



Community Wildfire Protection Plan

An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources

Sumter County, Georgia



August 2017

CONTENTS

I. Executive Summary.....	3
II. Signature Page.....	4
III. Overview of Wildland/Urban Interface Disasters.....	5
IV. Objectives of the CWPP.....	6
V. Description of Sumter County.....	7
VI. Wildfire History.....	7
VII. County Base Maps.....	12
VIII. What are “Communities-at-Risk”?.....	15
IX. Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment, Risk Hazard Maps, & Community Risk Assessments.....	17
X. Hazard Mitigation Plan.....	20
XI. Sumter County Action Plan.....	26
XII. Grant Funding and Mitigation Assistance.....	33
XIII. Glossary.....	34
XIV. Sources of Information.....	36

Attachments:

Sumter County Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

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.

II. SIGNATURE PAGE

Honorable Randy Howard, Chairman
Sumter County Board of Commissioners

Date

John Ekaitis, Chief
Sumter County Fire Department

Date

Brent McCarty, Chief Ranger Sr.
Georgia Forestry Commission

Date

III. 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 (or human habitations) and natural or wildland areas.

In the mid 1980’s, following a new wave of development in what was previously forest or wildland areas, agencies across the country became aware of an increasingly common phenomena – wildfires were more and more frequently impacting communities . In 1985, a milestone year, over 1400 homes nationwide were lost to wildfire. The catastrophes became known as wildland/urban interface fires and occur when the fuel feeding 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, and low relative humidity).

The public does not have to fall victim to this type of disaster. Homes (and communities) can be designed, built and maintained to withstand a wildfire even in the absence of fire engines and firefighters on the scene. But, it takes planning and commitment at the community level BEFORE a wildfire emergency occurs.

CWPP PLAN PARTICIPANTS

Core Committee

Phillip Daniel, Sumter County Sheriff’s Office
Randy Howard, GEMA
Duane Montgomery, Americus Fire Department
Chief Allen Erkhart , Americus Fire Department
Chief Joe Pollock, Sumter County Fire Department

GFC Representatives

Brent McCarty, Chief Ranger Sr.
CWPP Program Specialist Jim Harrell
Beryl Budd, Wildfire Prevention Specialist (revised 2017)

Meeting Dates

Initial Core Committee Meeting: August 17, 2010
Follow-Up Meeting: December 7, 2010

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE CWPP

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

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

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan is a critical tool required to obtain hazard mitigation grants through the National Fire Plan, FEMA mitigation grants, and others. Under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003, communities that seek grants from the federal government for hazardous fuels reduction work are required to prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

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

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

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

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

During development of the Sumter 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 (*Americus Times Recorder*) on December 10, 2010 explaining the objectives of the Sumter County CWPP, the planning process and the procedure for obtaining a draft copy for review and/or comment.

V. DESCRIPTION OF SUMTER COUNTY

Sumter County was created in 1831 from part of Lee County. The county is 43.5% rural with a 2008 population estimated by the Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development at 32,449. The county seat is Americus. Sumter County was named for Major General Thomas Sumter of South Carolina, a Revolutionary War soldier.

Total area of Sumter County is 492.6 square miles (315,264 acres), of which 485.3 square miles (310,592 acres) is land and 7.3 square miles (4,672 acres) is water.

Forestry is a significant industry in Sumter County, the county's 179,892 forested acres adding \$2,520,000 to the local economy in 2008. The county's 429 farms had a 2008 production in excess of \$168 million.

Incorporated Municipalities

Americus
Plains
Leslie
Andersonville
DeSoto
Cobb

Unincorporated Areas

Aries
Concord
Sumter City
Shiloh
Botsford
Lake Blackshear
Methvin
New Era

Attractions

Jimmy Carter National Historic Site
Habitat for Humanity (National Headquarters)
City of Andersonville (Civil War history)

Educational Institutions

SW Georgia State University
South Georgia Technical College

VI. WILDFIRE HISTORY

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

The local office of the Georgia Forestry Commission serving Schley-Sumter Counties is located at: 178 Bumphead Road, Americus, GA, 31719. Telephone: 229-931-2511.

GFC Personnel

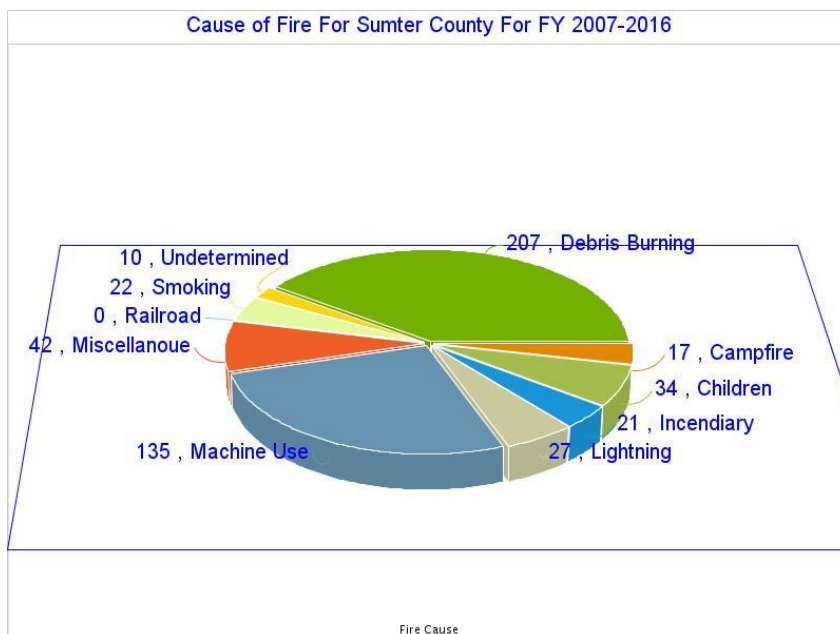
Brent McCarty, Chief Ranger Sr.
Brandon Jones, Ranger I
Jerry W. Dailey, Ranger I
Mark B. Shutters, Ranger I

GFC Firefighting Equipment

3 Type 5 Tractor Plow Units
2 Type 7 Engine

Wildfire Activity in Sumter County from FY 2007 thru FY 2016 in table below:

