

GEORGIA FORESTRY  
COMMISSION



# Community Wildfire Protection Plan

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

### Washington County, Georgia

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



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## Appended Documents:

Washington County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report

Washington 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 Washington 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 July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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:

Washington County Government  
*County Volunteer Fire Departments*  
*Emergency Management*  
*Board of County Commissioners*  
City of Sandersville  
*Sandersville Fire Department,*  
City of Tennille  
*Tennille 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 nine fire departments in the county assessed their districts and reconvened on Aug 27<sup>th</sup>, 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

#### Community History



Washington County in east central Georgia was established on February 25, 1784. Georgia's tenth county, named for U.S. president George Washington, was settled by Revolutionary War (1775-83) veterans who were awarded grants to Creek and Cherokee lands. Beginning in 1786, seven counties plus portions of nine more were eventually cut from the original Washington County. The county currently encompasses 680 square miles, and its population, according to the 2000 U.S. census, is 21,176 (45.7 percent white; 53.2 percent black).

#### Early History

Warthen was the first settlement in the county, founded as the site of the superior courts and the jail. Made of hand-hewn logs, the jail has been restored and is considered the oldest log jail in Georgia. The entire village of Warthen, including the jail, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1796 the Georgia legislature named Sandersville (originally Saunders Crossroads), which was situated at the crossing of two Indian trails, the county seat. Many early post-office communities within the county grew and faded with time, while railroads determined the survival of several villages. Townships in the county today include Davisboro, Deepstep, Harrison, Oconee, Riddleville, Sandersville, Tennille, and Warthen. As a frontier county, self-contained farms and plantations were also common.

Religion played an important role in the early community. The first church in the area was constituted in 1790. Baptists and then Methodists later organized, and both denominations had founded churches by 1856. Around 1900, Catholic and Episcopal congregations were formed. Today 120 churches of various denominations meet around the county, and many are descendents of these earlier ones.

#### Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

On November 25, 1864, Union general William T. Sherman and his troops came through Washington County on their "March to the Sea." Sherman selected the Brown House as his headquarters. Two days later, when his army left Sandersville, Sherman ordered the courthouse and jail to be burned. In Tennille, railroad tracks were pulled up, heated, and twisted into "bowties." The county courthouse was lost to fires in 1855 and again in 1864. A new courthouse was completed in 1868 and enlarged in the Victorian style in 1899. Before the turn of the twentieth century, brick store buildings replaced the wooden ones that had been burned.



Medicine also played a key role in the county's history. William Rawlings, a renowned surgeon, opened a hospital around 1895. Nurses were taught at Rawlings' Nurses Training School from 1903 to 1932. Operating on the Sandersville square for sixty-five years, the Rawlings Sanitarium moved to a new facility in 1961; originally called Washington Memorial Hospital, it is now the Washington County Regional Medical Center.

Stable cotton prices from about 1890 to the mid-1920s brought prosperity and fine homes to the area, many of which are still standing. Farmers have since diversified, growing other agricultural products, and a prosperous lumber industry has also developed.

### **Industry and Agriculture**

Fortunately for Washington County, as the marketplace for some agricultural products declined, the kaolin industry grew. Kaolin, a white, alumina silicate clay, is used in paper, medicines, paints, and many other products, all of which are shipped around the world. As Washington County grew into kaolin's largest refiner, it became known as the "Kaolin Capital of the World." Five processing companies and numerous mines attract college-educated personnel, scientists, and geologists from many countries. An annual Kaolin Festival celebrates the importance of the resource. At the end of the twentieth century, kaolin was an \$800 million business and Georgia's largest volume export. Mining companies have reclaimed and restored more than 80 percent of the land that has been stripped since 1969.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Washington County businesses are well served by four industrial parks and their proximity to interstate highways 16 and 20, the Norfolk Southern and Sandersville Railroad companies, and Washington County airport. Savannah, with its port facilities and international airport, offers a gateway to world markets. Agriculture is still important, along with a fledgling nursery industry and a healthy timber business. A number of manufacturing plants and a district Department of Transportation complex remain, while two peak power plants were built in 2002 and 2003.

### **People and Places**

Organized in 1976, the Washington County Historical Society operates two museums, one in the old county jail, which is now the Genealogical Research Museum, and the Brown House Museum, which serves as the society's headquarters. Four districts are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as are the Old City Cemetery and several other structures. An exhibition dedicated to architect Charles E. Choate is housed in the chamber of commerce.

Two Georgia governors came from Washington County: Jared Irwin, a Revolutionary War soldier and frontier Indian fighter, and Thomas Hardwick, a U.S. senator and congressman. Elijah Poole Mohammed, leader of the Nation of Islam, was born near Deepstep; the Gordy's of Motown music fame and concert singer McHenry Boatright were also from Washington County.

Washington County is served by Sandersville Technical College and a local campus for Georgia Military College.

(Courtesy Brenda Hollingsworth, *New Georgia Encyclopedia*)

## Wildfire History

Washington County located in the heart of Southeastern Georgia, despite its known agricultural presence, is still 71% forested. With the exception of the large block of woodlands along the Oconee 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 Sandersville and Tennille.

Washington County is protected by organized fire departments within the cities of Sandersville, and Tennille and seven widely spaced volunteer fire departments in the remainder of the county, Riddleville, Harrison, Oconee, Deepstep, Warthen, Davisboro and Ochoopee. The Georgia Forestry Commission maintains a county protection unit located about two miles west of Sandersville on Hwy 68 to respond to wildfires throughout the county. The cities of Sandersville and Tennille and the adjacent areas of the county are serviced by a pressurized water system with well placed hydrants throughout.

Over the past fifty years, Washington County has averaged 69 reported wildland fires per year. These fires have burned an average of 384 acres annually. The monthly acreage burned fairly well corresponds with the number of fires. The annual numbers of fires and acreage burned has decreased during the past 10 years. In the years since 2008, Washington County reported an annual average of 58 fires burning 349 acres annually. The reduction in average size from just under six acres per fire to about 4 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 cause of these fires over the past 10 years, FY2008 – FY2017, was debris burning causing 36% and 42% of the acres burned. The 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause, during this period, was machine use causing 18% of the fires and 10% of the acres burned. Another major cause was lightning causing 10% of the fires and 28% of the acres burned. Over the past ten years records show that over 50% of the debris fires originated from residential burning.

Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Records show that in the past five years, FY2014-FY2018, 2 outbuildings have been lost or damaged by wildfire in Washington County resulting in estimated losses of \$5,500. According to reports during this period 15 homes have been directly or indirectly threatened by these fires. Additionally 4 pieces of mechanized equipment valued at \$21,000 were lost and \$6,200 in crop damage was lost as a result of these wildfires. This is a substantial loss of non-timber property attributed to wildfires in Washington County.

The following table shows Washington County wildfire activity during the last complete fiscal year 2018, July 1, 2017 thru June 30, 2018.

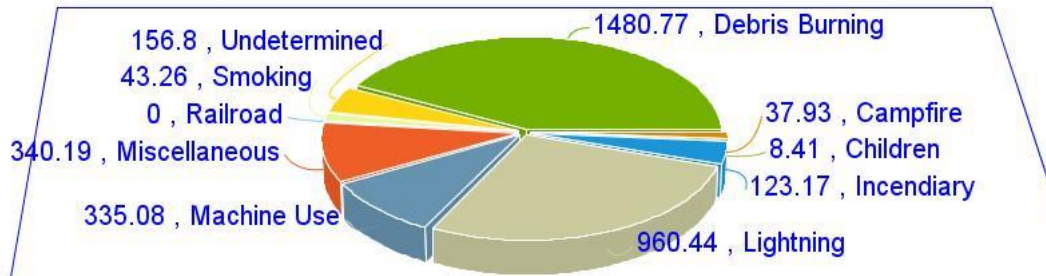
County = Washington	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
<a href="#">Campfire</a>	Campfire	1		2.50	1.00	1.80
<a href="#">Children</a>	Children	0		0.00	0.20	0.20
<a href="#">Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc</a>	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	4		14.51	1.40	5.54
<a href="#">Debris: Construction Land Clearing</a>	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	0		0.00	0.40	0.06
<a href="#">Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn</a>	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	3		2.80	9.40	87.63
<a href="#">Debris: Household Garbage</a>	Debris: Household Garbage	0		0.00	0.40	6.08
<a href="#">Debris: Other</a>	Debris: Other	0		0.00	0.20	0.59
<a href="#">Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc</a>	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	5		4.96	1.80	8.99
<a href="#">Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related</a>	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	5		43.83	1.20	11.13
<a href="#">Incendiary</a>	Incendiary	0		0.00	0.20	0.02
<a href="#">Lightning</a>	Lightning	2		35.73	2.00	10.36
<a href="#">Machine Use</a>	Machine Use	4		1.01	4.00	8.29
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding</a>	Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	0		0.00	0.40	0.89
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Other</a>	Miscellaneous: Other	0		0.00	1.20	1.66
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences</a>	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	3		3.60	5.20	21.21
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion</a>	Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	0		0.00	0.20	0.10
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires</a>	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	0		0.00	1.00	0.66
<a href="#">Smoking</a>	Smoking	0		0.00	0.60	0.24
<a href="#">Undetermined</a>	Undetermined	2		17.15	2.80	34.43
<b>Totals for County: Washington Year: 2018</b>		29		126.09	33.60	199.87



