



Community Wildfire Protection Plan

An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources

Toombs County, Georgia

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



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Prepared by;
Randy Mosley, Chief Ranger, Toombs County
Will Fell, CWPP Specialist (Initial plan 2010)
Beryl Budd, Wildfire Prevention Specialist (Revised plan 2019)

Georgia Forestry Commission
3689 Hwy. 15
Vidalia, GA. 30474

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

Jon Jones
County Manager, Toombs County
(912) 526-3311

Darel Corley
Chief, Lyons Fire Department
(912) 526-8114

Randy Mosley
Chief Ranger, Toombs County Forestry Unit
(912) 538-1155

Brian Sikes
Chief, Vidalia Fire Dept.
(912)537-4141

Johnny Moser
Chief, Toombs Fire
(912) 293-9362

Lynn Moore
EMA Director, Toombs County
(912) 526-6424

David Beasley
Chief, Cedar Crossing VFD
(912) 286-3268

Larry Stephens
Chief, Marvin Yancey VFD
(912) 565-7646

Josh Dasher
Assistant Chief, Marvin Yancy VFD
(912) 565-7646/ (912) 565-9322

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Appended Documents:

Toombs County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Toombs County Wildfire Pre-suppression Plan

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

I. OBJECTIVES

The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Toombs County. The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect this community and its essential infrastructure. It also includes a plan for wildfire suppression. Specifically, the plan includes community-centered actions that will:

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

II. COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The core team convened on May 7th, 2009 to assess risks and develop the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The group is comprised of representatives from local government, local fire authorities, and the state agency responsible for forest management. Below are the groups included in the task force:

Toombs County Government

County Volunteer Fire Departments

Emergency Management

Board of County Commissioners

City of Lyons

Lyons Fire Department,

City of Vidalia

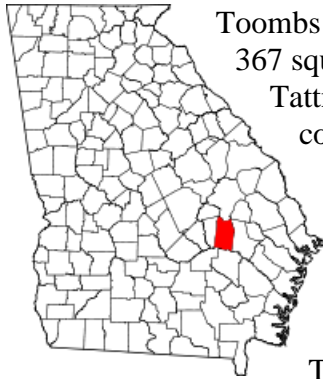
Vidalia Fire Department

Georgia Forestry Commission

It was decided to conduct community assessments on the basis of the individual fire districts in the county. The chiefs of the six fire departments in the county assessed their districts and reconvened on June 15th, 2009 for the purpose of completing the following:

Risk Assessment	Assessed wildfire hazard risks and prioritized mitigation actions.
Fuels Reduction	Identified strategies for coordinating fuels treatment projects.
Structure Ignitability	Identified strategies for reducing the ignitability of structures within the Wildland interface.
Emergency Management	Forged relationships among local government and fire districts and developed/refined a pre-suppression plan.
Education and Outreach	Developed strategies for increasing citizen awareness and action and to conduct homeowner and community leader workshops.

III. COMMUNITY & WILDFIRE HISTORY



Toombs County, in southeast Georgia, is the state's 144th county and comprises 367 square miles. It was created in 1905 from Emanuel, Montgomery, and Tattnall counties. It was named for Robert Toombs, a former U.S. congressman and senator who went on to serve the Confederacy as secretary of state and brigadier general. The land was originally held by Creek Indians. A large percentage of the earliest white settlers were Scots Highlanders, many of whom lived in North Carolina before they came to Georgia.

A land of forests and wiregrass, Toombs County was dominated by small farms concentrating on livestock, corn, and cotton during the nineteenth century. The arrival of railroads in the 1890s brought settlers from nearby counties and North Carolina. Interested in tapping the forests for timber and naval stores, the settlers built houses along the railroad lines, and towns sprang up around the clusters of homes.



Lyons, the county seat, was incorporated in 1897. It was named in honor of the man who convinced the Seaboard Air Line Railway to build tracks through the town. The first courthouse, completed in 1906, burned down in 1917 and was rebuilt in 1919. The current courthouse was built in 1964.

Other incorporated towns in Toombs County are Santa Claus and Vidalia. Santa Claus, incorporated in 1941, was named by a local farmer who hoped the name would attract tourists to stop for his pecans. Vidalia, incorporated in 1890, was originally called Jenkins Station for its railroad depot, which was named after local landowner Warren T. Jenkins. There are conflicting stories regarding the origin of the name "Vidalia," the most likely being that it was assigned by a daughter of Samuel Hawkins, the president of the Savannah, Americus and Montgomery Railroad. She may have found the name on a document or map referring to Vidalia, Louisiana, or she may have contracted the words "via" and "dahlia" (by the route of the dahlias) to form the name. Current maps of Toombs County include the unincorporated communities of Cedar Crossing, Johnson Corner, Normantown, and Ohoopce.

Although the Great Depression brought the same kinds of social and economic problems to the county as were experienced across the nation, Toombs was able to rebound soon afterward, as the country prepared for and engaged in World War II (1941-45). During the war, a U.S. Army Air Force field was located in Vidalia, and large numbers of residents joined the military. Businesses supporting military personnel and industries supplying the war effort thrived. Prosperity continued after the war ended; Vidalia grew into a regional trade center and continues to flourish.

Tobacco was a large part of the county's early economy, but for decades the county's most famous crop has been the sweet Vidalia onion, which gave Vidalia the nickname "Sweet Onion Capital of the World." The onion is sold all over the United States and attracts tourists to Toombs County for the annual Vidalia Onion Festival.

A number of noteworthy Georgians have called Toombs County home. Iris Faircloth Blicht, the first woman to serve two terms in the Georgia senate (1946-

48 and 1952-54), later became one of the first women from Georgia to win a seat in the U.S. Congress (1955-63). Mel Blount, a professional football player for the Pittsburgh Steelers; James T. McIntyre, the director of the Office of Management and Budget during Jimmy Carter's presidency; and restaurateur Sema Americus Wilkes, proprietor of the nationally known Savannah restaurant Mrs. Wilkes' Dining Room, also resided in the county.

The John E. Ladson Genealogical and Historical Library, established in the 1940s by its namesake, is now housed and maintained by the Ochoopee Regional Library System in Vidalia.

Toombs County boasts several buildings and areas listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Altamaha Museum of Art and History in Vidalia, housed in the Brazell House, holds several noteworthy permanent collections, including a large collection of Staffordshire porcelain and prints by John James Audubon, as well as a room dedicated to the history of the Girl Scouts. The Seaboard Air Line Railway Depot was built in 1930 and renovated in 1990 to serve as a community center for Lyons. Southeastern Technical College operates several facilities within the county.

According to the 2000 U.S. census, the population of Toombs County is 26,067 (69.2 percent white, 24.2 percent black, and 8.9 percent Hispanic), an 8.3 percent increase since 1990.

(Courtesy *New Georgia Encyclopedia*)



Wildfire History

Toombs County located in the heart of Southeastern Georgia, despite its well known agricultural presence, is still 67% forested. With the exception of the large block of woodlands along the Altamaha River, there are homes and communities scattered throughout the county. The risks and hazards from the wildland urban interface are fairly general and substantial throughout the county even on the edges of the two major population centers of Vidalia and Lyons.

Toombs County is protected by organized fire departments within the city's of Lyons and Vidalia and six widely spaced volunteer fire departments in the unincorporated areas, Normantown, South Thompson, Cedar Crossing, New Branch, East Toombs and Marvin Yancey. The Georgia Forestry Commission maintains a county protection unit located about three miles southeast of Lyons on Hwy 178 to respond to wildfires throughout the county. The cities of Lyons and Vidalia and the adjacent areas of the county are serviced by a pressurized water system with well placed hydrants throughout.

Over the past fifty years, Toombs County has averaged 93 reported wildland fires per year. The occurrence of these fires shows a pronounced peak in the five months from December through April and a slight decrease during the late summer months. These fires have burned an average of 477 acres annually. The monthly acreage burned fairly well corresponds with the number of fires. Interestingly while the annual numbers of fires have not changed noticeably during the 50 year period that records are available, the annual acreage lost appears to have decreased in later years. In the years prior to 1990, Toombs County reported an annual average of 95 fires burning 605 acres and since 1990 these figures are 90 fires burning 255 acres annually. This reduction in average size from over six acres per fire to about 3 acres per fire is perhaps the result of better response and equipment from both the Georgia Forestry Commission and the increased presence of rural fire departments. Despite this welcome trend in fire behavior, more homes are being built outside of traditional communities into the wildland urban interface.

The leading causes of these fires, was debris burning and arson causing 40% and 29% respectively of the fires and 33% and 43% respectively of the acres burned. Over the past ten years (FY 2008-2017) records show that debris burning was the leading cause accounting for 36% of the wildfires and 45% of the acres burned. Machine use was the second leading cause accounting for 26% of the fires and 22% of the acres burned.

Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Records show that in the past ten years (FY2008 – FY2017), seven homes have been lost or damaged by wildfire in Toombs County resulting in estimated losses of \$177,000 along with 18 outbuildings valued at \$45,250. According to reports during this period 203 homes have also been directly or indirectly threatened by these fires. Additionally 8 vehicles valued at \$41,750 and 13 other pieces of mechanized equipment valued at \$39,750 were lost. Crop damage has also been estimated at \$4235. This is a substantial loss of non-timber property attributed to wildfires in Toombs County.

County = Toombs	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	9		21.35	4.60	8.21
Children	Children	3		14.90	1.60	5.77
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	1		8.76	2.60	9.86
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	4		3.04	1.00	0.72
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	2		2.22	3.20	9.32
Debris: Household Garbage	Debris: Household Garbage	1		0.01	0.20	0.00
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	10		60.13	11.20	36.87
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	4		4.33	2.00	4.06
Incendiary	Incendiary	3		84.49	4.20	24.19
Lightning	Lightning	1		0.02	1.00	13.46
Machine Use	Machine Use	2		26.67	3.60	14.23
Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	0		0.00	0.80	1.77
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	4		11.19	3.60	20.80
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	2		7.65	0.80	3.45
Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	0		0.00	0.20	0.35
Railroad	Railroad	0		0.00	0.20	0.54
Smoking	Smoking	0		0.00	0.20	0.42
Totals for County: Toombs Year: 2018		46		244.76	41.00	154.00

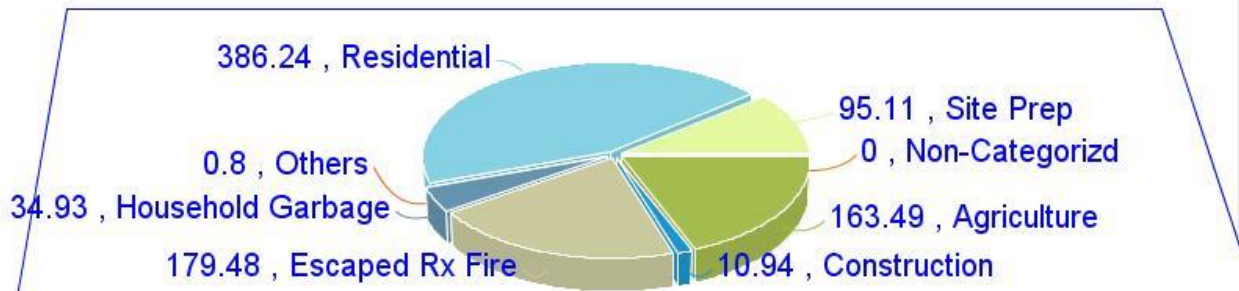
Acreage Burned /Number of Fires For Toombs County For FY 2008-2017				
Year	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2008	210.18	79	2.66	4.56
2009	153.74	71	2.17	3.90
2010	102.15	56	1.82	3.93
2011	631.69	163	3.88	17.56
2012	215.53	58	3.72	5.08
2013	138.26	45	3.07	4.53
2014	117.88	44	2.68	5.02
2015	140.52	30	4.68	4.42
2016	58.53	23	2.54	6.29
2017	208.29	62	3.36	11.60

Acreage Burned /Number of Fires by Fire Cause For Toombs County For FY 2008-2017		
Fire Cause	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires
Campfire	55.73	44
Children	44.44	25
Debris Burning	870.99	225
Incendiary	88.09	39
Lightning	125.57	29
Machine Use	428.38	164
Miscellaneous	322.62	86
Railroad	0.00	0
Smoking	19.53	14
Undetermined	0.52	1
Total	1,955.87	627

Number of Fires by Cause for Toombs County for FY 2008 to 2018

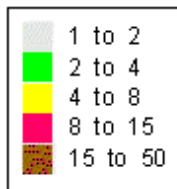
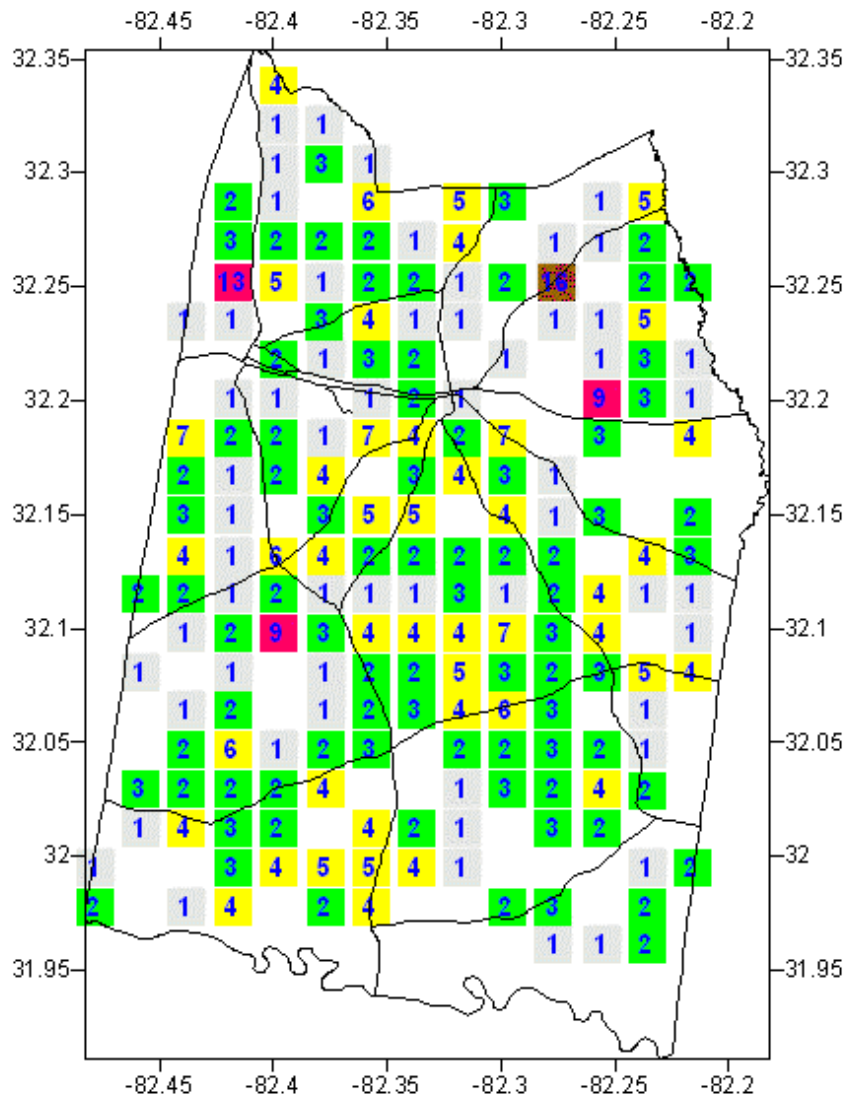
Year	Campfire	Children	Debris Burning	Incendiary	Lightning	Machine Use	Miscellaneous	Railroad	Smoking
2008	3	4	21	0	5	39	4	0	3
2009	6	2	28	7	4	12	7	0	5
2010	2	2	20	0	1	19	10	0	2
2011	11	8	43	7	10	60	20	1	3
2012	5	2	24	3	4	13	6	1	0
2013	3	2	10	4	1	5	19	1	0
2014	6	0	21	2	0	3	12	0	0
2015	0	0	19	3	1	3	4	0	0
2016	3	0	9	7	1	2	1	0	0
2017	5	5	30	6	2	8	4	1	1
2018	9	3	22	3	1	2	6	0	0