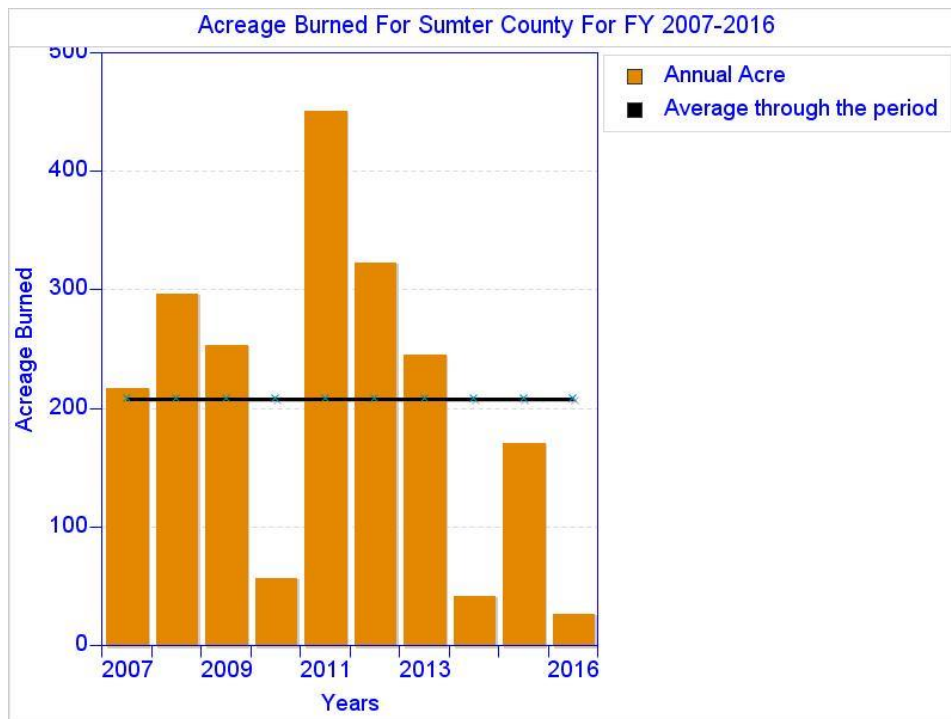
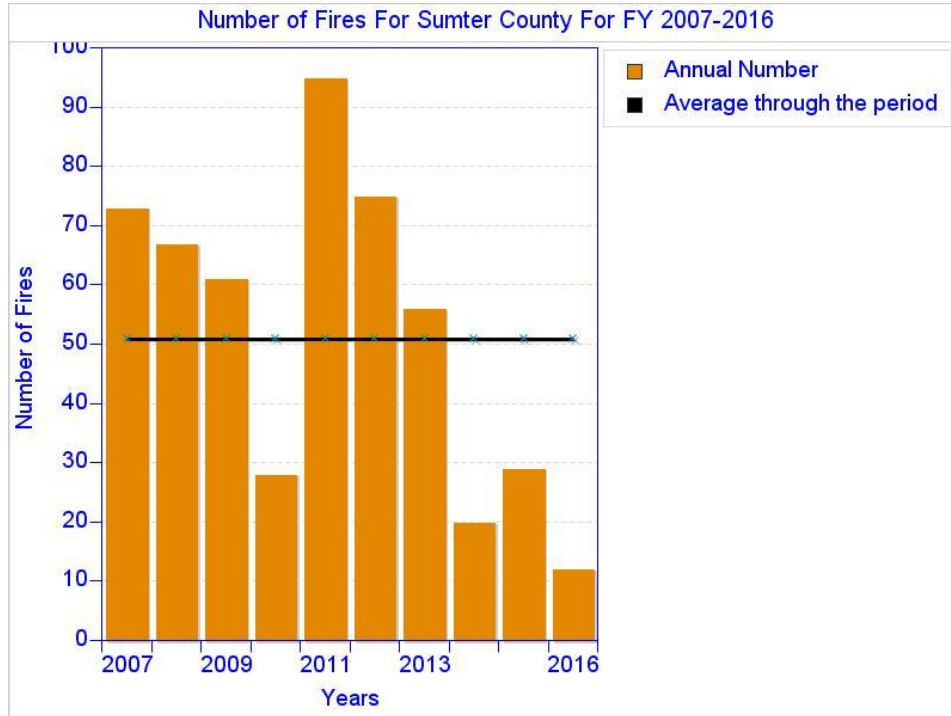
Year	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	Statewide Average size
2007	217.31	73	2.98	18.64
2008	297.47	67	4.44	4.56
2009	253.54	61	4.16	3.90
2010	57.23	28	2.04	3.93
2011	451.44	95	4.75	17.56
2012	323.24	75	4.31	5.08
2013	245.90	56	4.39	4.53
2014	42.42	20	2.12	5.02
2015	171.22	29	5.90	4.42
2016	26.73	12	2.22	6.29