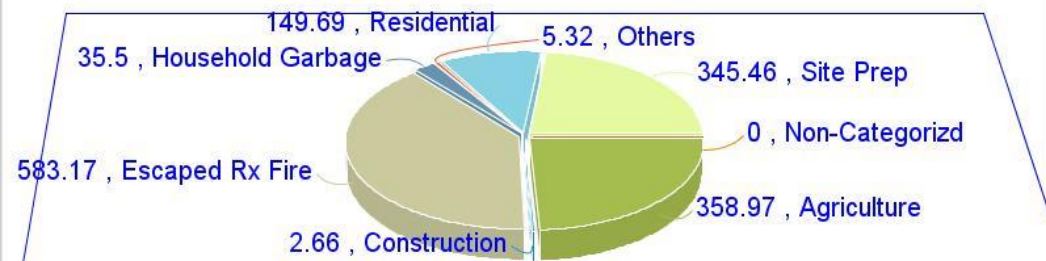
<b>Acres Burned /Number of Fires For Washington County For FY 2008-2017</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Acres Burned</b>	<b>Number of Fires</b>	<b>Average Size</b>	<b>Statewide Average Size</b>
2008	809.78	133	10.38	4.56
2009	167.55	91	5.66	3.90
2010	213.69	43	7.01	3.93
2011	255.36	76	7.61	17.56
2012	970.09	57	6.74	5.08
2013	196.90	44	14.37	4.53
2014	246.00	35	11.94	5.02
2015	177.51	31	7.03	4.42
2016	127.93	22	3.90	6.29
2017	321.84	51	4.15	11.60

<b>Acres Burned /Number of Fires by Fire Cause For Washington County For FY 2008-2017</b>		
<b>Fire Cause</b>	<b>Acres Burned</b>	<b>Number of Fires</b>
Campfire	37.93	13
Children	8.41	6
Debris Burning	1,480.77	211
Incendiary	123.17	42
Lightning	960.44	57
Machine Use	335.08	102
Miscellaneous	340.19	106
Railroad	0.00	0
Smoking	43.26	32
Undetermined	156.80	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,486.05</b>	<b>582</b>

Acreage Burned by Cause of Fire For Washington County For FY 2008-2017

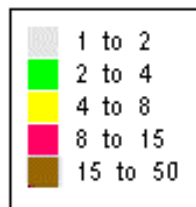
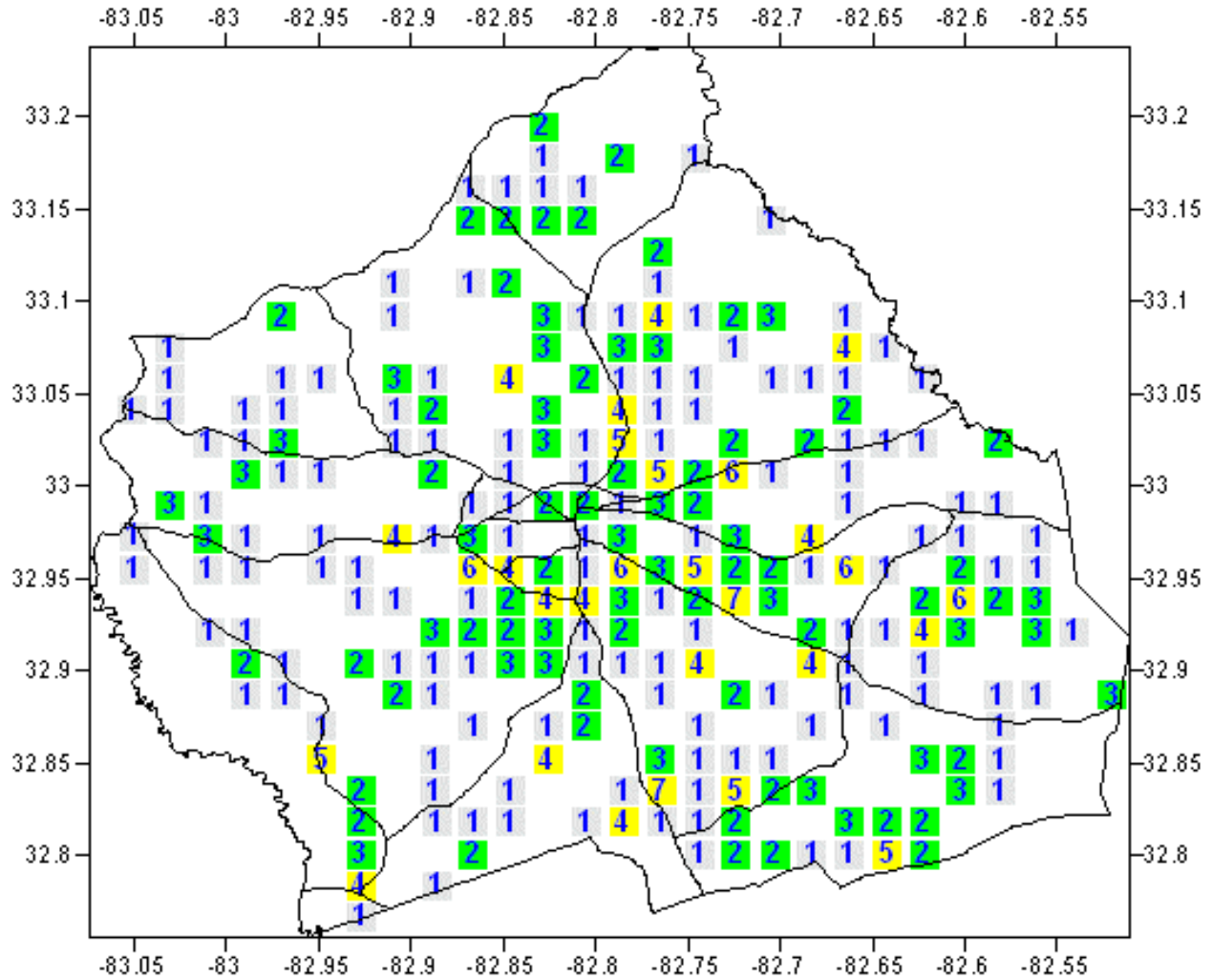


Acreage Burned By Debris Burning Sub Cause For Washington County For FY 2008-2017

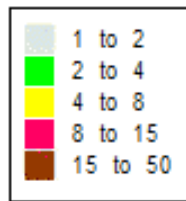
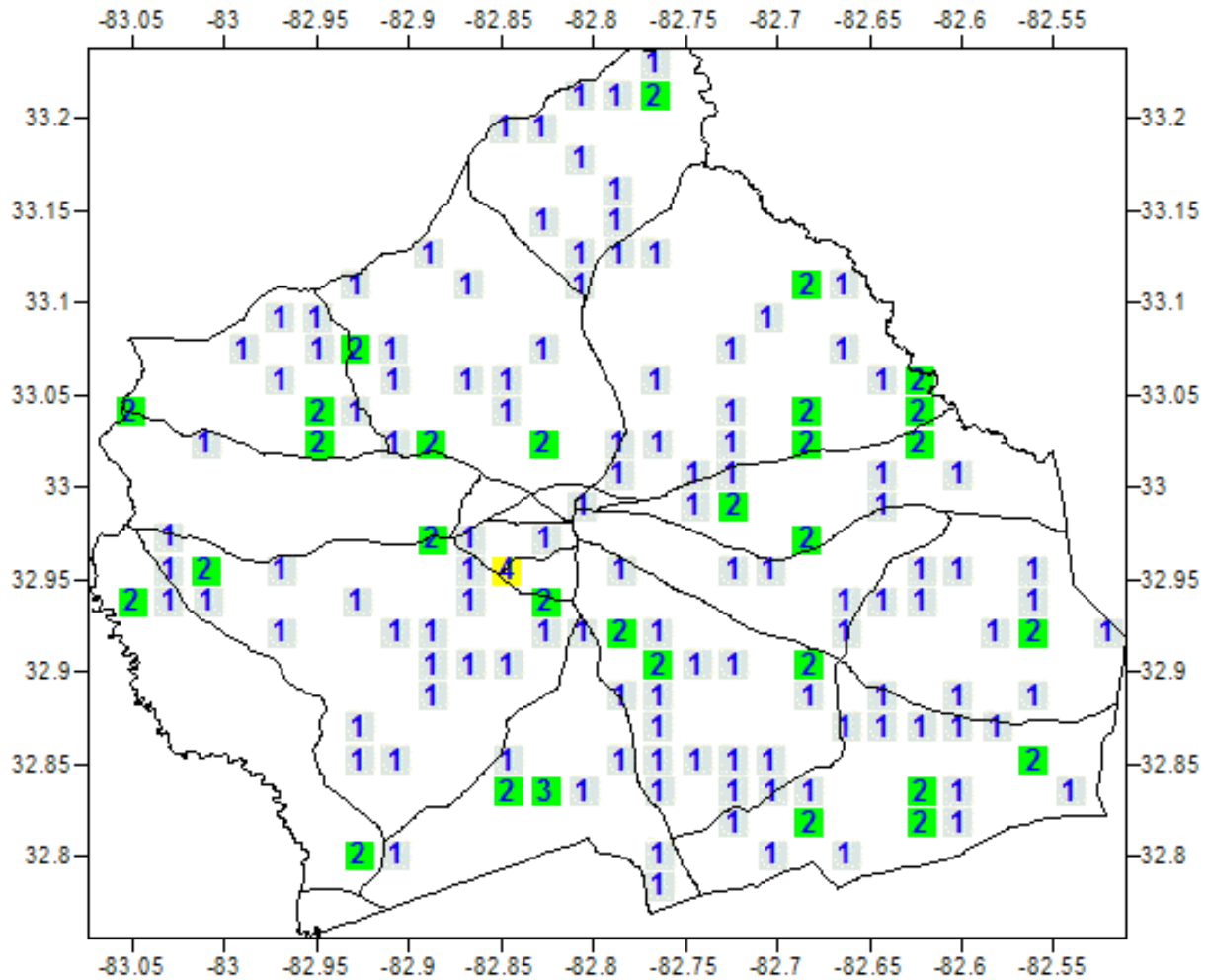


