GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources

Talbot County, Georgia

JUNE 2018

CONTENTS

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

Sher'Londa Walker
Chairman
Talbot County Commission

Date

Carol Ison
County Manager
Talbot County

Date

Leigh Ann Erenheim
EMA Director
Talbot County

Date

Alfred C. Lucas
Chief Ranger
Georgia Forestry Commission

Date

James Harrell
CWPP Program Specialist
Georgia Forestry Commission

Date

I. WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE FIRE DISASTERS

Fire influenced and defined the landscape we call the United States, well before the arrival of the first Europeans. Scientists, in fact, think that fires started by lightning or Native Americans occurred over most of the Southeast every 3 to 7 years. These were typically low intensity fires (because of their frequency) which kept the forests open and "park-like" in appearance and prevented heavy accumulations of dense underbrush. When communities became well established across the South, wildfires began to impact public safety 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, low relative humidity, etc.).

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

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE CWPP

The Wildland/Urban Interface is 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). 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 Talbot County. There are three generally accepted 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 Talbot 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

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan can 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 Talbot County.
The development of this plan was a collaborative effort for the people of Talbot County. The individuals listed below made up the "CWPP Core Committee" and are responsible for much of the plan content.

CWPP Core Committee

Rob Thomas, Chief, O'Neal Volunteer Fire Department
Knox Blackmar, Chief, Talbotton Volunteer Fire Department
Jack Meier, Flint Hill Volunteer Fire Department
Leigh Ann Erenheim, Flint Hill Volunteer Fire Department
Alfred C. Lucas, Chief Ranger, Sr. GFC

Georgia Forestry Commission Representatives

Chief Ranger Alfred C. Lucas
Ranger I George Barbee
CWPP Program Specialist Jim Harrell (Initial plan 2010)
Wildfire Prevention Specialist Beryl Budd (revised 2018)

Meeting Dates

Initial Core Committee Meeting: July 30, 2009
Follow-Up Meeting #1: February 18,2010

The CWPP Core Committee contributed to the CWPP development by:

Initiation Plan	Agreed on the need to develop a Community Wildfire Protection
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 and needs for coordinated wildland fire response
Education and Outreach	Outlined a public education initiative to increase citizen awareness of residential wildfire protection (Firewise)

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

- Major stakeholders were invited to participate as members of the CWPP Core Committee.
- A news release was placed in the local paper *(Talbotton New Era)* explaining the objectives of the Talbot County CWPP, the planning process and the procedure for obtaining a draft copy for review and/or comment.

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

III. HISTORY OF TALBOT COUNTY & WILDFIRE HISTORY

Talbot County was created by an act of the Georgia legislature in 1827.

The county was formerly a part of Muscogee County. It is located thirty miles northeast of Columbus and sixty miles west of Macon in west central Georgia. The Flint River forms the northeastern boundary, and Talbotton is the seat of the 393-square-mile county. Both the town and the county are named for Captain Matthew Talbot, who served as Georgia's governor for a short time in 1819. Collinsworth Institute and Talbotton Female Academy (later LeVert College), one of the first schools for females in Georgia, were located in Talbotton.

In 1836 the last of the Creek Indians were forcibly removed from the area, and growth was rapid up until the time of the Civil War (1861-65). By 1850 Talbot was the fifth largest county in the state. The total population was 16,534, just over half of whom were slaves. Cotton production at the time reached 18,800 bales per year. The production of cotton, peaches, and livestock made Talbot one of the wealthiest counties in the state. With the infestation of the boll weevil in the early 1920s, cotton production decreased steadily. Between 1992 and 1997, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, land use for farms in Talbot County decreased 5 percent, from 38,313 acres to 36,481 acres.

Talbot County Courthouse

The average size of farms increased from 302 to 329 acres in this same period, while the number of full-time farms decreased from 46 to 40. During the same period, crops accounted for 10 percent and livestock for 90 percent of the market value of agricultural products sold. Talbot County has a 95-acre industrial park located southwest of Talbotton on U.S. Highway 80.Hunters know Talbot County for its large deer. The county also holds a popular fall festival and car rally. Nearby attractions include Pine Mountain, Warm Springs and Franklin D. Roosevelt's Little White House, the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation, Callaway Gardens, Columbus, and the Flint River Recreation Outdoor Center.

Main Street, Talbotton

According to the 2010 U.S. census the county's population was 6,865, a slight increase from the 2000 population of 6,498.

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 commodity to the taxpayers of Talbot County. It is the Georgia Forestry Commission's goal to protect this precious resource.

Personnel
Alfred C. Lucas, Chief Ranger
George Barbee, Ranger
Michael W. Bryan, Ranger
Mike Dean, Ranger
Robert Brogdon, Ranger

GFC County Unit
The Georgia Forestry Commission Unit serving Talbot County is located at: 608 GA Hwy. 36, Waverly Hall, GA 31831.

Wildland firefighting equipment
4 International transports with 2 JD 450 tractors and 2 JD 550 tractors
1 Peterbilt transport with Dressta TD 8
2 Type VII trucks (150 gallon tank)

Major causes of wildfires
During the last 10 years, FY2007 – FY2016, the leading cause of wildfire in Talbot County was Debris Burning accounting for 36% of the wildfires and 44% of the acreage burned. The second most common cause of wildfires is Incendiary (arson), 21% and 20% of the acreage burned. The third major cause was Machine Use accounting for 13% of the wildfires and 6% of the acreage burned.

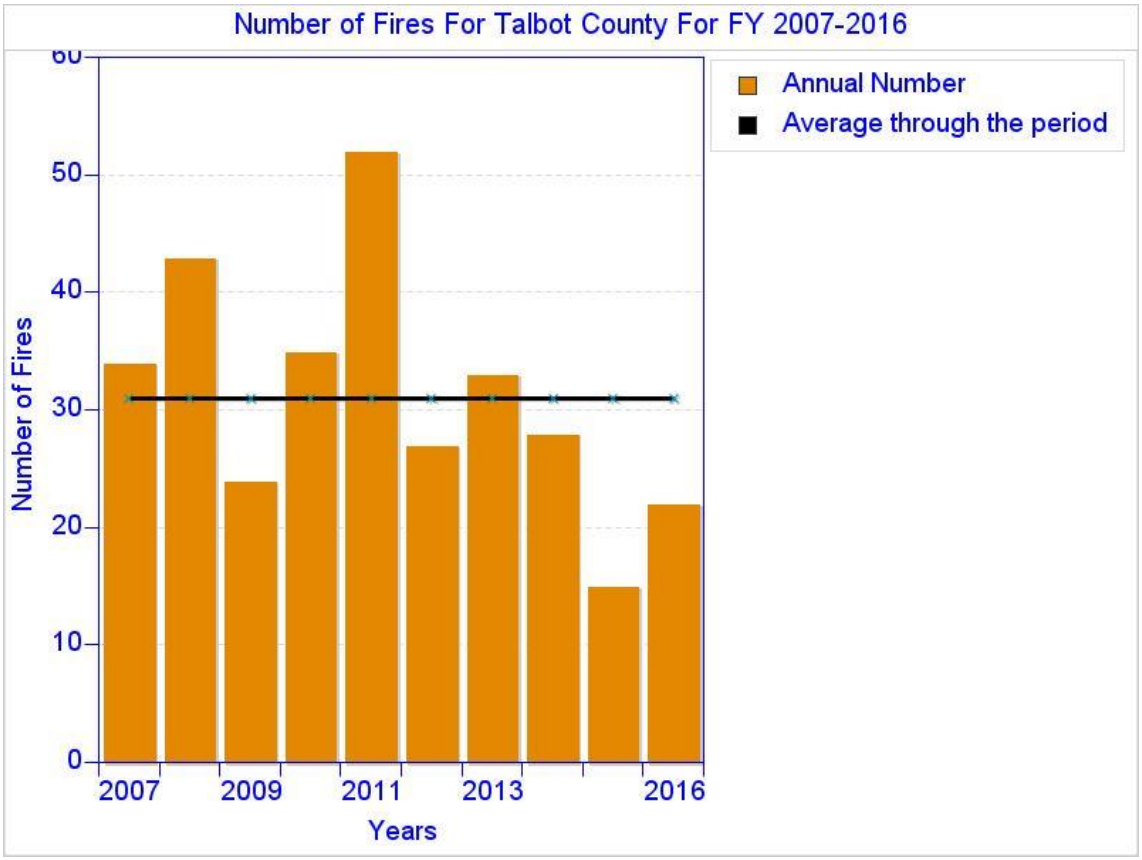
On the following page is Talbot County Wildfire data for the last complete fiscal year 2017. On the following pages 12-16 is Talbot county wildfire data for fiscal year 2007 thru 2016.