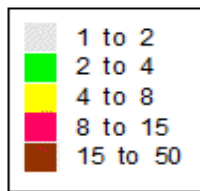
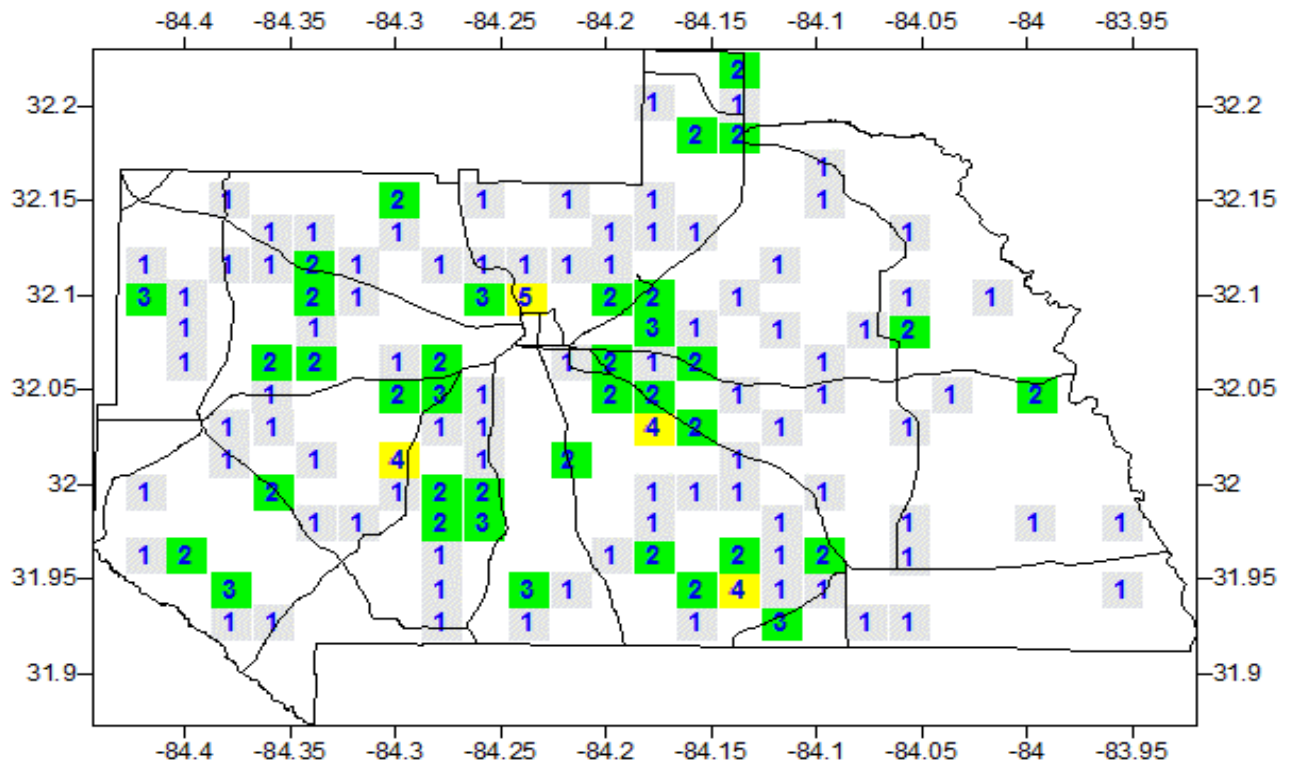
Debris Burning was the leading cause accounting for 40% of wildfires. The second leading cause was Machine Use accounting for 26% of wildfires during the 10 years 2007-2016.

County = Sumter	Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	2	2.08	1.80	3.45
Children	Children	0	0.00	1.20	1.18
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	1	15.90	1.60	4.43
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	2	15.89	1.80	4.66
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	5	61.63	3.60	25.02
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	2	3.30	1.20	6.29
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	8	9.98	4.40	11.14
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	4	24.18	2.60	10.89
Incendiary	Incendiary	2	8.66	0.80	8.91
Lightning	Lightning	2	1.78	2.00	4.26
Machine Use	Machine Use	12	10.83	5.00	15.52
Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	0	0.00	0.40	0.49
Miscellaneous: Fireworks/Explosives	Miscellaneous: Fireworks/Explosives	0	0.00	0.20	0.07
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	1	0.10	0.80	3.08
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	3	37.53	2.20	11.88
Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	1	2.44	0.20	0.49
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	1	0.62	0.20	0.12
Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	0	0.00	0.20	0.47
Smoking	Smoking	1	0.11	0.60	1.91
Undetermined	Undetermined	12	30.35	4.40	28.05
Totals for County: Sumter Year: 2017		59	225.38	35.20	142.33

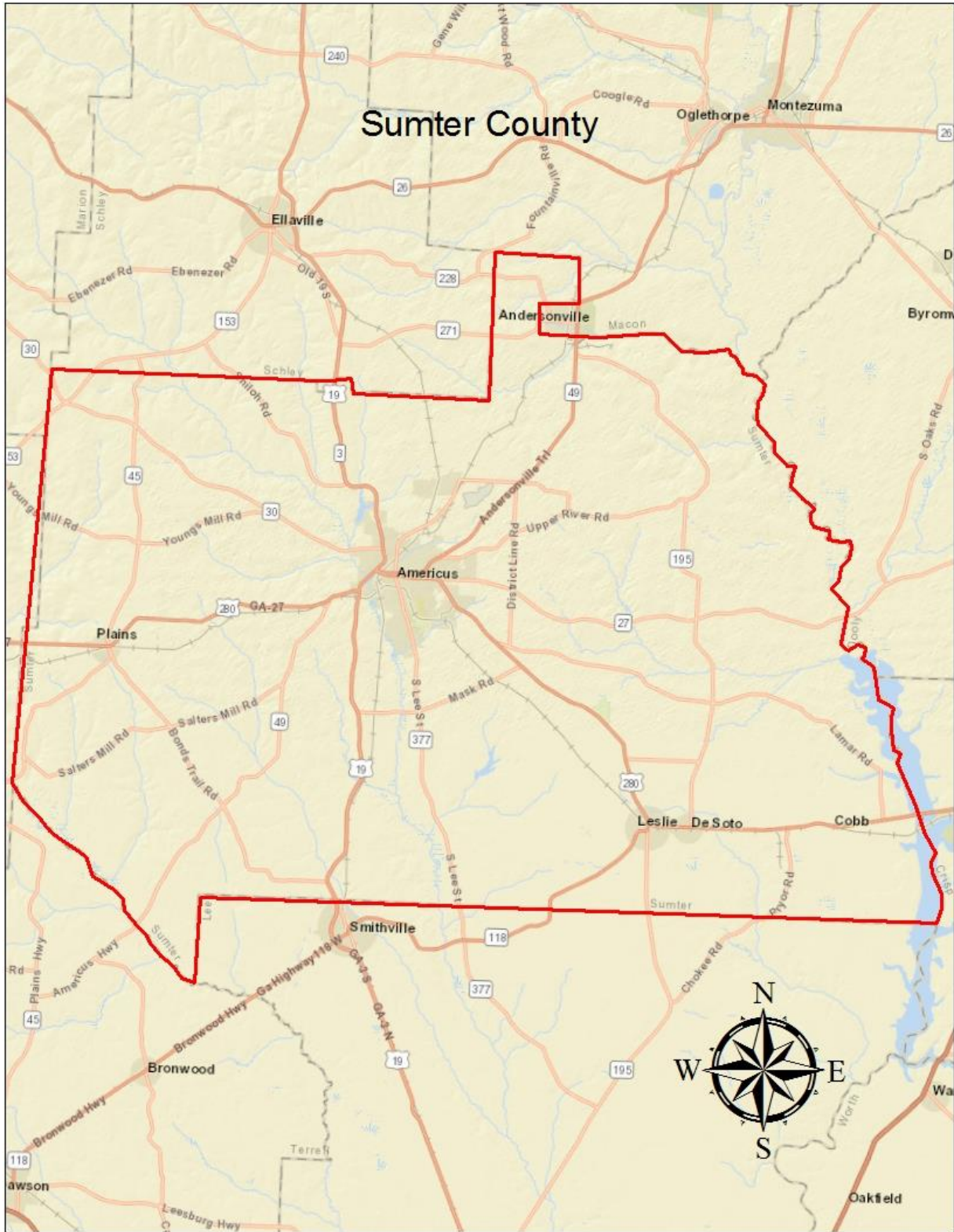
The charts below indicate the annual number of wildfires and acreage burned during FY 2007 thru FY 2016. Sumter County averaged 52 wildfires burning 210 acres annually during this period. The years 2014-2016 had record breaking low wildfire activity due to above average rainfall during peak wildfire seasons.

