

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



Community Wildfire Protection Plan

An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources

Wilkes County, Georgia

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

+



MAY 2018

Prepared by;
Beth Richards, Chief Ranger Wilkes County
Will Fell CWPP Specialist
Mark Wiles, Wildfire Prevention Specialist (revised 2018)
Georgia Forestry Commission
1495 Tignall Rd
Washington, GA 30673

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:

C J Gilland
Chief Washington FD
(706) 678-7113

David Streetman
Chief Danburg FD

Joe Burton
Chief Jackson Crossroads FD
(706) 318-6988

Randy Danner
Chief Metasville FD
(706) 678-6426
randydanner@berryplastics.com

Ryan Burton
Chief Tignall FD
(706) 318-6061
ryanburton_01@yahoo.com

Brent Sherrer
Chief Rayle FD

Billy Godwin
Chief Tyrone FD
(706) 678-2994
bgodwin@washingtontilkes.org

Blake Thompson
Wilkes Co Safety Officer

Samual Moore
Wilkes Co Commissioner (Chairman)

Beth Richards
Chief Ranger Wilkes County Forestry Unit
(706) 678-2910
brichards@gfc.state.ga.us

Greg Scott
Lt Washington FD
(706) 401-2176
lak@nu-z.net

PLAN CONTENTS

PREFACE

I. Objectives	5
II. Community Collaboration	5
III. Community Background and Existing Situation	6
IV. Community Base Map	9
V. Community Wildfire Risk Assessment	10
VI. Community Hazards Map	15
VII. Prioritized Mitigation Recommendations	17
VIII. Action Plan	22
IX. Appended Documents.....	26

Wilkes County Wildfire Pre-suppression Plan

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

Preface

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

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) includes a locally assessed evaluation of the wildland urban interface areas of the county, looking at the critical issues regarding access to these areas, risk to properties from general issues such as building characteristics and “fire wise” practices and response from local fire fighting resources. It further incorporates a locally devised action plan to mitigate these risks and hazards through planning, education and other avenues that may become available to address the increasing threat of wildland fire. The CWPP does not obligate the county financially in any way, but instead lays a foundation for improved emergency response if and when grant funding is available to the county.

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

This plan will:

- Enhance public safety
- Raise public awareness of wildfire hazards and risks
- Educate homeowners on how to reduce home ignitability
- Build and improve collaboration at multiple levels

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

I. OBJECTIVES

The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Wilkes 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 February 24th, 2011 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:

Wilkes County EMA
Wilkes County Fire Departments
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 various fire departments in the county assessed the selected areas and reconvened on January 19th, 2012 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.

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan was revised and updated in May 2018.

III. COMMUNITY BACKGROUND AND EXISTING SITUATION

Background

Located in east central Georgia, Wilkes County was created in 1777. The state's first county, it was originally far larger than its current 471 square miles. The area that became the original Wilkes County was called the New Purchase or Ceded Lands, referring to the land lying between the Broad River and the Savannah River, which today includes Elbert and Lincoln counties, as well as parts of Oglethorpe, Taliaferro, and Warren counties. Wilkes County is named for John Wilkes, a colorful member of British Parliament who opposed some of the British policies that eventually led to the American Revolution (1775-83).

Creek and Cherokee people originally held the land but lost it to whites in a treaty signed in 1773. The first non-Indians in the area were fur trappers and traders; the first white settlers came from North Carolina, followed soon by a large number of Virginians. The latter were wealthier, more educated, and often held a higher social status than the former. Sociocultural differences between the two settler groups led to political dissension that eventually spread across Georgia, with citizens choosing sides led by men from one group or the other.

While Georgia was still an English colony, the area now forming Wilkes County was part of St. Paul Parish. The area saw action during the American Revolution, most notably on February 14, 1779, during the Battle of Kettle Creek, one of the most decisive conflicts of the war. British forces, solidly defeated by the Americans, were prevented from moving farther into west Georgia. The eventual county seat, Washington, was settled in 1773 by Stephen Heard, a one-term governor of Georgia. He established a fort known initially as Heard's Fort and later as Fort Washington, honoring his former neighbor, George Washington. The first court sessions north of Augusta were held at Heard's Fort in 1779. During Heard's term as governor (1780-81), the colonial legislature met in Augusta, but he used Fort Heard as his capital during a time when Augusta was endangered.