Fire Cause

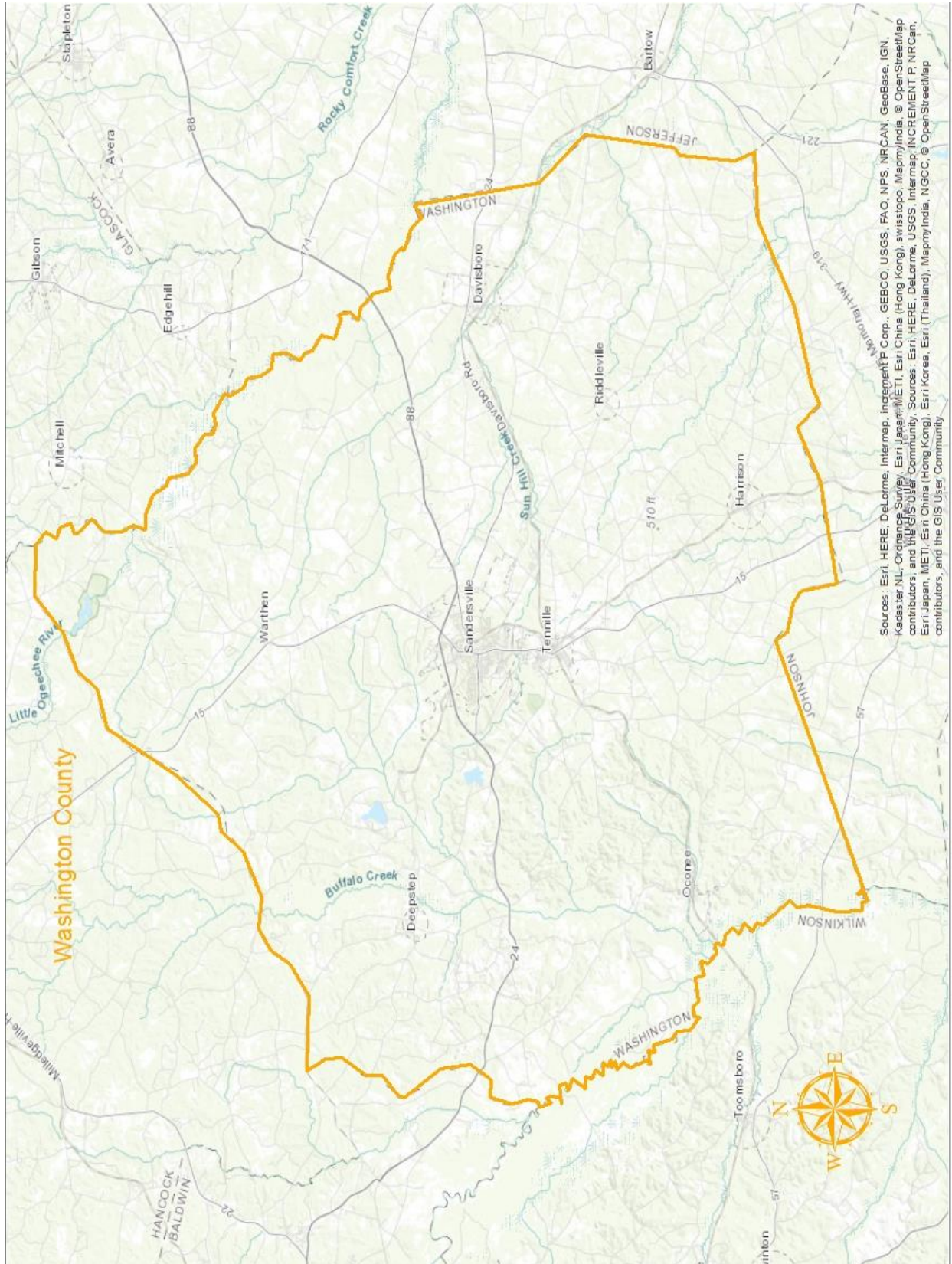
# Fire Occurrence Map for Washington County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011