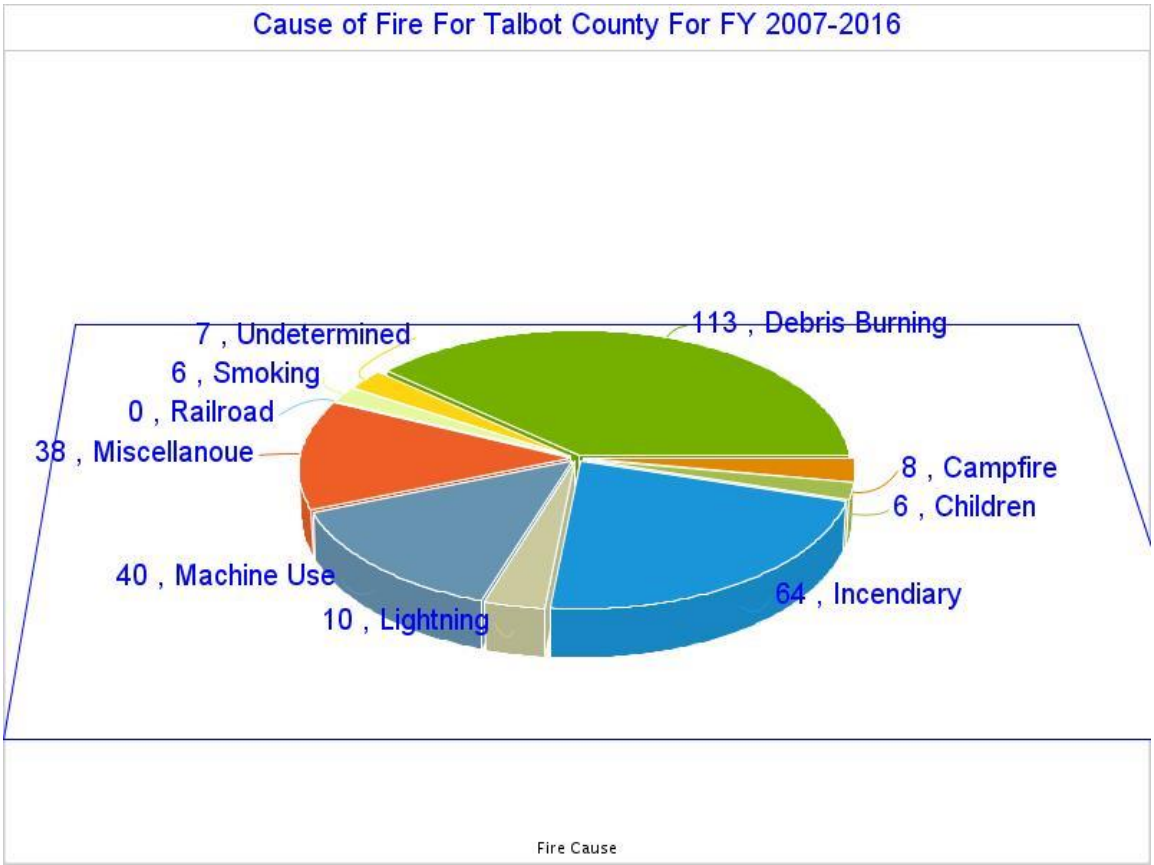
County = Talbot	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	9		7.31	2.60	1.91
Children	Children	2		0.75	1.00	0.53
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	0		0.00	0.80	11.86
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	7		108.63	6.60	48.08
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	1		23.45	0.40	5.35
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	6		24.63	3.00	12.20
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	3		6.96	1.00	7.55
Incendiary	Incendiary	3		4.25	2.00	1.84
Lightning	Lightning	0		0.00	0.40	1.87
Machine Use	Machine Use	9		33.77	2.40	10.17
Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	0		0.00	0.40	0.12
Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	1		0.30	0.20	0.06
Miscellaneous: Fireworks/Explosives	Miscellaneous: Fireworks/Explosives	0		0.00	0.20	0.64
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	2		9.70	0.80	1.97
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	4		15.89	2.40	7.07
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	4		12.40	1.40	2.66
Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	7		11.30	2.40	2.88
Railroad	Railroad	0		0.00	1.20	11.24
Smoking	Smoking	2		0.85	1.00	0.98
Undetermined	Undetermined	9		75.35	3.20	17.13
Totals for County: Talbot Year: 2017		69		335.54	33.40	146.11

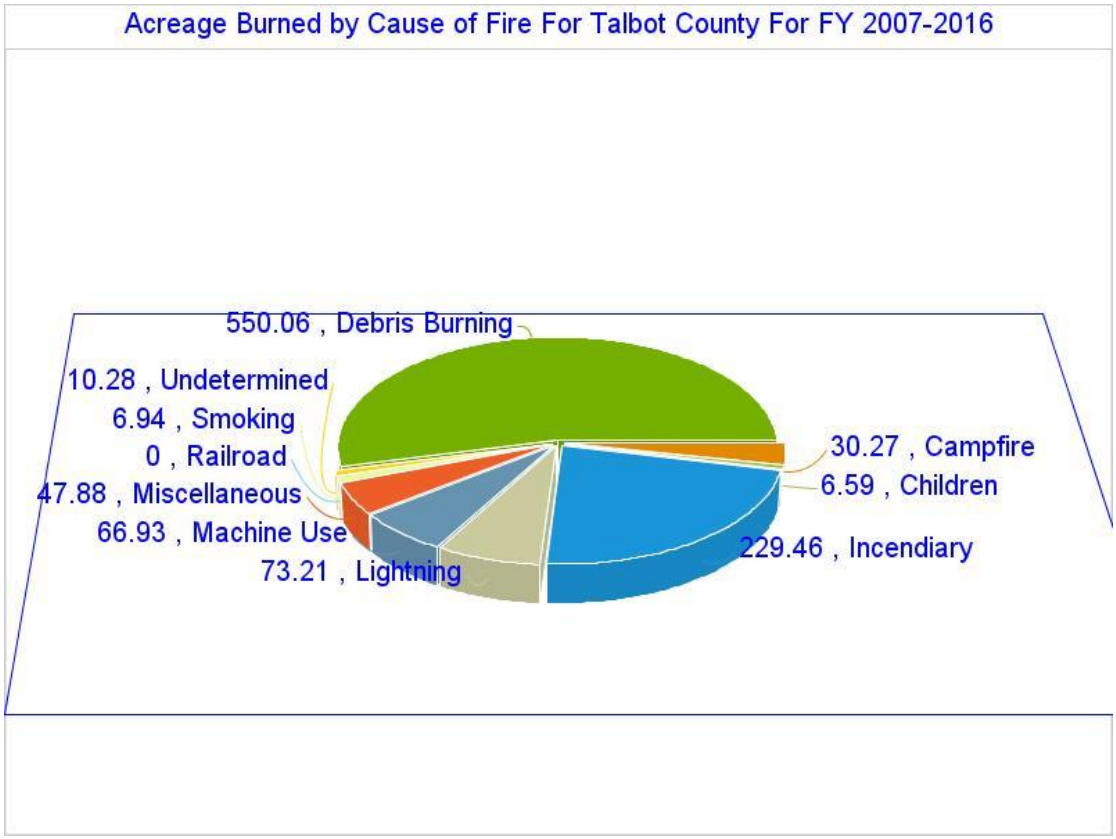
Acreage Burned /Number of Fires For Talbot County For FY 2007-2016				
Year	**Acreage Burned**	**Number of Fires**	**Average Size**	**Statewide Average Size**
2007	121.94	34	3.56	18.64
2008	175.50	43	4.08	4.56
2009	99.10	24	4.13	3.90
2010	60.43	35	1.73	3.93
2011	214.83	52	4.13	17.56
2012	71.80	27	2.66	5.08
2013	168.27	33	5.10	4.53
2014	120.67	28	4.31	5.02
2015	44.55	15	2.97	4.42
2016	61.50	22	2.80	6.29
Average	**113.86**	**31**		