Acreage Burned by Debris Burning Sub Cause For Toombs County For FY 2008-2017

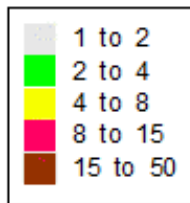
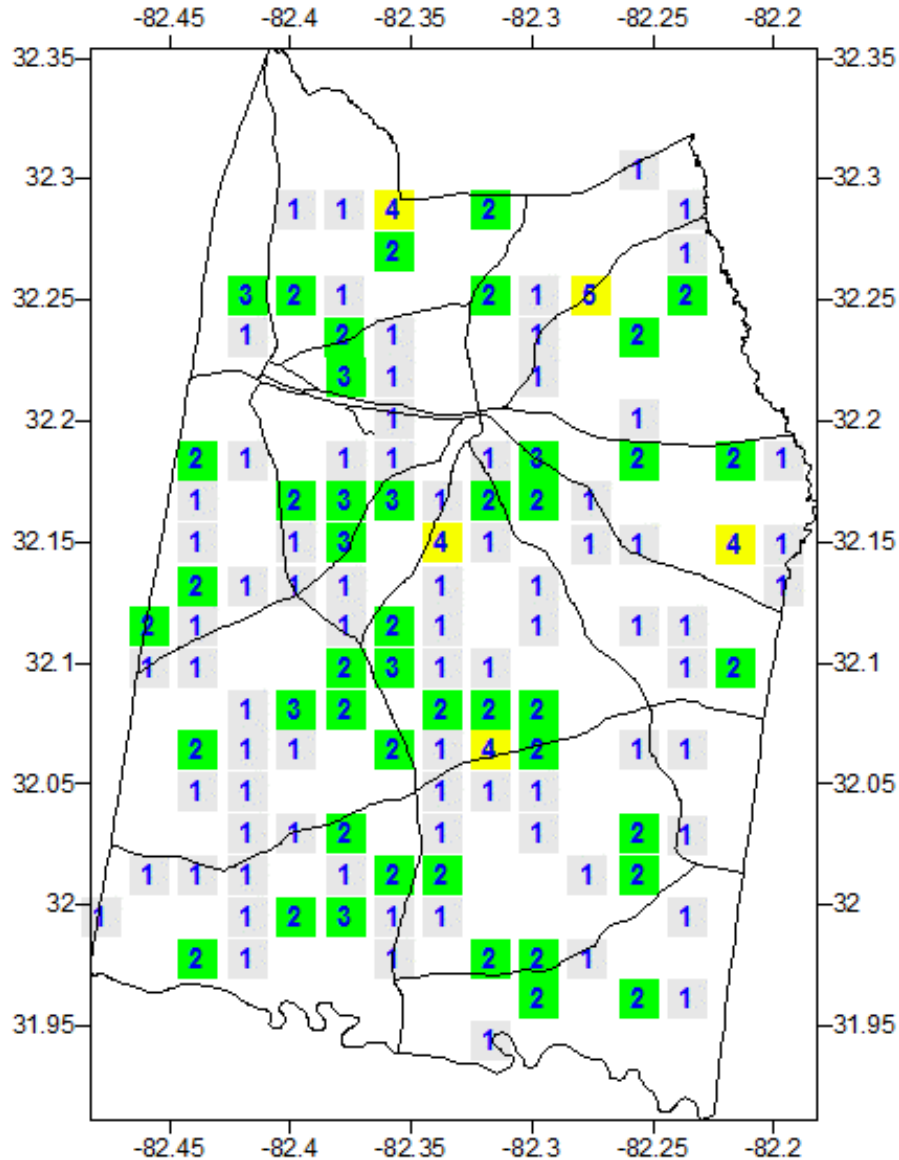


Fire Cause

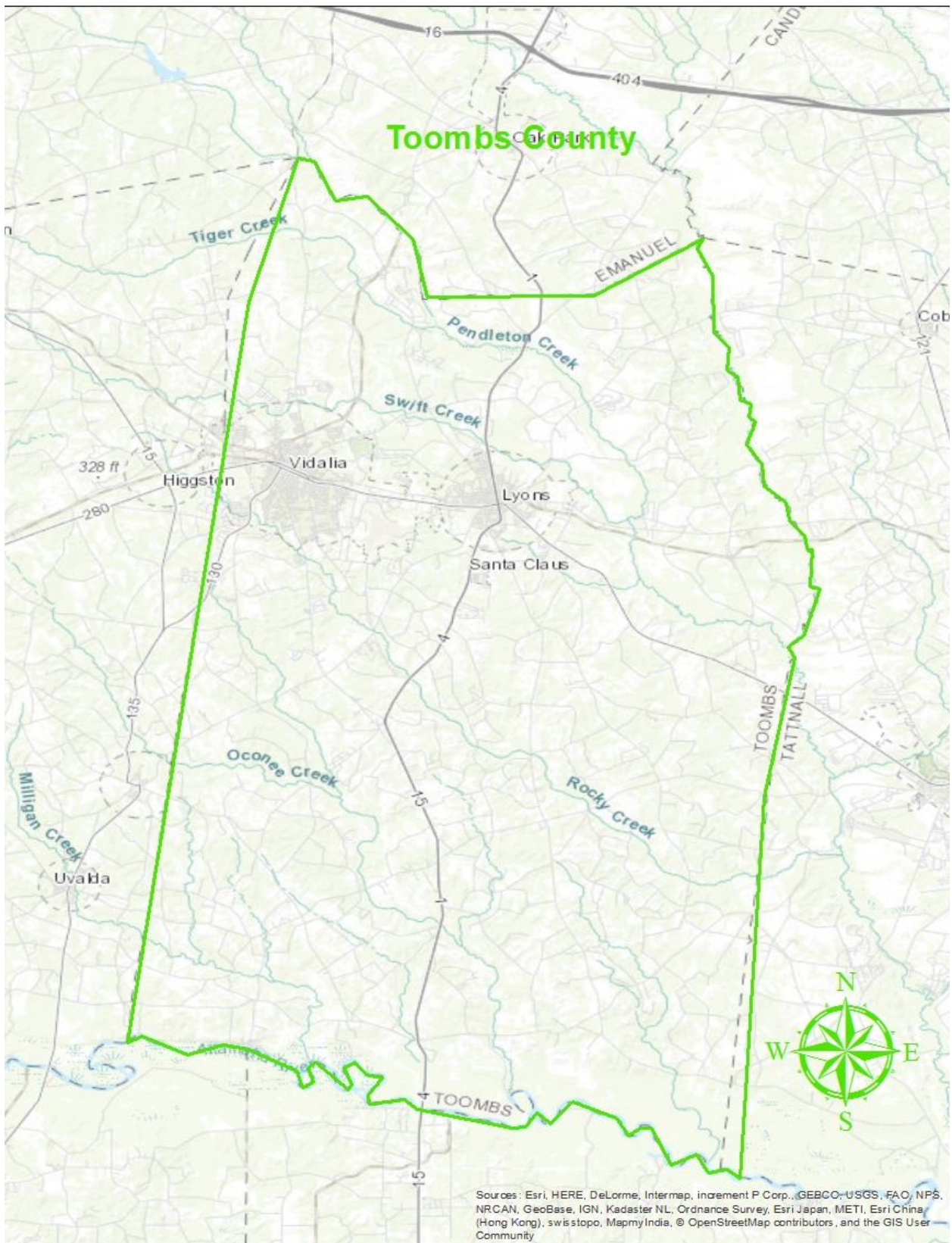
Fire Occurrence Map for Toombs County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011



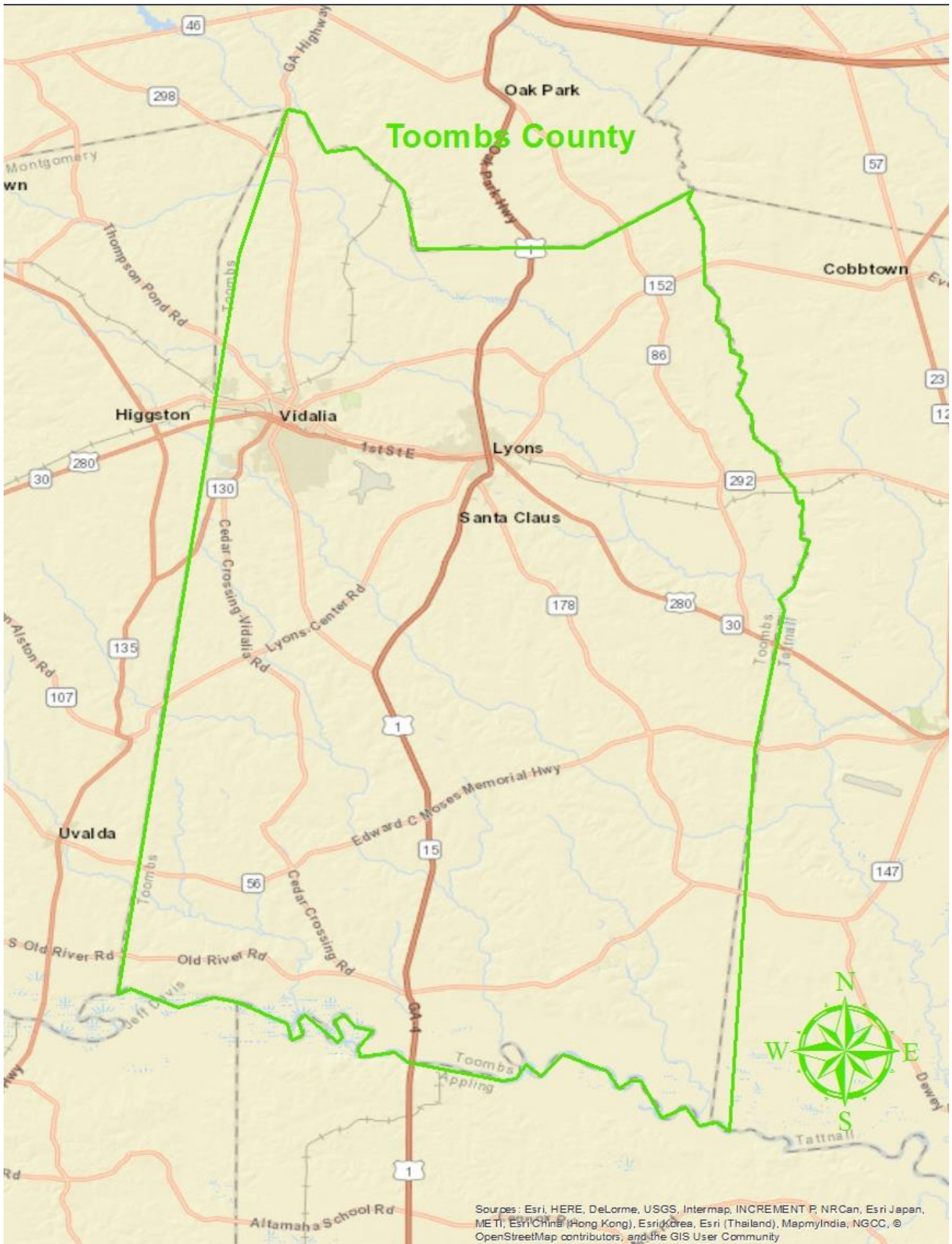
Fire Occurrence Map for Toombs County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



