



**Community Wildfire Protection Plan**  
*An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and  
Conservation of Natural Resources*  
**Worth County, Georgia**



**February 2018**

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## Attachments

Worth County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

## Executive Summary

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

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan includes an evaluation of the wildland fire susceptibility of wildland/urban interface “communities-at-risk”, an analysis of fire service resources and training and an Action Plan to address the increasing threat of wildfire. The CWPP does not obligate the county financially in any way, but instead, lays a foundation for improved emergency response if and when grant funding is available to the County.

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

The plan will:

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

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

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

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Honorable Fred Dent, Chairman  
Worth County Board of County Commissioners

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Date

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Honorable William J. Yearta, Mayor  
City of Sylvester

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Date

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Tom Whittington, District Fire Chief  
Worth County

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Date

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Jack Colby, Fire Chief  
City of Sylvester

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Date

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Lester Green, Chief Ranger  
GFC Worth County

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Date

## I. WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE FIRE DISASTERS

Fire influenced and defined the landscape we call the United States, well before the arrival of the first Europeans. Scientists, in fact, think that fires started by lightning or Native Americans occurred over most of the Southeast every 3 to 7 years. These were typically low intensity fires (because of their frequency) which kept the forests open and “park-like” in appearance and prevented heavy accumulations of dense underbrush. When communities became well established across the South, wildfires began to impact public safety and had to be controlled. State forestry agencies became established between 1915 and 1928 and the landscape was generally segregated into communities (or human habitations) and natural or wildland areas.

In the mid 1980's, following a new wave of development in what was previously forest or wildland areas, agencies across the country became aware of an increasingly common phenomena – wildfires were more and more frequently impacting communities . In 1985, a milestone year, over 1400 homes nationwide were lost to wildfire. The catastrophes became known as wildland/urban interface fires and occur when the fuel feeding the fire changes from natural vegetation (trees, shrubs and herbs) and begins to include manmade structures (homes, outbuildings and vehicles). Wildland/Urban Interface Fires can occur anywhere in the United States and can become major disasters when associated with extremes in weather (extended droughts, high winds, low relative humidity, etc.)

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

### CWPP PLAN PARTICIPANTS

#### Core Committee

Chairman of Worth County Commissioners Fred Dent  
County Commissioner Bettye Bozeman  
Worth County Fire Department Deputy Chief Jason Brooks  
Lyndel E. Ford, Jr., Fire Chief and Worth County EMA Director  
Debbie Bridges, City Manager, City of Sylvester  
City of Sylvester Fire Chief Jody L. Yarbrough  
Chris Duncan, Sylvester Fire Department  
GFC Chief Ranger Lester Green

#### GFC Representatives

GFC Chief Ranger Lester Green  
CWPP Program Specialist Jim Harrell (Initial CWPP)  
Wildfire Prevention Specialist Beryl Budd (Revised 2018)

#### Meeting Dates

Initial Core Committee Meeting: September 15, 2009  
Follow-Up Meeting #1: November 30, 2009  
Follow-Up Meeting #2: January 20, 2010

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE CWPP

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

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

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

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

### OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

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

- Major stakeholders were invited to participate as members of the CWPP Core Committee.
- A news release appeared in the local paper (*Sylvester Local*) on January 20, 2010 explaining the objectives of the Worth County CWPP, the planning process and the procedure for obtaining a draft copy for review and/or comment.

### III. HISTORY OF WORTH COUNTY

Worth County, spanning 570 square miles, was created from Dooly and Irwin counties by an act of the state legislature on December 20, 1853. Located in southwest Georgia just east of Albany, the county was named for Major General William J. Worth of New York, who gained fame in the Mexican War (1846-48) and was a son-in-law of General Zachary Taylor. Major William Harris, a leader in the formation of the new county, suggested Worth's name because Harris had served under him.

Pindartown was of considerable importance in the early days.



**Worth County Courthouse**

When the Creek lands changed hands in 1821, the village was bought from the Indians. Pindartown served as the only post office between the Ocmulgee and Flint rivers in the early days. The stagecoach road between Milledgeville and Tallahassee, Florida, went through Pindartown, and the town was located at the head of navigation on the Flint River.

San Bernard served as the first county seat, which moved to Isabella in 1854. Worth County remained virtually unscathed during the Civil War (1861-65), except for the men sent into battle. In 1872, when the Brunswick and Albany Railroad (later the Seaboard Coast Line) was built to Albany, the line ran three miles south of Isabella, thus causing a new community, Isabella Station, to develop. Several towns sprang up on the rail line, some bigger than Isabella, and in 1904, after a prolonged power struggle, the county seat became Sylvester.



In 2004 the incorporated towns in Worth County were Poulan, Sumner, Sylvester, and Warwick. Known as the "Peanut Capital of the World," Sylvester hosts the annual Georgia Peanut Festival in October in celebration of peanuts, the state's official crop. Warwick, on Lake Blackshear, is considered the most historic town in Worth County. It is believed that General Andrew Jackson, in 1818, camped near the settlement that became Warwick. Warwick hosts the National Grits Festival in April. Sumner is home to a branch of the Southern Regional Technical College (formerly Moultrie Technical College) and hosts an egg festival in September. Possum Poke, in Poulan, was the winter residence and hunting lodge of Michigan governor Chase S. Osborn, who was instrumental in organizing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO. Osborn was known for his writings on subjects ranging from geography to wildlife.



**Possom Poke**

Agriculture has always been the economic mainstay of the region. Even in the 1990s, the average size of farms increased, from 441 acres in 1992 to 470 acres in 1997, with a 16 percent increase in the market value of agricultural products sold, average per farm, from \$137,156 in 1992 to \$159,241 in 1997. Worth County produces more peanuts than anywhere else and every jar of Peter Pan Peanut Butter in the world is produced here by ConAgra Foods. Worth County farmers plant nearly 28,000 acres of peanuts annually with a value of over \$18 million.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, Worth County had a population of 21,679, a slight decrease from the 2000 population of 21,967. Georgia Highway 520/U.S. Highway 82 stretches through Worth County.

## WILDFIRE HISTORY

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

*Vision: Healthy sustainable forests providing clean air, clean water and abundant products for future generations.*

*Mission: To provide leadership, service and education in protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources.*

Worth County Unit Personnel:

Name	Title	Phone/Pager	Profile
Brannen, Christopher Scott	Ranger	Office: 229-777-2114	<a href="#">Profile</a>
Green, Lester	Chief Ranger-District Communications Coordinator	Office: 229-777-2114	<a href="#">Profile</a>
Harden, Clayton Tyler	Ranger (Lead Worker)	Office: 229-777-2114	<a href="#">Profile</a>
Reynolds, Samuel James (Jim)	Ranger	Office: 229-777-2114	<a href="#">Profile</a>

### Equipment

2017 Ford F-250 4X4 pickup equipped with 150 gallon water tank  
 2012 Freightliner M2112 transport/ 2016 CAT D6K crawler tractor  
 2009 International 7600 transport / 2016CAT D6K crawler tractor  
 2006 International 7600 transport / 2016 CAT D5K crawler tractor

