for clean-up initiative
Sealy’s Pond	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$2,500	(M)	Organize community for Firewise improvements
Harvel Pond Area	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$2,500	(M)	Organize community for Firewise improvements
Countywide	Wildland Fire Handtools	County	\$5,000	(H)	40 tool sets for volunteer firefighters
Countywide	Wildland Fire Training	County	\$10,000	(H)	S-130 (Standards for Survival) and S-190 (Wildfire Behavior)
Countywide	Firefighter Personal Protective Equip.	County	\$20,000	(H)	20 sets of PPE; 2 fire shelters per engine
Countywide	Firewise Workshop	GFC/County	\$1,500	(M)	“Firewise” workshop for public education
Countywide	Type VI Engine	County	\$180,000	(H)	Improve County’s off road firefighting capability
Countywide	Dry Hydrants	County	\$7,500	(H)	5 additional dry hydrants for south end of the County

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

ASSESSMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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

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



Prescribed burning 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.

XIII. 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.

XIV. 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 wildfire.

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).*

XV. 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.wildfireprepdlay.org

Attachments:

Seminole County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SouthWRAP)

Seminole County Community Risk Assessments

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



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