IV. COMMUNITY BASE MAP







V. COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

The Wildland-Urban Interface

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

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

- 1. “Boundary” wildland-urban interface** is characterized by areas of development where homes, especially new subdivisions, press against public and private wildlands, such as private or commercial forest land or public forests or parks. This is the classic type of wildland-urban interface, with a clearly defined boundary between the suburban fringe and the rural countryside.
- 2. “Intermix” wildland-urban interface** areas are places where improved property and/or structures are scattered and interspersed in wildland areas. These may be isolated rural homes or an area that is just beginning to go through the transition from rural to urban land use.
- 3. “Island” wildland-urban interface**, also called occluded interface, are areas of wildland within predominately urban or suburban areas. As cities or subdivisions grow, islands of undeveloped land may remain, creating remnant forests. Sometimes these remnants exist as parks, or as land that cannot be developed due to site limitations, such as wetlands.
(courtesy *Fire Ecology and Wildfire Mitigation in Florida* 2004)

The wildland fire risk assessments conducted in 2009 by the Toombs County Fire Departments returned an average score of 83, placing Toombs County in the “high” hazard range. The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Toombs County’s WUI was the Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Checklist. The instrument takes into consideration accessibility, vegetation (based on fuel models), roofing assembly, building construction, and availability of fire protection resources, placement of gas and electric utilities, and additional rating factors. The following factors contributed to the wildfire hazard score for Toombs County:

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

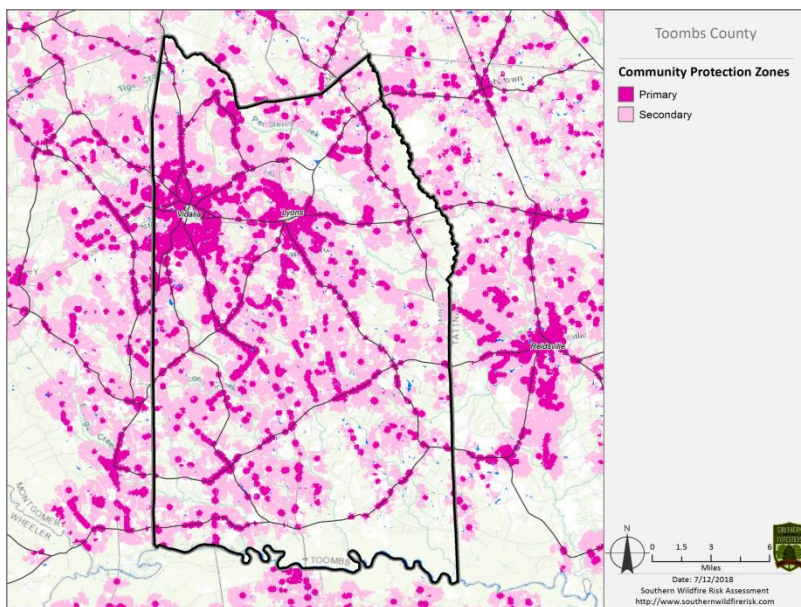
Summary of Toombs County Assessment Ratings

Fire District/ Community	Access	Surrounding Vegetation	Building Construction	Fire Protection	Utilities	Additional Factors	Score	Hazard Rating
New Branch	13	15	30	14	7	5	84	High
Marvin Yancey	18	20	25	20	6	13	102	Very High
Normantown	9	15	15	5	5	10	59	Moderate
East Toombs	10	20	15	19	7	0	71	Moderate
Pendleton Creek Development	24	15	35	20	7	7	108	Very High
Cedar Crossing	19	20	22	7	7	21	113	Very High
Vidalia	22	12	8	8	7	10	65	Moderate
Average	16	17	21	13	7	9	83	High

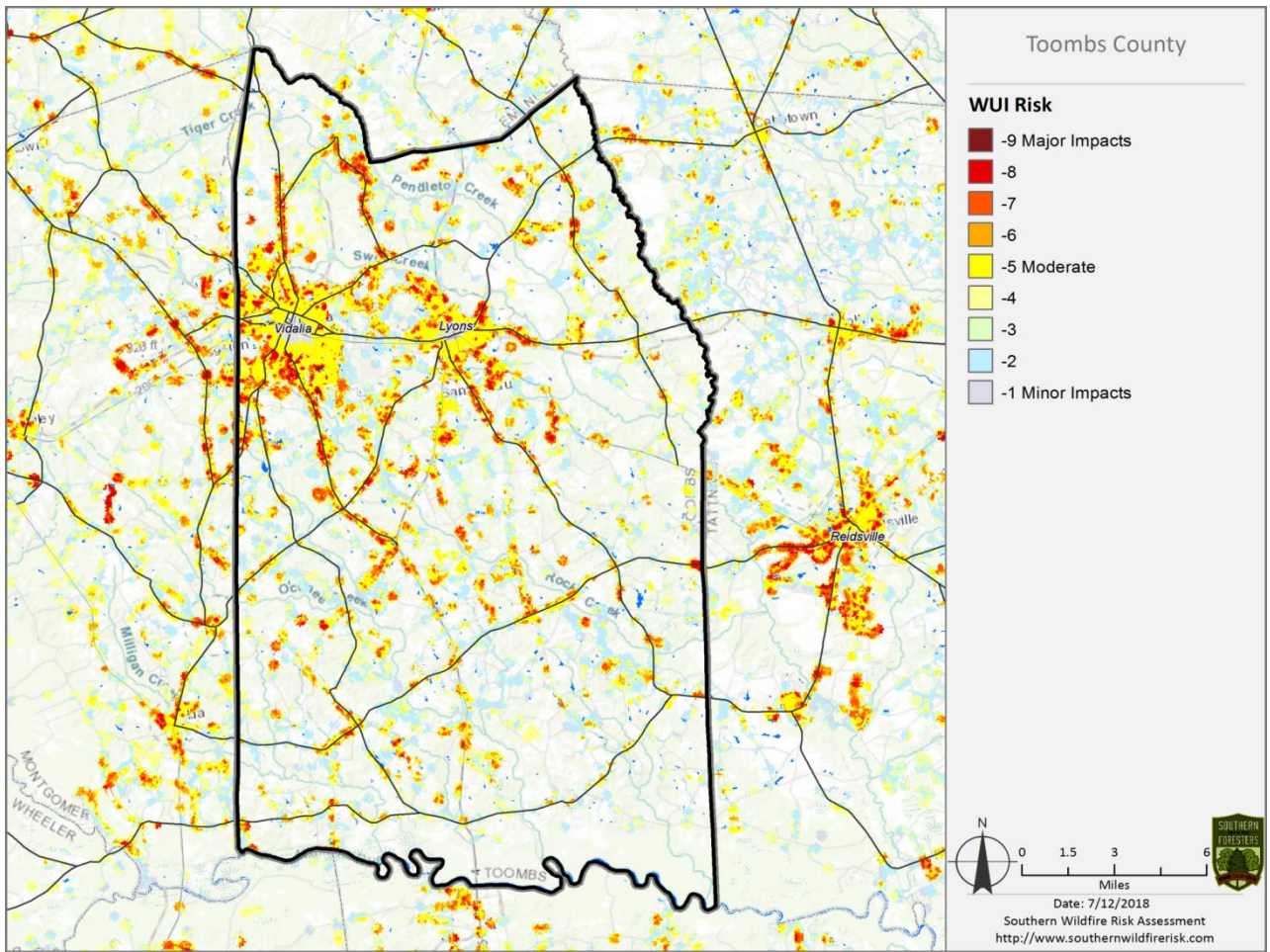
VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