The town itself was laid out in the midst of the Revolution, retaining the name to honor General Washington and, thus, reputedly becoming the first town in the United States named for him. The first official courthouse was built in 1785 on the spot where the fort had stood and served until 1904, when the current building was completed. The town, incorporated in 1805, grew steadily, and its prosperity was enhanced by improved access to outside markets in 1853, when the Georgia Railroad built a line from Washington to Barnett, in Warren County. The first cotton mill in the South was built in Wilkes County, and it was there, in the Cooper-Sanders-Wickersham House, that Jefferson Davis dissolved the Confederacy in 1865.

Wilkes County's economy originally relied heavily on cotton, and Washington was once a thriving commercial center. However, the damage to cotton done by the boll weevil in the 1920s caused a precipitous decline in the fortunes of the area, exacerbated in the following decades by the closure of numerous manufacturing plants. The peak population of 24,210 in 1920 had dropped to 10,687 by 2000. Among the current efforts to reverse decades of economic decline is the aggressive pursuit of new industries through the building of industrial parks. A successful workplace-to-school educational partnership has also been instituted and serves as a model for other counties. There are also creative efforts under way to make use of the rich heritage of this historical county, in hopes of boosting tourism. The other incorporated towns in the county are Rayle and Tignall, which was known earlier as "Little Atlanta."

Wilkes County has been home to several notable Georgians, including U.S. Supreme Court justice Archibald Campbell, who helped decide the Dred Scott case; Alexander Stephens, vice president of the Confederacy; Robert Toombs, secretary of state of the Confederacy; Ben Fortson, Georgia's secretary of state; governor George Mathews; Jesse Mercer, Baptist leader and publisher; and John Springer, noted educator and clergyman and the first Presbyterian minister ordained in Georgia.

Wilkes County boasts twenty-nine entries in the National Register of Historic Places, including several districts within Washington. Structures range from Victorian to Greek revival in style. Among them are the courthouse, the Robert Toombs House, and the Washington Historical Museum, which houses a rare collection of Civil War (1861-65) relics, including Jefferson Davis's camp chest. The Callaway Plantation, northwest of Washington, is a working farm museum, and southwest of Washington is the Kettle Creek Battlefield.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, the population of Wilkes County was 10,593, a slight decrease from the 2000 population of 10,687.

Elizabeth B. Cooksey, Savannah, Courtesy New Georgia Encyclopedia

Existing Situation

Wilkes County located in east central Georgia is still over 70% forested. Perhaps with the exception of a few large blocks of paper company woodlands scattered about the county, there are homes and communities 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 incorporated cities.

Wilkes County is protected by seven organized volunteer fire departments and a city fire department in Washington. The Georgia Forestry Commission maintains a county protection unit located on Hwy 17 two miles north of Washington near the center of the county to respond to wildfires throughout the county. The incorporated towns of Washington, Tignall and Rayle are serviced by pressurized water systems with hydrants available. In addition the county fire departments have good water handling capability and adequate drafting pumps to cover those parts of the county without pressurized hydrants.

Over the past 55 years, Wilkes County has averaged 30 reported wildland fires per year, burning an average of 118 acres per year. Using more recent figures over the past 20 years, this number has decreased to an average of 18 fires per year burning on average 111 acres annually. The occurrence of these fires during this later period shows a slight increase during the months of February, March and April in the average number of fires and a marked increase in the monthly average acreage burned, accounting for 44% of the yearly acreage. The numbers of fires over the remainder of the year are fairly well distributed.

Over the past 20 years, the leading cause of these fires was debris burning causing 34% of the fires and over 50% of the acres burned. Over the past six years records show that about 30% of the debris fires originated from residential burning.