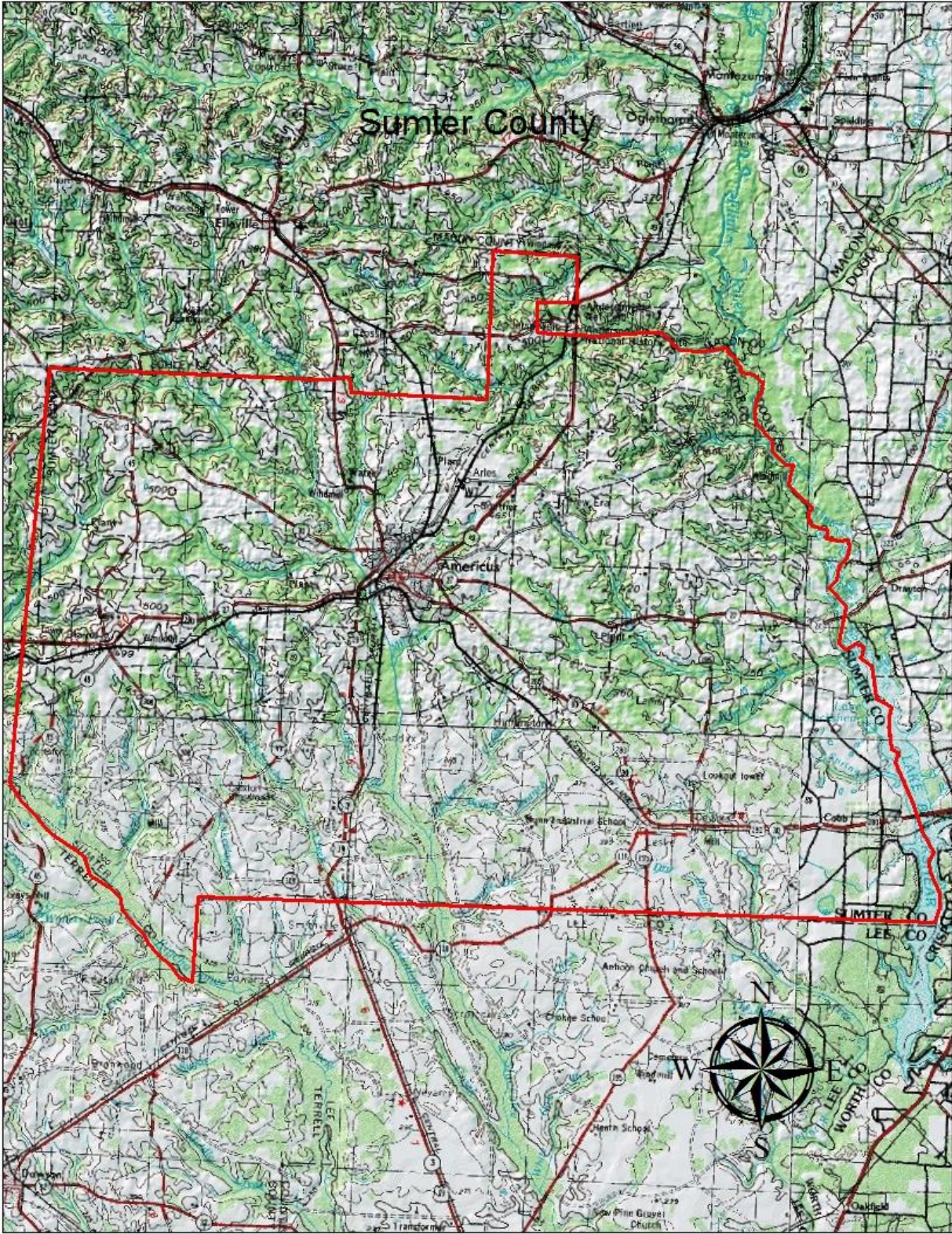


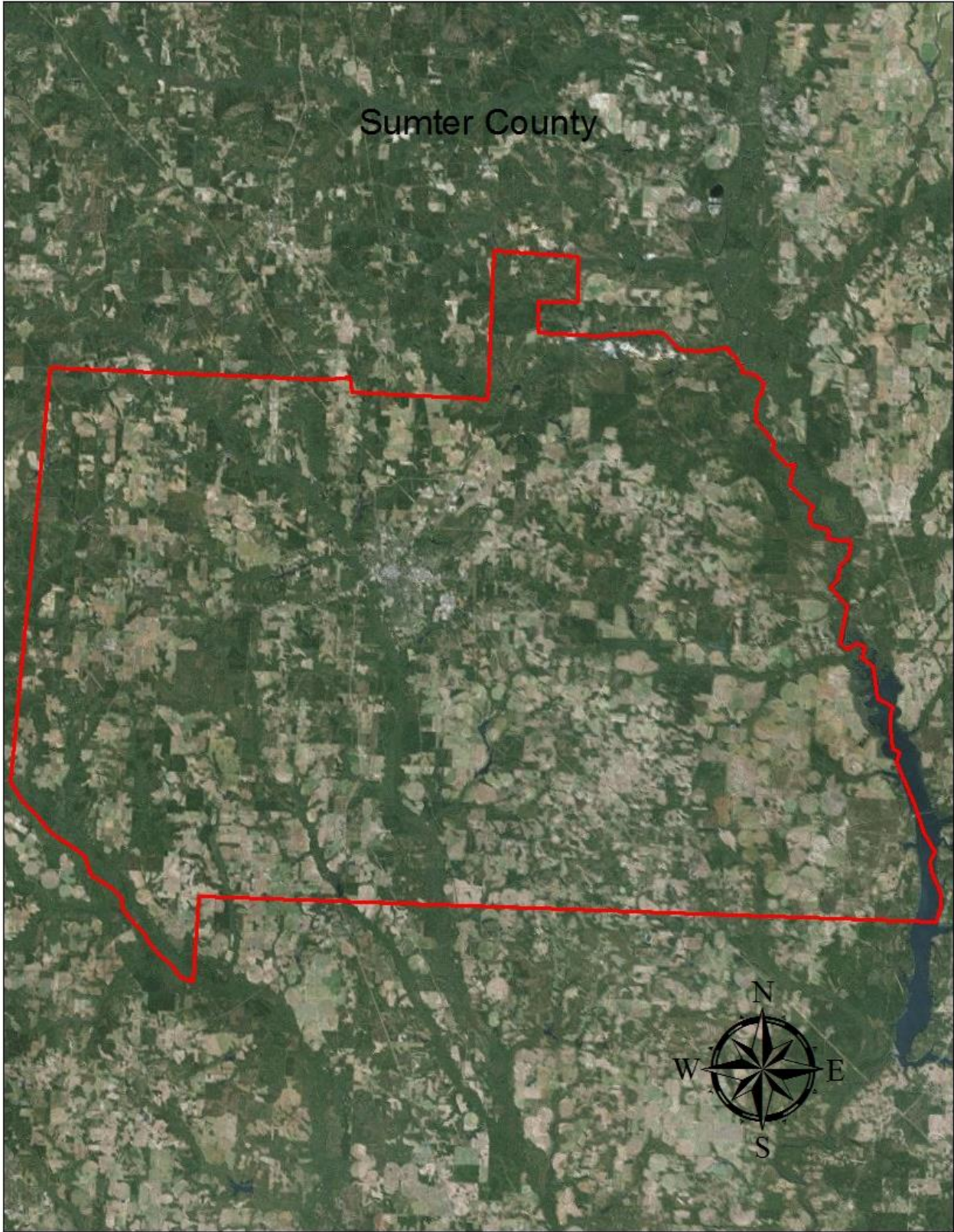
Fire Occurrence Map for Sumter County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



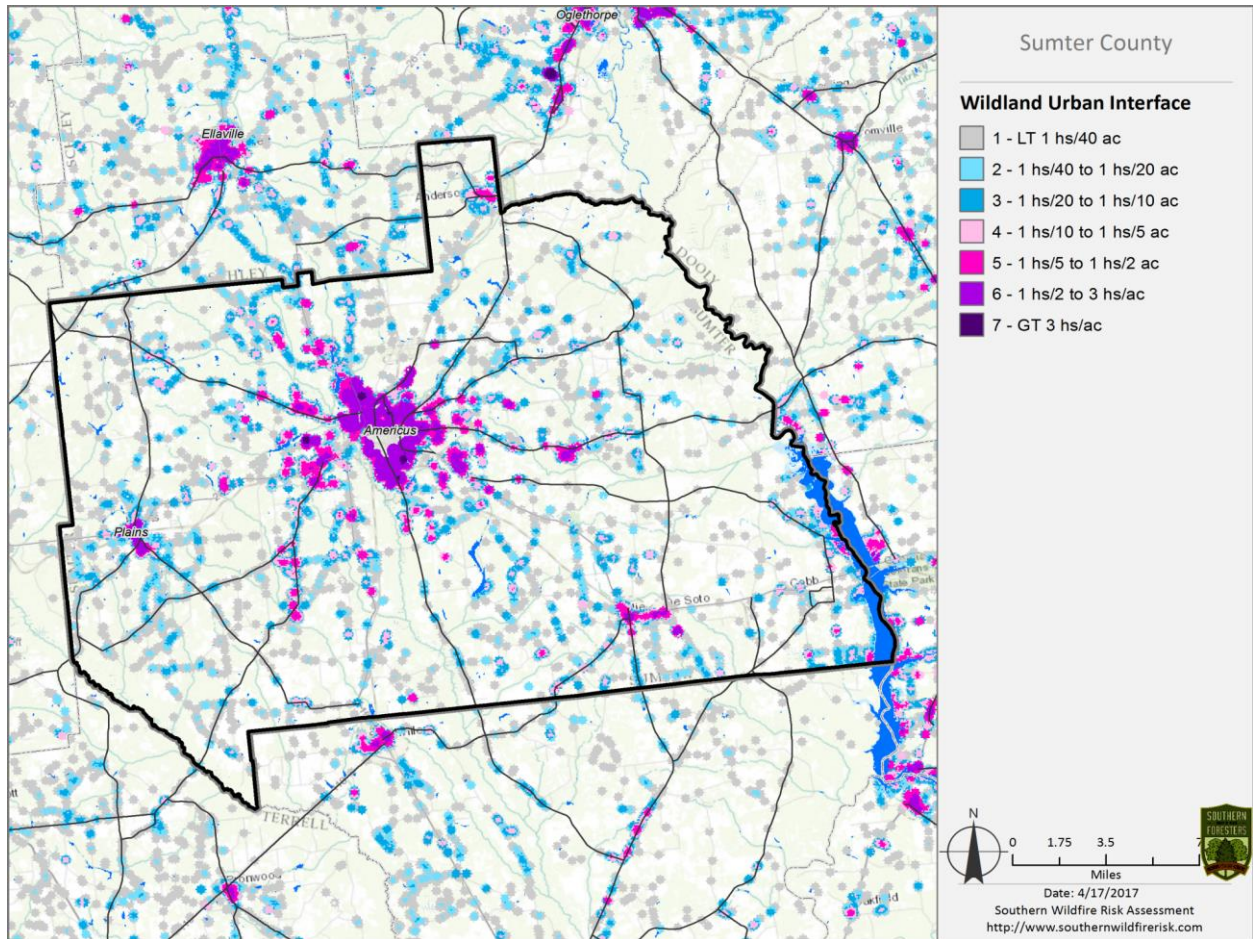
VII. COUNTY BASE MAPS







VIII. WHAT ARE “COMMUNITIES-AT-RISK”?



The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map, from the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary (SWRA), indicates areas where homes are located near or adjacent to wildlands (areas that could potentially be threatened by a wildfire).