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

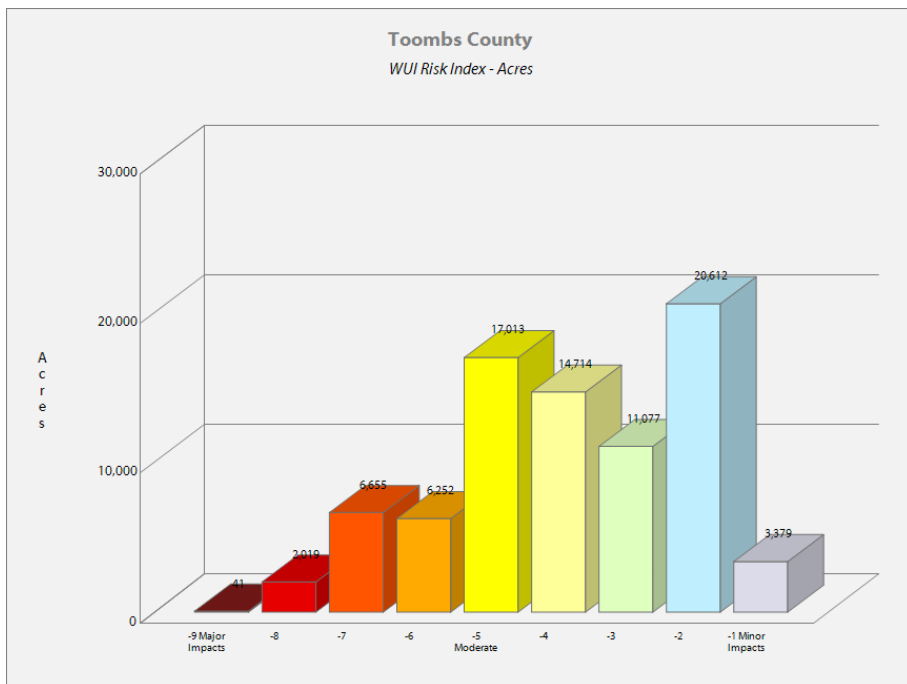
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire.
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning.
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests.
- Allow agencies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