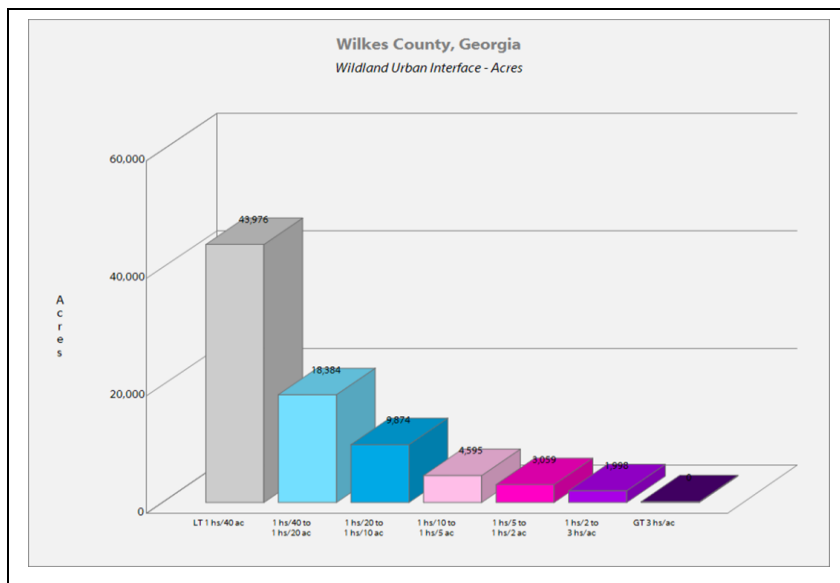
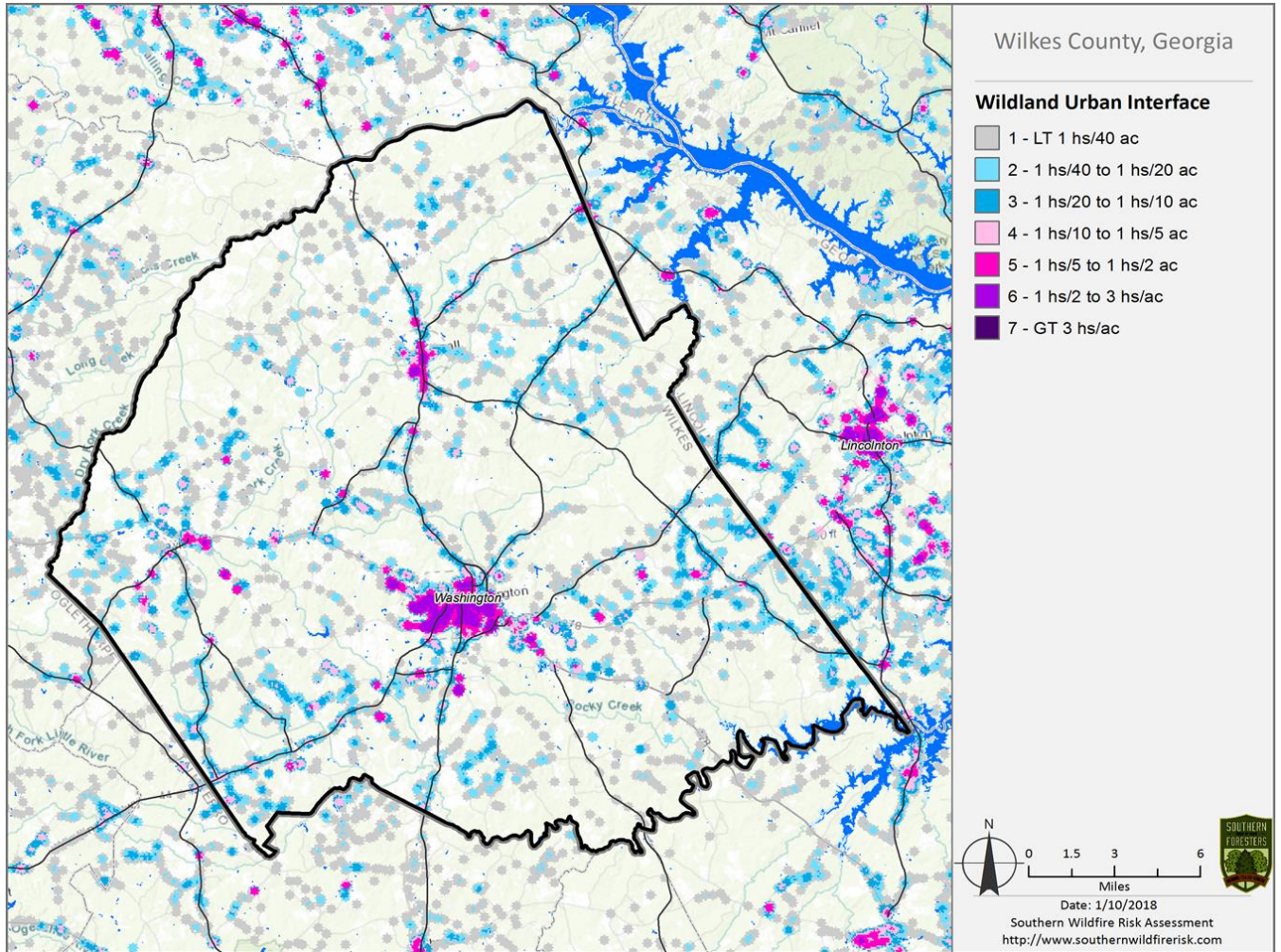
Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Records show that in the past five years, six homes have been damaged by wildfire in Wilkes County resulting in losses of \$45,000 along with five barns and other outbuildings worth \$37,000 and 56 more homes have been directly or indirectly threatened by these fires. This is a significant loss and threat to non timber property attributed to wildfires in Wilkes County.