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

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

In Sumter County, there are many individual (isolated) homes and outbuildings on farms and small properties that could be damaged or destroyed in the event of a disastrous wildfire. On these

properties, the owners must assume a greater responsibility for wildfire protection - - - by making improvements to the landscape and structures that will provide some degree of wildfire protection until the fire department can arrive. This can only be accomplished if rural residents know how to make their homes and properties “Firewise”.

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

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

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

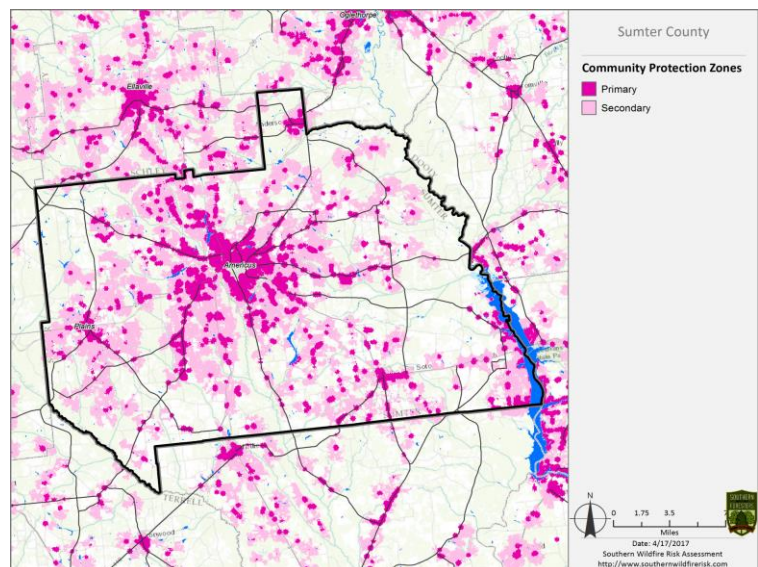


Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is described as the area where structures and other human improvements meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.

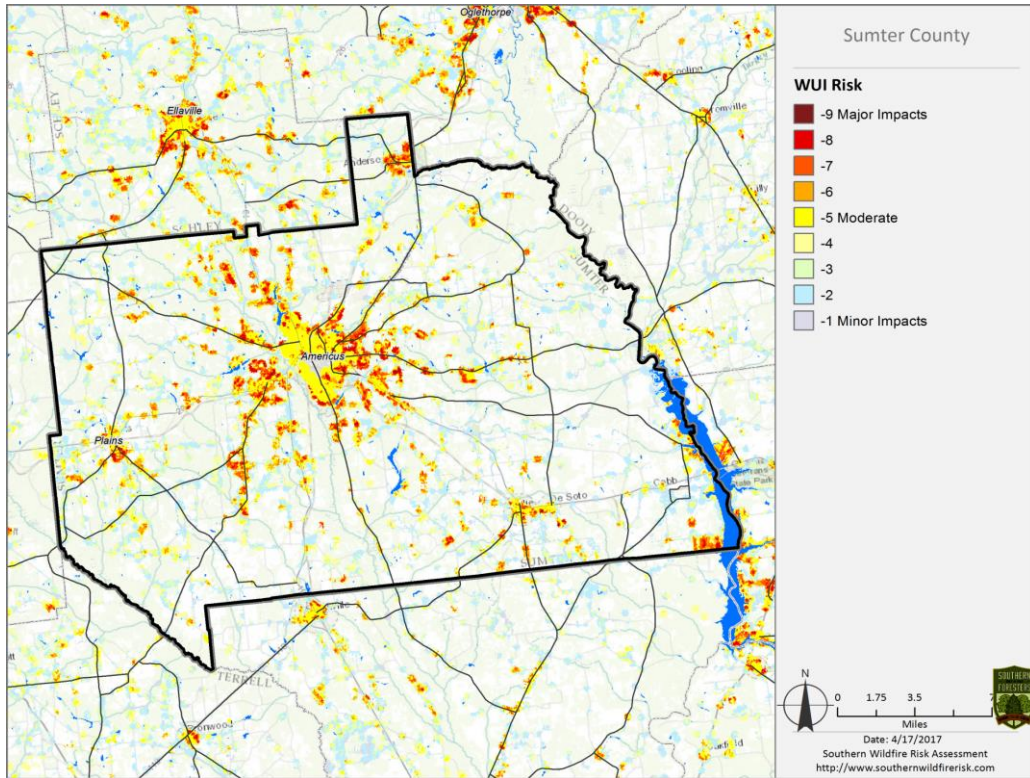
IX. Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary, Risk Hazard Maps & Community Risk Assessments

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

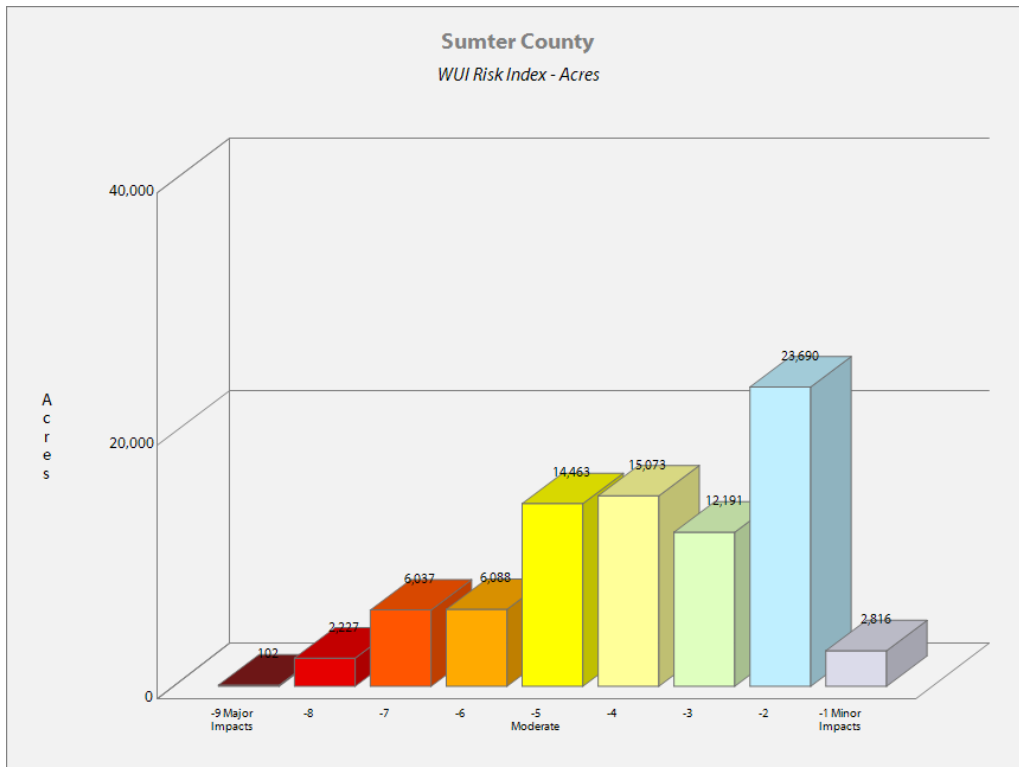
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests
- Allow agencies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