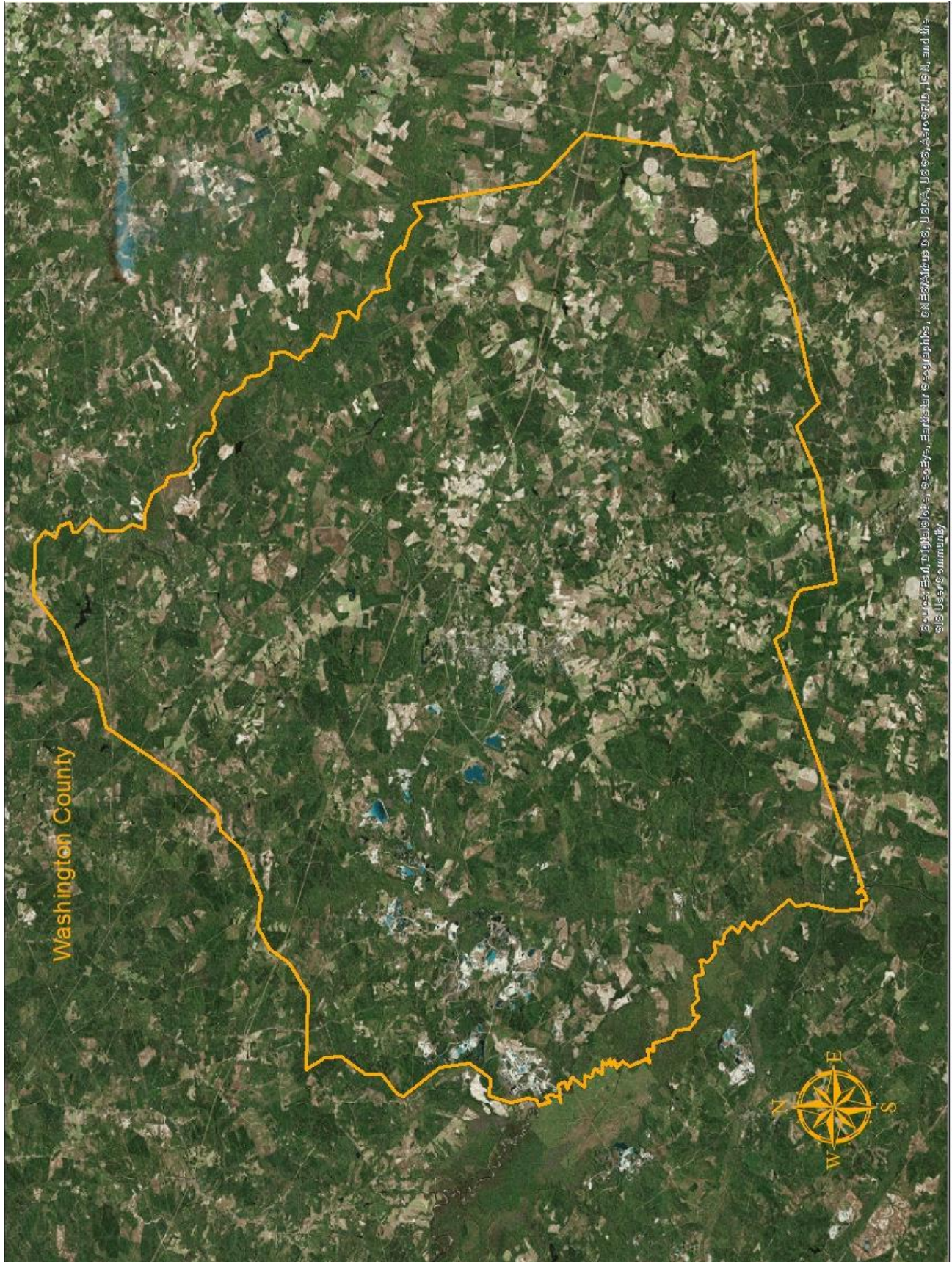


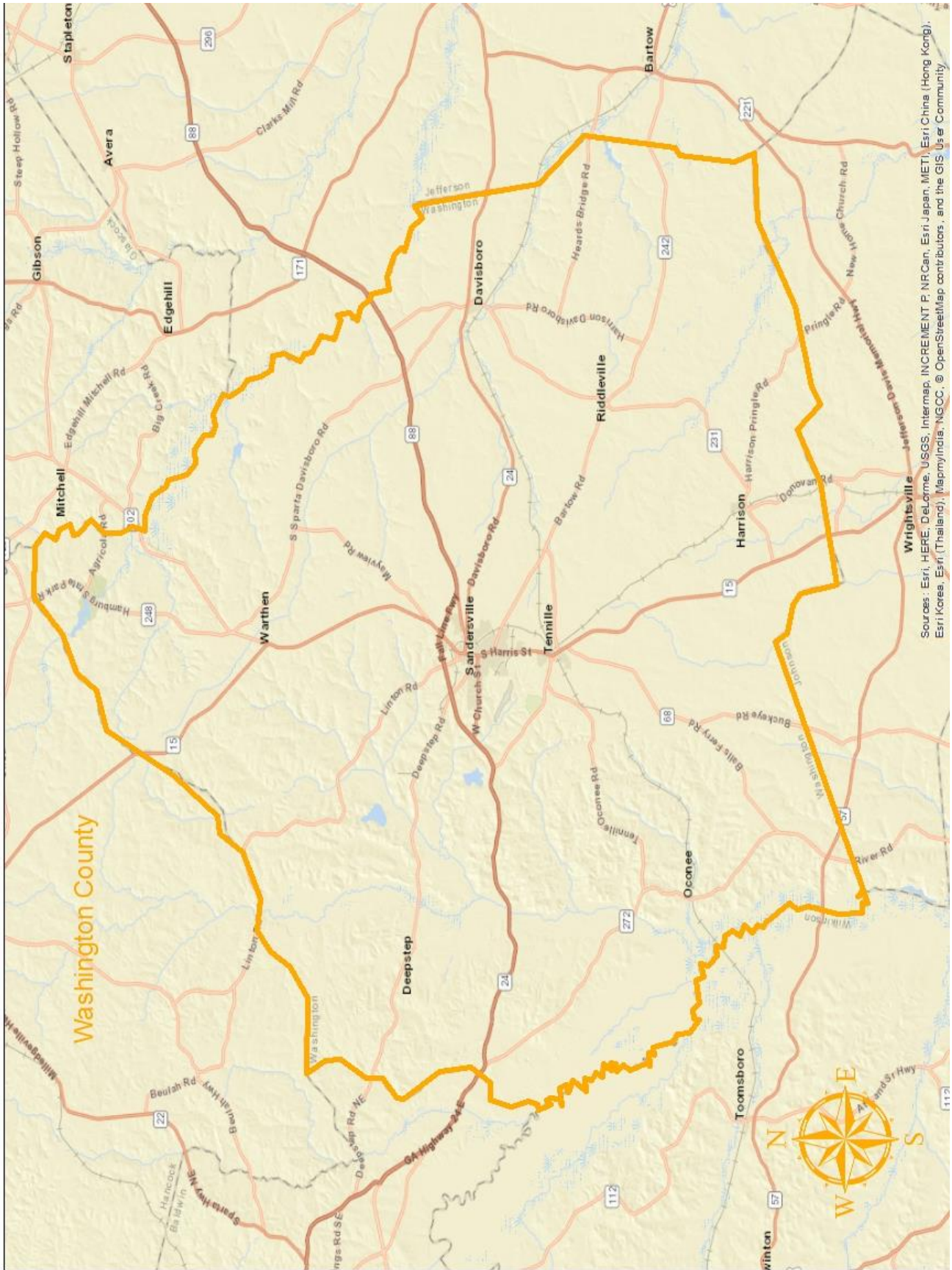
# Fire Occurrence Map for Washington County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



## IV. COMMUNITY BASE MAPS







## 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.



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



The wildland fire risk assessments conducted in 2009 by the Washington County Fire Departments returned an average score of 83, placing Washington County in the “high” hazard range. The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Washington 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 Washington County:

- Dead end roads with inadequate turn arounds
- Narrow roads without drivable shoulders
- Limited street signs and homes not clearly addressed
- Long narrow driveways
- 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

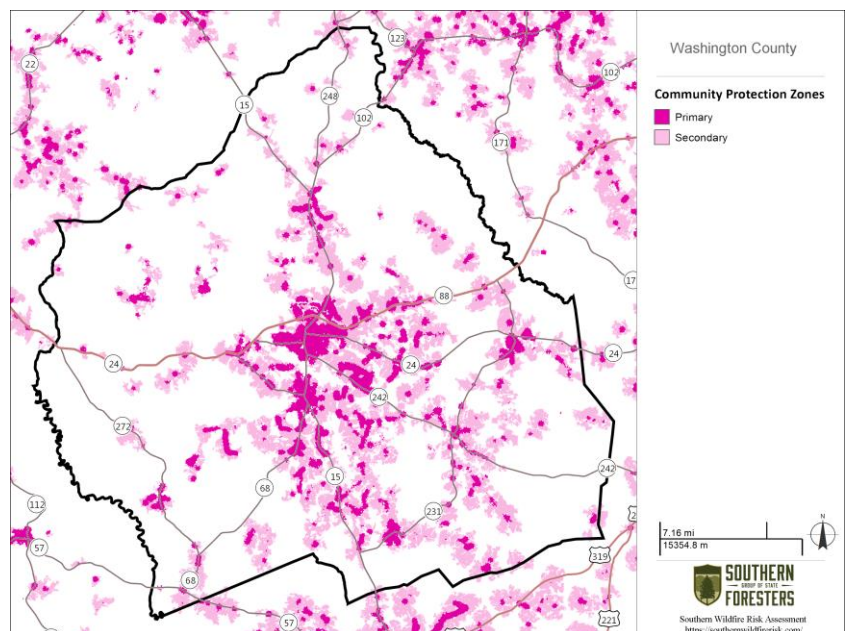
### Summary of Washington County Assessment Ratings

Fire District/ Community	Access	Surrounding Vegetation	Building Construction	Fire Protection	Utilities	Additional Factors	Score	Hazard Rating
Sandersville	10	20	6	8	7	13	64	Moderate
Tennille	13	16	21	21	7	19	97	High
Oconee	18	20	25	20	9	30	120	Very High
Warthen	20	15	10	19	7	35	106	Very High
Ohoopie	14	20	20	29	4	8	99	High
Deepstep	10	10	15	10	7	15	67	Moderate
Riddleville	11	20	15	17	4	20	87	High
Harrison	22	20	31	14	7	32	126	Extreme
Average							96	Moderate