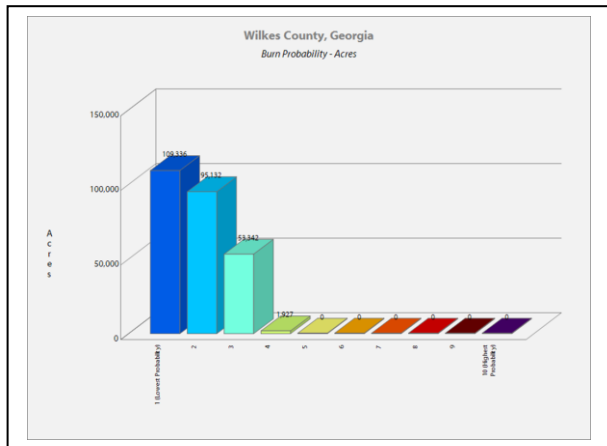
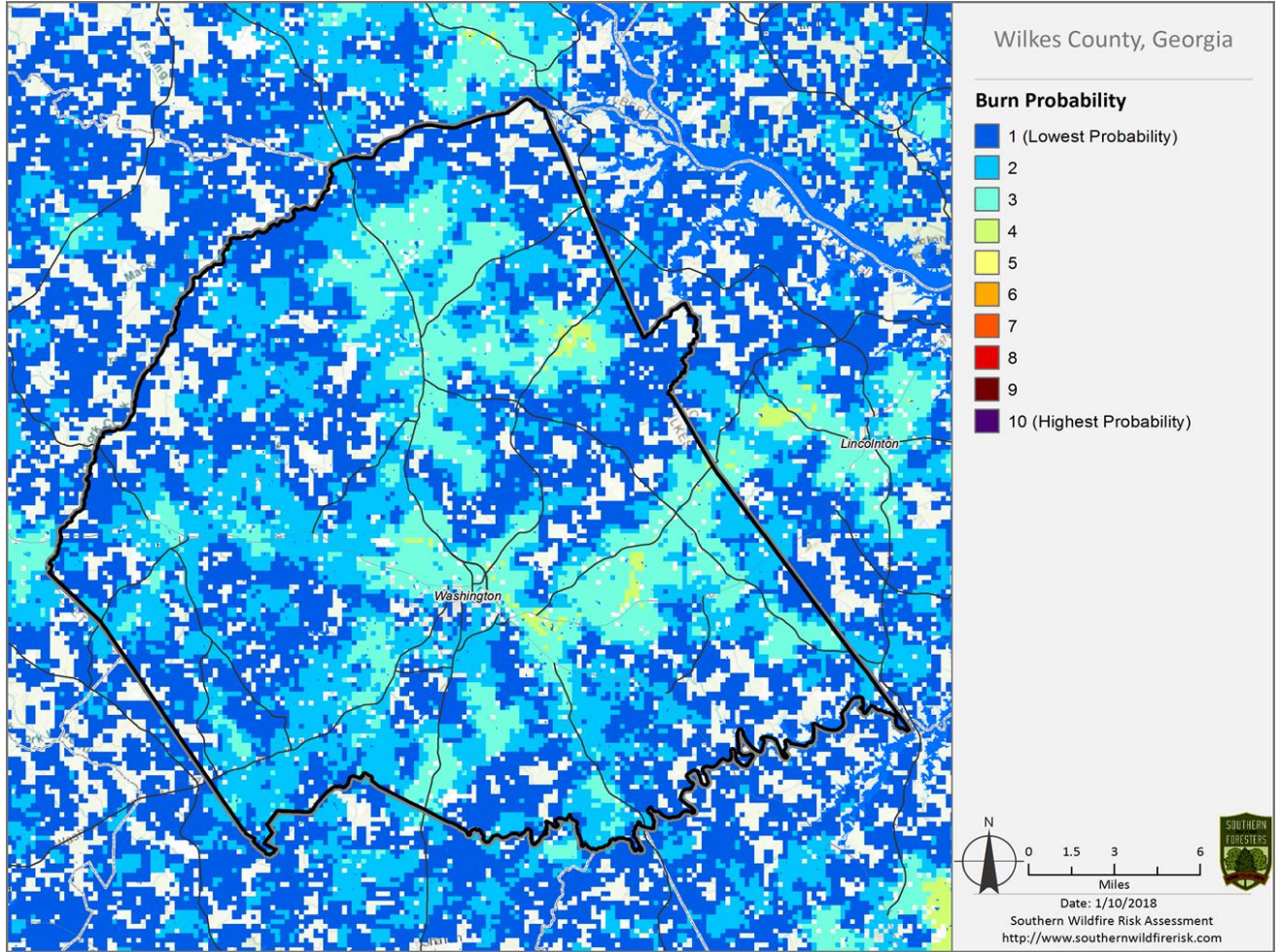
Wilkes County Wildland Urban Interface