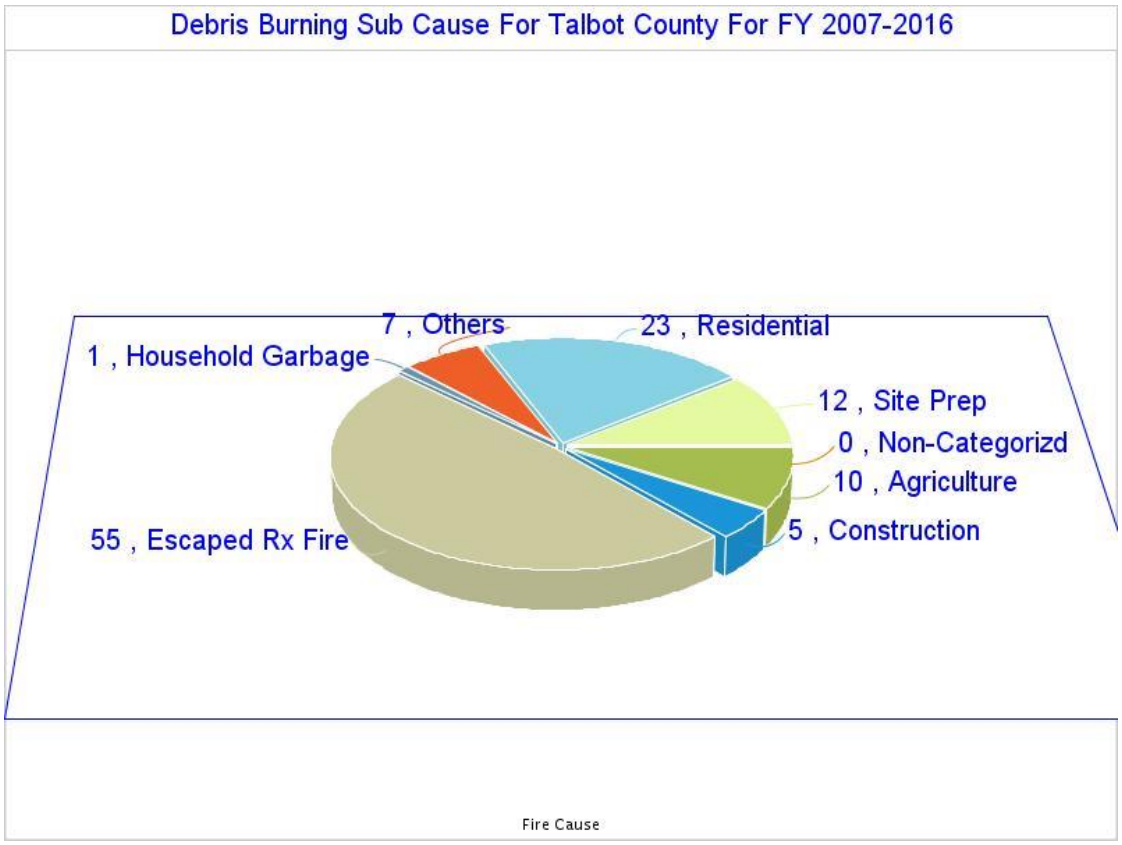
Number of Fires by Cause for Talbot County for FY 2007 to 2016

Year	Campfire	Children	Debris Burning	Incendiary	Lightning	Machine Use	Miscellaneous	Railroad	Smoking
2007	0	2	12	9	3	5	1	2	0
2008	1	1	20	9	2	7	2	0	1
2009	0	0	6	11	1	5	1	0	0
2010	0	0	11	10	0	9	3	2	0
2011	2	0	11	11	0	9	8	10	1
2012	1	0	11	7	2	2	2	1	1
2013	1	0	12	4	1	1	8	5	1
2014	2	0	16	1	0	2	5	1	1
2015	1	1	8	0	1	0	4	0	0
2016	0	2	6	2	0	0	11	0	0

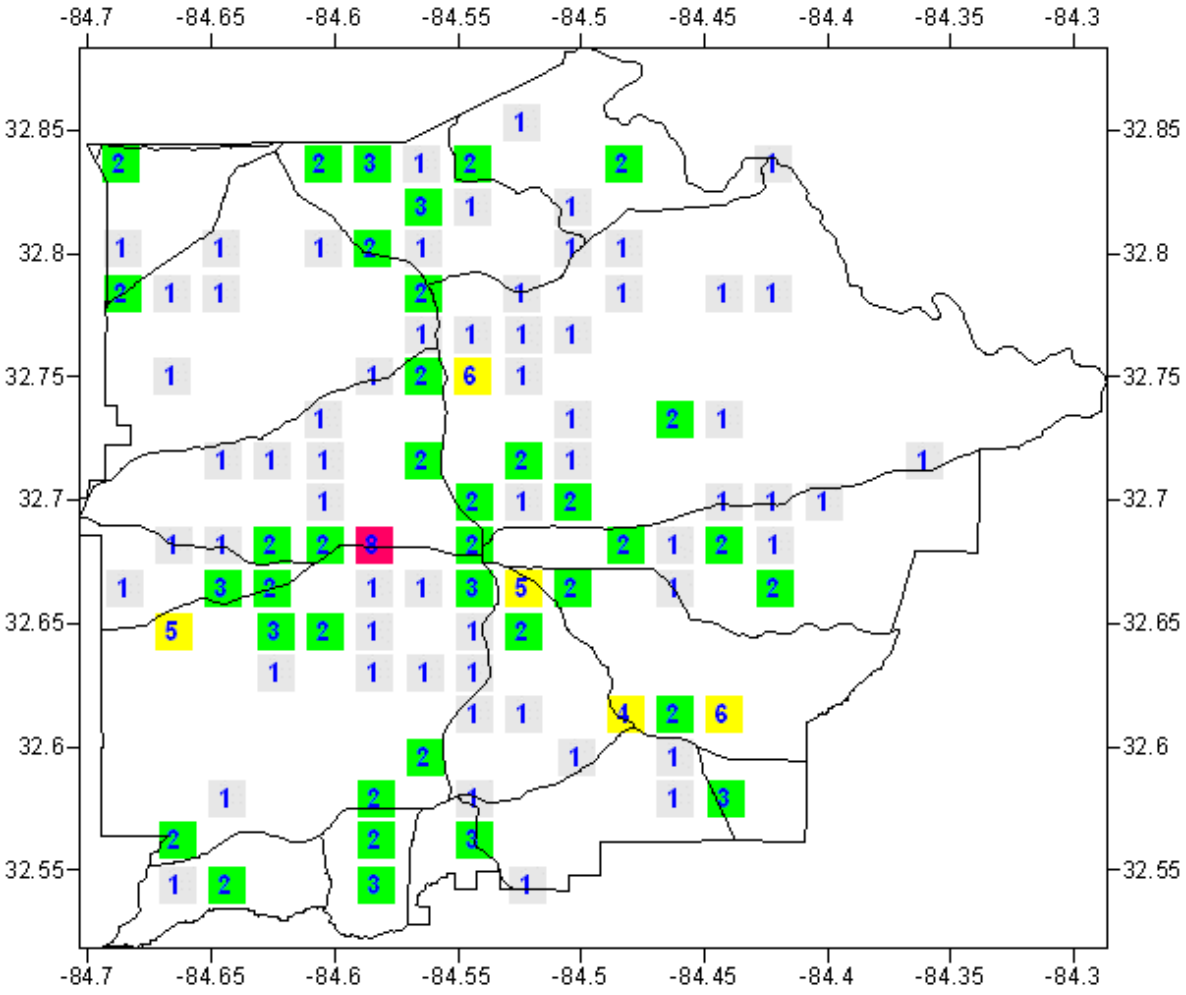

Number of Fires For Talbot County For FY 2007-2016
Annual Number
Average through the period
Number of Fires
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
2007
2009
2011
2013
2016
Years


Cause of Fire For Talbot County For FY 2007-2016
7 , Undetermined
6 , Smoking
0 , Railroad
38 , Miscellanoue
40 , Machine Use
10 , Lightning
113 , Debris Burning
8 , Campfire
6 , Children
64 , Incendiary
Fire Cause


Acreage Burned by Cause of Fire For Talbot County For FY 2007-2016
550.06 , Debris Burning
10.28 , Undetermined
6.94 , Smoking
0 , Railroad
47.88 , Miscellaneous
66.93 , Machine Use
73.21 , Lightning
30.27 , Campfire
6.59 , Children
229.46 , Incendiary