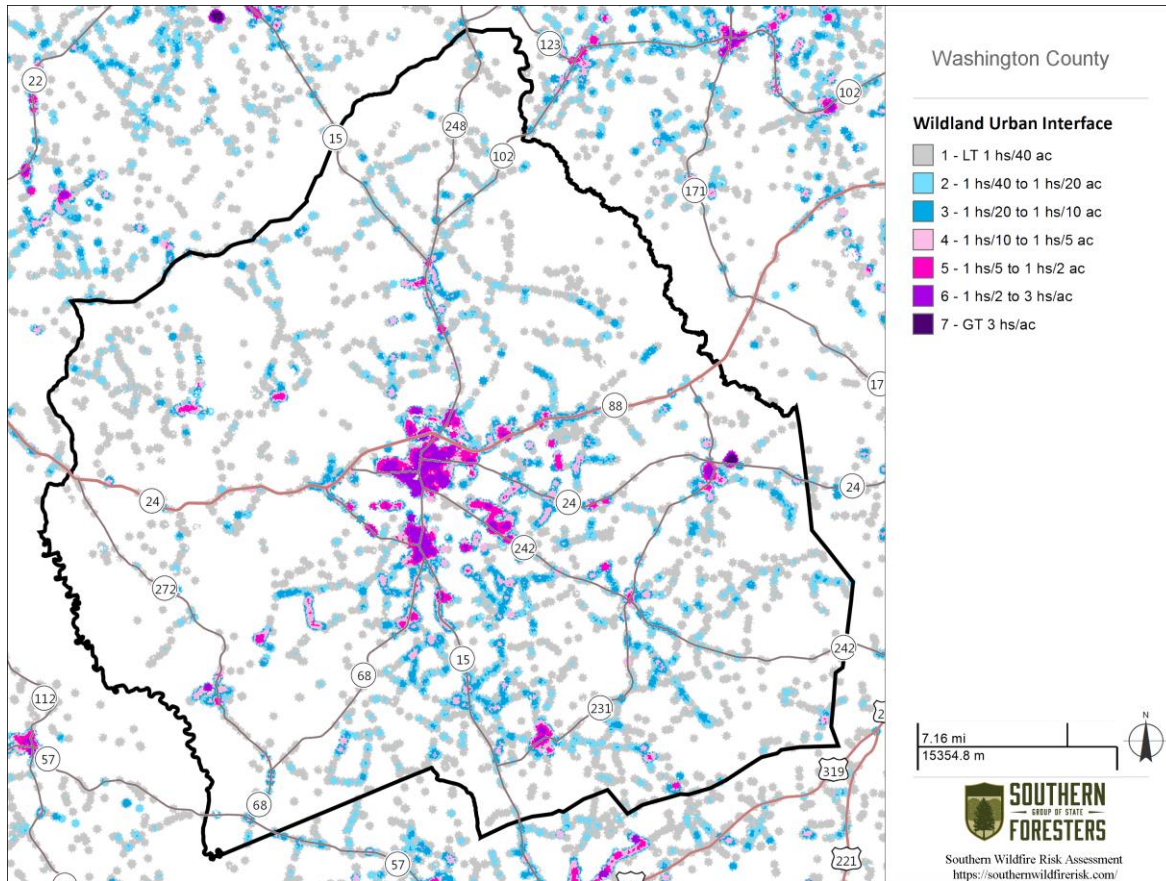
## VI. SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

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

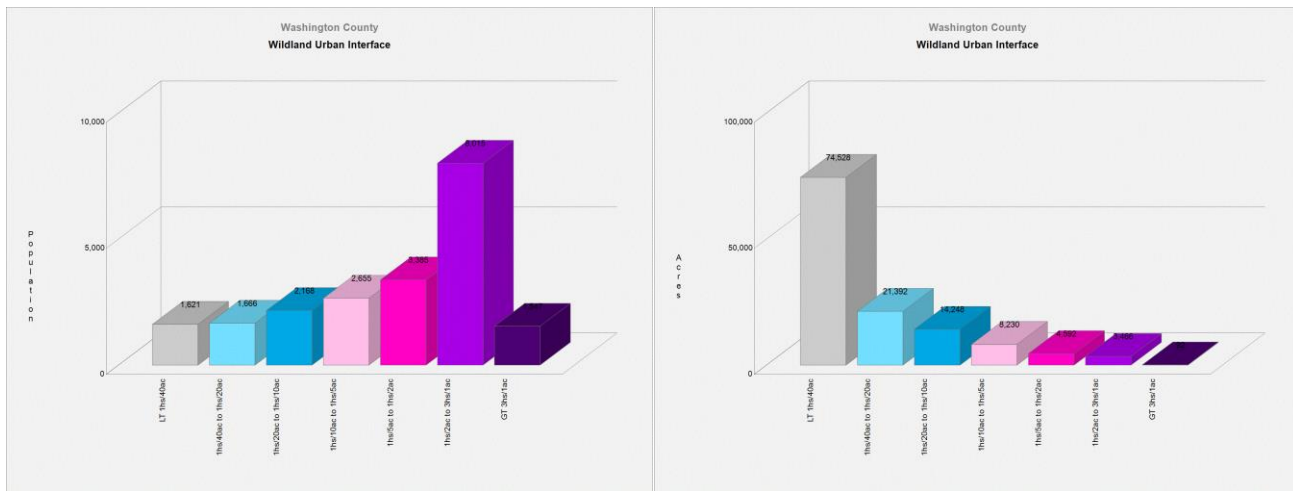
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire.
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning.
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests.
- Allow agencies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