WUI is described as the area where structures and other human improvements meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. Population growth within the WUI substantially increases the risk from wildfire.

For the **Wilkes County, Georgia** project area, it is estimated that **10,553** people or **100 percent** of the total project area population (10,584) live within the WUI.

IV. COMMUNITY BASE MAP





The fire growth simulations, when run repeatedly with different ignition locations and weather streams, generate burn probabilities and fire behavior distributions at each landscape location (i.e., cell or pixel). Results are objectively evaluated through comparison with historical fire patterns and statistics, including the mean annual burn probability and fire size distribution, for each FPU. This evaluation is part of the FSim calibration process for each FPU, whereby simulation inputs are adjusted until the slopes of the historical and modeled fire size distributions are similar and the modeled average burn probability falls within an acceptable range of the historical reference value (i.e., the 95% confidence interval for the mean).

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)

Wildland Urban Interface Hazards

Firefighters in the wildland urban interface may encounter hazards other than the fire itself, such as hazardous materials, utility lines and poor access.

Hazardous Materials

- Common chemicals used around the home may be a direct hazard to firefighters from a flammability, explosion potential and/or vapors or off gassing. Such chemicals include paint, varnish and other flammable liquids, fertilizer, pesticides, cleansers, aerosol cans, fireworks, batteries and ammunition. In addition, some common household products such as plastics may give off very toxic fumes when they burn. Stay out of smoke from burning structures and any unknown sources such as trash piles.

Illicit Activities

- Marijuana plantations or drug production labs may be found in the wildland urban interface areas. Extremely hazardous materials such as propane tanks and flammable/toxic chemicals may be encountered.