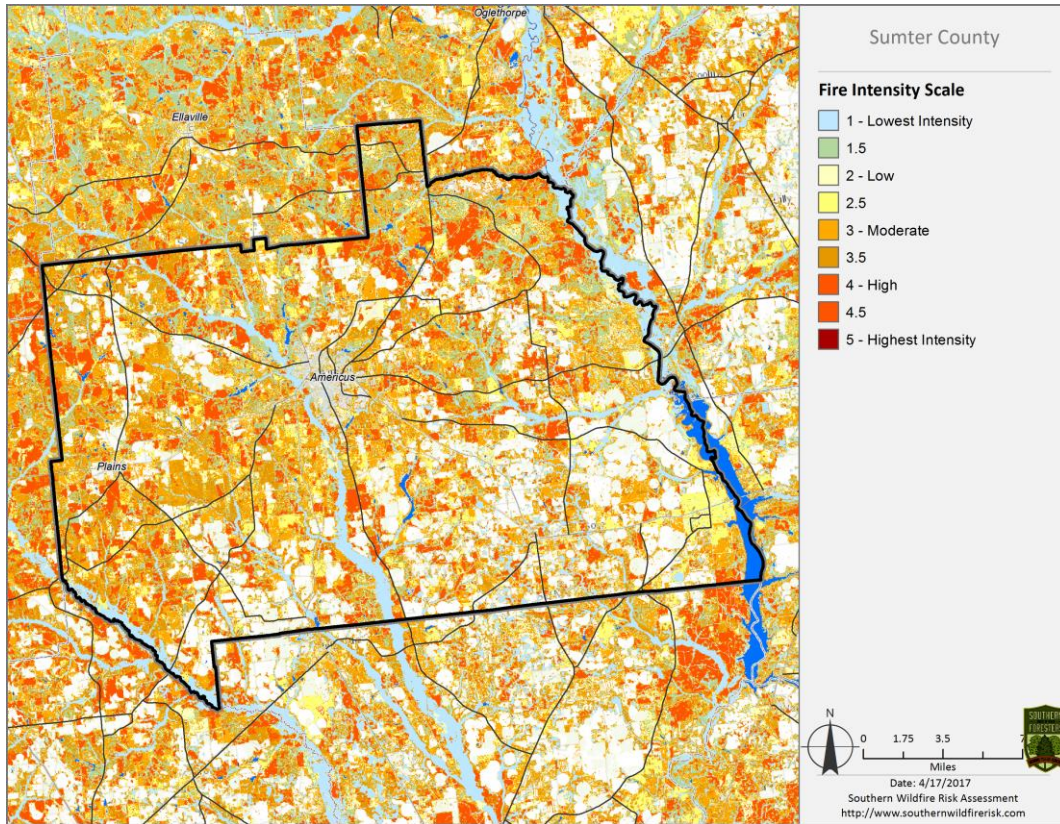


Community Protection Zones map from the Sumter SWRA summary



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





Fire Intensity Scale map (above)

SUMTER COUNTY COMMUNITY RISK ASSESSMENTS

Community	Score	Hazard Rating
Statham Lakes, Spring Creek & Flintside Drive	142	Extreme Risk
Pennington Area	138	High Risk
Rockhill Subdivision	127	Moderate Risk
Shaaben Subdivision	102	Moderate Risk
Silver Hills (Off Highway 19 N)	98	Moderate Risk
South Lee St. Area (South Forty, Quail Dr. & Deerfield)	91	Moderate Risk
Hancock Lake Area	82	Moderate Risk
Whispering Pines & Sun Valley	73	Low Risk

These hazard ratings were completed by GFC personnel: Brent McCarty and Mark Shutters and Sumter fire personnel Joe Pollock and Chris Ammons during the month of October, 2010. The Georgia Forestry Commission Woodland Community Wildfire Risk Assessment Scoresheet was used. This document evaluates communities (groups of homes) based upon four criteria: subdivision design, site hazard, building construction and additional rating factors. The cumulative wildfire hazard rating scores range from a low hazard rating of 0 to 75 points to an extreme hazard rating with over 140 points.

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

X. HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

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 provide grants 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		

PROTECTING EXISTING STRUCTURES

Critical Facilities

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

Critical Facilities:

Sumter County Sheriff’s Dept. (Law Enforcement Ctr.)	Satham Lakes, Spring Creek & Flintside Dr.
Sumter County Correctional Institution	Pennington Area
Youth Detention Center	Rockhill Subdivision
Georgia Southwestern College	Shaaban Subdivision
South Georgia Technical College	

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

Public Education Needs

“Firewise” structures are homes and other buildings in the wildland/urban interface that have been built, designed 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Initiate a community public education program for Sumter County residents

- Develop a “Firewise Communities” educational display for use at local festivals.
- Make Firewise Communities brochures available to the public at central locations such as: Farm Services Agency, Chamber of Commerce and the County Courthouse.
- Encourage communities (neighborhoods) that qualify to apply for recognition as a Firewise Community/USA.

Reduction of Hazardous Fuels

Because almost 58 percent of Sumter County is forested, the accumulation of brush and other (mostly ground) vegetation can create conditions over extensive areas that could fuel a disastrous wildfire. Treatment of forested areas with prescribed fire can significantly reduce this hazard while improving pulpwood and sawtimber production and enhancing wildlife habitat. Prescribed burning, however, must be conducted by experienced personnel when weather conditions are conducive to a safe burn and when an authorization has been obtained from the local office of the Georgia Forestry Commission. Other ways to reduce wildland fuel (vegetation) include:

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

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

The goal for structural protection should be a “Firewise” landscape. A Firewise landscape is characterized by trees, shrubs and grasses that are carefully managed within 100 feet of structures - an area called the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ). Most critical is the space within 30 feet of a structure which is usually referred to as the area of Defensible Space. The Defensible Space should include a landscape of less flammable plants, coarse bark or lava rock as mulch adjacent the structure, tree limbs trimmed away from the structure and 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.