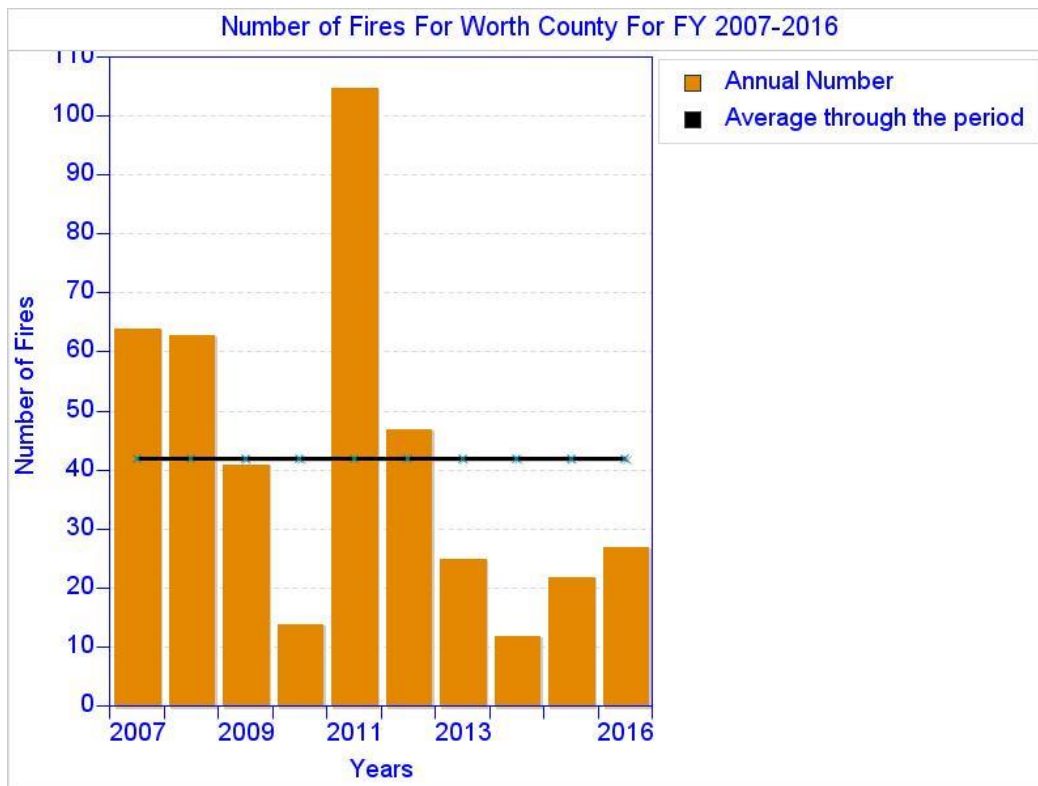
On a year-to-year basis, the leading cause of wildfires in Worth County is debris burning and escaped prescribed fires, followed by wildfires originating from equipment /machine use. Other major causes are Incendiary (arson) and lightning followed by children, campfires and other miscellaneous causes.



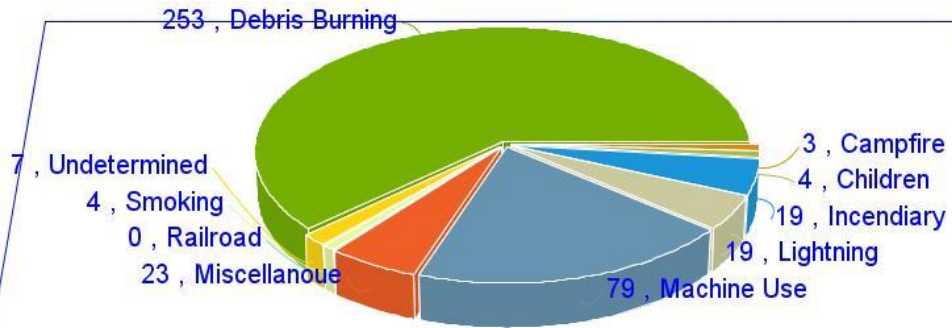
The table below indicates wildfire activity in Worth County during the 2017 fiscal year (July 1, 2016 thru June 30, 2017). The following pages indicate wildfire activity during the last 10 years, 2007 thru 2016.

County = Worth	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
<a href="#">Campfire</a>	Campfire	6		23.27	1.20	4.65
<a href="#">Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc</a>	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	0		0.00	1.40	10.46
<a href="#">Debris: Construction Land Clearing</a>	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	2		20.93	0.80	8.26
<a href="#">Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn</a>	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	11		38.04	6.20	77.83
<a href="#">Debris: Household Garbage</a>	Debris: Household Garbage	1		3.75	0.80	2.06
<a href="#">Debris: Other</a>	Debris: Other	0		0.00	0.80	0.01
<a href="#">Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc</a>	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	10		18.07	4.00	6.56
<a href="#">Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related</a>	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	5		40.70	1.20	8.52
<a href="#">Incendiary</a>	Incendiary	2		276.50	1.20	58.90
<a href="#">Lightning</a>	Lightning	0		0.00	0.60	9.17
<a href="#">Machine Use</a>	Machine Use	12		24.21	5.80	29.13
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding</a>	Miscellaneous: Cutting/Welding/Grinding	0		0.00	0.20	0.62
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Other</a>	Miscellaneous: Other	2		2.60	0.40	0.52
<a href="#">Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences</a>	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	5		5.58	2.00	9.62
<a href="#">Railroad</a>	Railroad	0		0.00	0.20	0.32
<a href="#">Smoking</a>	Smoking	1		1.38	0.40	0.72
<a href="#">Undetermined</a>	Undetermined	4		21.01	2.20	7.30
<b>Totals for County: Worth Year: 2017</b>		61		476.04	29.40	234.67

Acreage Burned /Number of Fires Worth County FY 2007-2016				
Year	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2007	674.12	64	10.53	18.64
2008	248.47	63	3.94	4.56
2009	345.29	41	8.42	3.90
2010	42.80	14	3.06	3.93
2011	676.69	105	6.44	17.56
2012	490.55	47	10.44	5.08
2013	173.87	25	6.95	4.53
2014	170.61	12	14.22	5.02
2015	228.36	22	10.38	4.42
2016	124.46	27	4.61	6.29

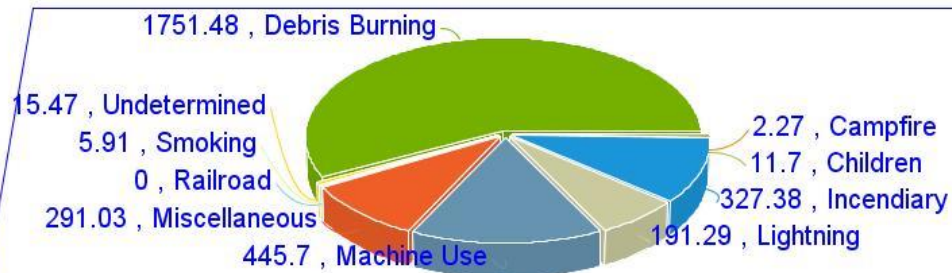


Cause of Fire For Worth County For FY 2007-2016

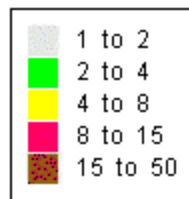
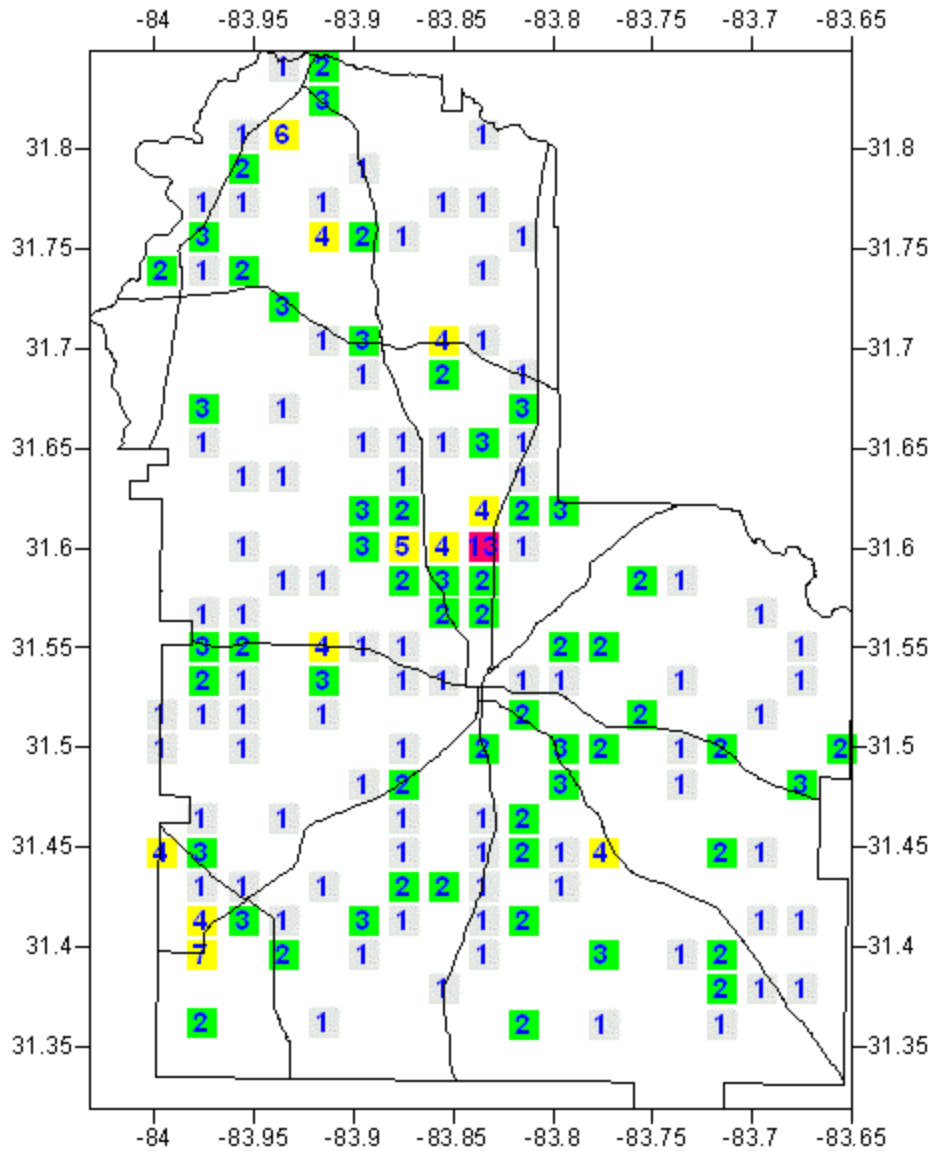