Debris Burning Sub Cause For Talbot County For FY 2007-2016
7 , Others
23 , Residential
1 , Household Garbage
12 , Site Prep
0 , Non-Categorizd
10 , Agriculture
55 , Escaped Rx Fire
5 , Construction
Fire Cause

Fire Occurrence Map for Talbot County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011



GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION

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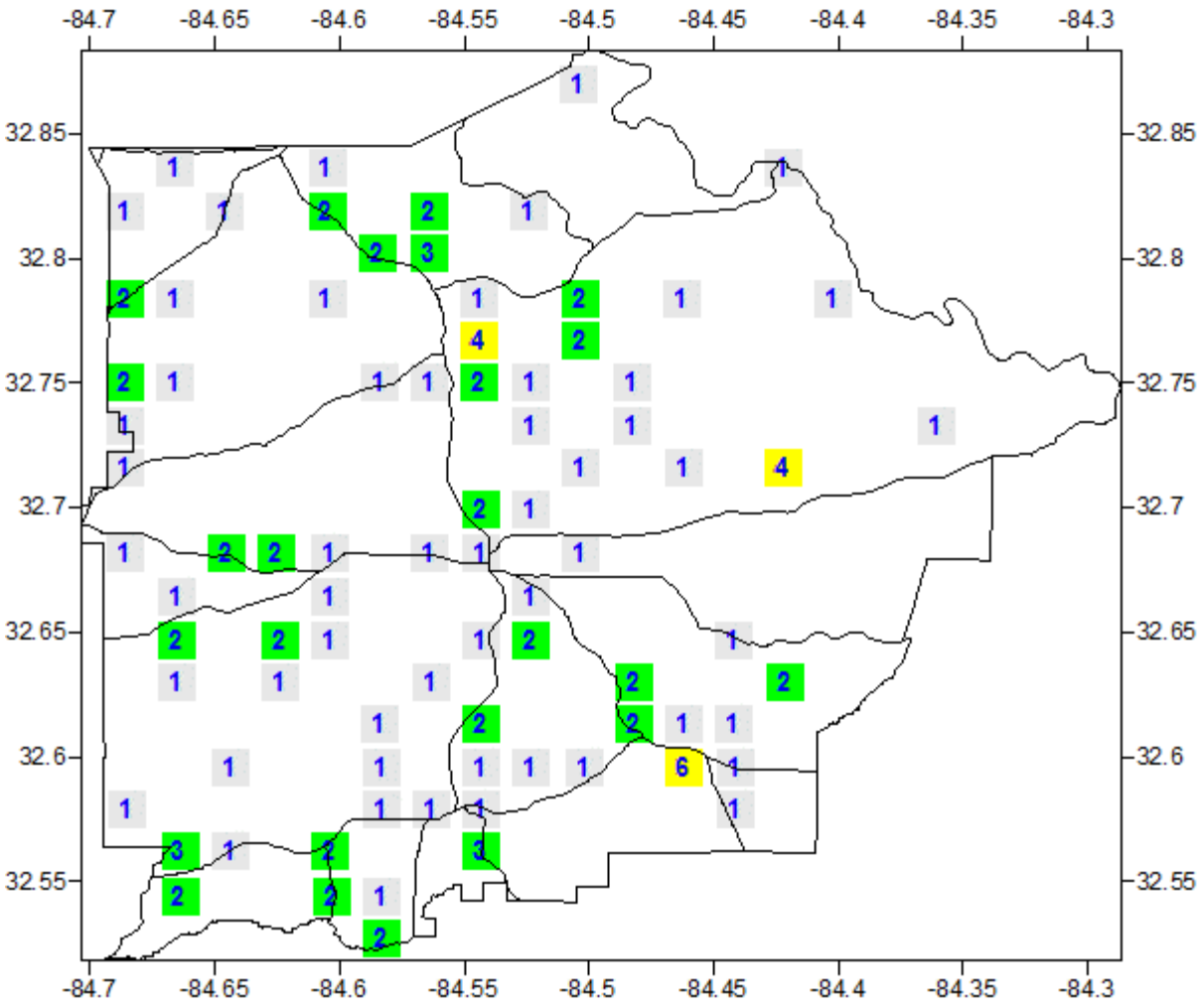
2 to 4
4 to 8
8 to 15
15 to 50

GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION

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



GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION

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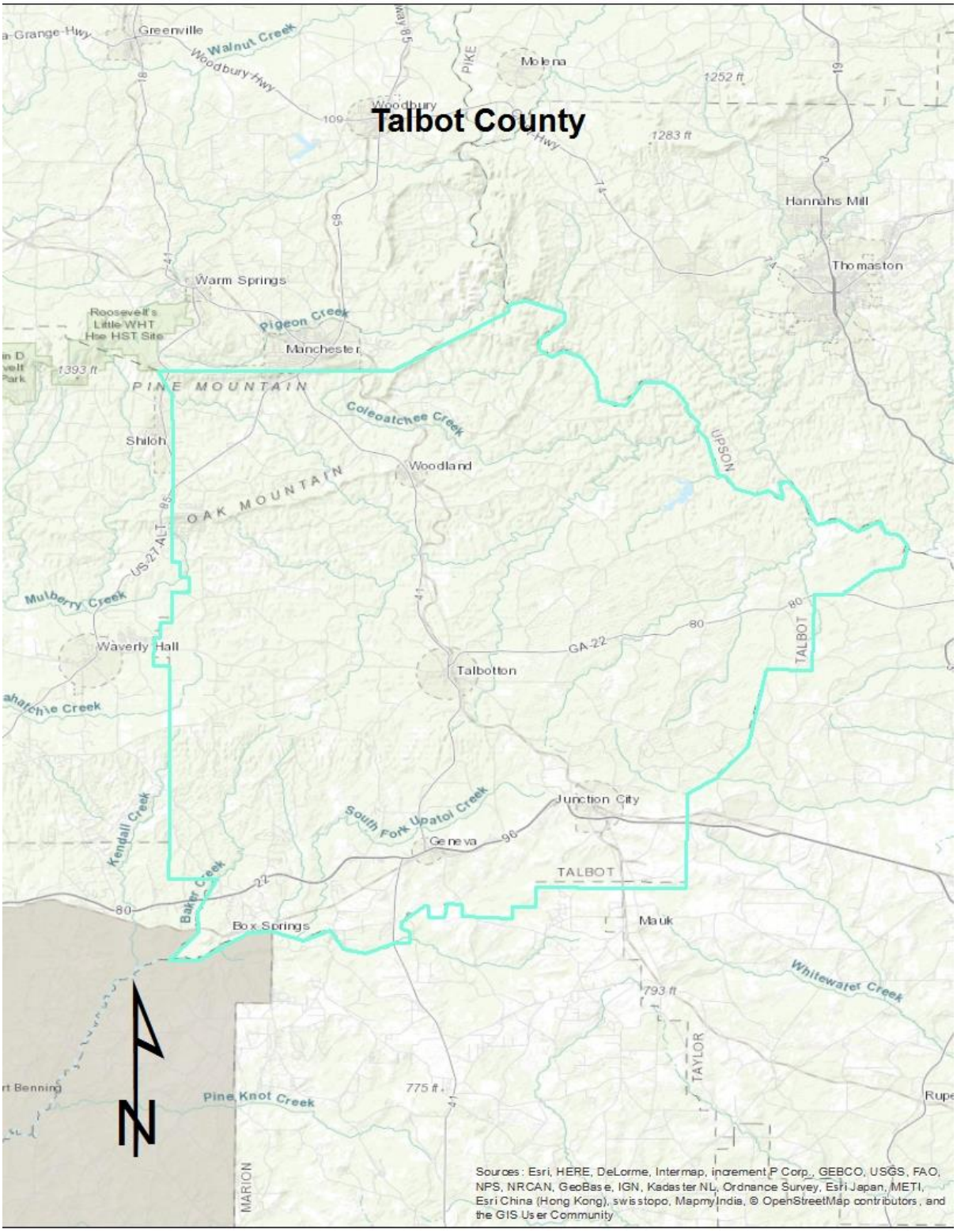
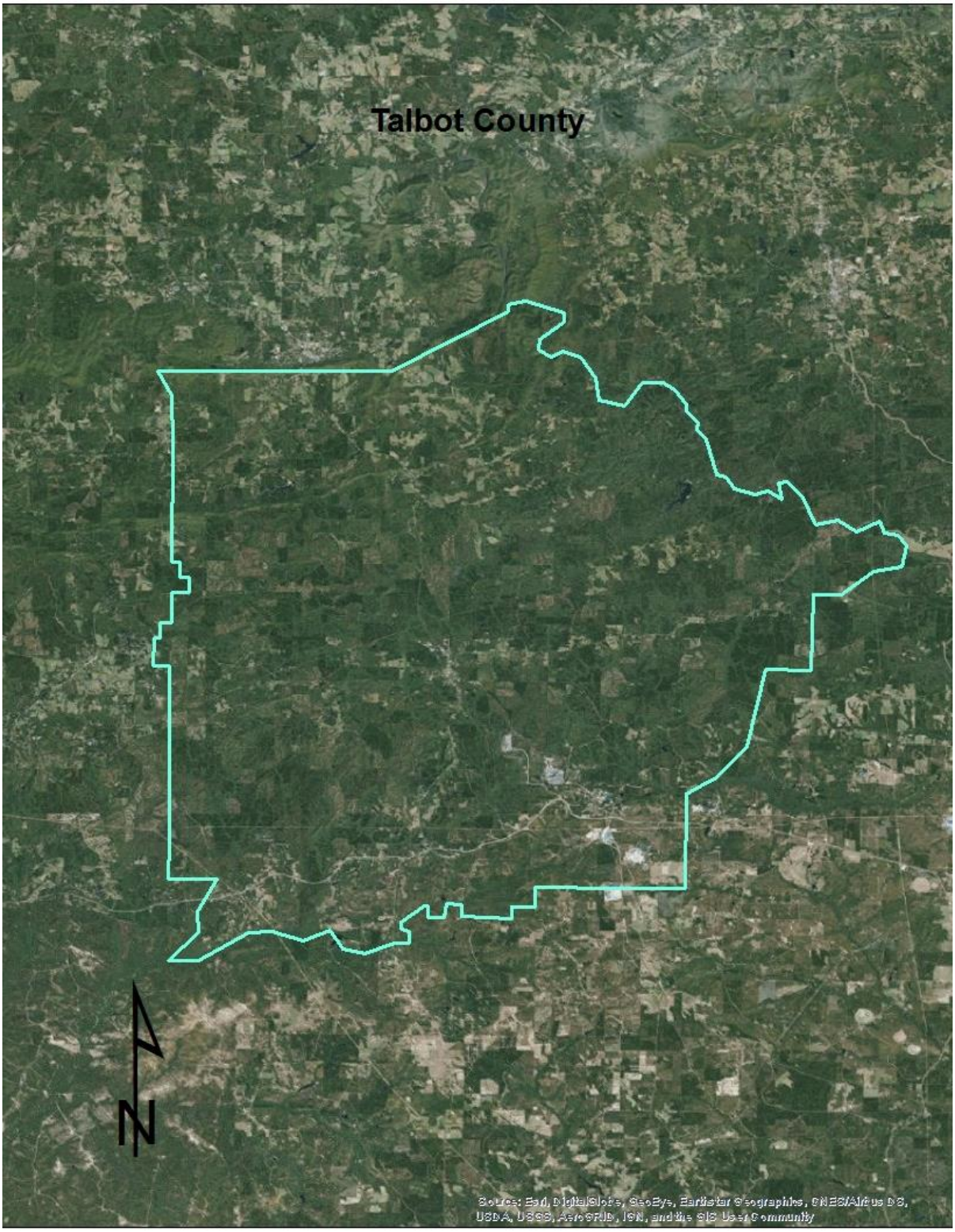
4 to 8
8 to 15
15 to 50

GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION

IV.COUNTY BASE MAPS




Talbot County
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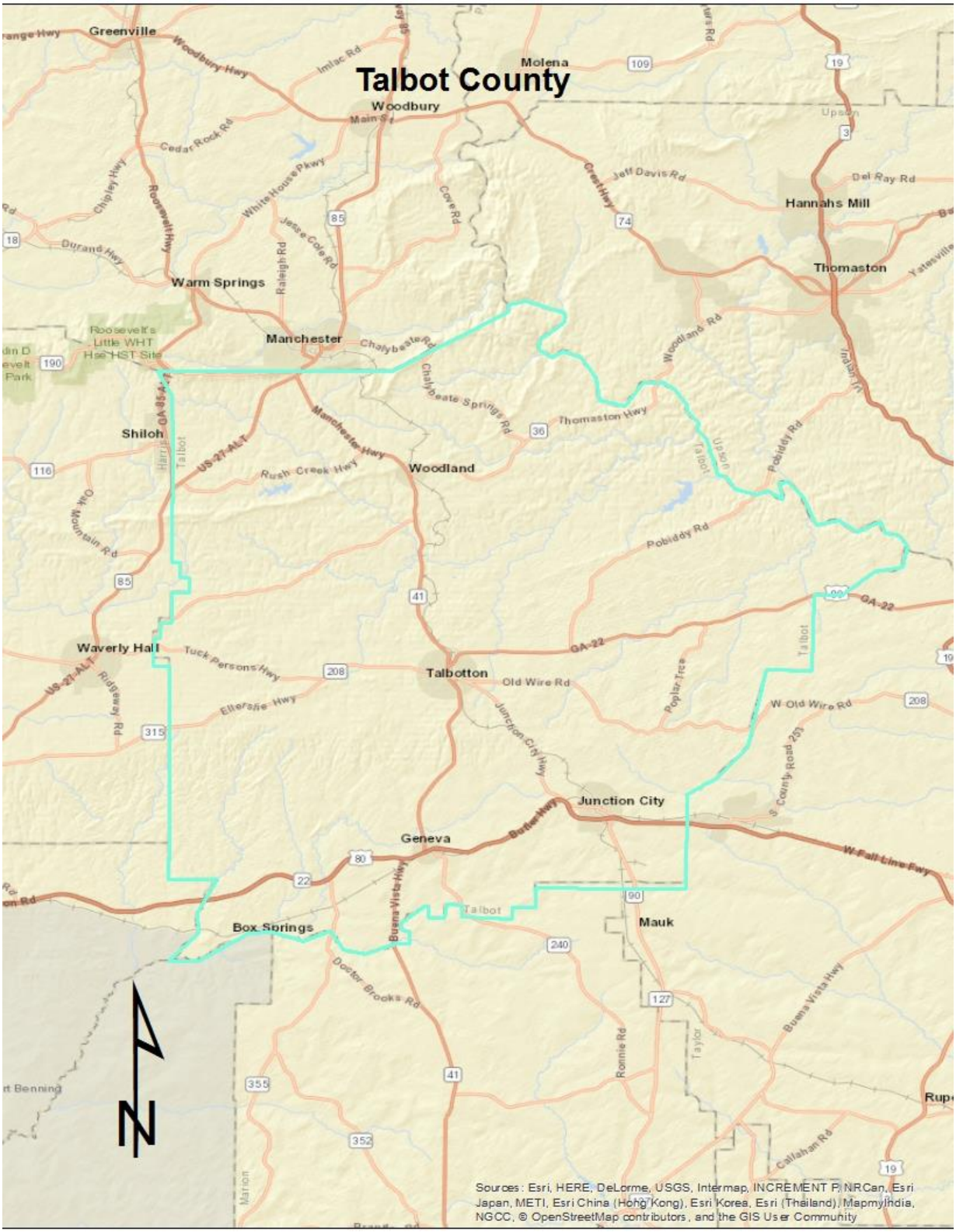
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community


Talbot County
Greenville
Woodbury
Molena
Hannahs Mill
Thomaston
Warm Springs
Manchester
Roosevelt's Little WHT Hse HST Site
Shiloh
Woodland
Waverly Hall
Talbotton
Junction City
Geneva
Box Springs
Mauk
Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), Mapmyindia, NGCC, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

V. WHAT ARE "COMMUNITIES-AT-RISK"?

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

In Talbot 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 owner(s) must assume be educated so they can assume a greater responsibility for wildfire protection--- by making improvements to the landscape and structures that will provide some wildfire protection until the fire services can arrive. This can only be accomplished is 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 operate safely and identifying residences with reflective "911addresses" wildfire protection can be greatly improved.

In addition, 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 are within most family budgets.

