



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



December 2017

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Attachments:

Clay County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary (SWRA)

Executive Summary

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, 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, a description of needed equipment 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 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.

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

Honorable David Shivers, Chairman
Clay County Board of County Commissioners

Date

Charles Crozier
Clay County Fire Chief

Date

Jon Lee Wright, Chief Ranger Sr.
Clay County

Date

I. OVERVIEW OF 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. State forestry agencies became established between 1915 and 1928 to control wildfires and the landscape was generally segregated into communities (or human habitations) and natural or wildland areas.

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

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



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

II. CWPP COMMITTEE

The development of this plan was a collaborative effort for the people of Clay County. The individuals listed below made up the “CWPP Core Committee” and are responsible for much of the plan content.

CWPP Core Committee

Charles Crozier, Clay County Fire Chief

Tyrone Ragan, U.S. Corp of Engineers

Georgia Forestry Commission Representatives

Chief Ranger Jon Lee Wright

CWPP Program Specialist Jim Harrell

Wildfire Prevention Specialist Beryl Budd (revised 2017)

The CWPP Core Committee contributed to the CWPP development by:

Initiation	Agreed on the need to develop a Community Wildfire Protection P
Risk Assessment	Assessed the wildfire hazard of “communities-at-risk”
Fuels Reduction	Identified and prioritized areas for fuel treatment projects
Structure Ignitability	Identified strategies for reducing the ignitability of structures within the wildland/urban interface
Emergency Response	Updated and improved strategies for wildland fire response
Education and Outreach	Education initiative to increase citizen awareness of Firewise

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 Clay County CWPP, opportunities for collaboration were provided and major stakeholders were invited to participate as members of the CWPP Core Committee.

A news release was placed in the local paper (*Citizen News*) explaining the objectives of the Clay County CWPP, the planning process and the procedure for obtaining a draft copy for review and/or comment.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE CWPP

The objective of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is to improve public safety and reduce structural losses from wildfire in wildland/urban interface areas of Clay County.

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

There are three generally accepted types of interface areas:

- 1. “Boundary” wildland/urban interface** areas are characterized by development where groups of homes, subdivisions or other structures create a distinct and easily identified border with public or private wildlands, forests or parks.
- 2. “Intermix” wildland/urban interface** areas are places where parcels of improved property and/or structures are scattered and interspersed within wildlands, forests or parks. Frequently, this is a subdivision that is not yet “built-out” with many undeveloped lots interspersed among occupied homes.
- 3. “Island” wildland/urban interface** (also called “occluded interface”) are typically very small pockets of wildland or natural areas surrounded by development or even situated within an incorporated area. A park or greenspace within a city is an example of an island interface area.

This CWPP will provide Clay County with an evaluation of the wildland fire susceptibility of wildland/urban interface “communities-at-risk” and can be a valuable guide and action plan to address the increasing threat of wildfire. The plan will:

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

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan will be very important to County applications for hazard mitigation grants 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. The minimum requirements for a Community Wildfire Protection Plan as described in the HFRA are:

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

This plan should be looked at as a working document (i.e.; a guide) for local, state and federal agencies to reach common wildfire protection goals. A CWPP committee should meet on a continuing basis from year to year to review accomplishments, discuss impediments, revise outdated portions of the CWPP and develop new, meaningful wildfire protection goals for Clay County.

HISTORY OF CLAY COUNTY



Clay County, in southwest Georgia, was once on the western frontier of the United States. Named for Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky, the county was created in 1854 from parts of Randolph and Early counties. The county seat, Fort Gaines, was established in 1816 around a fort overlooking the Chattahoochee River. The fort was built by General Edmund Pendleton Gaines at the direction of General Andrew Jackson to protect settlers during the Creek Indian wars. The site also served as

a Confederate fort in 1863. The point where nearby Cemochechobee Creek meets the Chattahoochee River was at one time a defining boundary between the United States and Indian Territory.



John Dill House

A legend endures concerning General John Dill, one of the prominent leaders during the Creek Indian wars. It seems that during a raid, some Creeks captured a Mrs. Stuart and killed her husband. They discarded as worthless the paper money they found. Mrs. Stuart gathered the money and pinned it to her petticoats during her captivity. When finally rescued, she was wealthy, thanks to her resourcefulness. She was introduced to and later married General Dill. The elegant house they built in Fort Gaines still stands. Until the development of

the railroad in the 1850s, Fort Gaines was a hub of commerce and river traffic for merchants in Georgia and Alabama. It was known as the "Queen City of the Chattahoochee."



Clay County Bridge, 1943

The Walter F. George Lock and Dam, home to the second highest lock east of the Mississippi, was completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1963. Lake George, a 45,180-acre lake created by the dam, is used for fishing, boating, and other recreational activities. The George T. Bagby State Park and Lodge is located on the lake a few miles north of Fort Gaines.



Clay County Courthouse

The Fort Gaines area is home to an unusually rich variety of plant life. Plant species such as Carolina rhododendron, found mainly in the north Georgia mountains, mix with Florida's maidenhair fern. Around the bluff area are many endangered plant species, including *Trillium reliquum*, the rarest of the sessile-flowered species of trillium known in the world. In 1979 the Fort Gaines Natural Phenomena Authority was formed, in part to establish and promote these natural assets.

Frontier Village in Fort Gaines is an unusual collection of log structures moved from locations throughout the county. It is located on the bluff 130 feet above the Chattahoochee. The entire city is on the National Register of Historic Places. Two private history museums are available for tours by appointment only.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, Clay County's population is 3,183, a decrease from the 2000 population of 3,357.

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 growing and selling quality tree seedlings for reforestation.

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.

The Georgia Forestry Commission office serving Calhoun/Clay Counties is located at 1611 Edison Hwy., Ft. Gaines, GA, 39851. Telephone: 229-768-2922.