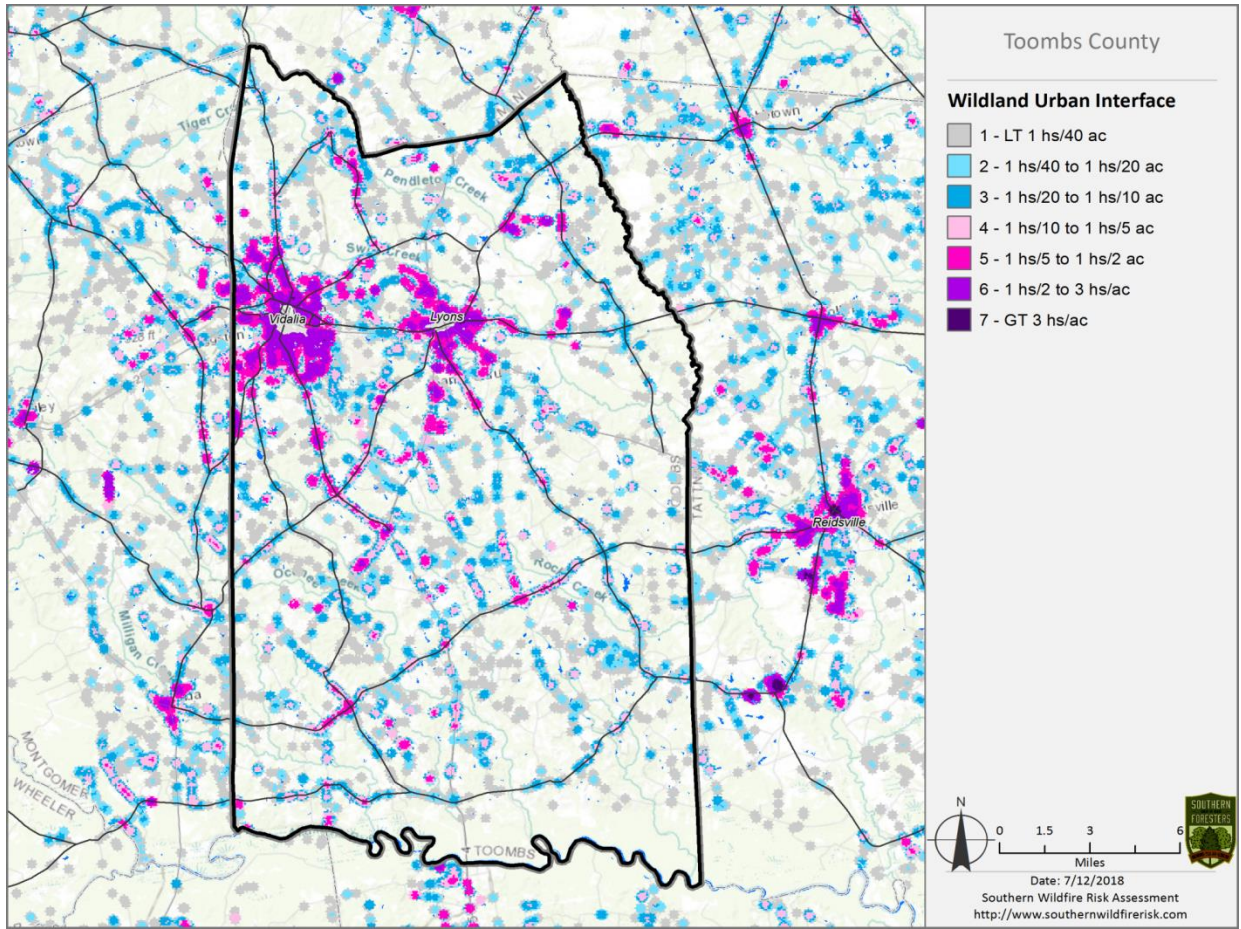


Community Protection Zones map from the Toombs County SWRA

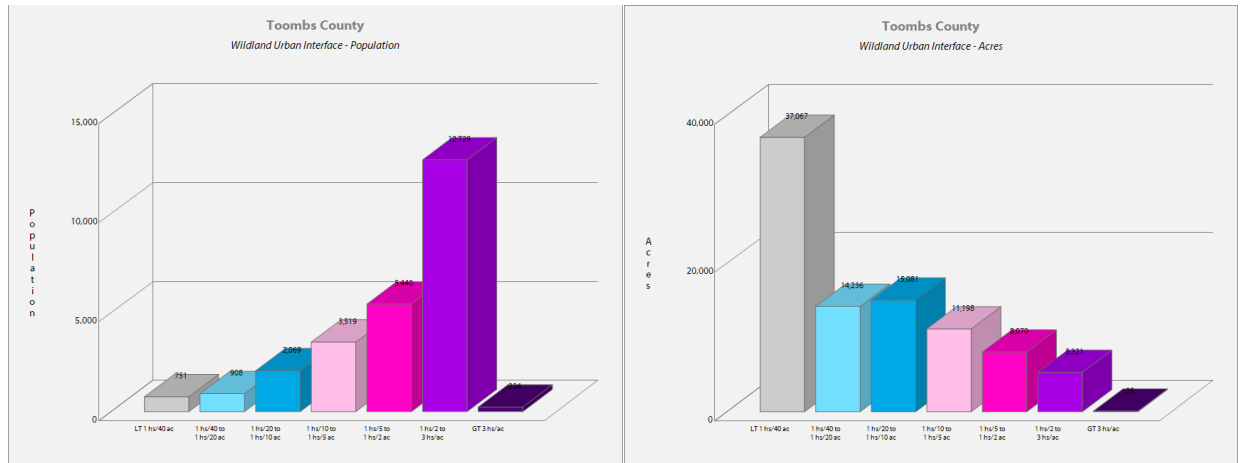


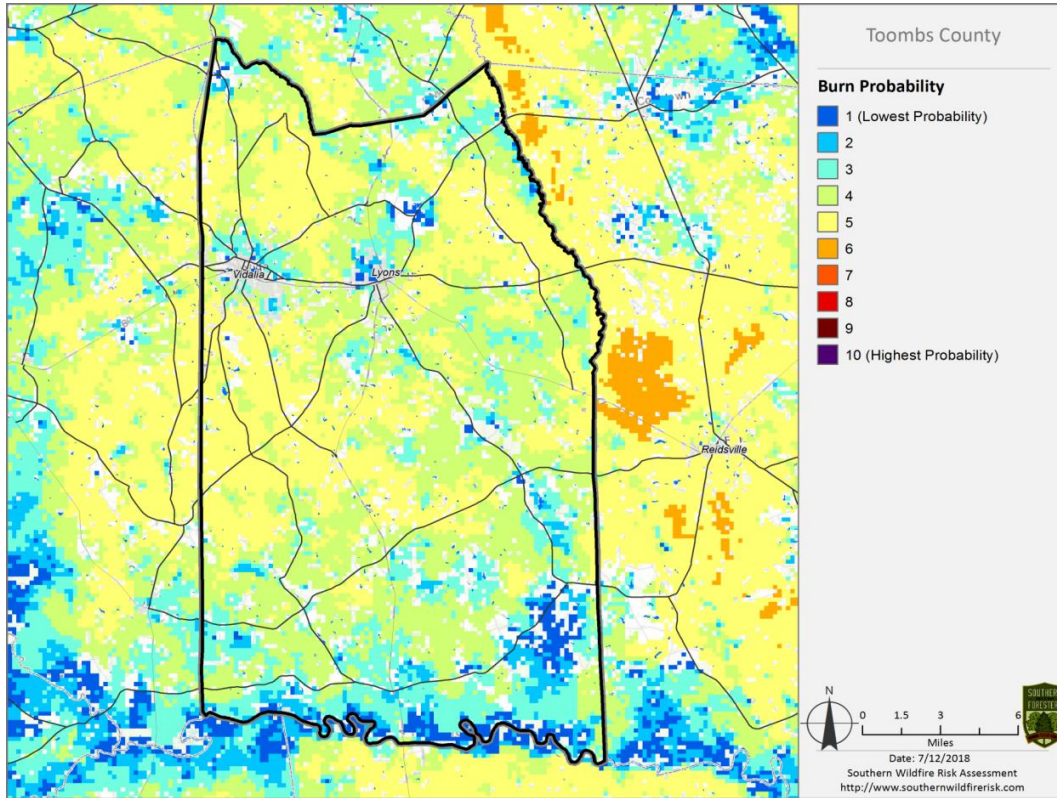
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map Below: WUI Risk Index Acres



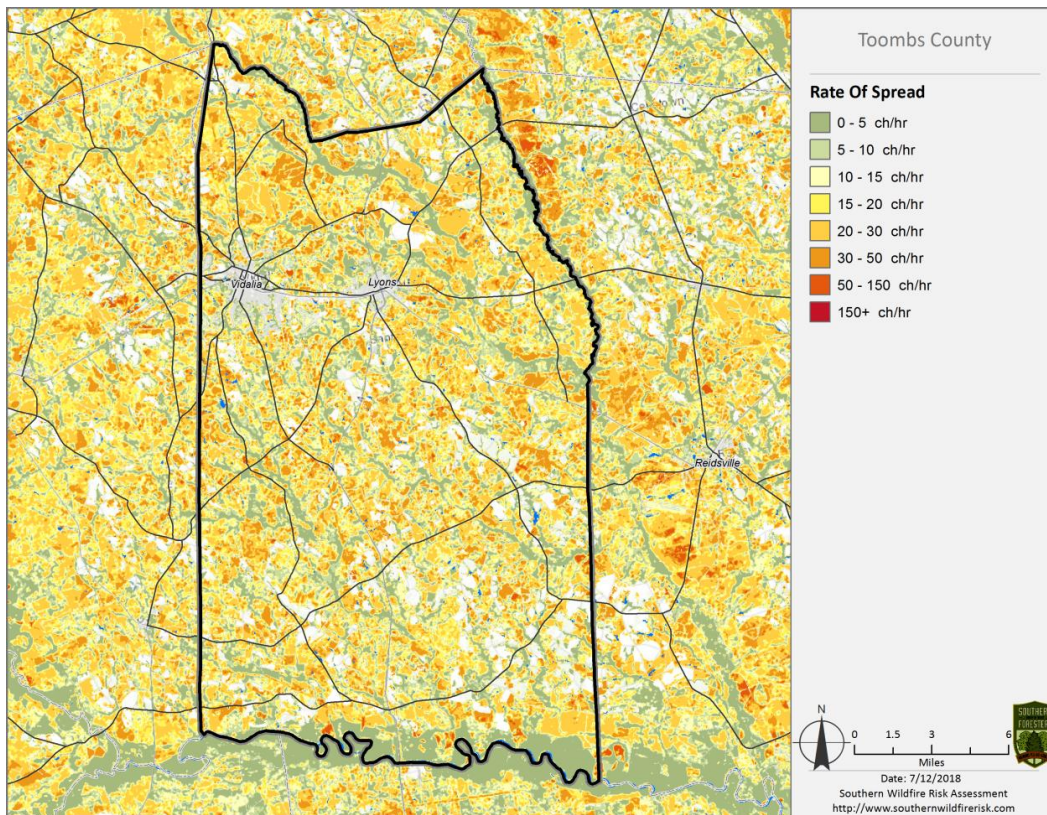


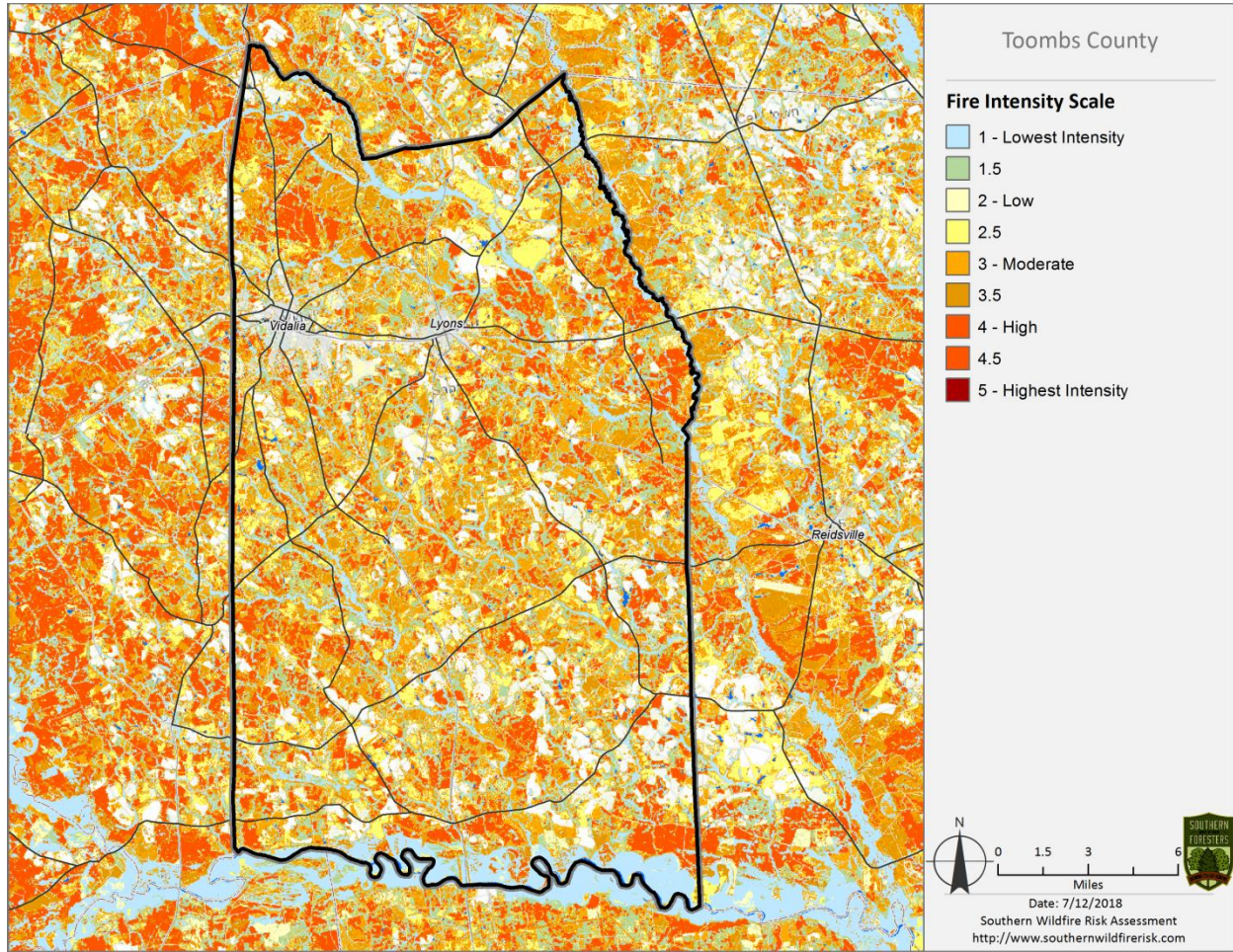
Above: Wildland Urban Interface map Below: WUI Population (left) WUI Acres (right)