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 with the home ignition zone (within 100 feet of the home) either by removing highly flammable vegetation or by replacing the vegetation with fire resistant plan species will significantly improve wildfire safety.

TALBOT COUNTY WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE COMMUNITIES AT RISK

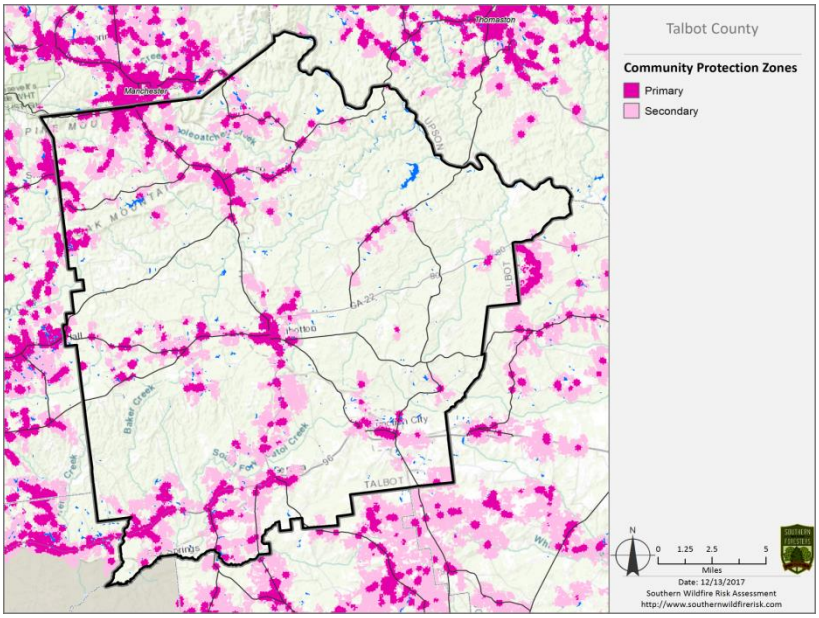
Community	Score	Hazard Rating
Pleasant Valley	171	Extreme Hazard
Box Springs & Thomas Circle	171	Extreme Hazard
Woodland at Jeff Hendricks Rd.	169	Extreme Hazard
Juniper Junction	169	Extreme Hazard
Powell Church Road (East)	157	Extreme Hazard
Rock Church Road	156	Extreme Hazard
O'Neal (Timber Line North)	153	Extreme Hazard
Geneva (Haley Fuller Rd.)	149	Extreme Hazard
Oak Mountain Estates	143	Extreme Hazard
Talbotton- Kelley Rd.	135	High Hazard
Flint Hill (GA Hwy. 85)	134	High Hazard
O'Neal (Baker Road)	127	Moderate Hazard
Powell Church Road (West)	122	Moderate Hazard
lake Talbot (Hut Road}	118	Moderate Hazard
Tazwell Highway	95	Moderate Hazard
Geneva (Oak Grove Road}	77	Moderate Hazard
Geneva	70	Low Hazard

These hazard ratings were completed by volunteers from the respective Talbot County Volunteer Fire Districts during October, November and December, 2009. The Georgia Forestry Commission's Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard 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 0 to 75 points to an extreme rating with over 140 points.

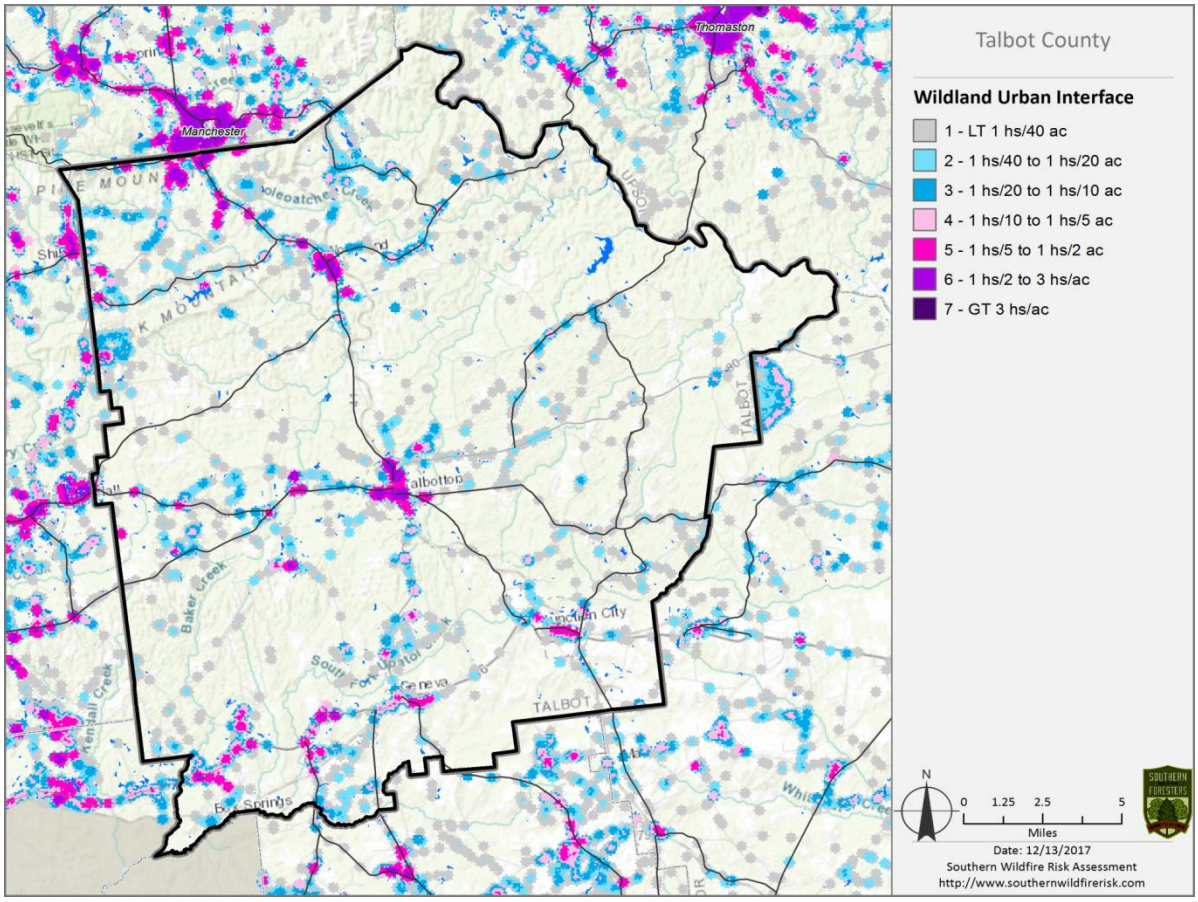
VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

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

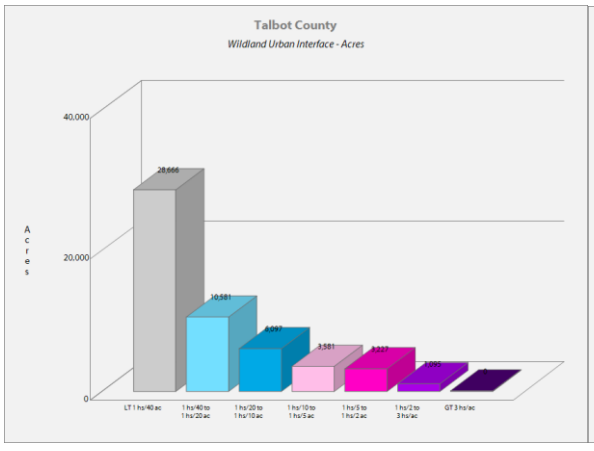
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests
- Allow agencies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