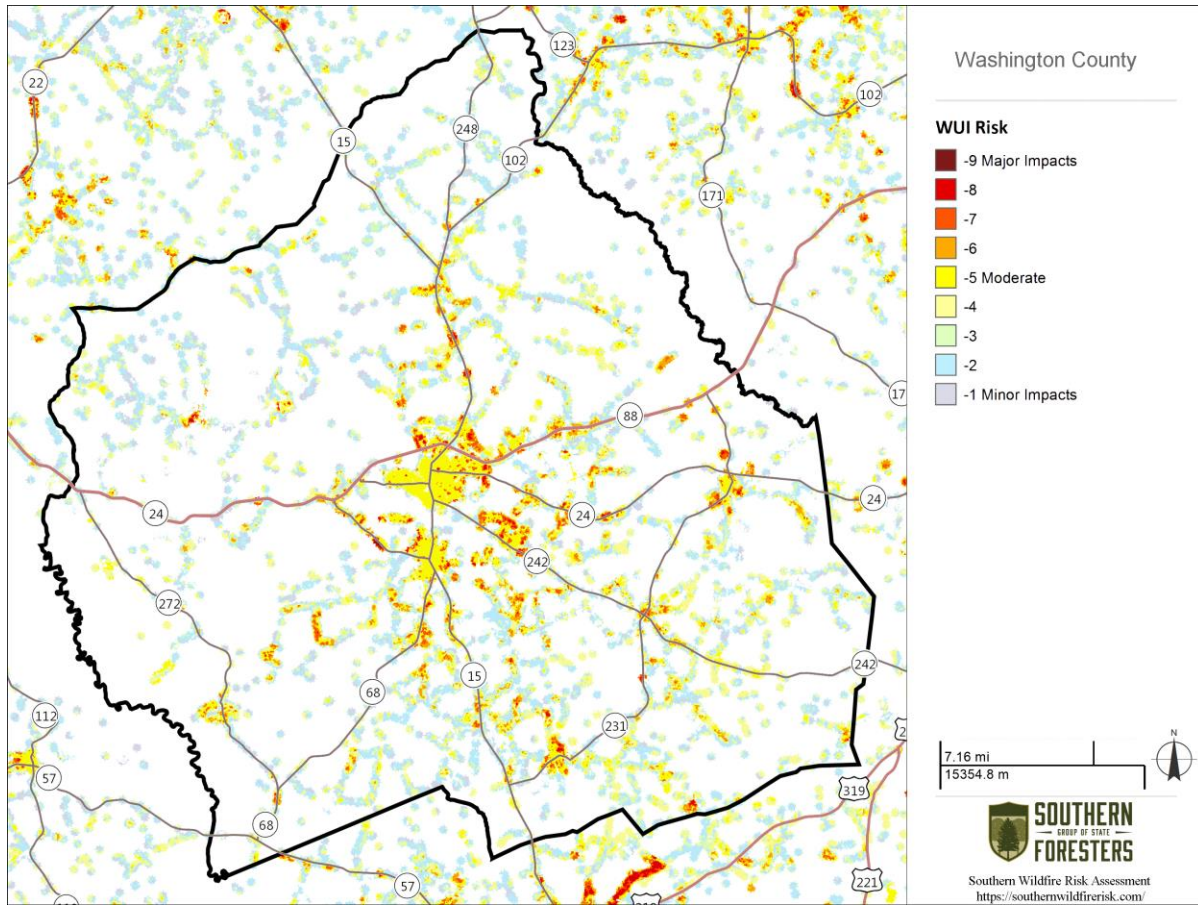


Community Protection Zones map from the Washington County SWRA

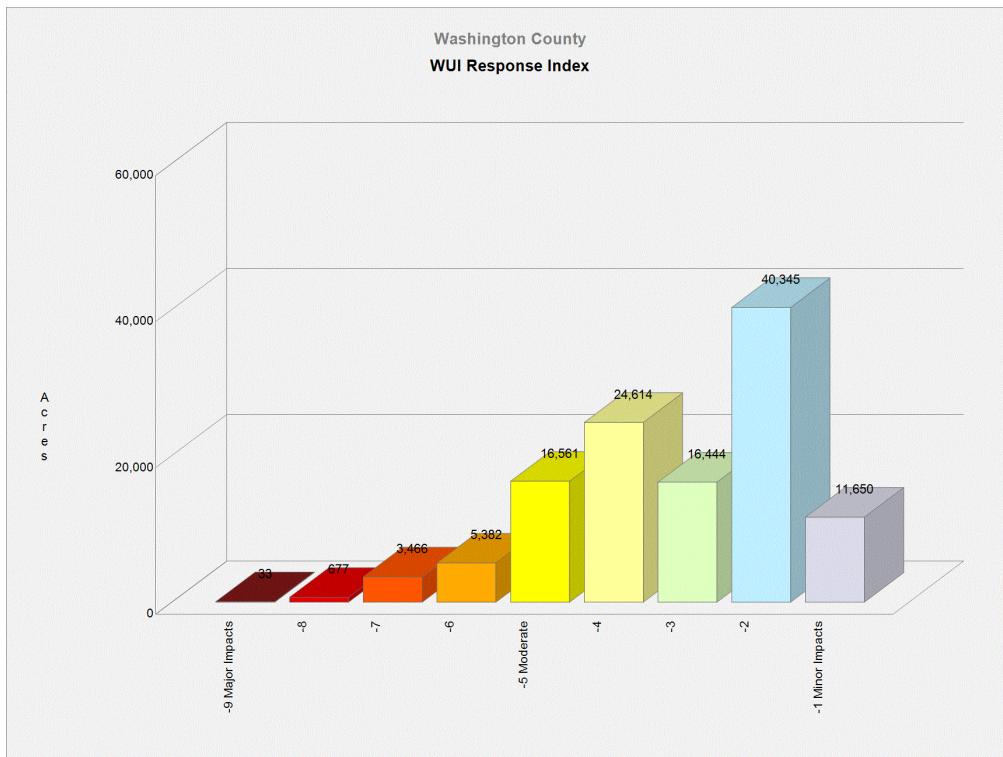


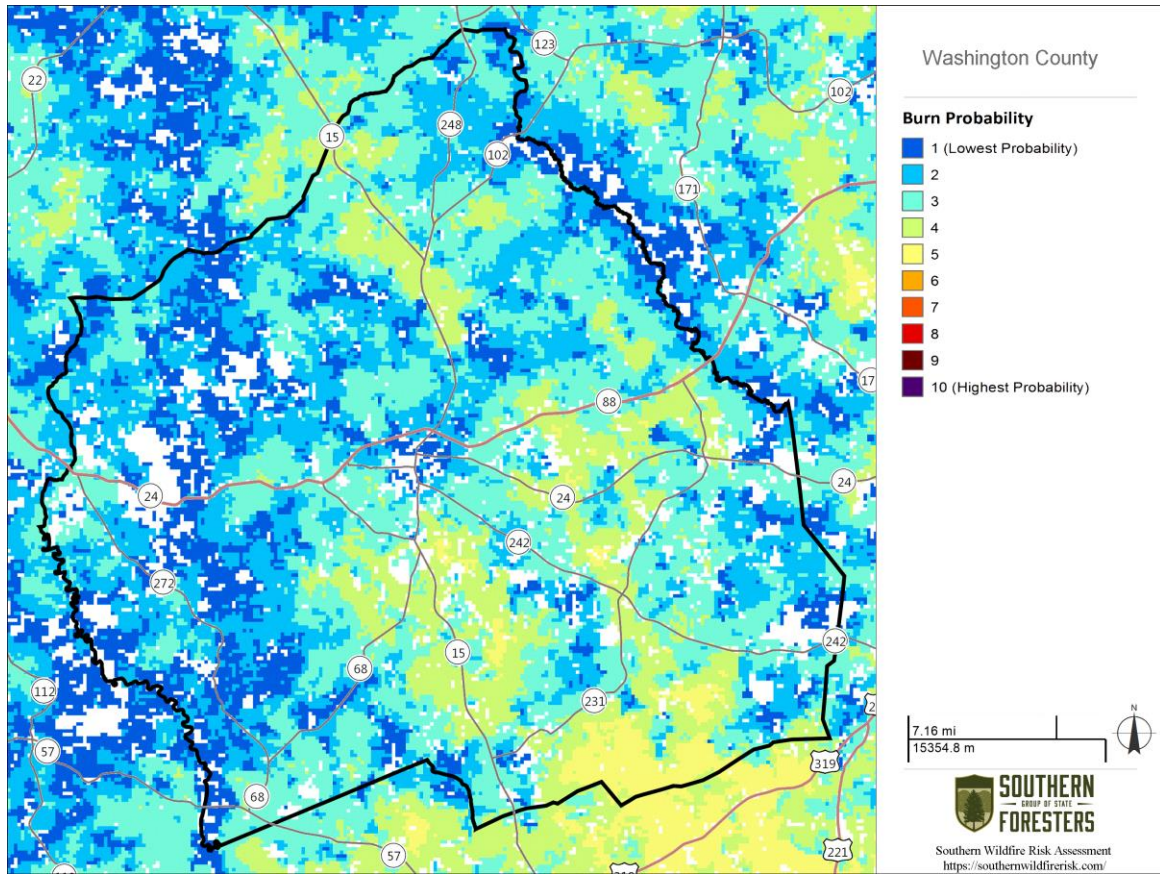
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map Below: WUI Acres (left) WUI Population (right)



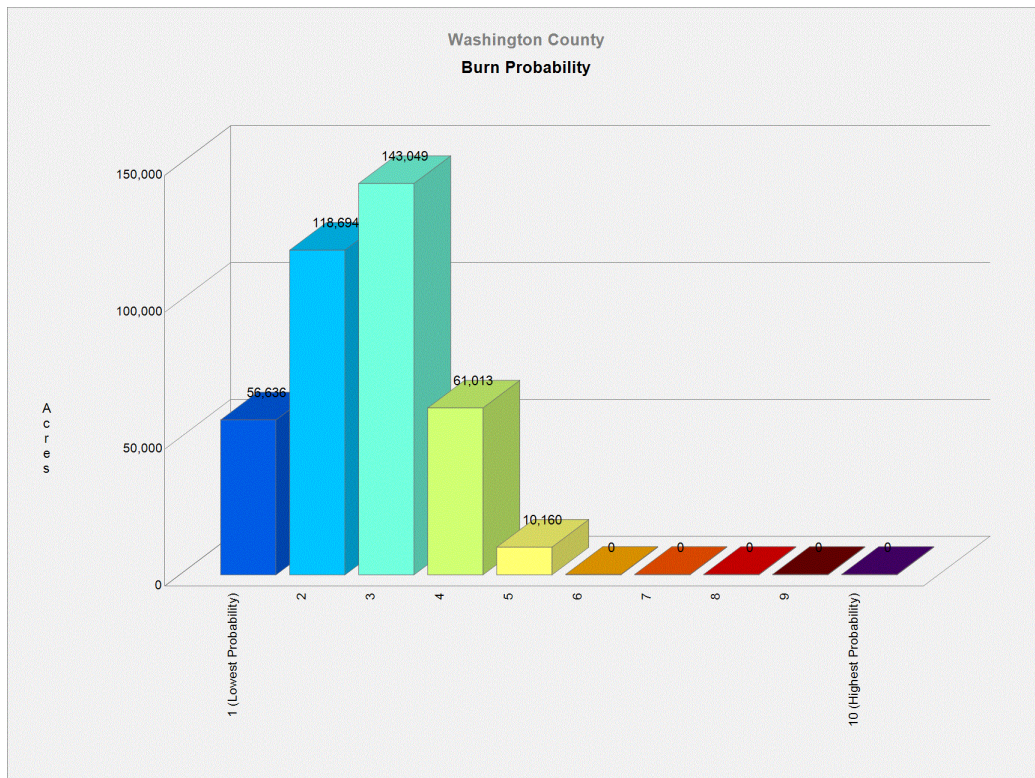


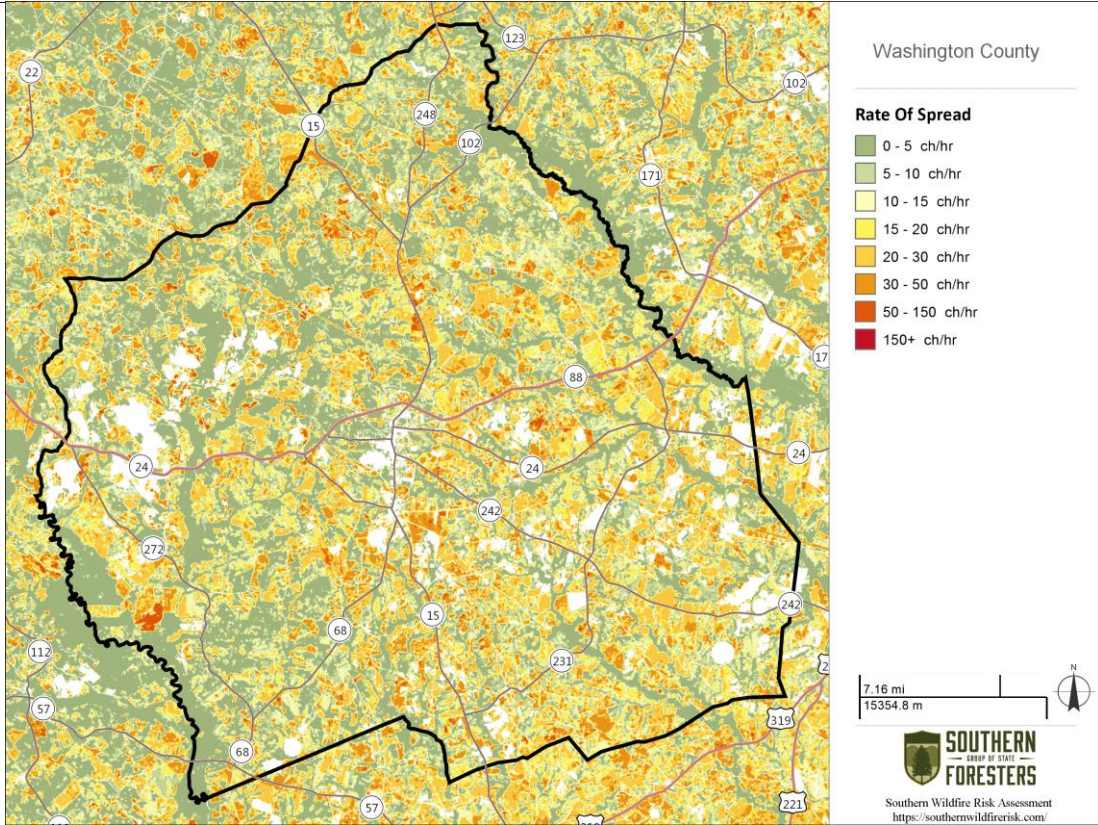
Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map    Below: WUI Risk Index Acres