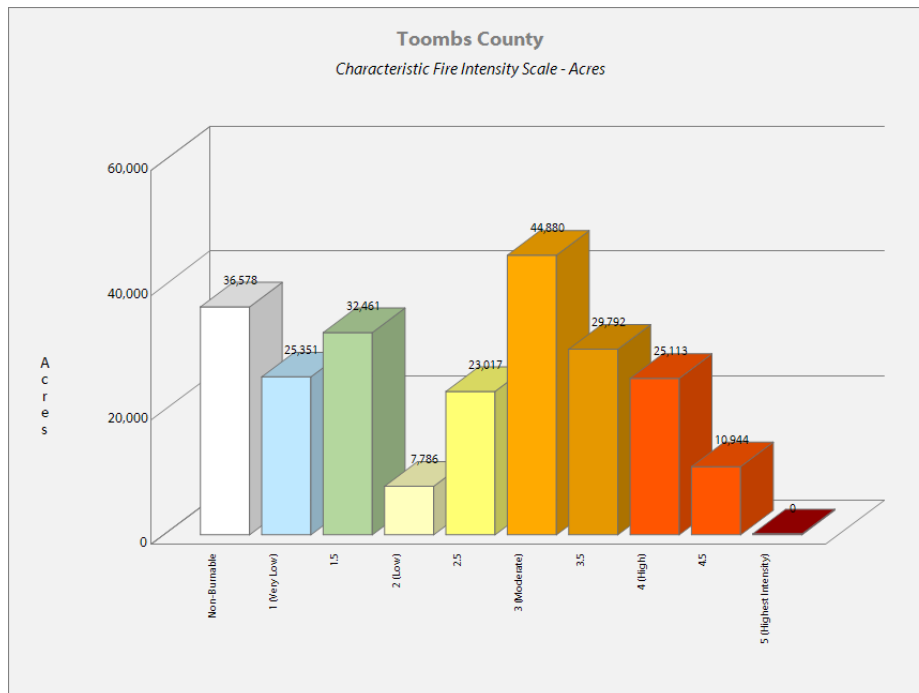


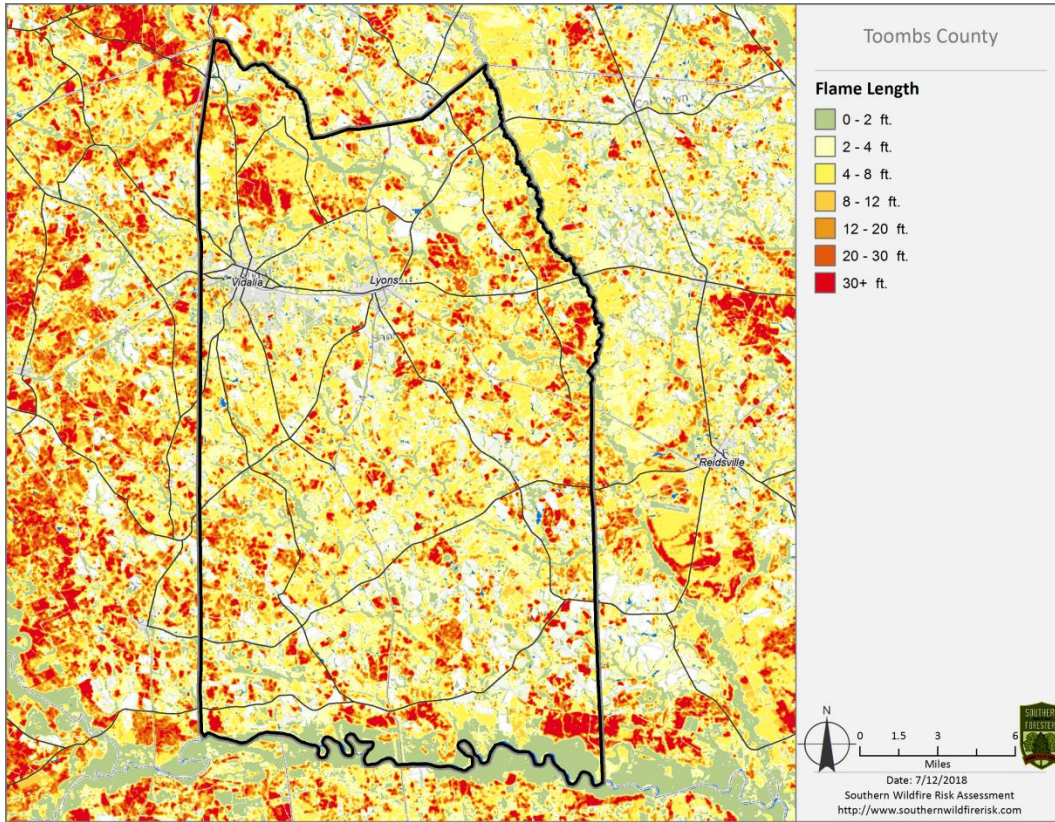
Above: Burn Probability map Below: Rate of Spread map