Fire Cause

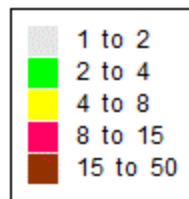
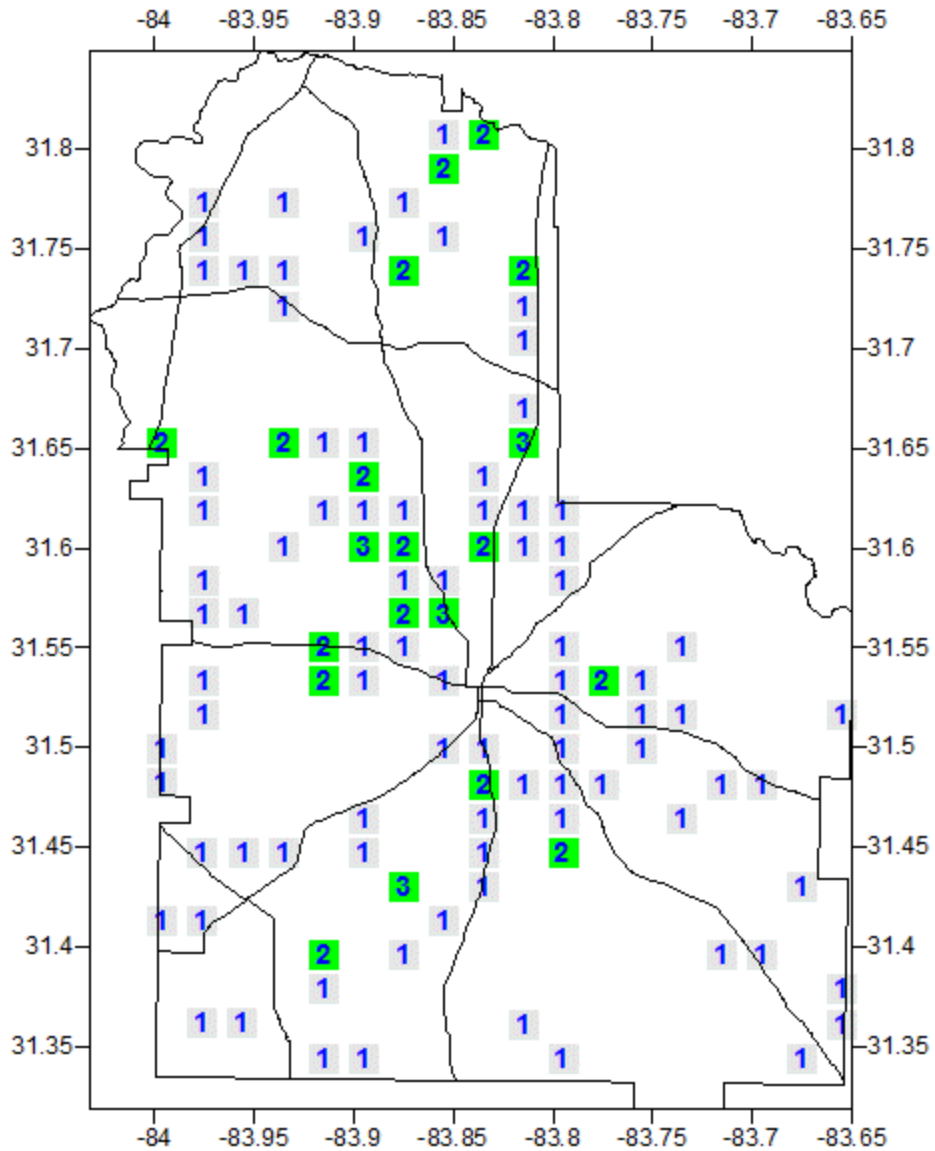
Acreage Burned by Cause of Fire For Worth County For FY 2007-2016



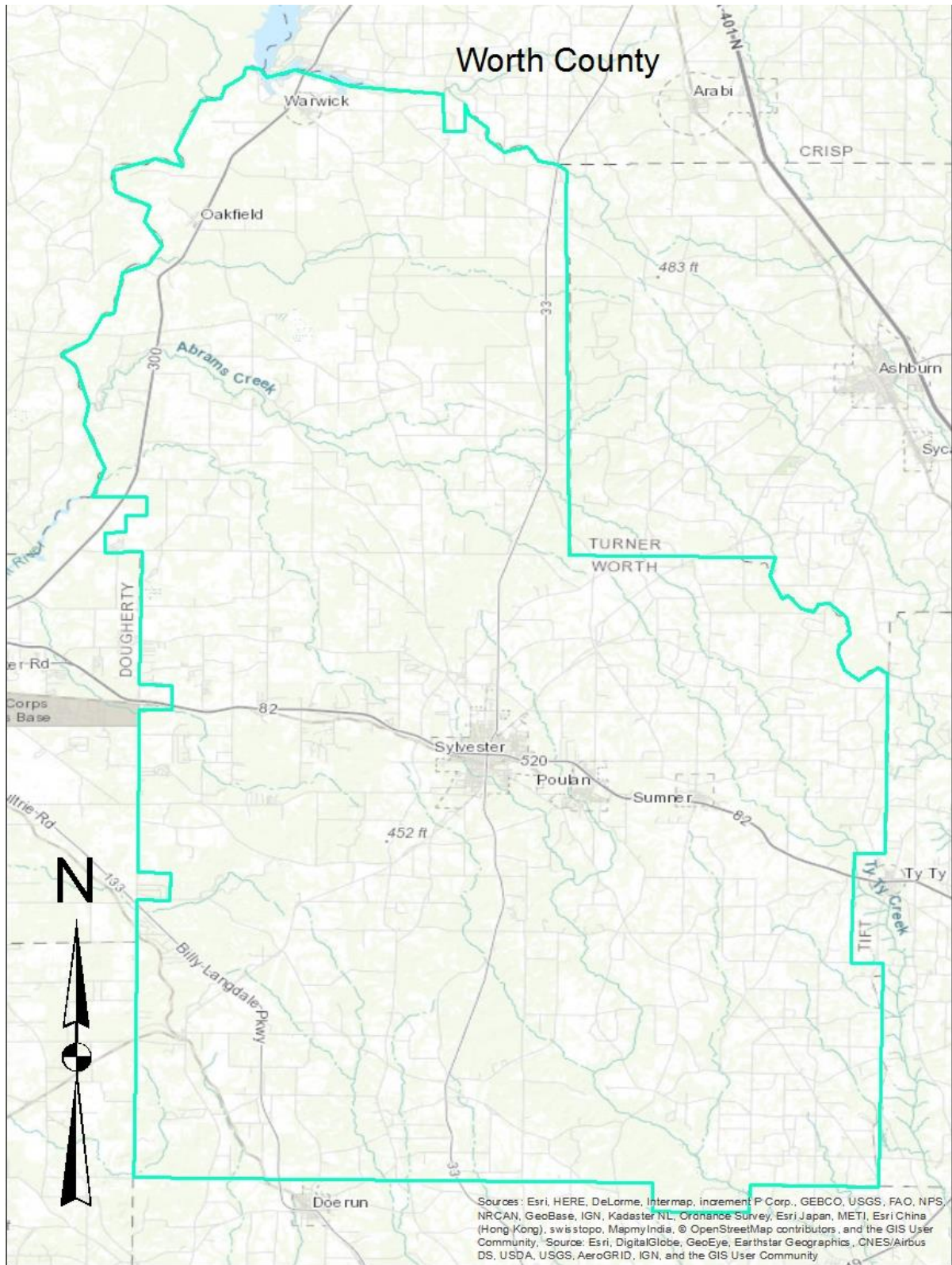
# Fire Occurrence Map for Worth County for Fiscal Year 2007-2011