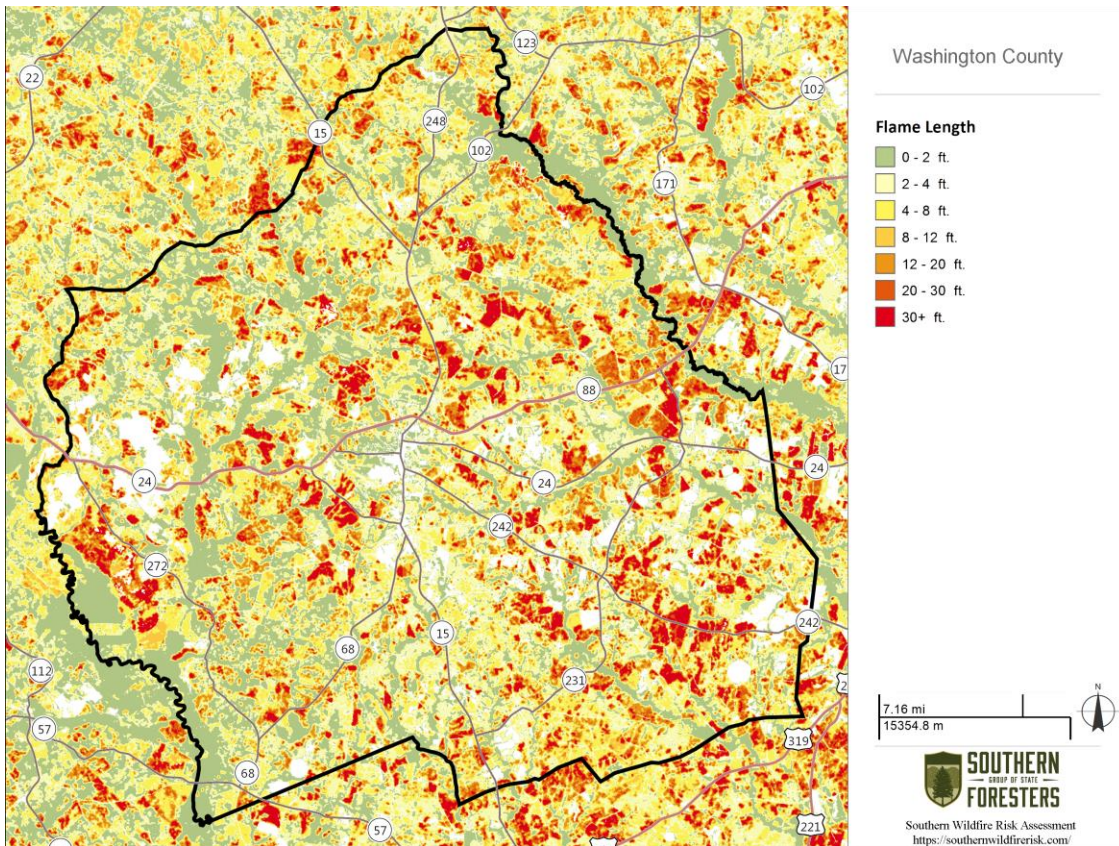


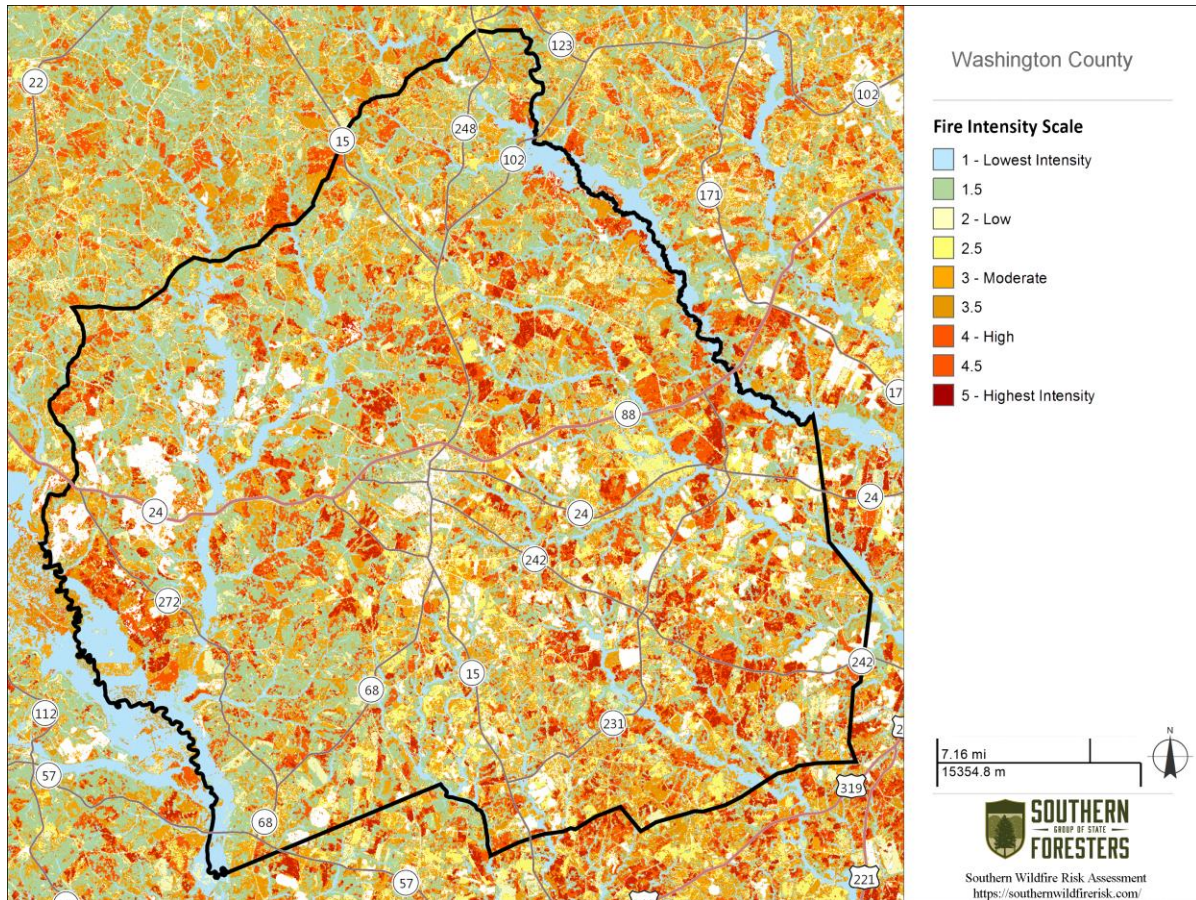
Above: Burn Probability map Below: Burn Probability Acres