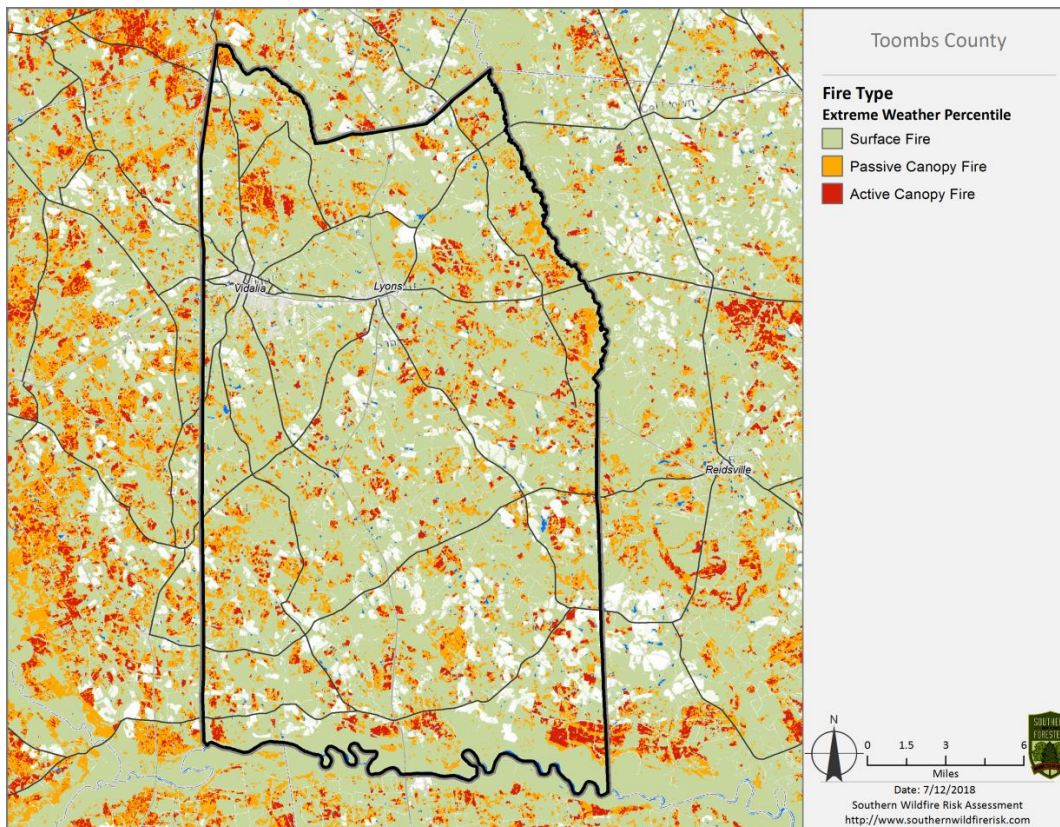


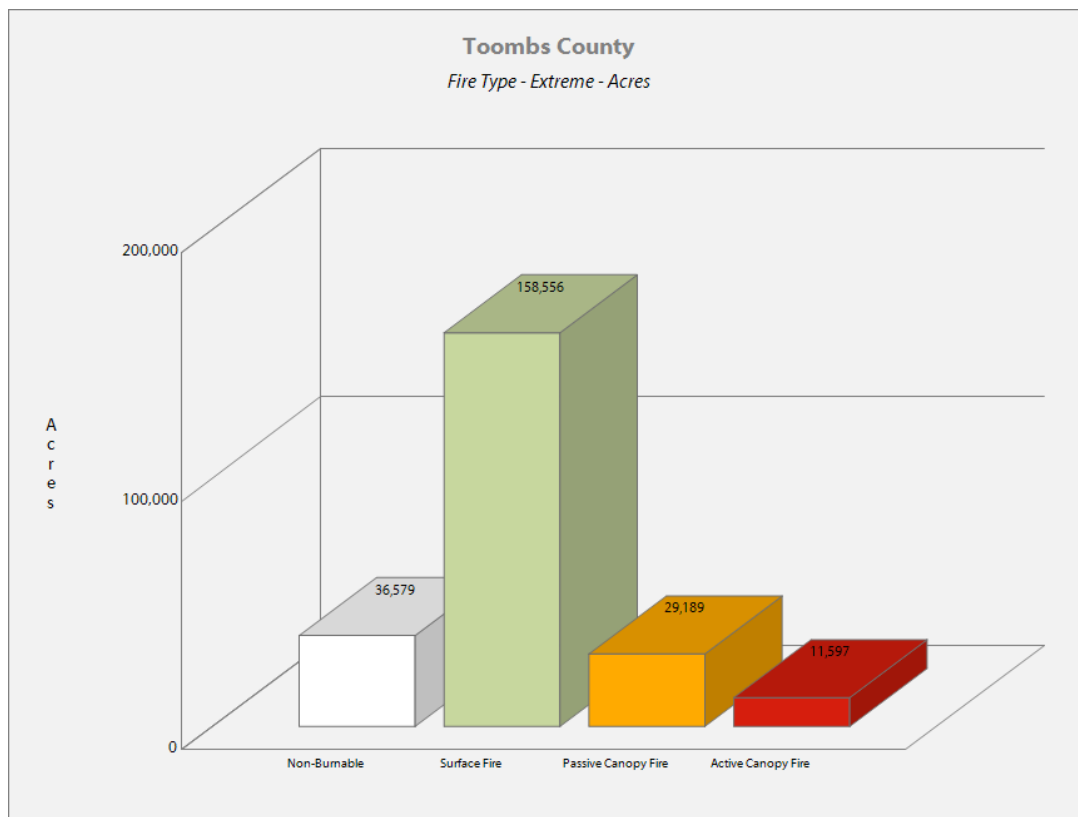
Above: Fire Intensity Scale map Below: Fire Intensity Scale Acres





Above: Flame Length map Below: Fire Type map





Above: Fire Type Acres

Surface Fire

A fire that spreads through surface fuel without consuming any overlying canopy fuel. Surface fuels include grass, timber litter, shrub/brush, slash and other dead or live vegetation within about 6 feet of the ground.



Passive Canopy Fire

A type of crown fire in which the crowns of individual trees or small groups of trees burn, but solid flaming in the canopy cannot be maintained except for short periods (Scott & Reinhardt, 2001).



Active Canopy Fire

A crown fire in which the entire fuel complex (canopy) is involved in flame, but the crowning phase remains dependent on heat released from surface fuel for continued spread (Scott & Reinhardt, 2001).



VII. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

As Southeast 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. Toombs 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.

In 2012 the International Code Council developed the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC). This code was adopted by the Georgia Legislature in 2014 for Counties to use when developing building and zoning codes in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) to help reduce risk and minimize structure loss.

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

Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

Primary Protection for Community and Its Essential Infrastructure		
Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. All Structures	Create minimum of 30-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.
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 National Wildfire Preparedness Day - 1 st Saturday in May annually	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.
6. Codes and Ordinances	Examine existing codes and ordinances. Utilize the International Wildland Urban Interface Code IWUIC	Amend and enforce existing building codes as they relate to skirting, propane tank locations, public nuisances (trash/debris on property), Property address marking standards and other relevant concerns Review Subdivision and development ordinances for public safety concerns. Enforce uniform addressing ordinance.
7. Burn Permits	Education and Enforcement	Greater Burn Permit enforcement and education from the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities		
Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. Adjacent WUI Lands	Reduce hazardous fuels	Encourage prescribed burning for private landowners and industrial timberlands particularly adjacent to residential areas. Seek grant 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. Locate and pre-clear helicopter dip sites.
2. Fire Stations	Equipment	Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland PPE Gear. Investigate need for “brush” trucks.
3. Water Sources	Drafting equipment	Investigate need for additional drafting pumps.
4. Road Names	Road Signage	Improved Road Signage at Crossroads. “Dead End” or “No Outlet” Tags on Road Signs.
5. Personnel	Training	Obtain Wildland Fire Suppression training for Fire Personnel. Ready Set Go training.
6. Fire Station Coverage	New Station	Investigate need for new station in Petroff Community.
**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 Toombs 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>
<p>2. Conduct “Firewise” Workshop for Community Leaders</p>
<p>Arrange for GFC Firewise program to work with local community leaders and governmental officials on the importance of “Firewise Planning” in developing ordinances and codes as the county as the need arises. Identify “Communities at Risk” within the county for possible firewise community recognition.</p>
<p>3. Spring Clean-up Event (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1st Saturday in May annually)</p>
<p>Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Toombs County Fire Departments and community residents. 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters • Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet away from structures • Trim overhanging limbs • Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties <p>Celebrate the work with a community cookout, with Community officials, GFC and Toombs County Fire Departments discussing and commending the work accomplished.</p>
<p>4. Informational Packets</p>
<p>Develop and distribute informational packets to be distributed by realtors and insurance agents. Included in the packets are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Firewise Around Your Home • Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction • Firewise Communities USA Brochures • Ready Set Go materials • Fire Adapted Community information

5. Wildfire Protection Display

Create and exhibit a display for the general public at the Vidalia Onion Festival and other local events. Display can be independent or combined with the Georgia Forestry Commission display.

Hold Open House at individual Fire Stations to promote Community Firewise Safety and develop community support and understanding of local fire departments and current issues.

6. Media

Invite the Vidalia and Lyons news media to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Toombs County. Utilize TV, Radio, and Cable access stations for outreach. Utilize social media to reach diverse audiences.



The Georgia Forestry Commission can assist with developing a prescribed burning plan, installation of firebreaks, and can provide equipment standby and burning assistance when personnel are available. Private forestry contractors can also provide this service.

Forestry mowers and brush cutters, such as pictured here, can be very effective in reducing understory fuels in areas where prescribed fire is not practical. Private contractors can provide this service.



VIII. ACTION PLAN

Roles and Responsibilities

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

Role	Responsibility
Hazardous Fuels and Structural Ignitability Reduction	
Toombs County WUI Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC officials, Toombs County Fire department officials, a representative from the city and county government and the EMA Director for Toombs 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 people 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 Radio and TV PSAs 3 Personal Contacts and social media 4 Key messages and prevention tips 5 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters

Spring Clean-up Day (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1 st Saturday in May annually)	
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, Toombs County Fire Departments, and Emergency Management Agency. Procure needed equipment and supplies. In cooperation with local city and county officials, develop safety protocol. Supervise work and monitor activities for safety the day of the event.

Funding Needs

The following funding is needed to implement the action plan:

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
1. Create a minimum of 30 feet of defensible space around structures	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
2. Reduce structural ignitability by cleaning flammable vegetation from roofs and gutters; appropriately storing firewood, installing skirting around raised structures, storing water hoses for ready access, replacing pine needles and mulch around plantings with less flammable material.	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
3. Amend codes and ordinances to provide better driveway access, increased visibility of house numbers, properly stored firewood, minimum defensible space brush clearance, required Class A roofing materials and skirting around raised structures, planned maintenance of community lots.	No Cost	To be adopted by city and county government. IWUIC
4. Spring Cleanup Day National Wildfire Preparedness Day	Varies	Community Business Donations.
5. Fuel Reduction Activities	\$35 / acre	FEMA & USFS Grants

Assessment Strategy

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

- Annual wildfire risk assessment will be conducted to re-assess wildfire hazards and prioritize needed actions.
- Mitigation efforts that are recurring (such as mowing, burning, and clearing of defensible space) will be incorporated into an annual renewal of the original action plan.
- Mitigation efforts that could not be funded in the requested year will be incorporated into the annual renewal of the original action plan.
- Continuing educational and outreach programs will be conducted and assessed for effectiveness. Workshops will be evaluated based on attendance and post surveys that are distributed by mail 1 month and 6 months following workshop date.
- The Toombs County WUI Council will publish an annual report detailing mitigation projects initiated and completed, progress for ongoing actions, funds received, funds spent, and in-kind services utilized. The report will include a “state of the community” section that critically evaluates mitigation progress and identifies areas for improvement. Recommendations will be incorporated into the annual renewal of the action plan.
- An annual survey will be distributed to residents soliciting information on individual mitigation efforts on their own property (e.g., defensible space). Responses will be tallied and reviewed at the next Toombs County WUI Council meeting. Needed actions will be discussed and delegated.

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

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 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 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.wildfireprepdays.org

Appended Documents:

Toombs County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Toombs County Wildfire assessment scoresheets

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



Georgia Forestry Commission
5645 Riggins Mill Rd.
Dry Branch, GA 31020

1-800-GA-TREES
GaTrees.org

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