Propane Tanks

- Both large (household size) and small (gas grill size) liquefied propane gas (LPG) tanks can present hazards to firefighters, including explosion.

Utility Lines

- Utility Lines may be located above and below ground and may be cut or damaged by tools or equipment. Don't spray water on utility lines or boxes.

Septic Tanks and Fields

- Below ground structures may not be readily apparent and may not support the weight of engines or other equipment.

New Construction Materials

- Many new construction materials have comparatively low melting points and may “off-gas” extremely hazardous vapors. Plastic decking materials that resemble wood are becoming more common and may begin softening and losing structural strength at 180 degrees F, though they normally do not sustain combustion once direct flame is removed. However if they continue to burn they exhibit the characteristics of flammable liquids.

Pets and Livestock

- Pets and livestock may be left when residents evacuate and will likely be highly stressed making them more inclined to bite and kick. Firefighters should not put themselves at risk to rescue pets or livestock.

Evacuation Occurring

- Firefighters may be taking structural protect actions while evacuations of residents are occurring. Be very cautious of people driving erratically. Distraught residents may refuse to leave their property and firefighters may need to disengage from fighting fire to contact law enforcement officers for assistance. In most jurisdictions firefighters do not have the authority to force evacuations. Firefighters should not put themselves at risk trying to protect someone who will not evacuate!

Limited Access

- Narrow one-lane roads with no turn around room, inadequate or poorly maintained bridges and culverts are frequently found in wildland urban interface areas. Access should be sized up and an evacuation plan for all emergency personnel should be developed.



The wildland fire risk assessment conducted in 2011 by the Wilkes County Fire Departments identified a number of hazards and risks to communities in the wildland urban interface. The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Wilkes County’s WUI was the Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Checklist. The instrument takes into consideration accessibility, site hazard, roofing and building construction, and additional factors such as availability of water, placement of gas and electric utilities, and the surrounding environment. The following factors contributed to the wildfire hazard’s identified for Wilkes County:

- Unpaved roads and private driveways
- Narrow roads without drivable shoulders and with overhanging trees
- Short or inadequate culverts leading to private drives
- Minimal defensible space around structures
- Homes with wooden siding
- Unmarked septic tanks in yards
- Lack of pressurized or non-pressurized water systems available
- Large, adjacent areas of forest or wildlands
- Lack of enforcement of addressing ordinance

Fire District	Community Design	Site Hazard	Bldg Construction	Additional Factors	Score	Hazard Rating
Washington	17	54	9	30	110	Moderate
Metasville	12	53	5	34	104	Moderate
Rayle	19	55	20	34	128	Moderate
Tyrone	13	48	20	39	120	Moderate
Danburg	18	57	25	35	135	High
Tignall	20	52	30	35	137	High
Average	17	53	18	35	123	Moderate