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

RECOMMENDATION: Promote prescribed burning in Sumter County.

- Help landowners understand how to prescribe burn legally and safely.
- 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

Site Plan Review

Growth pressure is expected to increase new home starts in Sumter County over the next 20 years. 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. In 2014 Georgia adopted International Wildland-Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) for use by Georgia counties.

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 the wildfire hazard of proposed new development in rural areas as part of the site plan review process (GFC Woodland Community 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 Area.
- The International Wildland-Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) was adopted by the State of Georgia in 2014. This code is available for counties to use as may be needed to reduce risk.

FIRE SERVICES CAPABILITY

The residents of Sumter County are very fortunate to have one of the best rural fire departments in the state. They are not only very well equipped and professionally staffed, but have either dealt with or assisted the local Georgia Forestry Commission Unit on numerous open land (brush) and forest fires. With 22 stations, the Sumter County Fire Department is able to quickly respond to structural fires in any unincorporated area. In addition to the county fire department, the communities of Americus and Leslie operate 4 fire stations.

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

<u>Local Government</u>	<u>#Stations</u>	<u># Engines</u>	<u># Water Tenders</u>	<u># Firefighters</u>
Sumter County	22	23	5 (4/1,500 gal.) (1/5,000 gal.)	12 fulltime 38 volunteer 22 inmate**
Americus	4	4	1/1,500 gal.	45 fulltime***
Leslie	1	1	1/1,500 gal.	10 volunteer

*None of the fire stations are equipped with Brush Trucks

**fulltime inmate firefighters from Sumter Correctional Institution

*** 45 budgeted firefighter positions

Equipment and Training Needed

Countywide Nomex type wildland personal protective equipment (PPE) is not available for use by volunteer firefighters and none of the fire departments are equipped with wildland fire hand tools or fire shelters. All firefighters have completed the Incident Management Training Courses, I-100, I-700 & I-800, and some of the county's firefighters have had the basic wildfire training courses (S-130, Standards for Survival and S-190, Basic Wildfire Behavior) and another class is planned for January, 2011.

Water Tenders

There are seven (7) water tenders (1,500 – 5,000 gallon capacity) in Sumter County to transport water to structural fires in remote areas. Because water supply remains a critical factor in structural protection there is a need for additional large water tenders (2,500-5,000 gallon capacity).

Fire Hydrants

Pressurized fire hydrants exist in the northwest portion of the county (136 hydrants) and in the Lake Blackshear area (80 hydrants), as well as in the municipalities of Americus (975 hydrants) Leslie (46 hydrants), Desoto (9 hydrants) and Plains (52 hydrants).

A system of dry hydrants is present in rural areas and were mapped and checked in 2010.

XI. SUMTER COUNTY ACTION PLAN

Executive Summary

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

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

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

The following recommendations were developed by the Sumter 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)
All Structures	Create minimum of 30-foot of defensible space**	Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet from structures, trim overhanging limbs, replace flammable plants near homes

		with less flammable varieties, remove vegetation around chimneys.
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.
Community Clean-up Day	Cutting, mowing, pruning**	Cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces.
Driveway Access	Culvert installation	See that adequate lengths of culverts are installed to allow emergency vehicle access.
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)
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.
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.
Existing Fire Lines	Reduce hazardous fuels	Clean and re-harrow existing lines.
Proposed Improved Community Wildland Fire Response Priorities		
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.
Fire Stations	Equipment	Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland PPE Gear. Investigate need for “brush” trucks near communities at risk.
Water Sources	Drafting equipment	Investigate need for additional drafting pumps.
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

<p>1. Conduct “How to Have a Firewise Home” Workshop for County Residents</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Distribute materials promoting Firewise practices and planning through local community and governmental meetings.</p>

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 in the county as the need arises. Identified “communities-at-risk” 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, Sumter County Fire Departments, and local residents of rural Sumter County. National Wildfire Preparedness Day is held annually on the 1st Saturday in May, which is an excellent time to hold such an event. 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 and remove ladder fuels
- Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties
- Provide firewise and fire prevention educational materials to citizens

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 materials
- Fire Adapted Community
- Ready Set Go information

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 Sumter County.

Roles and Responsibilities

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

Role	Responsibility
Hazardous Fuels and Structural Ignitability Reduction	
Sumter 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 Sumter County. Meet periodically to review progress towards mitigation goals, appoint and delegate special activities, work with federal, state, and local officials to assess progress and develop future goals and action plans. Work with residents to implement projects and Firewise activities.
Key Messages to focus on	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping 2 Debris Burning Safety 3 Firewise information for homeowners 4 Prescribed burning benefits
Communications objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Create public awareness for fire danger and defensible space issues 2 Identify most significant human cause fire issues 3 Enlist public support to help prevent these causes 4 Encourage citizens to employ fire prevention and defensible spaces in their communities.
Target Audiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Homeowners 2 Forest Landowners and users 3 Civic Groups 4 School Groups
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 News Releases 2 Personal Contacts 3 Key messages and prevention tips 4 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters 5 Social media

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, Sumter 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.

Community/Area	Project	Agency	Funding Needs	Priority	Community Recommendation
Countywide	Wildland Fire Personal Protective Equipment	County	\$37,500	High	50 Sets of PPE & fire shelters
Countywide	Wildland Hand Tools	County	\$7,000	Medium	Tools for each of 23 engines
Countywide	(1) 2,500-3,000 Gallon Water Tender	County	\$200,000	High	Enhance water delivery in remote areas of the county
Countywide	(4) 5,000 Gallon Water Tender	County	\$750,000	High	Nurse Truck for each of four areas of the county
Countywide	(4) Brush Trucks	County	\$360,000	Medium	Improve off-road firefighting capability.
Countywide	Satellite Repeaters-Voter System (4)	County	\$150,000	Medium	Boost communication in remote areas during fire response

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

ASSESSMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

To accurately assess progress of the action plan, Sumter 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.

XII. 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.

XIII. GLOSSARY

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

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

CWPP – The Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prescribed Burning (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)

XIV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Publications/Brochures/Websites:

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

Appended Documents:

Sumter County Southern Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Community risk assessment scoresheets



**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.

An Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider

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