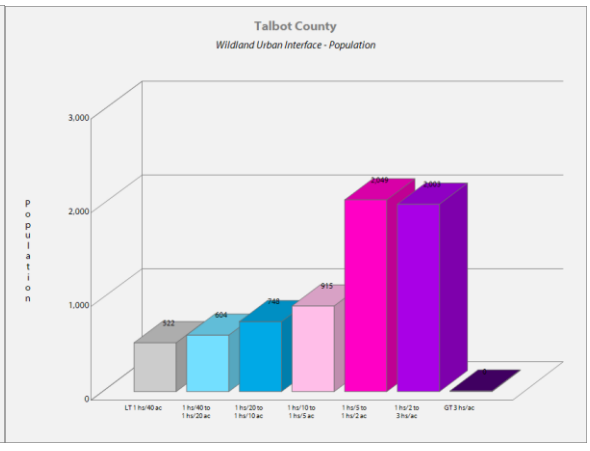


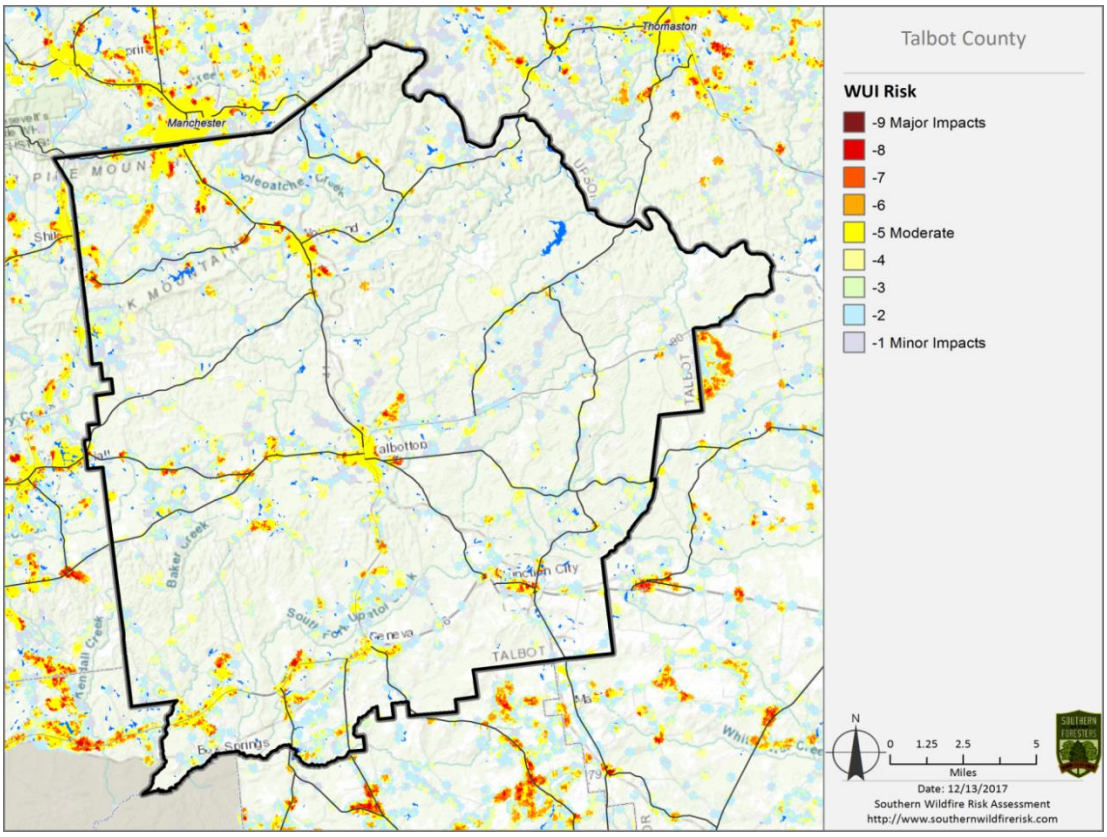
Community Protection Zones map from the Talbot County SWRA



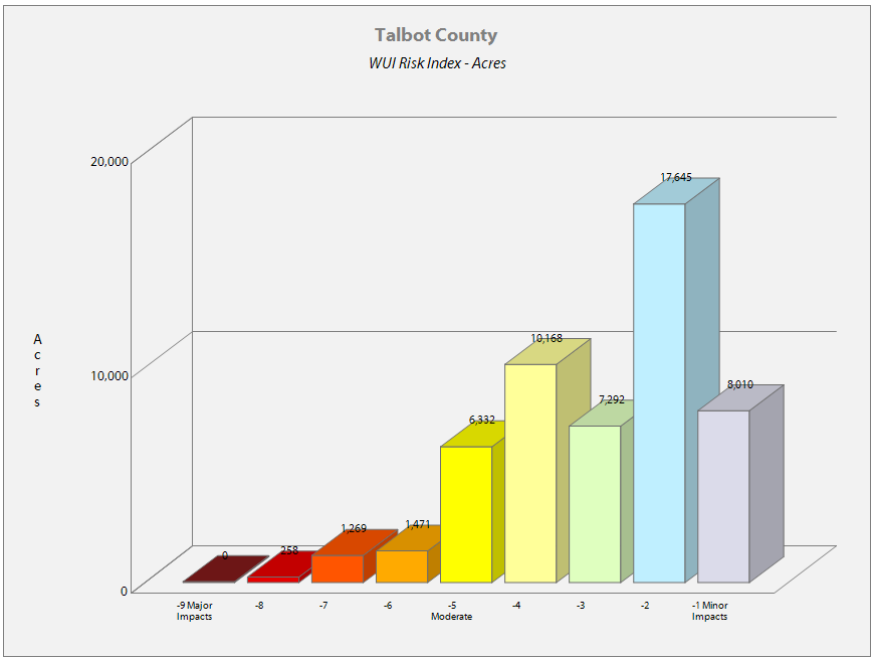
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Below: WUI Acres (left) and WUI Population (right)