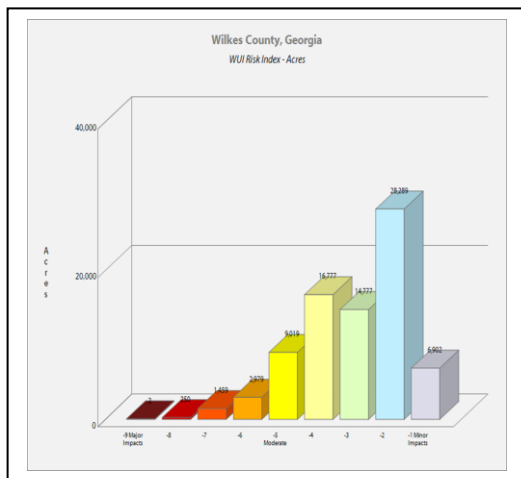
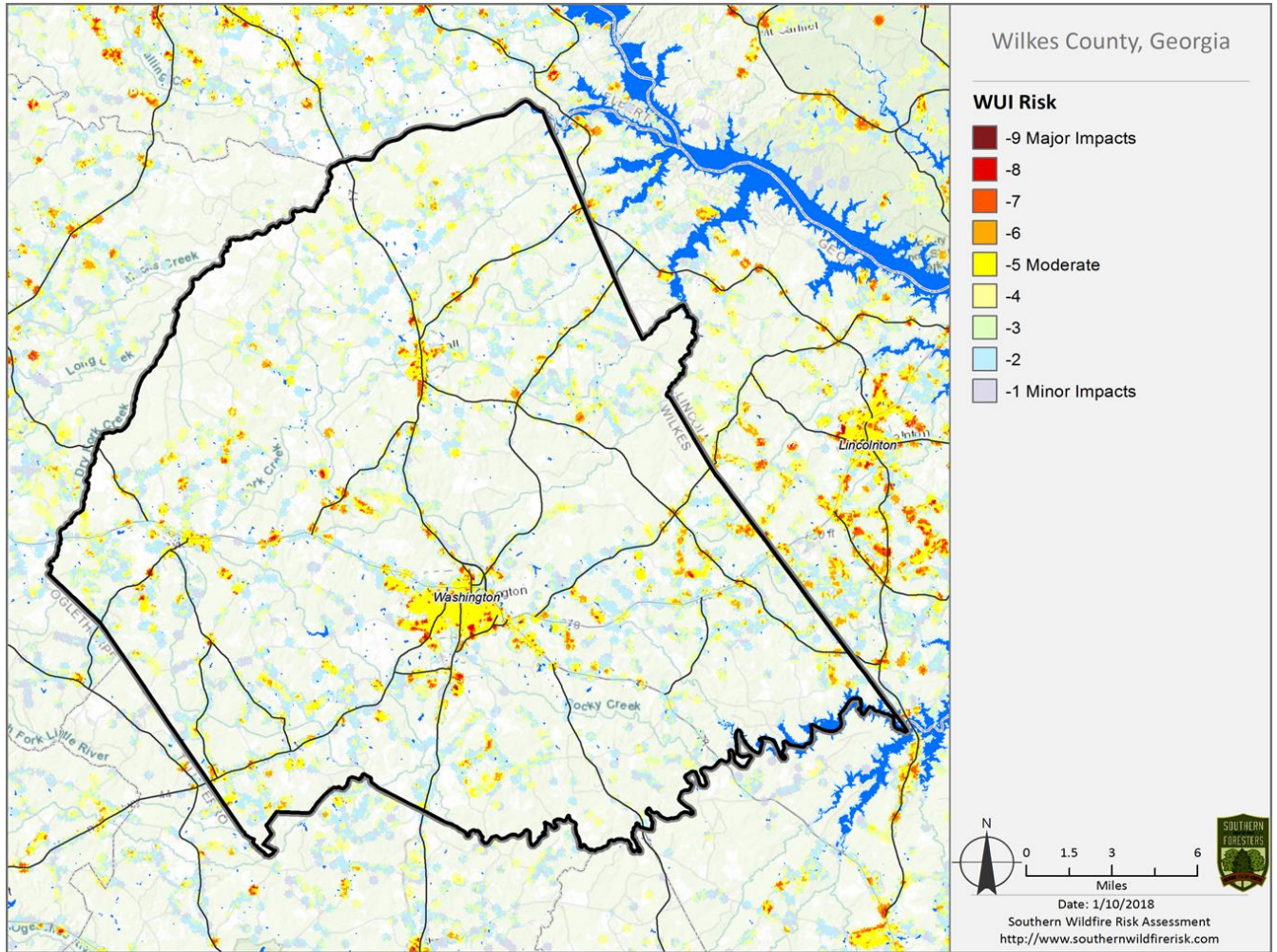
Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Mapping (SouthWRAP)

The SouthWRAP mapping 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

To learn more about the SWRA project or to create a custom summary report, go to www.SouthWildfireRisk.com.

VI. COMMUNITY HAZARDS MAPS



The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk Index layer is a rating of the potential impact of a wildfire on people and their homes. The key input, WUI, reflects housing density (houses per acre) consistent with Federal Register National standards. The location of people living in the Wildland Urban Interface and rural areas is key information for defining potential wildfire impacts to people and homes.