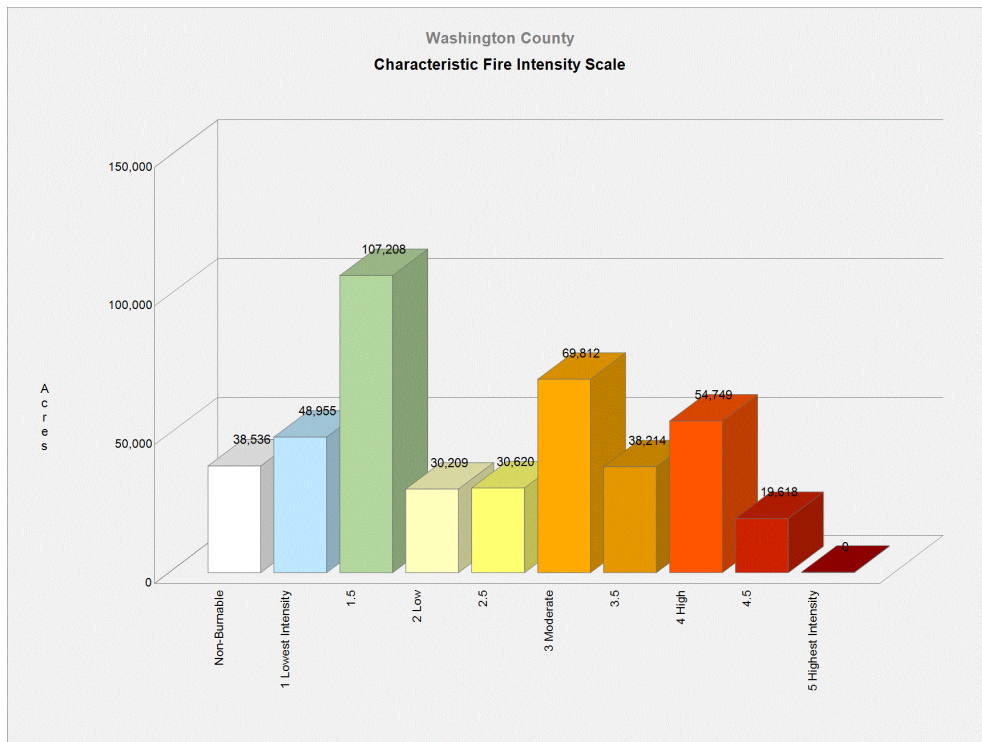


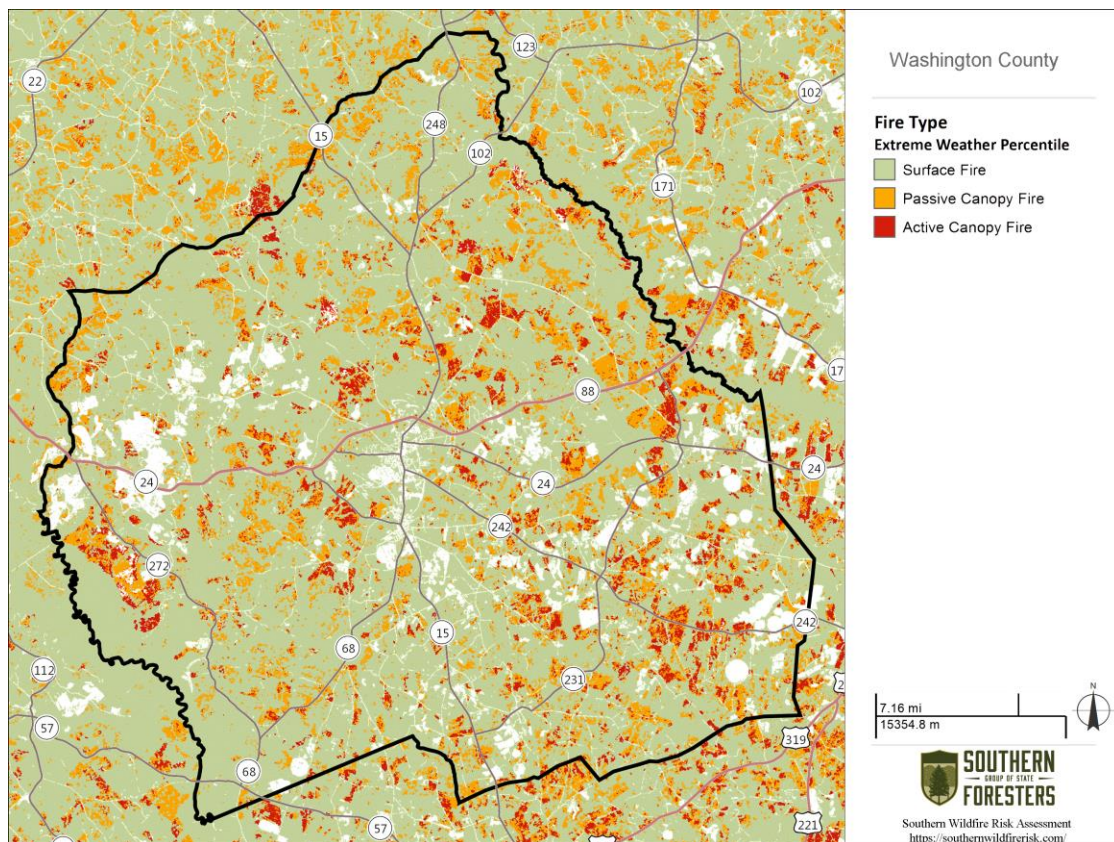
Above: Rate of Spread map Below: Flame Length map





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





There are two primary fire types – surface fire and canopy fire. Canopy fire can be further subdivided into passive canopy fire and active canopy fire. A short description of each of these is provided below.

**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 South 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. Washington 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 25 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. The code is endorsed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and in 2014 the code was adopted by the Georgia Legislature to be used by counties to help lower fire risk in the higher risk areas in the WUI.

The following recommendations were developed by the Washington 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	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. Clear adequate width and height for 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.  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.

<b>Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities</b>		
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. Mastication and other mechanical fuel reduction near structures and residential areas.
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.
<b>Proposed Improved Community Wildland Fire Response Priorities</b>		
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. Obtain overhead tanks at fire stations without adequate refill capacity for tankers.
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.
**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 Washington 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 – 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in May annually)</p>
<p>Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Washington 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"> <li>• Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters</li> <li>• Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet away from structures</li> <li>• Trim overhanging limbs</li> <li>• Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties</li> </ul> <p>Celebrate the work with a community cookout, with Community officials, GFC and Washington 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"> <li>• Be Firewise Around Your Home</li> <li>• Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction</li> <li>• Firewise Communities USA Brochures</li> <li>• Fire Adapted Community information</li> <li>• Ready Set Go materials</li> </ul>

### 5. Wildfire Protection Display

Create and exhibit a display for the general public at the Fair 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 local news media to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Washington County. Utilize TV, radio, cable access, and social media to promote programs.



**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 may not be practical. This practice can reduce fuel and lower risk near homes in the wildland urban interface. Private contractors can provide this type of service.**



## VIII. ACTION PLAN

### Roles and Responsibilities

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

Role	Responsibility
<b>Hazardous Fuels and Structural Ignitability Reduction</b>	
Washington County WUI Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC officials, Washington County Fire department officials, a representative from the city and county government and the EMA Director for Washington 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"> <li>1 Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping</li> <li>2 Debris Burning Safety</li> <li>3 Firewise information for homeowners</li> <li>4 Prescribed burning benefits</li> </ol>
Communications objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Create public awareness for fire danger and defensible space issues</li> <li>2 Identify most significant human cause fire issues</li> <li>3 Enlist public support to help prevent these causes</li> <li>4 Encourage people to employ fire prevention and defensible spaces in their communities.</li> </ol>
Target Audiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Homeowners</li> <li>2 Forest Landowners and users</li> <li>3 Civic Groups</li> <li>4 School Groups</li> </ol>
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 News Releases</li> <li>2 Radio, TV PSAs, cable, social media</li> <li>3 Personal Contacts</li> <li>4 Key messages and prevention tips</li> <li>5 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters</li> </ol>

Spring Clean-up Day (National Wildfire Preparedness Day – 1 <sup>st</sup> 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, Washington County Fire Departments, and EMA. Procure needed equipment and supplies. In cooperation with local city and county officials, develop safety protocol. Supervise work and monitor activities for safety the day of the event.

**Funding Needs**

The following funding is needed to implement the action plan:

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
1. Create a minimum of 30 feet of defensible space around structures	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
2. Reduce structural ignitability by cleaning flammable vegetation from roofs and gutters; appropriately storing firewood, installing skirting around raised structures, storing water hoses for ready access, replacing pine needles and mulch around plantings with less flammable material.	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
3. Amend codes and ordinances to provide better driveway access, increased visibility of house numbers, properly stored firewood, minimum defensible space brush clearance, required Class A roofing materials and skirting around raised structures, planned maintenance of community lots.	No Cost	To be adopted by city and county government.
4. Spring Cleanup Day 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 Washington 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 Washington 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 Washington 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](http://www.firewise.org)
- Georgia Forestry Commission [www.georgiafirewise.org](http://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](http://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](http://www.interfacesouth.org)
- Information on codes and standards for emergency services including wildfire can be found at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)
- Information on FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) can be found at [www.firegrantsupport.com](http://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](http://www.SouthernWildfireRisk.com)
- Fire Adapted Communities [www.fireadapted.org](http://www.fireadapted.org)
- Ready, Set, Go [www.wildlandfirersg.org](http://www.wildlandfirersg.org)
- National Wildfire Preparedness Day [www.wildfirepreeday.org](http://www.wildfirepreeday.org)

### **Appended Documents:**

Washington County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Washington 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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