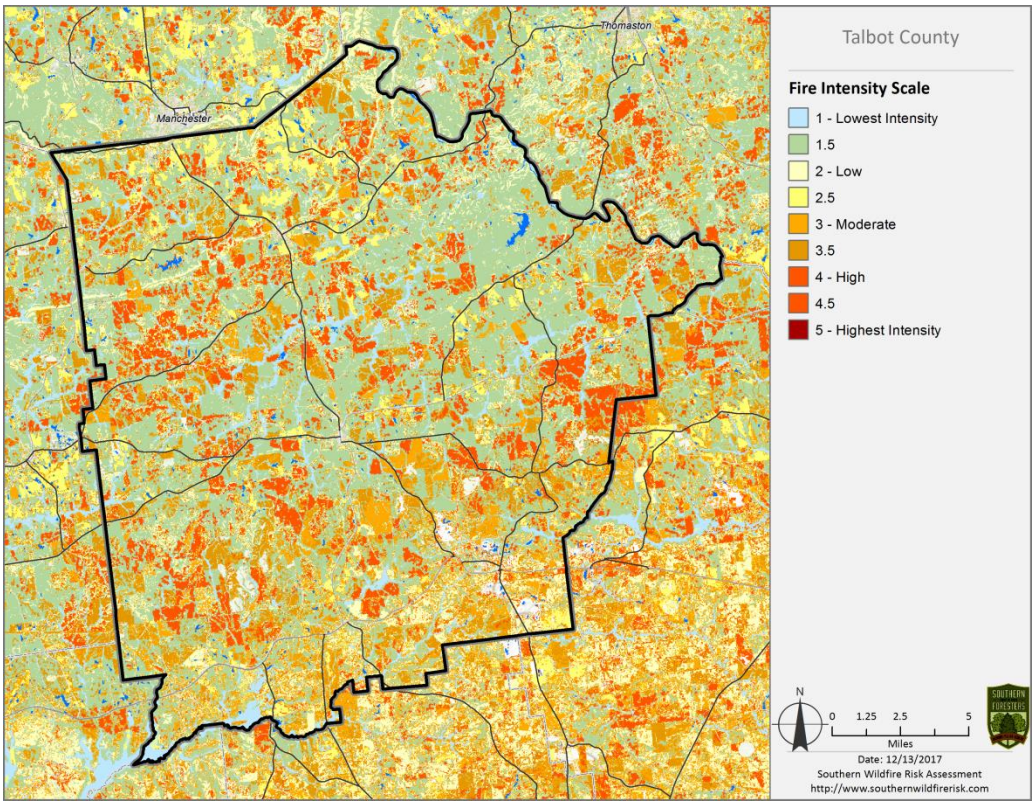




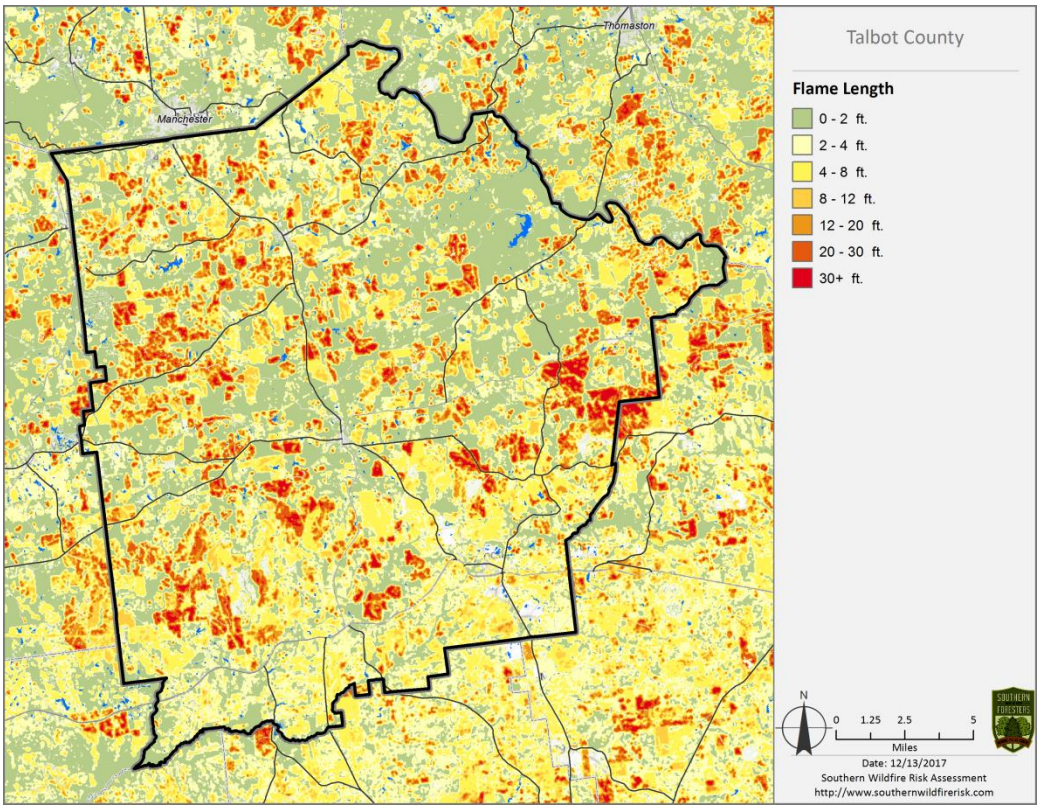


Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map Below: WUI Risk Index – Acres





Above: Fire Intensity Scale map Below: Flame Length map



VII. MITIGATION PLAN

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.

Critical Facilities:

Natural gas pipeline
Water treatment plant
Fire lookout tower
Morgan Oil Company
Auto salvage yards
LP gas fill stations
Senior Citizen Day Care Ctr.

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.

RECOMMENDATION: Initiate a Wildland Fire Protection public education campaign for Talbot 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, Planning and Zoning Board, the Chamber of Commerce and the County Courthouse.
- Encourage neighborhoods/communities that qualify to apply for recognition as a Firewise Community/USA.

Mitigating the Wildland Fuel Hazard

About 98 percent of Talbot County is forested with a significant portion of the total acreage owned and managed by forest industry (Meade-Westvaco, Plum Creek and MI). The accumulation of brush and other (mostly ground) vegetation in these forest and wildland areas can create conditions 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 and only 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. Citizens are likely to complain if the prevailing wind causes an accumulation of smoke and/or airborne ash in and around their homes (especially if the individuals impacted suffer from medical conditions that are exacerbated by airborne particulates). Additionally, smoke on the highway can quickly become a hazard for motorists, requiring that warning signs be posted by law enforcement officers.

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.

Pictured above left: A Georgia Forestry Commission masticater in a Loblolly Pine stand. This equipment is suited to mow understory vegetation to reduce fuel loads near developed areas.

Pictured above right: This type of equipment can mulch and shred understory vegetation. This helps reduce ladder fuels and other fuel for wildfire.

This type of mechanical fuel reduction is most practical in areas near homes where prescribed fire is not possible. The Georgia Forestry Commission and private contractors can provide this type of service.

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 Talbot County.

- Help county 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 county roads.

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

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Like most areas, new home starts in Talbot County are expected to increase over the next 20 years. If farm and ranch land is conserved as a mainstay of the County's rural economy, new development will 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 2012 the International Code Council developed the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC). This code is endorsed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and in 2014 was adopted by the Georgia Legislature for use by Georgia counties to help reduce risk in the WUI. Counties may adopt the code as needed in their building codes and zoning ordinances to help protect structures and reduce risk in the WUI.

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.
- Utilize the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) with building codes and zoning regulations.

FIRE SERVICES CAPABILITY

Gavin Hall is the EMA Director.

Mutual Aid Agreements exist with Columbus County, Harris County, Marion County, and Meriwether County Fire Departments.

Structural fire protection in Talbot County is provided by seven volunteer fire departments listed below:

Community	Personnel	Engines at Fire Departments
O'Neal	6	3 (including 3,000 gallon tanker and brush truck)
Talbotton	5	2 (including brush truck)
Flint Hill	20	3 (includes 1 engine is on loan from GFC)
Woodland	9	3 (includes1 engine on loan from GFC, 1 brush truck,1-2,000 gallon
Junction City	6	2 (includes1 engine is on loan from GFC)
Geneva	5	2
Box Springs	8	3 (includes 1 brush truck)

A limited number of hand tools are available at all stations, but there is no wildland personal protective equipment for use by volunteer firefighters, and no fire shelters are available.

Some of the volunteer firefighters have completed the Incident Management Training Courses, 1-100 &1-700, however, none (or very few) of the county's firefighters have had the basic wildfire training courses (S-130, Standards for Survival and S-190, Basic Wildfire Behavior).

Pressurized fire hydrants exist throughout much of the unincorporated area of Talbot County.

Recommendations for Improved Emergency Response

- Mobile water supply trucks
- Wildland fire training for volunteers
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for firefighters
- Wildland firefighting hand tools
- Multiple drop tanks
- Training on shuttling water
- Ready Set Go training

VIII. ACTION PLAN

Community/ Area at Risk	Project	Agency	Funding Needs	Priority	Community Recommendation
Countywide	Mitigation for nine (Extreme Hazard) Communities-at-Risk	County/GFC	$25,000	(H)	Implement a community fuel reduction initiative
Countywide	Firewise Workshop	GFC/County	$1,500	(M)	Hold countywide Firewise education workshop
Countywide	Volunteer Firefighter Training	County/GFC	$15,000	(H)	NIIMS, Standards for Survival & Wildland Fire Behavior Training
Countywide	Firefighter PPE & Tools	County	$20,000 PPE $5,000 Tools	(H)	Personal protective equipment, hand tools & fire shelters
Countywide	5,000 Gallon Water Tender	County	$250,000	(H)	Improved mobile water supply for remote areas
Countywide	1-Type VI Engine (Brush Truck)	County	$90,000	(M)	Improve Talbot County's off-road firefighting capability
Countywide	2 Drop tanks for mobile water supply	County	$6000	(M)	Improve water delivery in remote areas.

ASSESSMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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

- An annual wildfire risk assessment (of "communities-at-risk") would be conducted 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 a renewal of the original CWPP action plan.

- Mitigation efforts that could not be funded in the requested year will be incorporated into the annual renewal 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 surveys that are distributed by mail following the workshops.

- 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.

IX. MITIGATION ASSISTANCE & GRANT FUNDING

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

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

1. To provide technical and financial assistance to local governments to assist in the implementation of long term, cost effective hazard mitigation accomplishments.

2. This policy addresses wildfire mitigation for the purpose of reducing the threat to all-risk structures through creating defensible space, structural protection through the application of ignition resistant construction and limited hazardous fuel reduction to protect life and property.

3. With a completed registered plan (addendum to the State Plan) counties can apply for pre-mitigation funding. They will also be eligible for HMGP funding if the county is declared under a wildfire disaster.

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

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

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

X. GLOSSARY

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

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

CWPP – *The Community Wildfire Protection Plan.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Home Ignition Zone (Structure Ignition Zone) - *Treatment area for wildfire protection. The "zone" includes the structure(s) and their immediate surroundings from 0-200 ft.*
Mitigation – An a*ction that moderates the severity of a fire hazard or risk.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XI. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Publications/Brochures/Websites:

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

Appended Documents:

Talbot County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)
Talbot County Wildfire assessment scoresheets

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

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1-800-GA-TREES
GaTrees.org

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