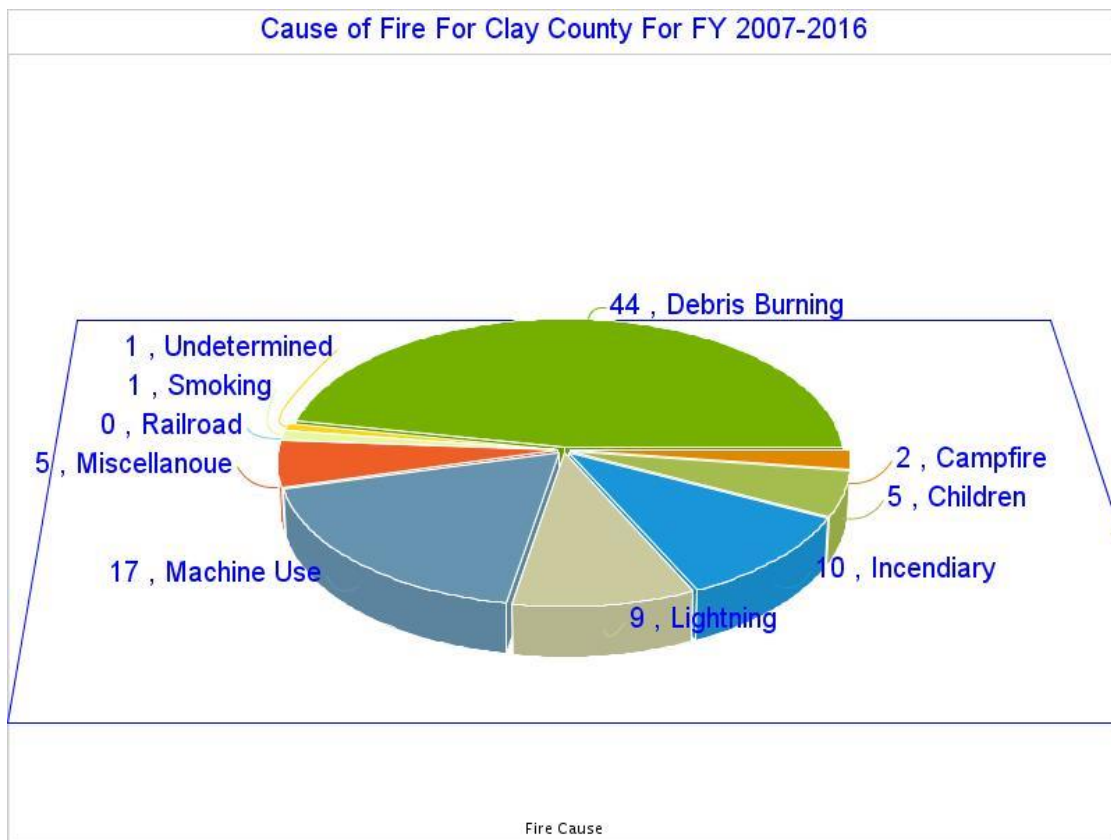
Personnel (Randolph-Terrell-Calhoun-Clay Unit):

Jon Lee Wright, Chief Ranger, Sr.
Edward Dean Wiley, Ranger/Forest Technician
Loran Anderson, Ranger
Joe Fincher, Ranger
Willie C. Jackson, Ranger
Frederick A. Robinson, Ranger

Wildland firefighting equipment (Calhoun-Clay-Early Unit):

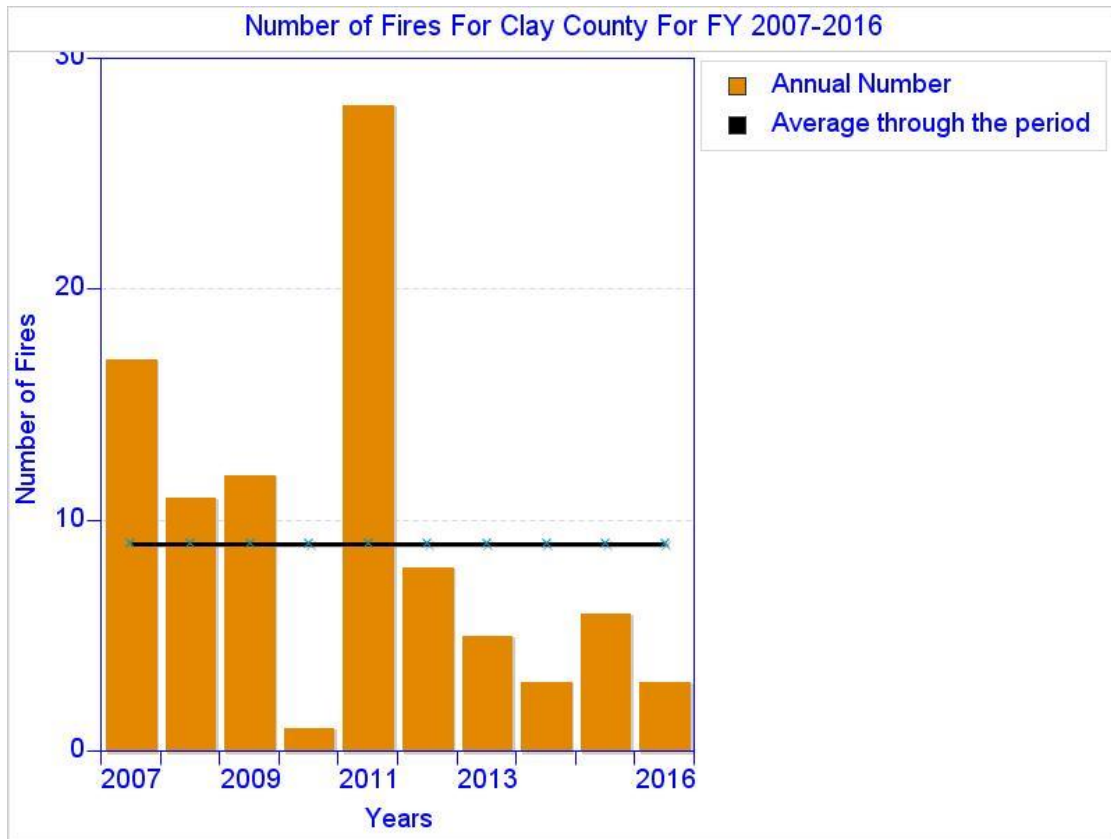
1 International Transport with JD450G Crawler Tractor (Calhoun County Office)
1 Freightliner Transport with JD550H Crawler Tractor (Calhoun County Office)
1 Type VII Ford F-250 Pickup Truck (Calhoun County Office)
3 tractor/plow units with 2 JD 650J & 1 JD 650H crawler tractors (Early County Unit)
1 quick response truck (brush truck with 400-gallon slip-in tank) (Early County Unit)
1 pickup truck (Ford F-250 4WD with 200-gallon tank) (Early County Unit)

On a year-to-year basis, the leading cause of wildfires in Clay County is careless debris burning, followed by machine use, incendiary (arson) and lightning.



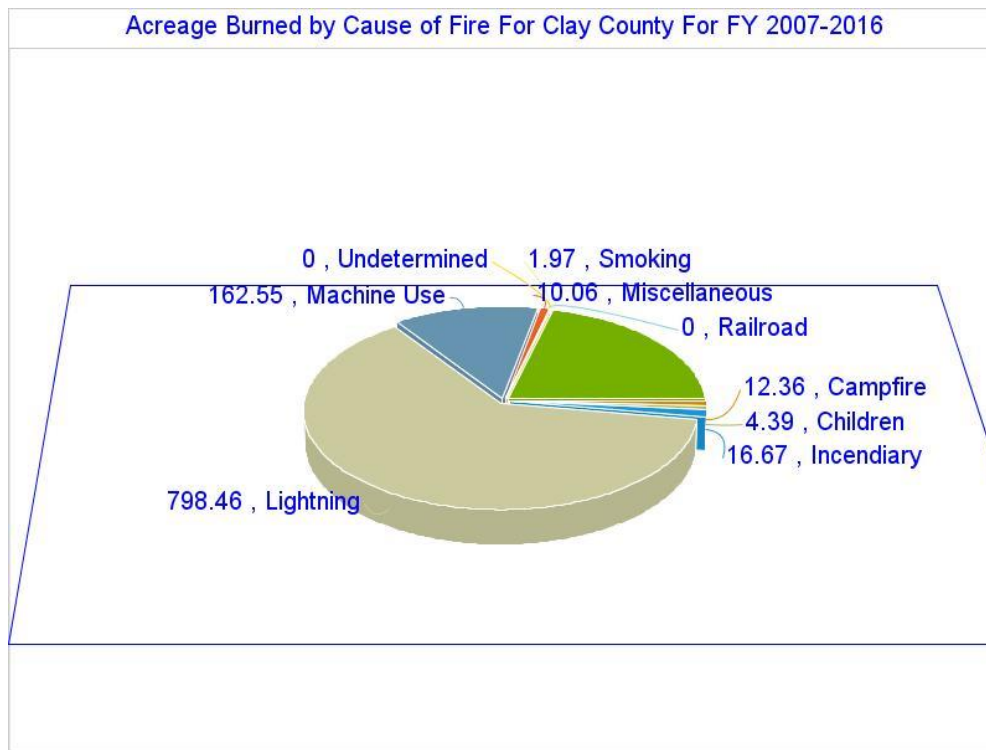
Wildfire activity for Clay County during Fiscal Year 2017 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017)

County = Clay	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	0		0.00	0.20	2.03
Children	Children	0		0.00	0.20	0.09
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	0		0.00	0.60	3.14
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	2		116.77	1.40	28.39
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	1		5.70	0.20	1.14
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	2		2.12	0.40	0.42
Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	1		1.40	0.60	1.08
Incendiary	Incendiary	0		0.00	0.20	0.07
Machine Use	Machine Use	1		29.40	0.60	9.93
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	1		1.37	0.20	0.27
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	1		2.76	0.40	0.90
Undetermined	Undetermined	2		87.15	0.60	17.43
Totals for County: Clay Year: 2017		11		246.67	5.60	64.90

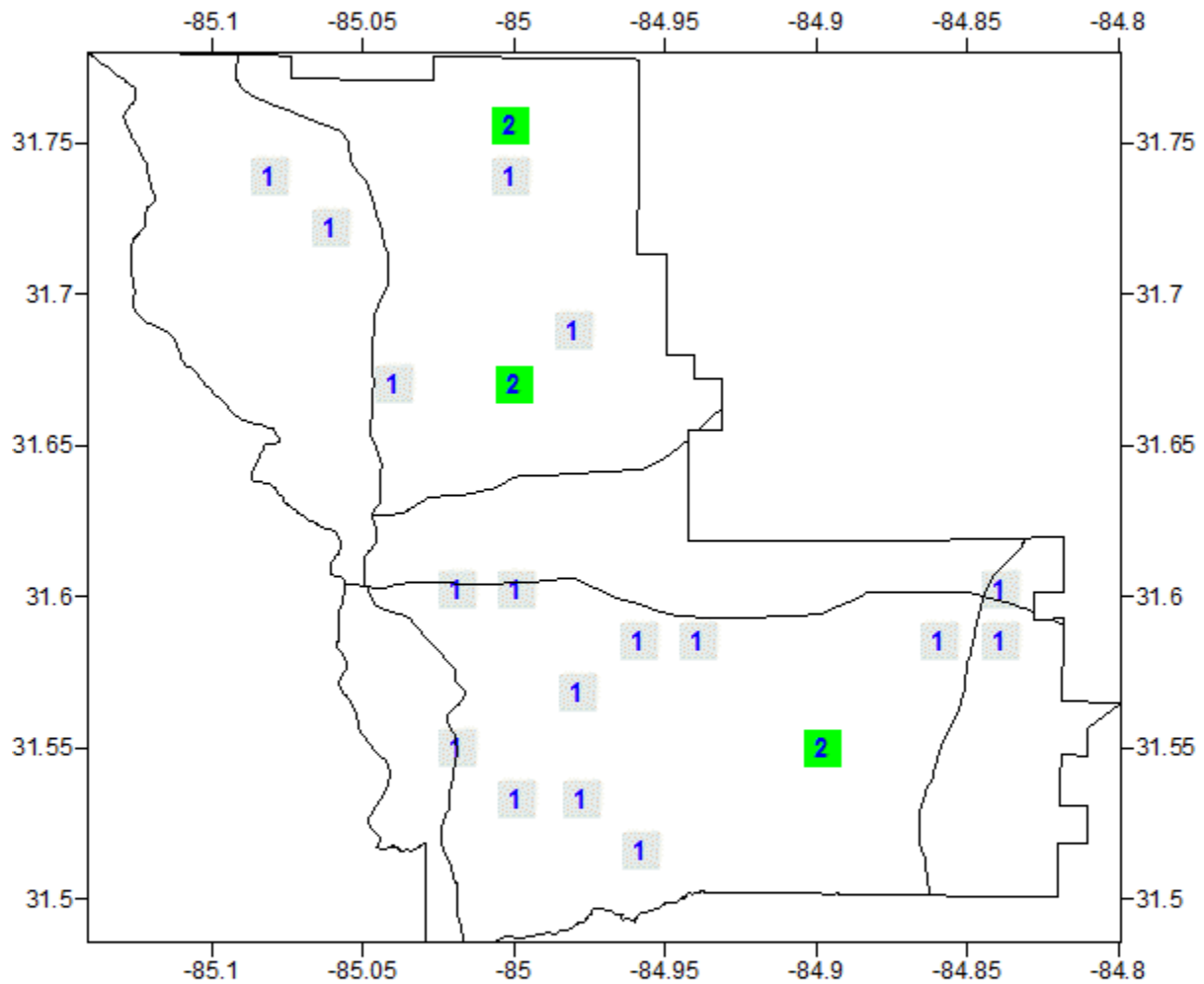


Acres Burned /Number of Fires For Clay County For FY 2007-2016				
Year	Acres Burned	Number of Fires	Average Size Clay County	Statewide Average Size
2007	684.60	17	40.27	18.64
2008	137.61	11	12.51	4.56
2009	33.85	12	2.82	3.90
2010	1.80	1	1.80	3.93
2011	284.31	28	10.15	17.56
2012	54.40	8	6.80	5.08
2013	24.73	5	4.95	4.53
2014	14.80	3	4.93	5.02
2015	9.51	6	1.59	4.42
2016	28.80	3	9.60	6.29

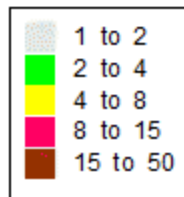
Acreage Burned /Number of Fires by Fire Cause For Clay County For FY 2007-2016		
Fire Cause	Acreage Burned	Number of Fires
Campfire	12.36	2
Children	4.39	5
Debris Burning	267.95	44
Incendiary	16.67	10
Lightning	798.46	9
MachineUse	162.55	17
Miscellaneous	10.06	5
Railroad	0.00	0
Smoking	1.97	1
Undetermined	0.00	1
Total	1,274.41	94



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



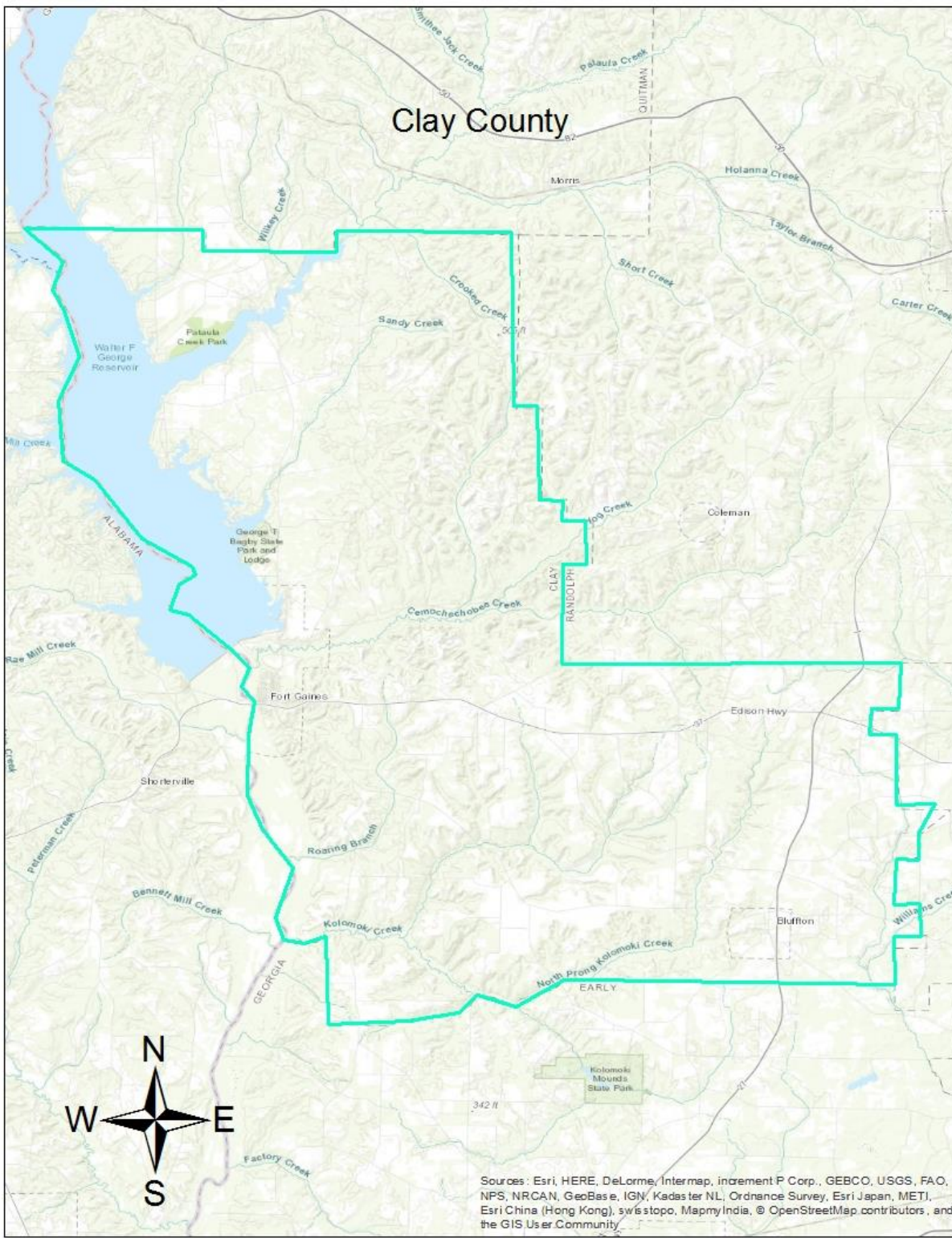
GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION

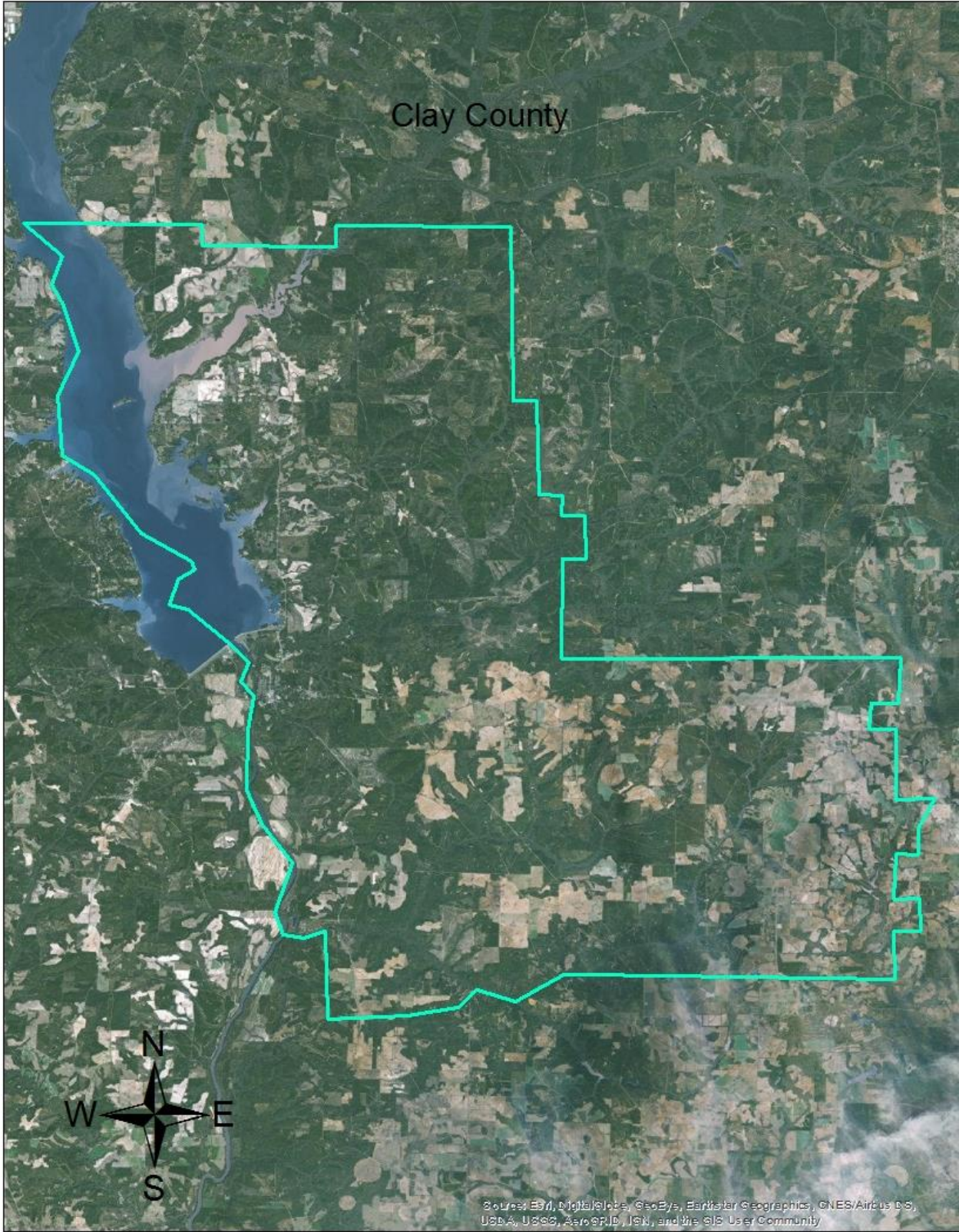


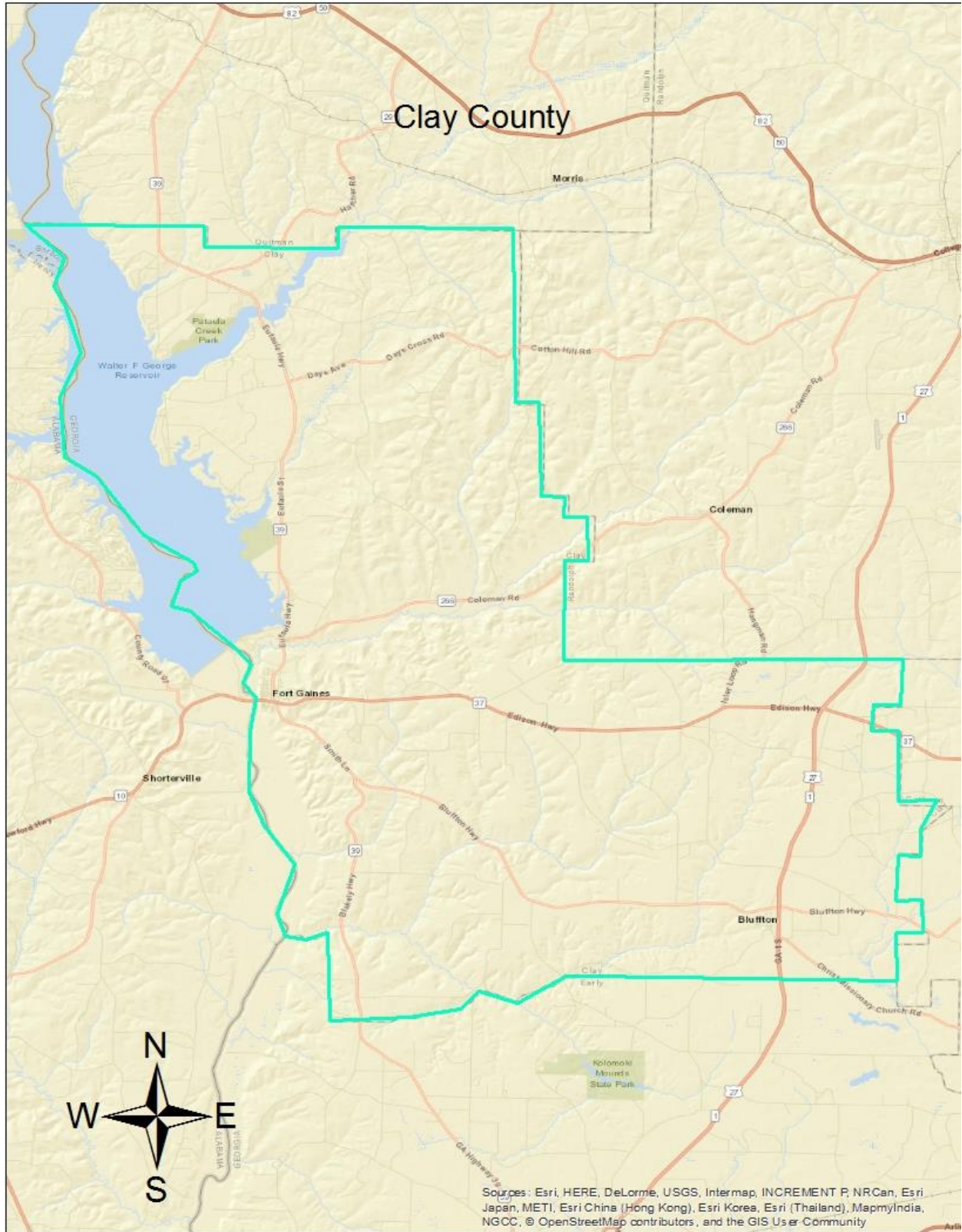
GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



V. COUNTY BASE MAPS







VI. WHAT ARE “COMMUNITIES-AT-RISK”?

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

While there may be relatively few “communities” that fit the above description in Clay County that does not mean there is not a significant risk of structural damage during the severe weather conditions that are conducive to a disastrous wildfire (severe drought, low relative humidity and high winds).

Improvements to the community infrastructure (roads, utilities, etc.) may be beyond the capabilities of the homeowners. However, if access by emergency vehicles can be improved by widening the entrance right-of-way(s), creating “hammerhead-T’s” or other ways for fire trucks to operate safely and identifying residences with reflective “911 addresses”, wildfire protection can be greatly enhanced.

Modifications in and around individual residences may need to be budgeted by the residents over time (for example, making a roof more fire resistant may have to wait a few years until it is time to replace the current roof covering). Moving firewood away from the home, skirting raised decks and keeping roofs free of accumulated flammable debris, however, are improvements most families can make in the short-run.

In most instances, communities-at-risk will benefit from (vegetative) fuel reduction within 100 feet of homes and outbuildings through prescribed burning or by mechanical means. Fuel management within the home ignition zone (within 100 feet of the home) either by removing highly flammable vegetation or by replacing the vegetation with fire resistant plant species will significantly improve wildfire safety.

In Clay County, there are many individual (isolated) homes and outbuildings on farms and small properties that could be damaged or destroyed by a wildfire. On these properties, the owners must be educated so they can assume a greater responsibility for wildfire protection by making improvements to the landscape and structures that will provide some wildfire protection until the fire department can arrive. This can only be accomplished if rural residents know how to make their homes and properties “Firewise”.

The shoreline of the Walter George Reservoir is owned by the federal government and managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers maintains the Cotton Hill Campground and East Bank Day Use Area and a number of public boat ramps in Clay County. These recreation areas are excellent locations to post information about “Firewise landscaping” and residential wildfire protection. Prescribed burning by the Corps of Engineers (where practical) contributes to the wildfire safety of homes along the reservoir shoreline. In addition, boat ramp locations are ideal locations for a cooperative Corps of Engineers/Clay County agreement to install and maintain dry hydrants for use as a water source for county volunteer fire departments.

ASSESSMENT HAZARD RATINGS FOR CLAY COUNTY COMMUNITIES AT RISK

Community	Score	Hazard Rating
Garnersville	107	Very High Hazard
Lake Corridor	111	Very High Hazard
Days Crossroads	89	High Hazard

These hazard ratings were completed by Chief Ranger David Baldwin and Ranger I Willie Jackson during the month of September, 2010. The Georgia Forestry Commission’s 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 quantitative wildfire hazard ratings range from a low hazard rating of 0 to 50 points to an extreme hazard rating with over 120 points.

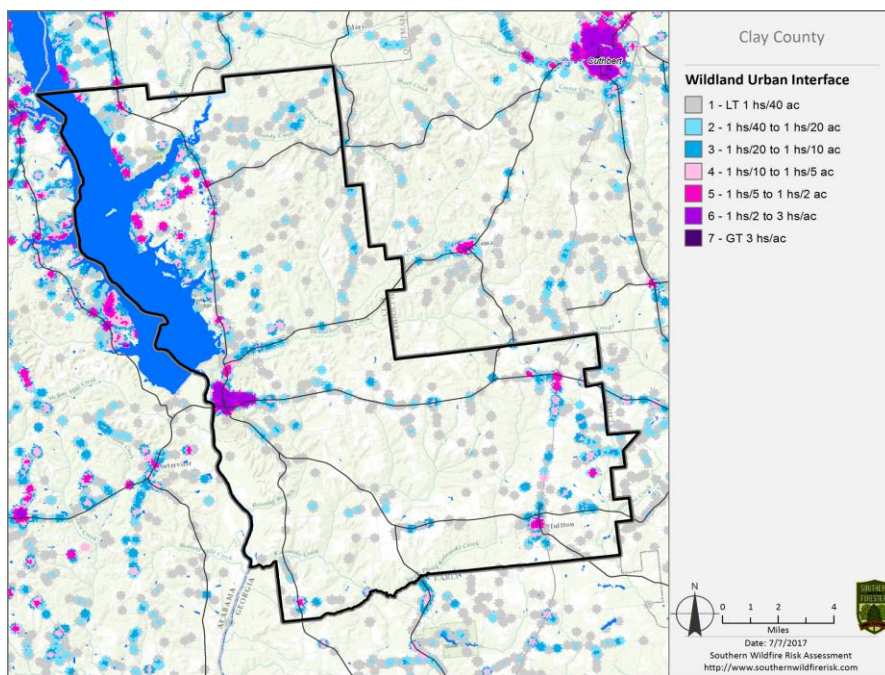


Prescribed burning of woodlands is the best management practice to reduce hazardous fuel accumulation. The Georgia Forestry Commission can provide a prescribed burning plan, establish fire breaks, and can also provide equipment standby and assist with burning when personnel are available.

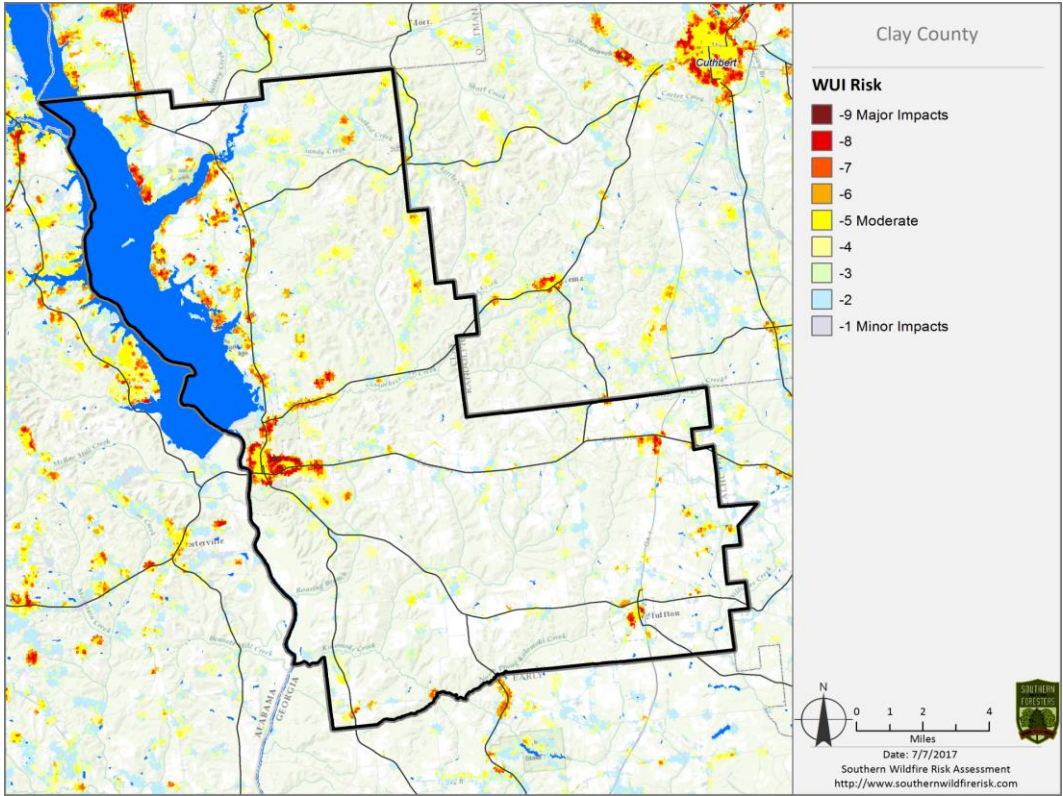
VII.SOUTHERN WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK HAZARD MAPS

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

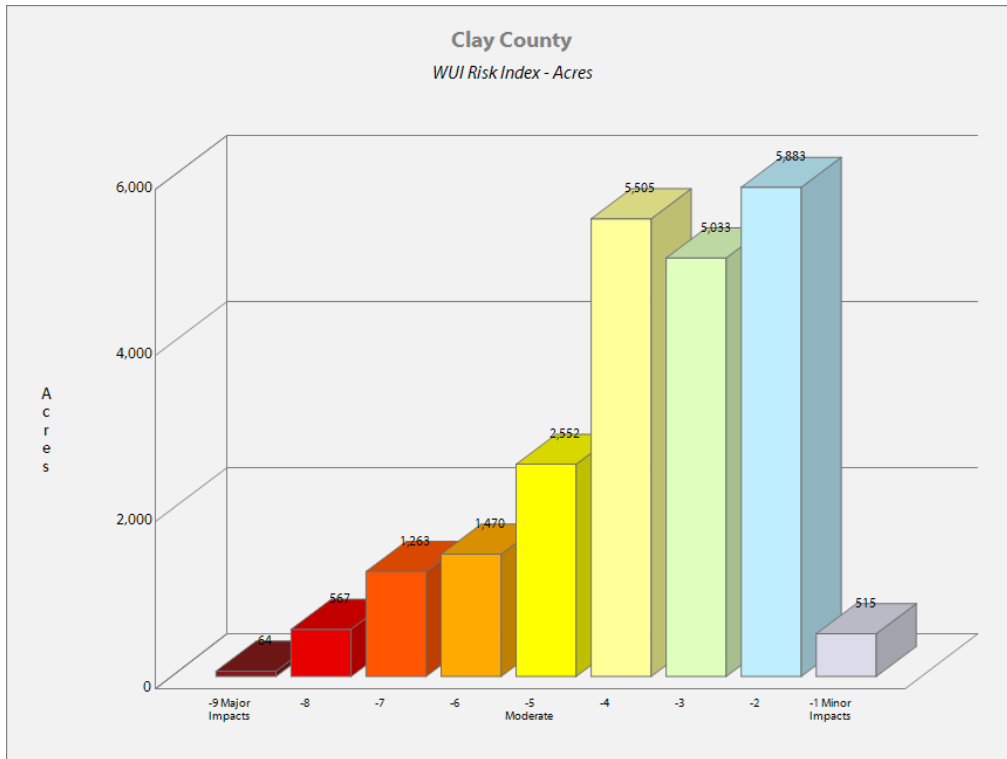
- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Identify areas that may require additional tactical planning, specifically related to mitigation projects and Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Provide the information necessary to justify resource, budget and funding requests
- Allow agencies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

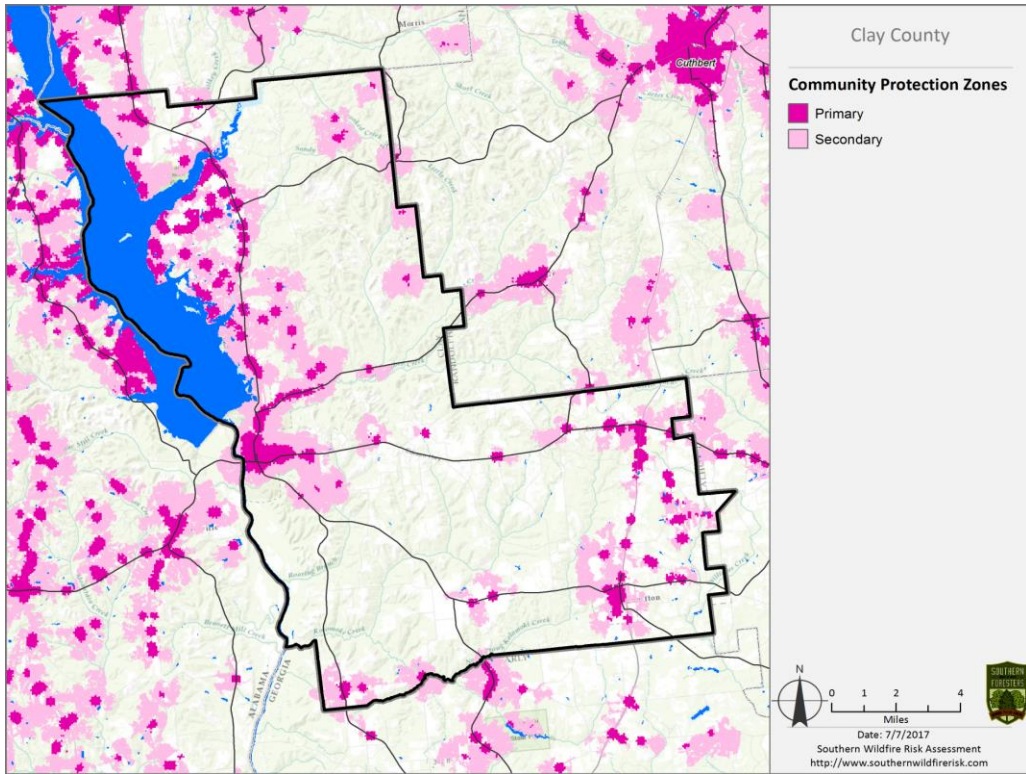


Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map from the Clay County SWRA report

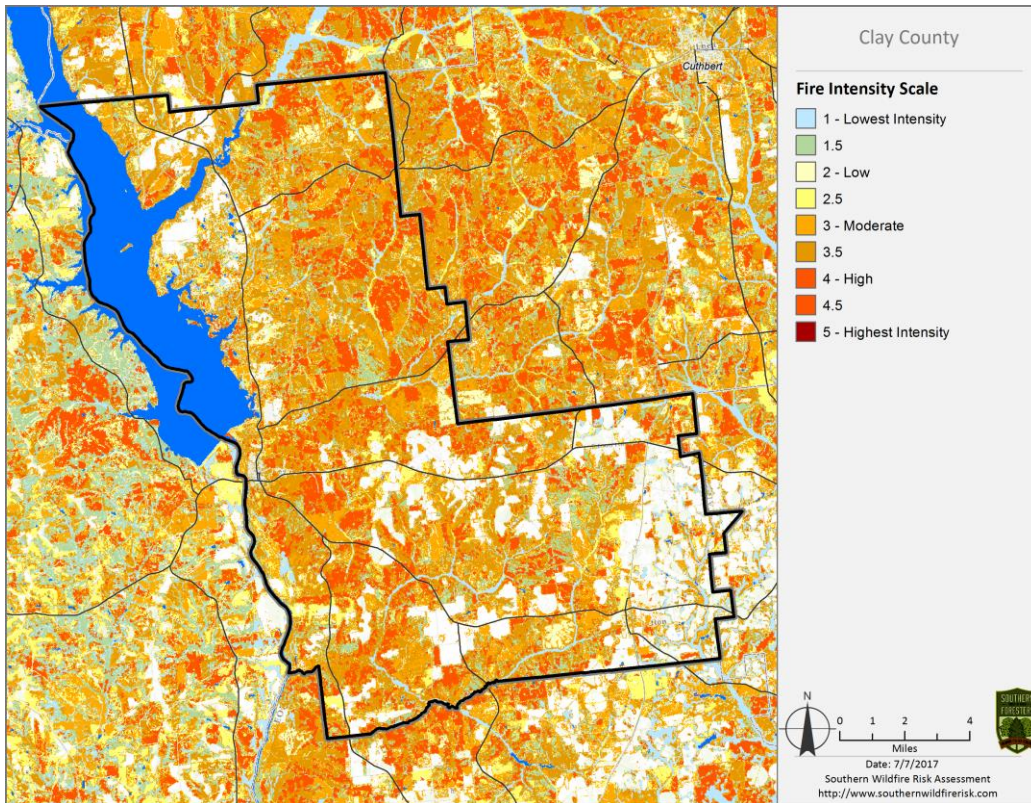


Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk map (above) and WUI Risk Index Acres graph (below)





Community Protection Zones map (above) and Fire intensity Scale map (below)



VIII. MITIGATION & ACTION PLAN

Critical Facilities

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

RECOMMENDATION:

Contact owner/operators of Critical Facilities in person or by letter to provide an evaluation of any hazards and suggest what owner/operators might do to mitigate the hazards and improve wildfire protection.

Public Education Needs

“Firewise” structures are homes and other buildings in the wildland/urban interface that have been built, designed or maintained to survive a wildfire event even in the absence of firefighters on the scene.

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

The key to the reduction of structural losses in the wildland/urban interface cannot rest solely with improved response by the local fire services. There will never be enough fire trucks and firefighters to adequately protect homes in the wildland/urban interface. A major part of the solution to this problem lies with the homeowner – homeowners in the wildland/urban interface must become “partners” with the fire services and assume some responsibility for maintaining their home (structure) and landscape (yard) so that ignitions in and around the home are less likely should a wildfire occur in the immediate area. This means a home with no debris on the roof and in the gutters, wood decks that are skirted underneath, chunky bark or

lava rock mulch near the house instead of pine straw or cypress mulch and a “lean, clean and green” landscape of less-flammable plants within 30 feet of the structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Initiate a community public education program for Clay County residents

- Hold Firewise education programs at a centrally-located facility in areas designated as “communities-at-risk”.
- Make Firewise Communities brochures available to the public at central locations such as: Farm Services Agency, Chamber of Commerce and the County Courthouse.
- Encourage neighborhoods/communities that qualify to apply for recognition as a Firewise Community/ USA.

Reduction of Hazardous Fuels

Because approximately 62 percent of Clay 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
- Chemical treatment (herbicides)
- Livestock grazing

The above alternatives to prescribed burning are more intensive and hence, more costly and generally suitable only for smaller acreages.

The goal for structural protection should be a “Firewise” landscape. A Firewise landscape is characterized by trees, shrubs and grasses that are carefully managed within 100 feet of structures - an area referred to as the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ). Most critical is the space within 30 feet of a structure which is usually called the area of Defensible Space. The Defensible Space should be landscaped with less flammable plants, coarse bark or lava rock as mulch adjacent the structure, tree limbs should be 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.

RECOMMENDATION: Promote prescribed burning in Clay 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.

NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTY

Site Plan Review

If farm and ranch land is to be conserved as a mainstay of the County's rural economy, new development will, by necessity, occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. Clay County has the 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 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 Family developed the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC). This code was adopted for use by the State of Georgia in 2013 to assist counties in the development of zoning and building regulations. The code is available for Georgia counties to use in helping to reduce risk in high hazard areas. When new multi-unit subdivisions are built in rural areas (sometimes referred to as the Wildland/Urban Interface), a number of public safety challenges may be created for the local fire services: (1) the water supply in the immediate areas may be inadequate for fire suppression; (2) if the Development is in an outlying area, there may be a longer response time for emergency services; (3) in a wildfire emergency, the access road(s) may need to simultaneously support evacuation of residents and the arrival of emergency vehicles; and (4) when wildland fire disasters strike, many structures may be involved simultaneously, quickly exceeding the capability of even the best equipped fire departments,

RECOMMENDATION:

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

- Evaluate (assess) the wildfire hazard of proposed new development in rural areas as part of the site plan review process. Reference: *GFC Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Scoresheet*.

- Consider the “adoption by reference” of NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.
- Consider utilizing the International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) to develop guidelines for development in high risk areas.

FIRE SERVICES CAPABILITY

Structural fire protection in Clay County is provided by three volunteer fire departments (Ft. Gaines VFD, Bluffton VFD and Pataula VFD). The County Fire Chief is Charles Crozier and the Assistant Fire Chief is Billy Moncrief.

<u>Volunteer Fire Departments</u>	<u>Engines</u>	<u>(# of firefighters)</u>	<u>Brush Trucks</u>
Ft. Gaines	1	14	0
Bluffton	1	2	0
Pataula	1 (fireknocker)	1	0

Wildland Fire Training

Some of the volunteer firefighters have completed the Incident Management Training Courses (I-100 & I-700), however, none of the county’s volunteer firefighters have completed the basic wildfire training courses (S-130, Standards for Survival and S-190, Basic Wildfire Behavior). Ready Set Go training is recommended for all fire personnel. This training is available at www.wildlandfirersg.org.

Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Tools

Countywide, a limited number (8 sets) of wildland personal protective equipment are available for use by volunteer firefighters, however, no wildland fire shelters are available.

Water Availability (pressurized hydrants, dry hydrants and drafting sources)

Pressurized hydrants exist within the incorporated areas of Ft. Gaines and Bluffton. There are a few in unincorporated Clay County)

There are 88 dry hydrants in the Days Crossroads area.

CLAY COUNTY CWPP ACTION PLAN

Community/Area at Risk	Project	Agency	Funding Needs	Priority	Recommendation
Countywide	3,000 Gallon Water Tanker	County	\$250,000	High	Increase water availability for structural fires in remote areas of the county
Countywide	Brush Truck	County	\$90,000	High	Improve off-road firefighting capability
Countywide	Firefighter Training	GFC/County	\$15,000	High	Standards for Survival (S-130) & Wildland Fire Behavior (S-190) for volunteer firefighters
Countywide	Dry Hydrants	County/US Corps of Engineers	\$150,000	Medium	Install 10 dry hydrants in selected areas of county. Work with US Corps of Engineers to locate and install 4 of these at selected sites along Lake Walter George Reservoir.
Countywide	Wildfire Prevention Education	GFC/County	\$1,000	Medium	Make "Firewise" and Wildfire Prevention brochures available to residents of Garnersville, Days Crossroads and the Lake Corridor area.
Countywide	Firefighting Boat	County	\$75,000	Medium	Boat equipped for shoreline firefighting capability (to protect lakeshore structures)
Countywide	Wildland Fire PPE & Hand Tools	County	\$20,000 PPE \$5,000 Hand Tools	Low	Personal Protective Equipment & Fire Shelters plus hand tools for volunteer firefighters

NOTE: The Action Plan summarizes a recommended course of action for implementation of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Some projects can be implemented at little or no added cost, however, the County or assigned agency will be able to implement most projects only if grant funding is available.

IX. 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.

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 (*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 fire 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 edition)*

XI. Sources of Information

Publications/Brochures/Websites:

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

Appended Documents:

Clay County Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report (SWRA)
Wildfire Assessment - Garnersville, Lake Corridor, and Days Crossroads

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



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The Georgia Forestry Commission provides leadership, service, and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources.

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