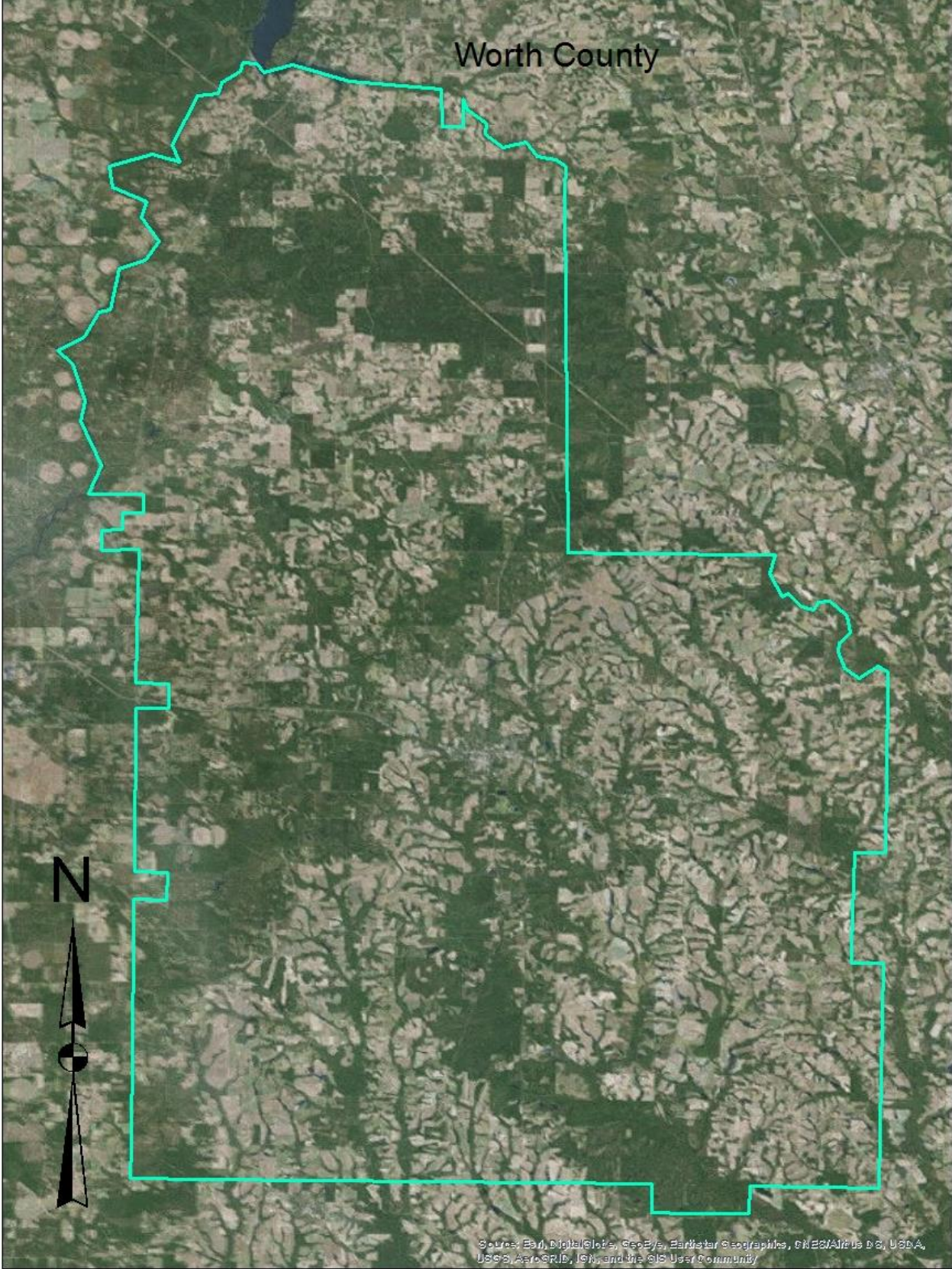
# Fire Occurrence Map for Worth County for Fiscal Year 2012-2016



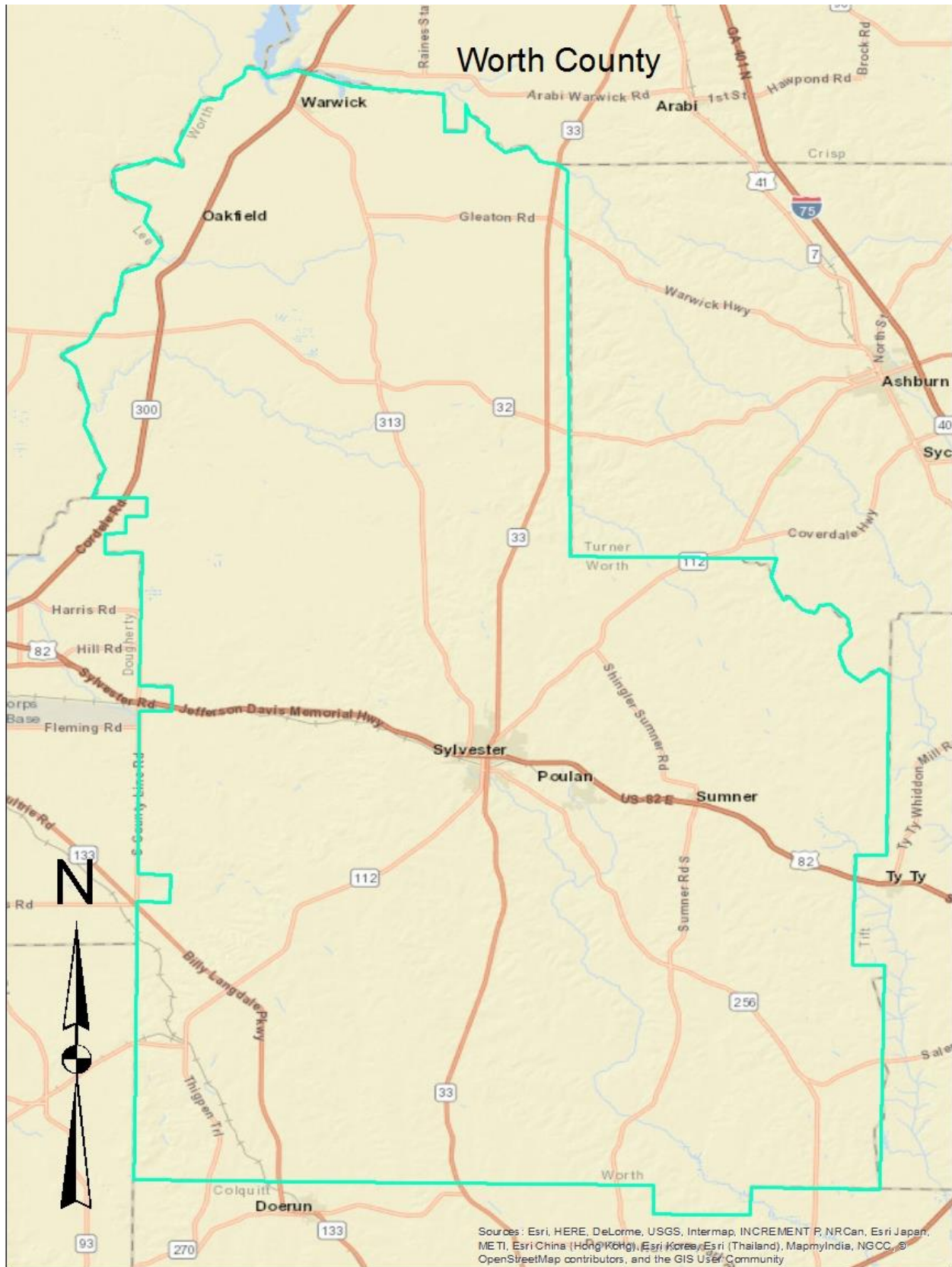
## IV. COUNTY BASE MAPS













## V. WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE COMMUNITIES AT RISK

Community	Score	Hazard Rating
Green Valley	122	Extreme Hazard
Greenleaf / Spring Flats	110	Very High Hazard
Tempy	103	Very High Hazard
Henry Road	84	High Hazard
Sumner Lakes	82	High Hazard
Woodcrest	72	Moderate Hazard
Sadler Street	58	Moderate Hazard
Twin Creeks / Highway 33	55	Moderate Hazard
Bent Tree / Bryant / Highway 33	46	Low Hazard
Kingsdale / Darlington	44	Low Hazard

These hazard ratings were completed by Lester Green, GFC Chief Ranger, and Sylvester Fire Chief Jody Yarbrough during the month of October, 2009. The Georgia Forestry Commission Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Scoresheet was used. This document evaluates communities (groups of homes) based upon six criteria: community access, surrounding vegetation, building construction, fire protection, utilities and additional rating factors. The cumulative wildfire hazard rating scores range from a low rating of 0 to 50 points to an extreme hazard rating with over 120 points. The cumulative wildfire hazard rating scores help establish priorities for mitigation activities in the CWPP Action Plan.

### Communities at Risk

**Green Valley** – This is a community of mobile homes with a few stick-built homes on 3-5 acres lots. There is more than one way in and out via graded dirt roads. The community is surrounded on three sides by pine forest. A significant amount of fuel (grassy fuels) is present in and around the residences. Some mobile homes are not skirted. There is a pond in the immediate vicinity for drafting. No fire hydrants.

**Greenleaf/Spring Flats** - This is a community of (skirted) mobile homes on ½ acre lots. The homes adjoin a wooded area with heavy fuel (15-20 year-old pine plantation and dense stands of 1"-2" oaks). . There

is only one way in and out for each of three streets. There is a fair amount of cleared area (defensible space) in and around the homes. There are no fire hydrants.

**Tempy** – This community is built in parts of an old pecan orchard and old planted pine. The mix of mobile homes and brick residences are widely spaced. There is a low amount of vegetative fuel in and around the homes. There are two ways in and out and no fire hydrants.

**Henry Road** – This is a community of (skirted) mobile homes on one-acre lots. There are two ways in and out , but dead end cul-de-sacs also are present. There are nearby stands (thickets) of small oaks – a significant amount of vegetative fuel. The amount and quality of the defensible (cleared) space around the homes varies. There are no fire hydrants, but ponds are present in the immediate area as a draft source.

**Sumner Lakes** – This community has one way in and out and is characterized by skirted mobile homes (a few stick-built homes) on large lots (est. 3 acres). A pine/hardwood forest adjoins the community on 2 sides and there are 2 ponds present as a source for drafting. The area immediately surrounding most of the homes is clear and open. There are a few vacant lots with accumulations of grass or small oaks. There are no fire hydrants.

**Woodcrest** – This community contains large brick and fiberboard exterior homes on lots averaging 1-2 acres in size. There is a stand of planted pines on 2 sides with moderate amounts of vegetative fuel. The immediate area surrounding the homes is cleared (good defensible space). There are no fire hydrants, two ways in and out and a pond that could be used as a drafting source for water.

**Sadler Street** – This neighborhood has 2 ways in and out. Homes are surrounded by pine/hardwood forest on 3 sides. A large portion of the homes have insufficient space surrounding the structures. Fire hydrants are present.

**Twin Creeks/Highway 33** – This is a subdivision of brick homes and homes with fiberboard exterior siding on 1 acre lots. The homes are built in what was a 10-12 year old stand of planted pine. The understory is open and the few vacant lots are grassed. There is one way in and out (cul-de-sac) and pressurized fire hydrants are present.

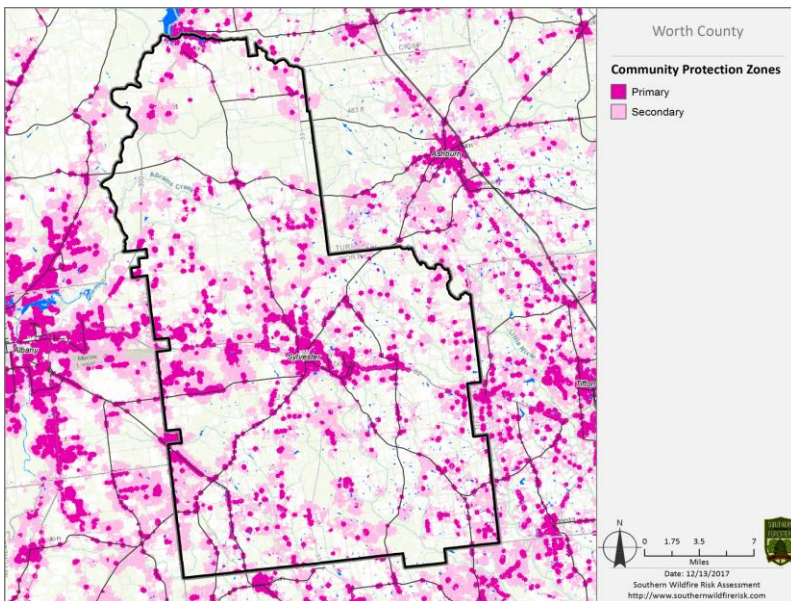
**Bent Tree/Bryant/Highway 33** – This neighborhood of large, mostly brick homes on 3-acre lots is located within the remnants of a stand of planted pines (estimated age: 30 years). There are two ways in and out and pressurized fire hydrants are present. The few undeveloped lots are characterized by a low amount of vegetative fuel. This area is classified as low hazard for wildfire.

**Kingsdale/Darlington** – This community has multiple ways in and out and many homes are surrounded on four sides by wooded areas. Defensible space around the homes averages 30 to 100 feet. Pressurized fire hydrants are present. This area is classified as low hazard for wildfire.

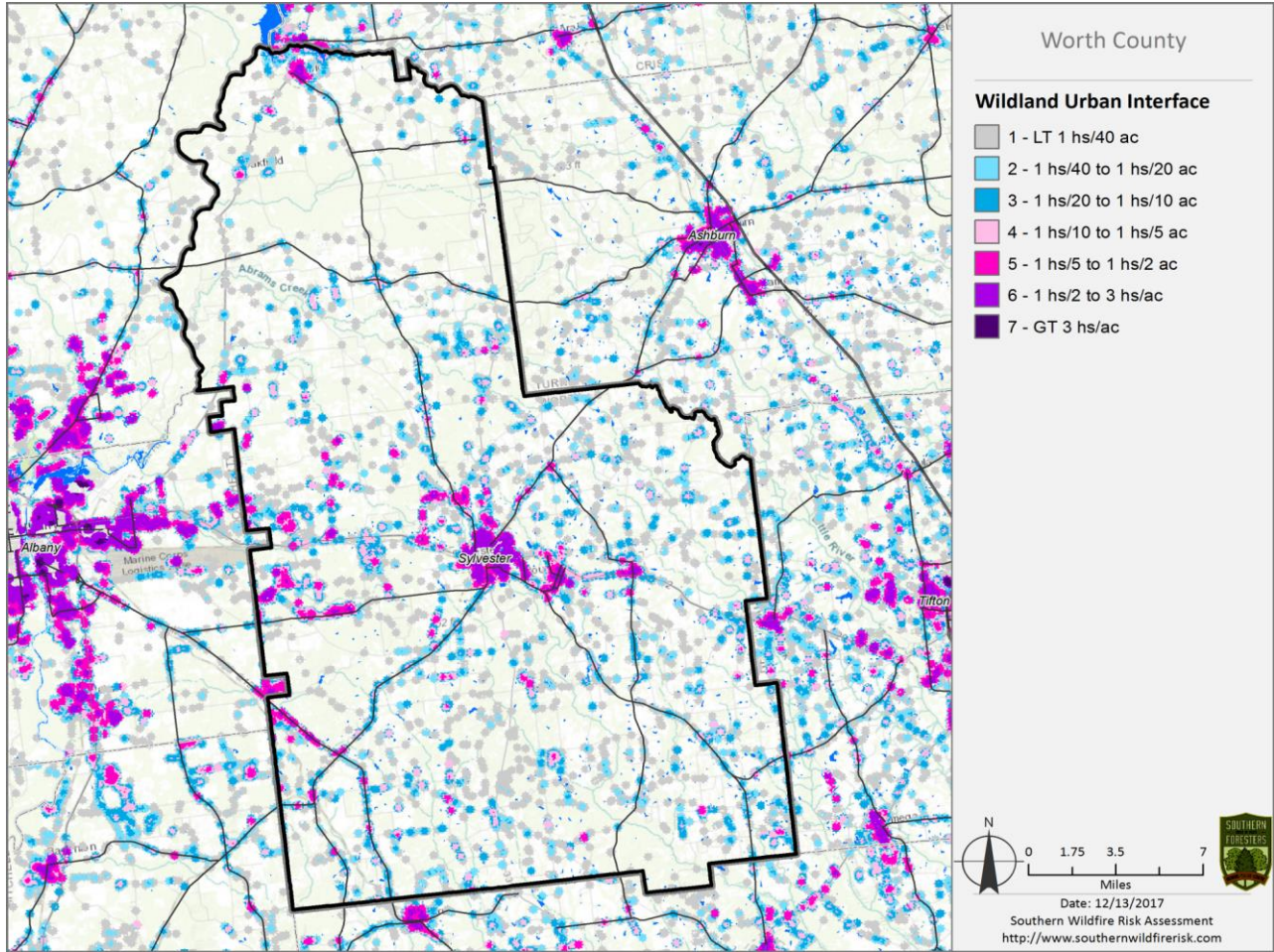
## VI.SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARDS MAPS

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 Worth 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

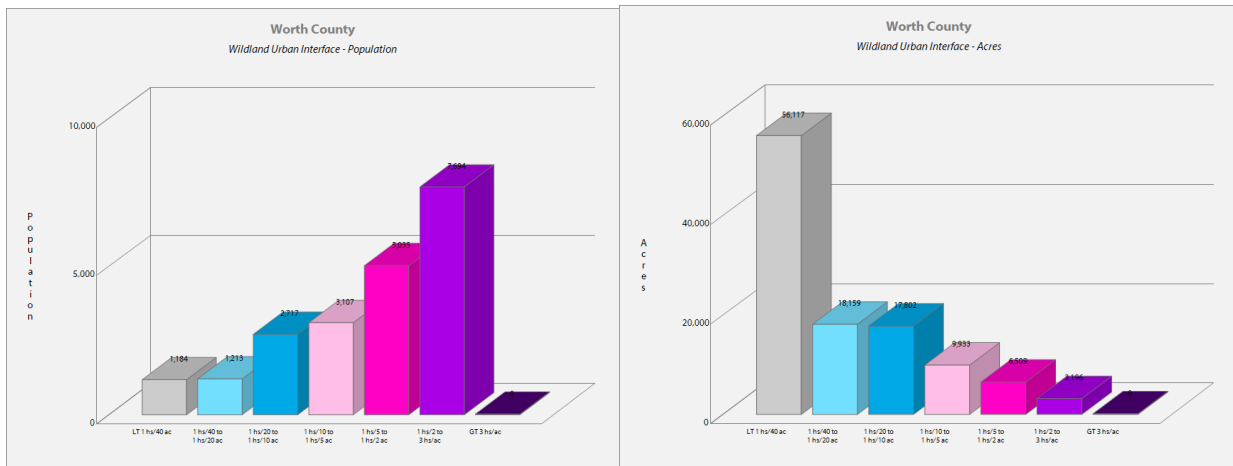


Community Protection Zones map from the Worth County SWRA

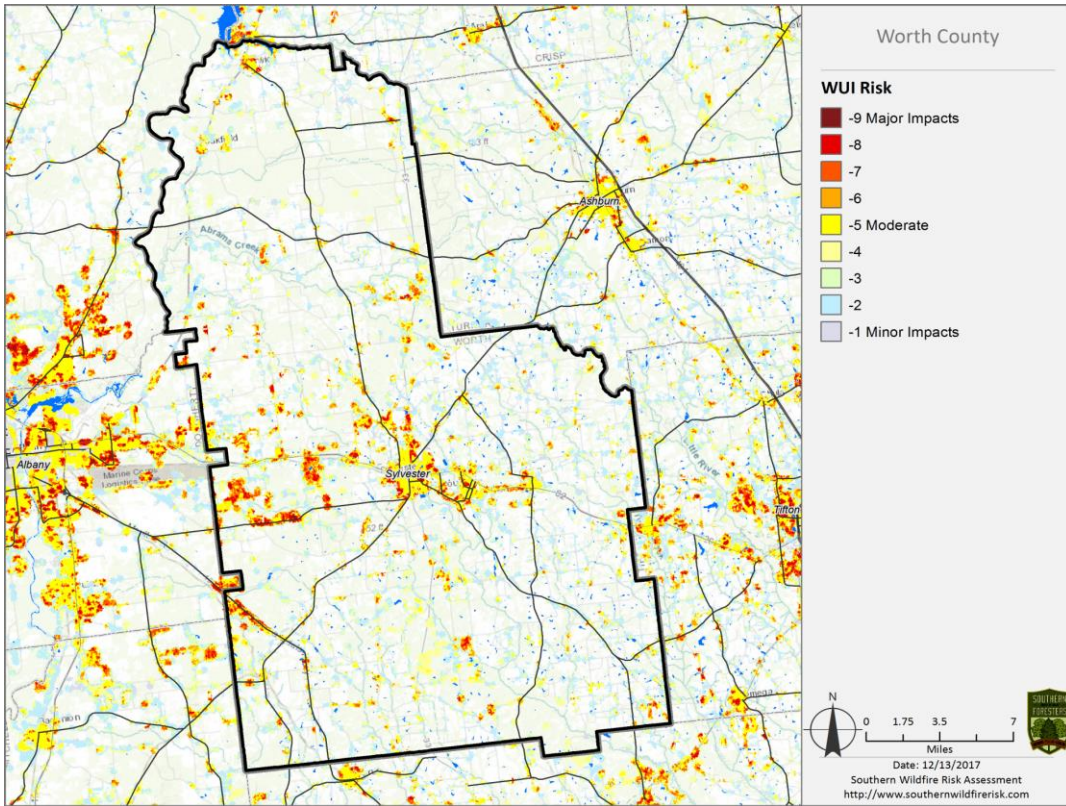


Above: Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

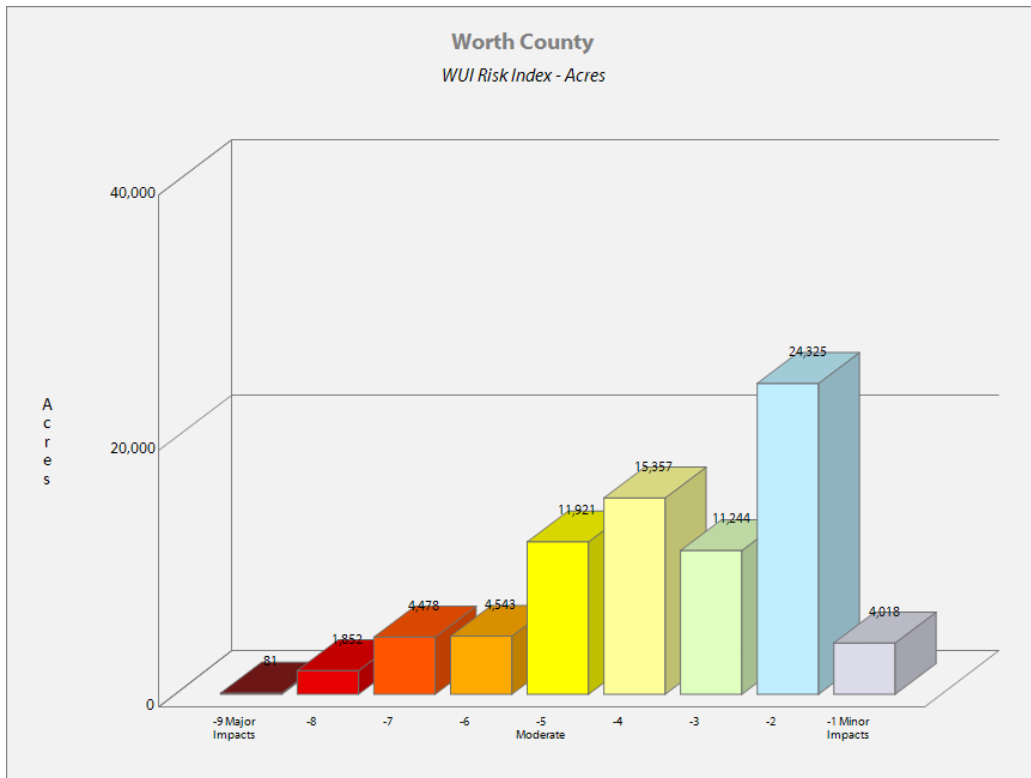
Graphs Below: WUI population (left) and WUI Acres (right)



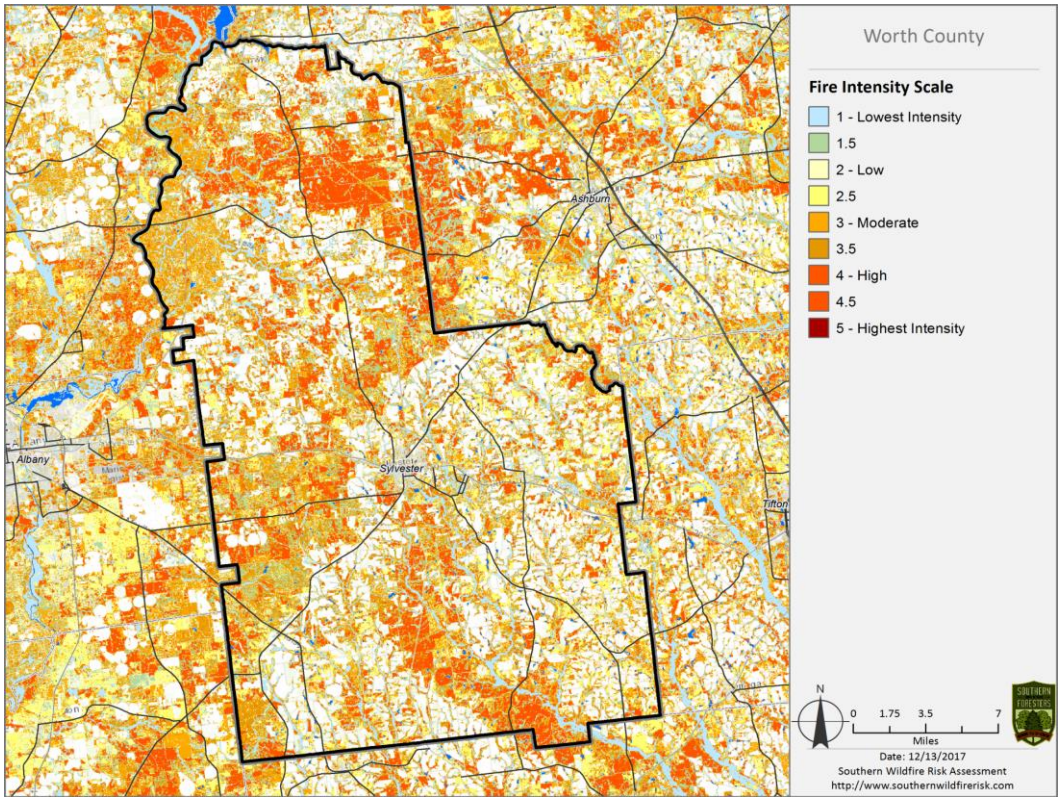




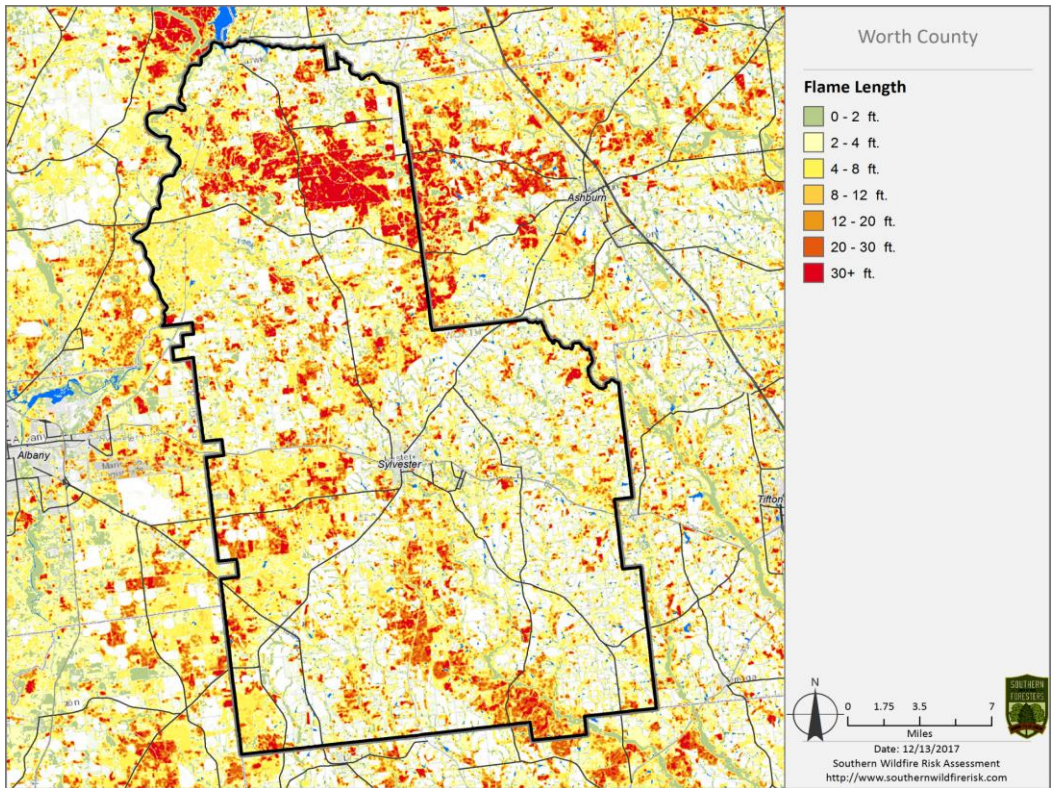
Above: Wildland Urban interface (WUI) Risk Below: WUI Risk Index - Acres







Above: Fire Intensity Scale Map    Below: Flame Length Map



## VII. MITIGATION & ACTION PLAN

### PROTECTING EXISTING STRUCTURES

#### Critical Facilities

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

#### Critical Facilities:

Phoebe Worth Hospital

New Holland Tire Company

2 Auto Salvage Yards (Giddens / Pine Knolls)

Pine Shadows Assisted Living

Worth County Primary Schools

Conger Gas (Ty Ty)

ConAgra Grocery Products

Webbs Propane Fuel Facility

Fertilizer Plant (Highway 82)

Gas Pipeline (Natural Gas)

Gas Pipeline (Propane)

Henson Oil Co.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

- Meet with owner/operators of Critical Facilities to evaluate any wildfire hazard and suggest what owner/operators might do to mitigate any observed hazards and improve wildfire protection.

#### Public Education Needs

“Firewise” structures are homes and other buildings in the wildland/urban interface that have been built, designed or maintained to survive a wildfire event even in the absence of firefighters on the scene. Over the past fifty years, many Georgia residents have left the city or the suburbs to build homes in or adjacent to forested areas with a desire to be “close to nature”. Unfortunately, this has resulted in neighborhoods or single-family dwellings with one way in and out, with long narrow driveways, no pressurized hydrants or draft source for water and so close to wildland fuel that even the best equipped fire department could not be successful in a severe wildfire event. Most of these homeowners don’t understand the risk associated with living in the wildland/urban interface and expect to be rescued by the fire department in the event of a wildfire emergency.

The key to the reduction of structural losses in the wildland/urban interface cannot rest solely with improved response by the local fire services. There will never be enough fire trucks and firefighters to adequately protect homes in the wildland/urban interface. A major part of the solution to this problem lies with the homeowner – homeowners in the wildland/urban interface must become “partners” with



the fire services and assume some responsibility for maintaining their home (structure) and landscape (yard) so that ignitions in and around the home are less likely should a wildfire occur in the immediate area. This means a home with no debris on the roof and in the gutters, wood decks that are skirted underneath, chunky bark or lava rock mulch near the house instead of pine straw or cypress mulch and a “lean, clean and green” landscape of less-flammable plants within 30 feet of the structure.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Initiate a community public education program for Worth County residents
- Host a Firewise Workshop each year at a centrally-located facility in Worth County with a meal and refreshments for those who attend.
- Make Firewise Communities brochures available to the public at central locations such as: Farm Services Agency, Chamber of Commerce and the County Courthouse.
- Encourage communities (neighborhoods) that qualify to apply for recognition as a Firewise Community/USA.

#### Reduction of Hazardous Fuels

Because a significant portion of Worth County is forested, the accumulation of brush and other (mostly ground) vegetation can create conditions over extensive areas that could fuel a disastrous wildfire. Treatment of forested areas with prescribed fire can significantly reduce this hazard while improving pulpwood and sawtimber production and enhancing wildlife habitat. Prescribed burning, however, must be conducted by experienced personnel when weather conditions are conducive to a safe burn and when an authorization has been obtained from the local office of the Georgia Forestry Commission. Other ways to reduce wildland fuel (vegetation) include: Mechanical treatment, such as forest mastication: Chemical treatment (herbicides): and livestock grazing. These alternatives to prescribed burning are more intensive and hence, more costly and generally suitable only for smaller acreages.



**Pictured here is a private contractor providing mastication mowing in dense understory. This type of fuel reduction is effective to lower wildfire risk in areas that may not be suitable for prescribed fire. The Georgia Forestry Commission can also provide forest mastication as one of its services.**



The goal for structural protection should be a “Firewise” landscape. A Firewise landscape is characterized by trees, shrubs and grasses that are carefully managed within 100 feet of structures - an area called the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ). Most critical is the space within 30 feet of a structure which is usually referred to as the area of Defensible Space. The Defensible Space should include a landscape of less flammable plants, coarse bark or lava rock as mulch adjacent the structure, tree limbs trimmed away from the structure and any decks skirted so leaves and other debris cannot accumulate underneath. The idea is to create a landscape that will prevent flames or fire brands (aerial borne embers) from igniting the structure.

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

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

##### **Promote prescribed burning in Worth County.**

- Help landowners understand how to prescribe burn legally and safely.
- Educate the general public on the benefits of prescribed burning.
- Work with the Georgia State Patrol and local law enforcement to ensure motorists are alerted to smoke hazards on local roadways.



**Prescribed burning of woodlands is the best management practice to reduce hazardous fuel accumulation. The Georgia Forestry Commission can provide a prescribed burning plan, establish fire breaks, and can also provide equipment standby and assist with burning when personnel are available.**

## **NEW DEVELOPMENT**

### Site Plan Review

Growth pressure is expected to increase new home starts in Worth County over the next 20 years. If farm and ranch land is conserved as a mainstay of the County's rural economy, new development will, by necessity, occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. The County Planning and Zoning Board will have an opportunity to significantly influence the wildland fire safety of new developments. It is important that new development be planned and constructed to provide for public safety in the event of a wildland fire emergency.

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

In 2012 the International Code Council created the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC). The following year Georgia Legislature adopted the code for Georgia counties to use as may be needed to minimize risk and reduce structure loss. This Code, endorsed by the National Fire Protection Association, is voluntary and can be adopted locally as needed for new development and building codes.

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

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

#### **Strengthen the site plan review process for multi-unit residential development in rural areas subject to wildfires.**

- Evaluate the wildfire hazard of proposed new development in rural areas as part of the site plan review process (GFC Hazard & Wildfire Risk Assessment Scoresheet).
- Consider the "adoption by reference" of NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.
- Adopt the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) or parts of the code that may help to reduce risk.



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

### **FIRE SERVICES CAPABILITY**

The citizens of Worth County are very fortunate to have one of the best Rural Fire Department - Cooperators in the state. They are not only very well equipped and professionally staffed, but have either dealt with or assisted the Forestry Unit on numerous open land and forest fires. With trucks and tankers supplied either in part or completely by grant money obtained through the Georgia Forestry Commission, the Worth County Fire Department is able to ensure a quicker response time from any of their 14 RFD stations that are strategically located throughout Worth County.

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

Number of firefighters:

Worth County Fire Department (38)

Sylvester (4)

There is a need for wildland fire training and Personal Protective Equipment to allow these firefighters to function safely and efficiently when responding either in support or as the primary units on a wildfire.

Needed:

#1 – Wildland Fire Training (Standards for Survival, S-130 & Wildfire Behavior, S-190, Ready Set go training]

#2 – Wildland Fire Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

#3 – Fire Shelters

In addition, enhanced drafting capability would allow firefighters to minimize the transport of water and operate more effectively in remote areas of the county.

## ACTION PLAN

Community/Area	Project	Agency	Funding Needs	Priority	Community Recommendation
Green Valley	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$10,000	<b>(H)</b>	Implement community fuel reduction
Green Leaf/Spring Flats	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$10,000	<b>(H)</b>	Implement community fuel reduction
Tempy	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$10,000	<b>(H)</b>	Implement community fuel reduction
Henry Road	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$10,000	<b>(H)</b>	Implement community fuel reduction
Sumner Lakes	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$10,000	<b>(H)</b>	Implement community fuel reduction
Woodcrest	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$2,500	<b>(M)</b>	Firewise Education program to organize homeowners
Sadler Street	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$2,500	<b>(M)</b>	Firewise Education program to organize homeowners
Twin Creeks/ Hwy 33	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	\$2,500	<b>(M)</b>	Firewise Education program to organize homeowners
Bent Tree/Bryant/ Hwy 33	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	-0-	<b>(L)</b>	<b>none</b>
Kingsdale/Darlington	Wildfire Mitigation	GFC/County	-0-	<b>(L)</b>	<b>none</b>
Countywide	Firefighter Training	County FD /GFC	\$15,000	<b>(H)</b>	Standards for Survival and Wildland Fire Behavior (Courses: S-130 & S-190)
Countywide	Firefighter PPE & Tools	County FD	\$20,000 PPE \$5,000 Tools	<b>(H)</b>	Personal protective equipment & fire shelters
Countywide	Firewise Workshop	GFC/County	\$1,500	<b>(H)</b>	1 countywide Firewise education workshop
Countywide	Drafting Equipment "Turbo draft"	County FD	Small: \$1,400 Large \$3,000	<b>(M)</b>	Enhanced water delivery

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

## **ASSESSMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

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

- An annual wildfire risk assessment (of “communities-at-risk”) would be conducted by the CWPP Committee to reassess wildfire hazards and prioritize needed actions.
- Mitigation efforts that are recurring (such as mowing, burning or clearing of defensible space) would be incorporated into annual revisions of the original CWPP Action Plan.
- Mitigation efforts that could not be funded in the requested year will be incorporated into the annual revision/update of the original CWPP Action Plan.
- Continuing education and outreach programs will be conducted and assessed for effectiveness. Workshops will be evaluated based upon attendance and post-workshop surveys that are distributed by mail.
- The CWPP Core Committee will continue a year-to-year focus on the wildland/urban interface fire challenges in the County. The Committee will annually update this CWPP, summarizing mitigation projects initiated and completed, progress for ongoing actions, funds received, funds expended and in-kind services utilized. Recommendations will be incorporated into the CWPP Action Plan.

## VIII. GRANT FUNDING AND MITIGATION ASSISTANCE

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

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

1. To provide technical and financial assistance to local governments to assist in the implementation of long term, cost effective hazard mitigation accomplishments.
2. This policy addresses wildfire mitigation for the purpose of reducing the threat to all-risk structures through creating defensible space, structural protection through the application of ignition resistant construction and limited hazardous fuel reduction to protect life and property.
3. With a completed registered plan (addendum to the State Plan) counties can apply for pre-mitigation funding. They will also be eligible for HMGP funding if the county is declared under a wildfire disaster.

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

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

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

## **IX. 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).*



## X. 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.wildfireprepdlay.org](http://www.wildfireprepdlay.org)

### Appended Documents:

Worth County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)

Worth 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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