The WUI Risk Rating is derived using a Response Function modeling approach. Response functions are a method of assigning a net change in the value to a *resource* or *asset* based on susceptibility to fire at different intensity levels, such as flame length. The range of values is from -1 to -9, with -1 representing the least negative impact and -9 representing the most negative impact. For example, areas with high housing density and high flame lengths are rated -9 while areas with low housing density and low flame lengths are rated -1.

VII. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

As Rural 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. Wilkes County will have an opportunity to significantly influence the wildland fire safety of new developments. It is important that new development be planned and constructed to provide for public safety in the event of a wildland fire emergency.

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

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

The following recommendations were developed by the Wilkes 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	Cutting, mowing, pruning**	Cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces.
4. Driveway Access	Right of Way Clearance	Maintain vertical and horizontal clearance for emergency equipment. 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. Work with road department to improve standards for new culvert installation and replacement sufficient to allow access by fire fighting equipment.
6. Codes and Ordinances	Examine existing codes and ordinances.	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.

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 mowing or prescribed burning in WUI areas.
2. 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 or drafting locations needed. Locate and pre-clear helicopter dip sites. Map location of dry hydrants.
2. Fire Stations	Equipment	Seek grants or other funding for Wildland hand tools and lightweight Wildland PPE Gear.
3. Personnel	Training	Obtain Wildland Fire Suppression training for Fire Personnel.
**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 Wilkes 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. Target local schools, community groups and local senior centers.</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</p>
<p>Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Wilkes 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 Wilkes 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 Bookmarks

5. Wildfire Protection Display

Create and exhibit a display for the general public at the county fairs 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. Press

Invite the local news media to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Wilkes County.



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	
Wilkes County WUI Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of concerned residents, officials from Wilkes County Fire Departments and Georgia Forestry Commission along with the EMA Director. 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 PSA's for area stations and cable access channels 3 Personal Contacts 4 Key messages and prevention tips 5 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters

Spring Clean-up Day	
Event Coordinator	Coordinate day's events and schedule, catering for cookout, guest attendance, and moderate activities the day of the day of the event.
Event Treasurer	Collect funds from residents to cover food, equipment rentals, and supplies.
Publicity Coordinator	Advertise event through neighborhood newsletter, letters to officials, and public service announcements (PSAs) for local media outlets. Publicize post-event through local paper and radio PSAs.
Work Supervisor	Develop volunteer labor force of community residents; develop labor/advisory force from Georgia Forestry Commission, Wilkes 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 governments.
4. Spring Cleanup Day	Varies	Community Business Donations.
5. Fuel Reduction Activities	\$35/acre	FEMA & USFS Grants

GRANT FUNDING AND MITIGATION ASSISTANCE

- Georgia Firewise Community Hazard Mitigation Grant: Georgia Forestry Commission grant designed to assist Firewise communities in the mitigation of fire hazards within their community. The grant is designed to provide financial assistance in helping the community to carry out the recommendations of their Firewise Action Plan.
- Community Protection Grant: U.S.F.S. 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.
- 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 complete a 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.
- FEMA – Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program
 1. Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG). The purpose of AFG’s is to award one-year grants directly to fire departments and emergency medical services (EMS) organizations of a state to enhance their abilities with respect to fire and related hazards.
 2. Fire Prevention and Safety Grants. The purpose of these grants is to assist state, regional, national or local organizations to address fire prevention and safety. Emphasis of the program is on prevention of fire-related injuries to children.
 3. Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER). The purpose of SAFER is to award grants directly to volunteer, combination and career fire departments to help the departments increase their cadre of firefighters (enhance their ability for 24-hour response).

- 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.
- Individual Homeowners:
 1. The elimination of hazardous conditions around a structure must ultimately be the responsibility of the community and the homeowner. They will bear the cost and reap the benefit from properly implemented mitigation efforts.
 2. GEMA: Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

Assessment Strategy

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness for the action plan, the Wilkes 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 Wilkes 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 Wilkes 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



5645 Riggins Mill Road. Dry Branch, Georgia 31020
1-800-GA-TREES
GaTrees.org

The Georgia Forestry Commission provides leadership, service, and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources. An Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider