



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

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources

Gilmer County



APRIL 2019

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

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1) OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

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

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

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

2) COUNTY BACKGROUND

Gilmer County



Gilmer County, in northwest Georgia, is the state's eighty-fifth county. Originally held by the Cherokee Nation, its land lay within that lost by the Indians via treaty, battle, and [forced removal](#) in the 1830s. The region was claimed by the Spanish as part of Florida until 1665, when it became part of Carolina. It then became part of the original grant to [James Oglethorpe](#), the founder of the Georgia colony. Early white visitors included the Spanish explorers [Hernando de Soto](#) and Juan Pardo with their men. Pardo's chaplain, Sebastian Montero, unsuccessfully tried to establish [mission](#) churches in the region. The first non-Indians to settle in what was to become Gilmer County arrived by 1769.

Establishing homes in an area called [Talking Rock](#) (now part of [Pickens County](#)), early white settlers developed communities along the [Federal Road](#), to which right-of-way had been granted by the Cherokees. Both the state and federal governments subsequently abrogated treaties with the Indians, preventing them from regaining control of their land, which was then sold to white settlers by [lottery](#). Several important Indian leaders from what became Gilmer County, including Chief Whitepath and Walking Stick, tried repeatedly but unsuccessfully to obtain just treatment of their people at the hands of the U.S. government.



[Old Gilmer County Courthouse](#)

In 1831 the [state legislature](#) created [Cherokee County](#), including in it all land west of the [Chattahoochee River](#) and north of [Carroll County](#). Because of the large size of Cherokee County, and the fact that its inhabitants included a number of [Cherokee Indians](#), the county proved too difficult to administer. In December 1832 it was divided into several smaller counties, one of which was Gilmer County, named after [George R. Gilmer](#), who as [governor](#) was a leading figure in the forcible removal of the Indians. The current Gilmer County, at 427 square miles, is about 68 percent of the original county's size. Many of its historic sites are located in what is now Pickens County.

The county seat, [Ellijay](#), was established on the site of a Cherokee town with a similar name. The seat of county administration since 1834, it has been home to a series of courthouses. The most recent is a converted hotel building constructed in 1898 and made into a courthouse in 1934, with an annex converted from a private home across the street. This courthouse was demolished in 2003 and replaced with a new complex that was completed in 2009. The county's only other incorporated city is East Ellijay.



[Gilmer County Courthouse](#)

There was a short period of "gold fever" in Gilmer County after gold was discovered in the region in 1829. Prospectors seeking their fortunes came to the county in several waves, some of them establishing the Georgia White Path Copper and Gold Mining Company, but the [gold rush](#) ended in the 1840s. The mines were thereafter sometimes operated with [convict labor](#).



[Stegall Mill](#)

Early industries in the county were [cotton gins](#), gristmills, and sawmills. Agriculture for the market was at first solely focused on [cotton](#), but local farmers achieved more security by growing [apples](#), now a prime crop and source of a tourist attraction. After long and hard work, residents of the county were able to secure the arrival of a [railroad](#) in 1883, but automobile travel made the biggest difference in Gilmer County. The completion of Georgia Highway 515 in 1991 has brought increasing numbers of tourists, drawn by the county's apples, scenery, and various festivals.

Points of interest include [Carters Lake](#); a large portion of the Chattahoochee National Forest; Ellijay Wildlife Rehabilitation Sanctuary; Old Cartecay United Methodist Church, the oldest [Methodist](#) church in north Georgia, established in 1834; the Perry House, home of the Gilmer Arts and Heritage Association; and River Park, a recreation and picnicking complex on the banks of the Coosawattee River.

According to the 2000 U.S. census, the population of Gilmer County was 23,456 (93.6 percent white, 0.3 percent black, and 7.7 percent Hispanic), an increase of 75.5 percent since 1990.

The above material is courtesy of the New Georgia Encyclopedia



[Chattahoochee National Forest](#)

Fire History and Existing Situation

Wildland Fire has not been a serious problem in Gilmer County. During the five year period that encompassed fiscal years 2014 through 2018, Gilmer County averaged 13.40 fires each year that burned an average of 44.92 acres.

Fiscal Year	Number of Fires	Acres	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2018	8	10.23	1.28	5.25
2017	33	161.02	4.88	11.60
2016	12	23.30	1.94	4.13
2015	5	3.83	.77	4.50
2014	9	26.22	2.91	5.02

In FY 2018, which ended on June 30, 2018, there were 8 fires that burned 10.23 acres. Causes, number of fires, and acres burned are outlined below.

County = Gilmer	Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	1	1.00	0.60	0.50
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	1	3.80	0.60	0.86
Debris: Household Garbage	Debris: Household Garbage	1	0.50	1.60	0.92
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	0	0.00	0.20	0.42
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	2	1.25	2.60	2.54
Incendiary	Incendiary	0	0.00	0.40	4.90
Lightning	Lightning	0	0.00	0.20	0.34
Machine Use	Machine Use	0	0.00	0.20	1.95
Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	Miscellaneous: Firearms/Ammunition	1	0.18	0.20	0.04
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	0	0.00	0.20	0.20
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	0	0.00	1.20	2.41
Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	Miscellaneous: Spontaneous Heating/Combustion	0	0.00	0.40	0.07
Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	Miscellaneous: Structure/Vehicle Fires	0	0.00	1.40	3.64
Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	Miscellaneous: Woodstove Ashes	1	1.50	0.60	2.60
Undetermined	Undetermined	1	2.00	3.00	23.54
Totals for County: Gilmer Year: 2018		8	10.23	13.40	44.92

Drought conditions in the fall of 2016 led to numerous wildfires throughout the North Georgia mountains, Gilmer County was no exception. The chart above outlines the fire activity in FY 2017 in Gilmer County and indicates that 33 fires occurred in the county with a loss of 161.02 acres. The number one cause of wildfire in Gilmer County is debris burning, which proves to be the number one fire cause in the State of Georgia.

The Wildland-Urban Interface

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

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

1. “Boundary” wildland-urban interface is characterized by areas of development where homes, especially new subdivisions, press against public and private wildlands, such as private or commercial forest land or public forests or parks. This is the classic type of wildland-urban interface, with a clearly defined boundary between the suburban fringe and the rural countryside.

2. “Intermix” wildland-urban interface areas are places where improved property and/or structures are scattered and interspersed in wildland areas. These may be isolated rural homes or an area that is just beginning to go through the transition from rural to urban land use.

3. “Island” wildland-urban interface, also called occluded interface, are areas of wildland within predominately urban or suburban areas. As cities or subdivisions grow, islands of undeveloped land may remain, creating remnant forests. Sometimes these remnants exist as parks, or as land that cannot be developed due to site limitations, such as wetlands.

(courtesy *Fire Ecology and Wildfire Mitigation in Florida* 2004)

Gilmer County is undergoing a transition from a relatively rural county to one that is undergoing rapid development of both boundary and intermix interface. This is due in large part to the improved access to the County afforded by Hwy 515. The County is becoming a highly desirable retirement and mountain residence community.

Wildland Urban Interface Hazards

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

- **Hazardous Materials**
Common chemicals used around the home may be a direct hazard to firefighters from flammability, explosion potential and/or vapors or off-gassing. Such chemicals include paint, varnish and other flammable liquids; fertilizer; pesticides; cleansers; aerosol cans, fireworks, batteries and ammunition. In addition, some common household products such as plastics may give off very toxic fumes when they burn. Stay OUT of the smoke from burning structures and any unknown sources such as trash piles.
- **Illicit Activities**
Marijuana plantations or drug production labs may be found in wildland urban interface areas. Extremely hazardous materials such as propane tanks and flammable/toxic chemicals may be encountered, as well as booby traps.
- **Propane tanks**
Both large (household size) and small (gas grill size) liquefied propane gas (LPG) tanks can present hazards to firefighters, including explosion. See the "LPG Tank Hazards" discussion in the appendix for details.
- **Utility lines**
Utility lines may be located above and below ground and may be cut or damaged by tools or equipment. Don't spray water on utility lines or boxes.
- **Septic tanks and fields**
Below-ground structures may not be readily apparent and may not support the weight of engines or other apparatus.

- **New construction materials**

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

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

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

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

3) Risk Summary

The risk summaries that were completed in Gilmer County were compiled when this report was initially created. The recent revisions to this report were completed by Mark Wiles, Wildfire Mitigation Specialist with the Georgia Forestry Commission and do not include updated risk assessment information. It is recommended that the local fire county Forestry officials and the county fire department work together to gather current information for an updated fire risk assessment. Following an initial meeting between the Georgia Forestry Commission and officials of the Gilmer County Fire Department, assessments were made of areas of concern in Gilmer County. These assessments were made by personnel of the Gilmer / Pickens office of the Georgia Forestry Commission. Assessments were made using the Georgia Forestry Commission Form 140 for Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment. Areas selected for assessment were based on the communities at risk GIS layer from the Southern Fire Risk Assessment supplemented by local knowledge of hazardous areas. Information from the assessment process is displayed in tabular form in the appendix. This table, which is organized by fire department jurisdiction, lists the community name, Map #, Lat / Long, number of homes, hazard rating, risk category, fire department jurisdiction, and the presence or absence of the area in the Southern Fire Risk Assessment. The original assessment documents contain detailed specific information relating to the particular hazards affecting the community and are retained by the Gilmer County office of the Georgia Forestry Commission. These documents would be valuable in mitigating specific hazards should they be able to be changed. These assessment areas are also represented on the Wildland Fire Susceptibility Index map. The colors for the symbols correspond to the colors on the risk summary table. Extreme risk communities are red, high risk is orange, moderate risk is purple, and low risk is green.

Sixty Four areas were assessed. Twenty eight (28) were classified as at extreme risk, eight (8) as high, twenty six (26) as moderate, and two (2) were classified as at low risk. It should be recognized that additional opportunities for assessment exist in all response jurisdictions. Principal hazards affecting communities classified as extreme or high were related to extreme slope of properties and driveways, poor access related to one way access, narrow roads, unpaved roads on steep slopes, lack of defensible space, high structural ignitability factors, and dead end roads. Varying degrees of suppression difficulty exist due to heavy fuel loading, steep slopes, and terrain influenced fire spread. There are some areas that are affected by extended response time due to winding roads on mountain slopes, ridges, or along large lakes or stream drainages. All jurisdictions experience these hazards to some degree. Many of the structures are vacation homes or are not occupied full time. This leads to a lack of maintenance which greatly increases structural ignitability. This is probably the greatest danger faced by full or part time residents in the county and is the most likely to be improved by citizen involvement or participation. County codes could address future development and road construction standards. Numerous educational opportunities exist. Again, as many of the areas at greatest risk are occupied part time, signage identifying the hazard and directing residents to the firewise website would seem to be an effective approach as direct communication may be more difficult.

4) Prioritized Mitigation Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed during follow-up meetings with County and State fire response agencies. A priority order was determined based on which mitigation projects would best reduce the hazard of wildland fire to communities and infrastructure. The following priorities were considered. ***It was acknowledged that in light of incendiary fire being a common cause in the county, protocol for investigation needs to be standard practice.***

- Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction
- Wildland Fuel reduction or modification
- Improvements to capabilities of Wildland response agencies
- Public Education regarding risk of wildland fire

Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

<u>Hazard</u>	<u>Mitigation</u>	<u>Method</u>
Incendiarism	Standardized investigation	Utilizing state and federal fire reports, investigations should be conducted on all fires determined to be caused by incendiarism on each jurisdiction. Coordination across agency and possibly geographic boundaries should be common practice.
Lack of defensible space	Improve defensible space around structures in communities at risk	All departments should examine structures in communities at risk in their response areas. Improvements to defensible space as referenced in Firewise guidelines should be conveyed to residents through media or direct contact.
Access problems for initial attack	Improve access problems	All County response agencies and the Georgia Forestry Commission should closely examine access in all communities identified to be at risk. When problems are identified corrective measures should be made.
Structural Ignitability	Reduce structural ignitability	Citizens in communities at risk should be educated regarding methods to reduce structural ignitability as referenced in Firewise guidelines. This can be accomplished through media or direct contact.
Local Codes and Ordinances	Improve and amend to codes and ordinances pertaining to infrastructure and community protection from wildland fire.	Examine all existing codes and ordinances for problems regarding direct conflicts to wildland safety or lack of needed codes or enforcement.

Proposed Wildland Fuel Reduction or modification Priorities

Hazard	Mitigation	Method
Fuel Hazards near Communities at risk	Prescribed Burning	Determine Communities at risk where Prescribed burning would be appropriate to use. Seek cooperation from adjacent landowners. Find funding to cover cost of burning. Prioritize burn compartments and execute. Install permanent firebreaks where burning is inappropriate or opposed by local residents.
Fuel Hazard in public or shared spaces	Fuel Modification or reduction	Determine where hazards exist. Determine appropriate method for modification or reduction. Chipping, raking and piling, County pick-up, Organized Community Clean-up days could be beneficial. Organized burning could be conducted on these days supported by local fire department personnel.

Proposed Improvements to capabilities of Wildland Response Agencies Priorities

Problem or need	Improvement or solution	Details
Lack of qualification or training	Provide training opportunities	Examine training records of all wildland responders to insure training and qualifications match expected duties. Insure that all wildland responders have Basic Wildland Certification. Locate and secure funding for enhanced training from state and federal agencies.
Equipment needs	Improve or acquire Wildland fire equipment	Determine specific equipment needs to bring all wildland response equipment to NWCG Standards. Provide appropriate PPE to all County wildland responders. Provide wildland hand tools to County departments. Investigate needs for improvements to all wildland water handing and supply (dry hydrants, brush trucks, hose, etc.)

Proposed Public Education Priorities

Educational Priority	Responsible party	Method
Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through direct contact	Federal, State, County, and municipal governments	Conduct Firewise meetings by each fire response jurisdiction assisted by Georgia Forestry Commission (state) and USDA Forest Service (federal). Conduct a door to door campaign in particularly hazardous communities
Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through use of media	County, State, and municipal governments	Use PSA's in local newspapers and local radio stations. Utilize Firewise displays in local post offices and banks. Seek use of local EMC newsletter for Firewise message. Create poster sized notices for use in common public places (stores, post offices, etc. adjacent to high hazard areas advising residents about the hazard and how to protect themselves and their property. Distribute public notices concerning Firewise at local sporting events and other public gatherings.
Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through formal certification and recognition	Federal, State, County, and municipal governments	Supported by the USFS and the Georgia Forestry Commission each local fire station should set a goal of achieving Firewise status for at least one extreme or high risk category community. The goal of adding at least one community annually should extend beyond this initial goal.

5) Action Plan, Timetables, and Assessment Strategy

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES:

- Georgia Firewise Community Hazard Mitigation Grant: Georgia Forestry Commission grant designed to assist Firewise communities in the mitigation of fire hazards within their community. The grant is designed to provide financial assistance in helping the community to carry out the recommendations of their Firewise Action Plan.
- Community Protection Grant: U.S.F.S. sponsored prescribed fire program. Communities with “at-risk” properties that lie within ten miles of a national forest, National Park Service or Bureau of Land Management tracts may apply with the Georgia Forestry Commission to have their land prescribe burned free-of-charge.
- FEMA Mitigation Policy MRR-2-08-01: through GEMA – Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM).
 1. To provide technical and financial assistance to local governments to assist in the implementation of long term, cost effective hazard mitigation accomplishments.
 2. This policy addresses wildfire mitigation for the purpose of reducing the threat to all-risk structures through creating defensible space, structural protection through the application of ignition resistant construction and limited hazardous fuel reduction to protect life and property.
 3. With a complete a registered plan (addendum to the State Plan) counties can apply for pre-mitigation funding. They will also be eligible for HMGP funding if the county is declared under a wildfire disaster.
- FEMA – Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program
 1. Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG). The purpose of AFG’s is to award one-year grants directly to fire departments and emergency medical services (EMS) organizations of a state to enhance their abilities with respect to fire and related hazards.
 2. Fire Prevention and Safety Grants. The purpose of these grants is to assist state, regional, national or local organizations to address fire prevention and safety. Emphasis of the program is on prevention of fire-related injuries to children.
 3. Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER). The purpose of SAFER is to award grants directly to volunteer; combination and career fire departments to help the departments increase their cadre of firefighters (enhance their ability for 24-hour response).
- Georgia Forestry Commission: Plowing and prescribed burning assistance can be obtained from the GFC as a low-cost option for mitigation efforts.
- Individual Homeowners:
 1. The elimination of hazardous conditions around a structure must ultimately be the responsibility of the community and the homeowner. They will bear the cost and reap the benefit from properly implemented mitigation efforts.
 2. GEMA: Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

Ultimately it is our goal to help the communities by identifying the communities threatened with a high risk to wildfire and educate those communities on methods to implement on reducing those risks.

5) Action Plan

Steps to implement Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Priorities

Hazard	Specific Action and Responsible Party
Incendiarism	The Georgia Forestry Commission and USDA Forest Service should conduct investigations on all fires determined to be caused by incendiarism on their jurisdictions. Cooperation and resource sharing (investigators) should be made standard practice. The use of local law enforcement should be standard practice especially when arson is identified as a problem in a specific area. The use of reward based incentives to locate arsonists should be considered.
Lack of Defensible Space	Using the risk summaries referenced in section 3, each department should conduct inspections of communities at risk in their jurisdiction or area of response for lack of defensible space. Findings will be conveyed to residents and treatment methods will be recommended in accordance with Firewise principles. This would probably be best accomplished by approaching homeowners associations or organizations. Ultimately, the message should reach individual homeowners in each community. Should local organizations not exist, the builder or developer could be contacted. Such contacts would also influence future projects or developments
Access problems	Using individual Communities at Risk maps for each station, the Georgia Forestry Commission and Gilmer County Fire officials should visit all identified communities at risk for the purpose of locating and resolving access difficulties. This inspection should extend into the wildland adjacent to the communities at risk looking for hindrances to suppression tactics
Structural Ignitability	Gilmer County Fire officials should examine structures for structural ignitability concerns at the time when the communities at risk are inspected for lack of defensible space. Using Firewise guidelines for reducing structural ignitability, (a checklist could be formulated and used) structures should be assessed and findings conveyed to residents. This could be through use of media or by direct contact with residents or homeowners associations.
Codes and Ordinances	Gilmer County and municipal Fire Marshalls should closely examine all codes and ordinances for gaps and oversights which could cause problems in the wildland fire arena. Examples include proximity of propane tanks to structures, accumulations of debris, lack of proper identification pertaining address or street names, set back distances from wildland fuels, and road widths in new developments.

In regard to priority, the above steps should first extend to the higher numbers in the extreme category from the risk summary as these communities are at a higher degree of risk.

5) Action Plan

Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

Hazard	Specific Action and Responsible Party
Hazardous Wildland Fuel Accumulations	The Georgia Forestry Commission will prioritize prescribed burning projects on non-federal lands adjacent to Communities at risk where burning is determined to be appropriate. Prescribed burn goals set by the U S Forest Service should also take fuel reduction near communities at risk into consideration as part of the prescription. Both agencies should work toward planning to see any proposed burn projects could be done concurrently. This will require changes in how these burns are carried out as regards logistics and technique.
Fuel Continuity between Federal Wildland and Woodland Communities	In areas where the need exists and fuel reduction by burning is determined to be inappropriate, permanent or semi-permanent fuel breaks could be established. These breaks should be maintained annually prior to the arrival of prime burning times. Their locations should be mapped and made known to local, state, and federal response personnel. Residents of the Communities adjacent to these breaks should be advised of their purpose and their cooperation in protecting them should be gained. These breaks could be installed by the USDA Forest Service in cooperation with and assisted by the Georgia Forestry Commission.
Hazardous Fuel Accumulations in communities and hindrances to suppression	Using the risk summary in section 3, Fire departments could conduct community clean up days in communities at risk in their respective jurisdictions aimed at reducing hazardous fuels and hindrances to suppression in shared community space. Residents would be provided with guidance and access to disposal alternatives for materials removed.

Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

Improvement needed	Responsible Party and specific action
Improve training and qualification of Gilmer County Wildland firefighters	Chief Ranger Austin Roland and Area 1 Fire Management Officer Kris Butler, both of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Gilmer County Fire Chief, should examine all training records for personnel under their supervision. All current or potential wildland personnel should be certified Georgia Basic Wildland Firefighters or higher in qualification. Additional training and qualification should be sought for personnel identified in the Gilmer County Fire plan who are assigned specific Incident Command System (ICS) functions. Sources for available funds for training should be sought at State and Federal levels.
Improve or acquire wildland firefighting equipment	All stations for Gilmer County Fire Departments should inventory their present equipment relating to their wildland capability. Funding sources should be investigated from available grants or other sources. Needs for job specific wildland responsibilities should be examined by Chief Ranger Roland and Gilmer County Fire Chief.

5) Action Plan

Steps to educate or inform the Public regarding wildland fire prevention and responsibilities

Opportunity	Responsible Party and Specific Action
Improve Public Education through direct contact	<p>Prior to the onset of fire season(s) rangers of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Gilmer County Fire personnel should conduct Firewise meetings in conjunction with normally scheduled fire department meetings. People living in or near extreme and high risk communities should be invited to these meetings by use of door to door campaigns or by mailbox flyers. Notices regarding these meetings could be placed in local post offices or stores near communities at risk. A Firewise display should be acquired and utilized at this meeting. This display would be retained by the Gilmer County unit of the Georgia Forestry Commission and used for all Firewise meetings in Gilmer County. Local news media should be invited to these meetings. Goals for potential Firewise certified communities in the County could be considered after these meetings are completed.</p>
Improve Public Education through use of media	<p>Prior to the onset of fire season(s) or during periods of particularly high fire danger use of the media should be stepped up by personnel of the Georgia Forestry Commission. This should include use of all available media in the County. PSA's should be run weekly during periods of high to extreme fire danger. Signs or poster boards could be developed for display in public spaces near communities at risk advising residents that they live in areas that are susceptible to wildland fire and directing them to sources of information regarding wildland fire and their role in improving their own personal safety.</p>
Improve Public Education through formal certification	<p>Before the end of calendar year 2019 the Georgia Forestry Commission and Gilmer County Fire Services should seek and obtain Firewise certification for one community in the extreme risk category.</p>

5) Action Plan

Timetables for Actions

Steps to implement Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Priorities

- Steps to standardize and coordinate investigation practices should begin as soon as possible between agencies involved.
- Steps to examine communities at risk for defensible space and structural ignitability should take place during the winter of 2019- 2020.
- Pre-planning to examine access and suppression problems should take place at any time during the current burning season.
- Codes and Ordinances should be examined as soon as possible in order for the legal workings of changes to take place.

Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

- Any identified prescribed burn projects should take place in late winter 2019 - 2020. Any other priority burn projects or installation of pre suppression fuel breaks should take place during this same window.
- Steps to reduce fuels in communities at risk should coincide with steps to improve defensible space and reduce structural ignitability. Timing of these actions would be dependent upon Fire station availability during the late winter of 2019 -2020.

Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

- Cooperation between state and local wildland suppression forces regarding improvements to training and equipment should begin immediately.

Steps to educate or inform the Public regarding wildland fire prevention and responsibilities

- Direct contact with residents in Communities at risk should take place as soon as possible during early calendar year 2019.
- The use of media should coincide with the above action.
- Certification of Firewise communities should follow the timetable associated with the action plan

5) Action Plan

Assessment of Actions

Reduction of Community hazard and structural ignitability

- Direct measurement of the number of communities assessed would be the appropriate measure of success
- Any meetings that result in cooperation between wildland departments should be logged along with minutes of those meetings. Goals should be set and reviewed after each meeting.
- Any changes to or additions to codes and ordinances would be an obvious measure of success.
- Steps to achieve cooperation across law enforcement agencies would be the most obvious measure of success as regards incendiaryism reduction.

Steps to implement Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities

- Acres burned would be the appropriate measure for fuel reduction. A direct measure of linear feet of firebreaks would be an appropriate measure for pre suppression breaks.
- Fuel reduction in communities at risk would be measured by the number of communities affected and number of projects completed.

Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

- A direct measure of the number of capabilities or qualifications gained would be the appropriate measure of success.
- Any equipment acquired or any equipment brought up to national standards would be the appropriate measure of success.

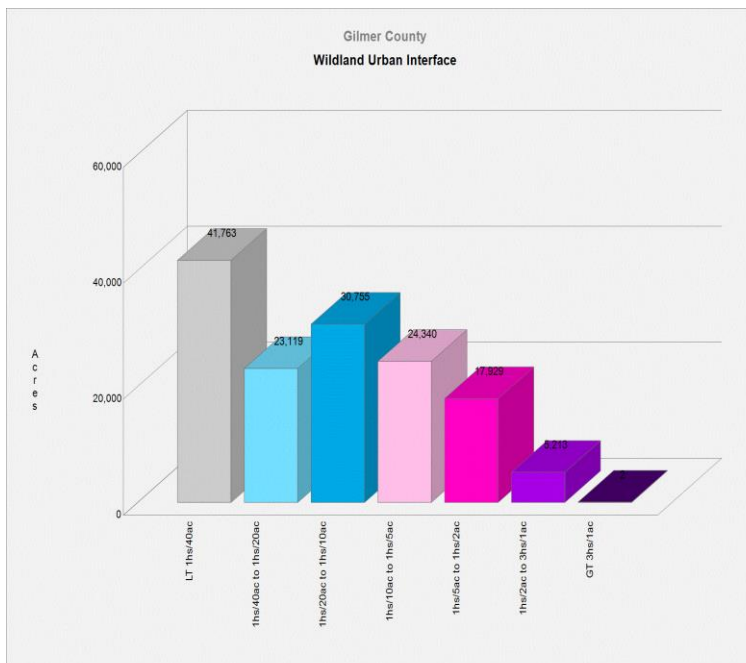
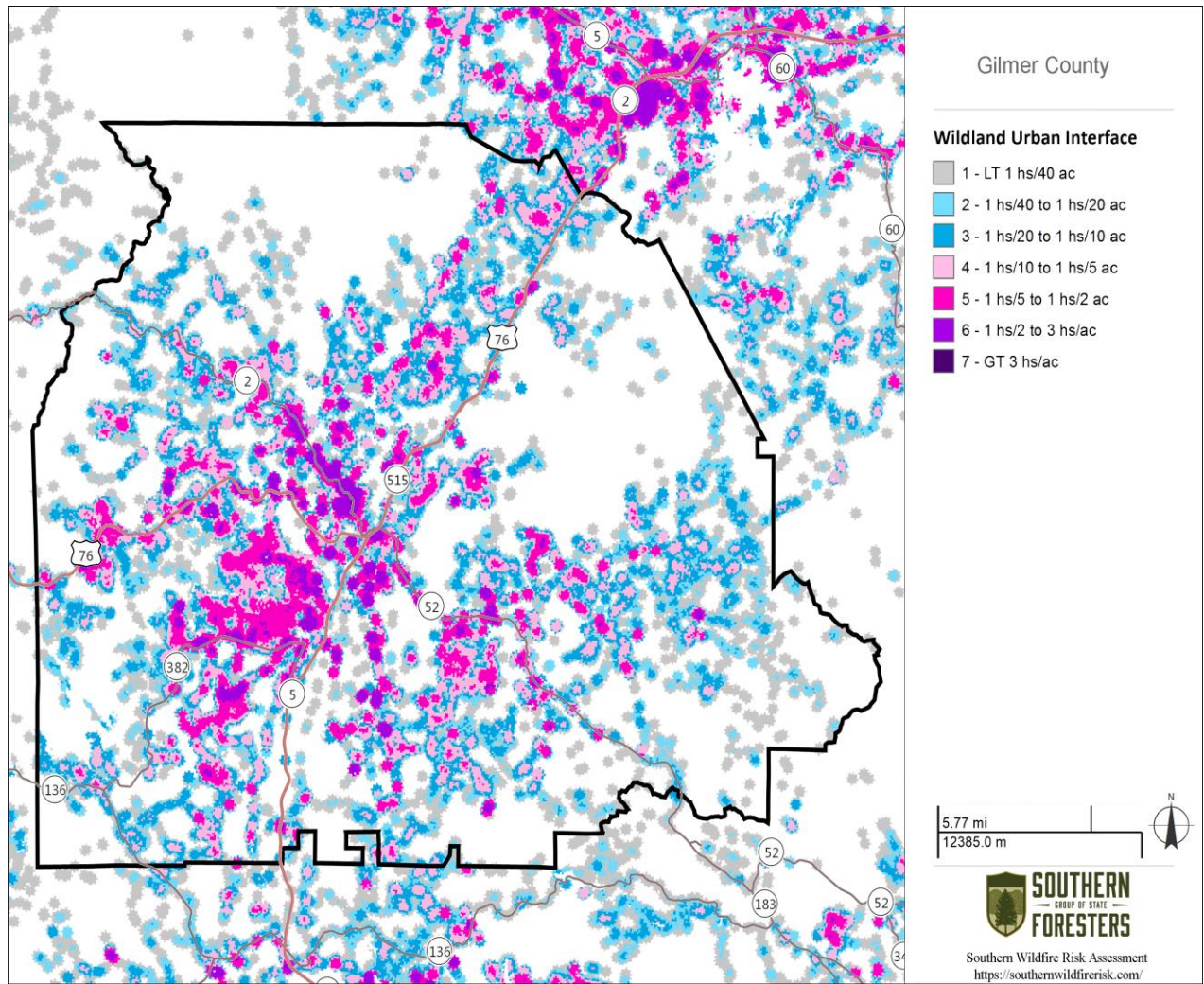
Steps to educate or inform the Public regarding wildland fire prevention and responsibilities

- Direct measurement of the number of persons contacted, literature distributed, public notices posted, news articles published, radio programs aired, etc. would be the best measure of success. The number of communities that achieve Firewise status would be an obvious measure of success.

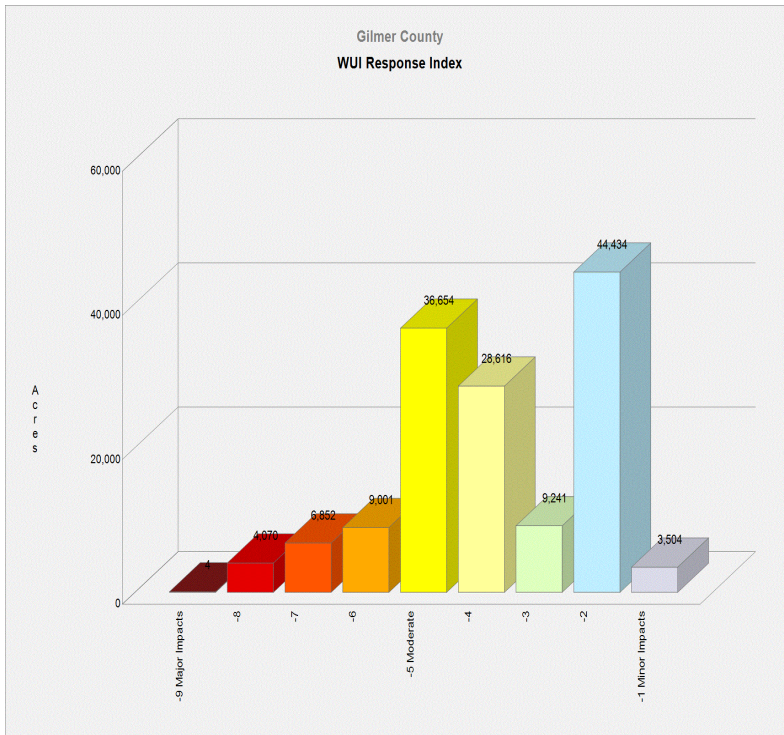
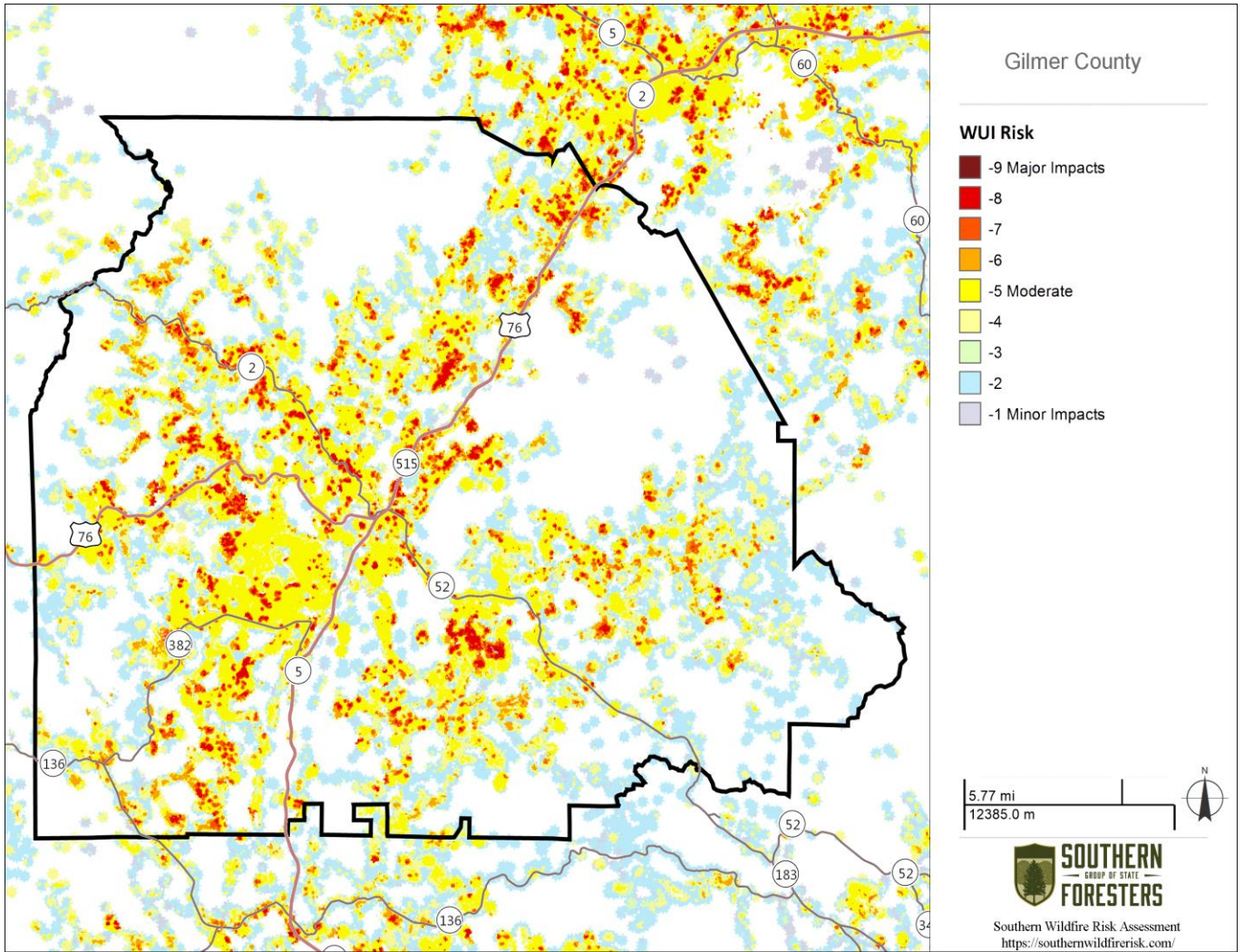
6) Wildfire Pre-Suppression Plan

This document is located in the appendix of this plan

7) County Base and Hazards Maps



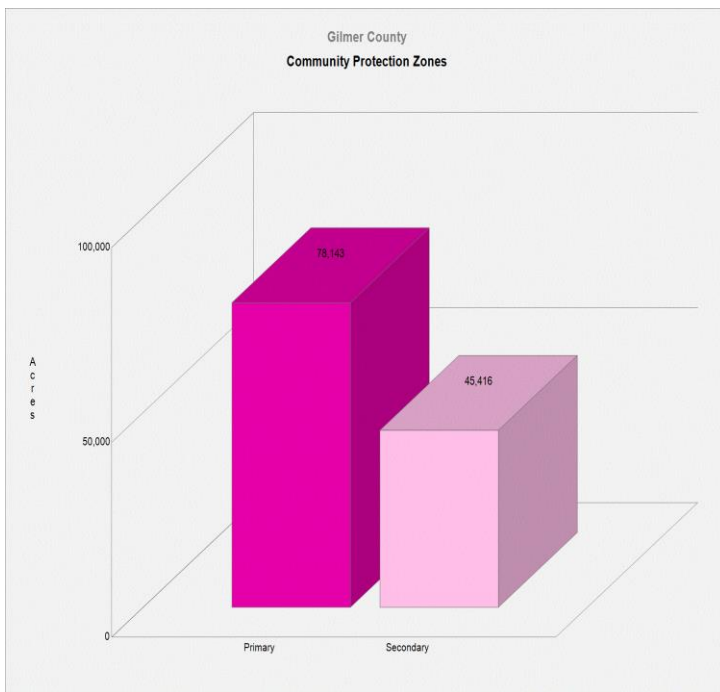
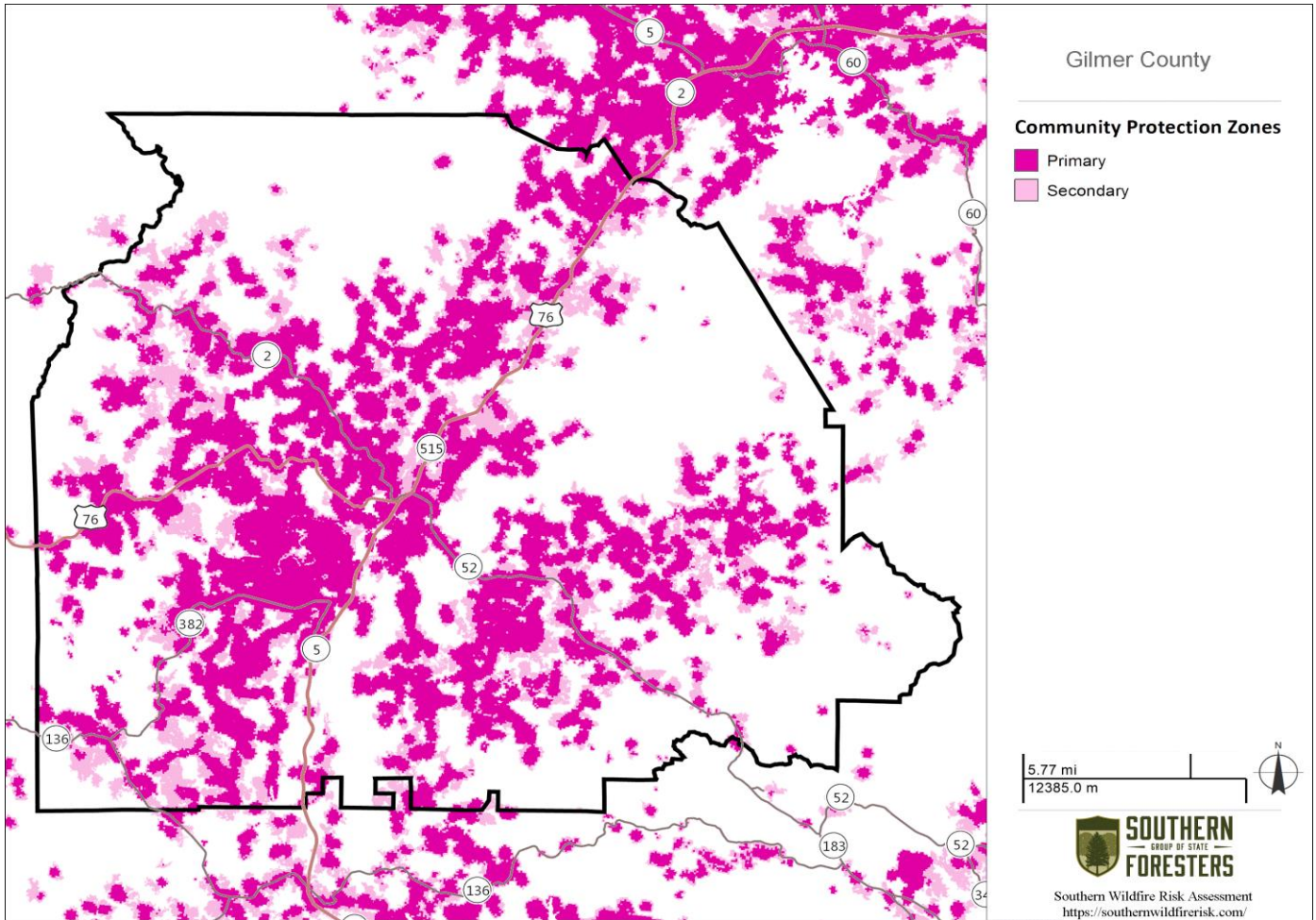
WUI housing density is categorized based on the standard Federal Register and U.S. Forest Service SILVIS data set categories, long considered a de facto standard for depicting WUI. However, in the SWRA WUI data the number of housing density categories is extended to provide a better gradation of housing distribution to meet specific requirements for fire protection planning activities. While units of the actual data set are in *houses per sq. km.*, the data is presented as the *number of houses per acre* to aid with interpretation and use by fire planners in the South



The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk Index layer is a rating of the potential impact of a wildfire on people and their homes.

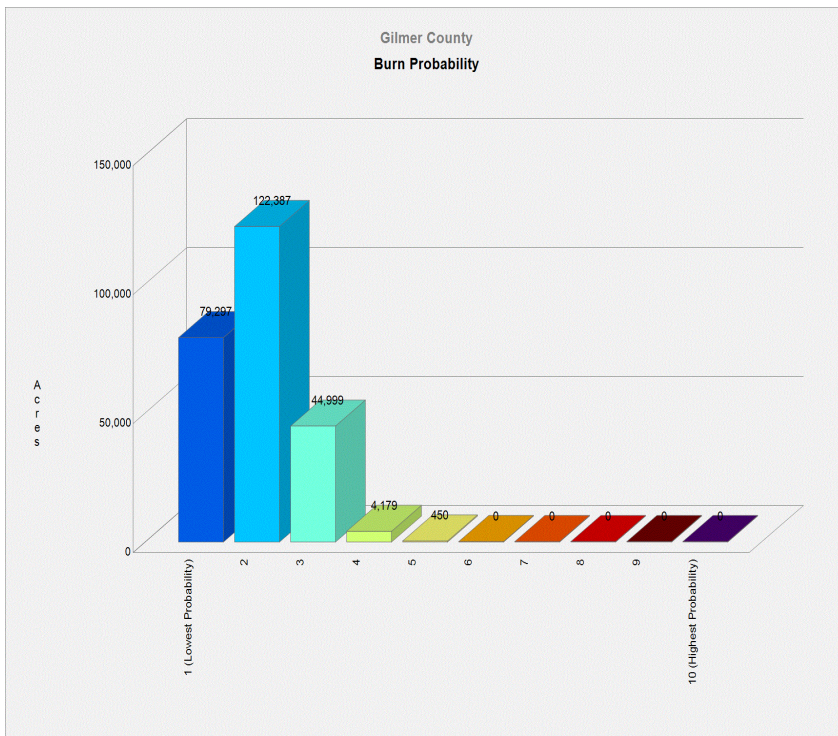
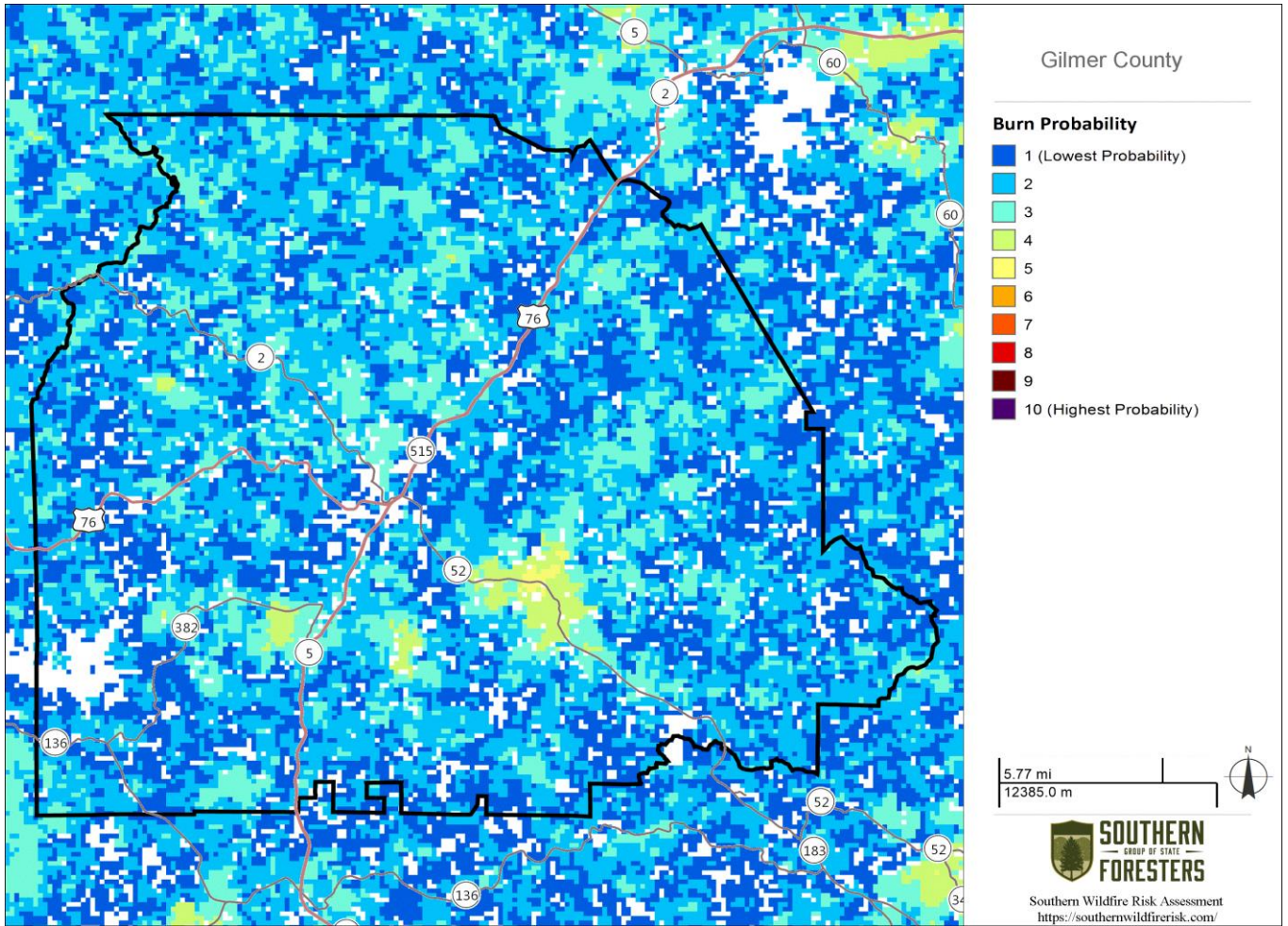
The key input, WUI, reflects housing density (houses per acre) consistent with Federal Register National standards. The location of people living in the Wildland Urban Interface and rural areas is key information for defining potential wildfire impacts to people and homes.

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



Community Protection Zones (CPZ) represent those areas considered highest priority for mitigation planning activities. CPZs are based on an analysis of the Where People Live housing density data and surrounding fire behavior potential. Rate of Spread data is used to determine the areas of concern around populated areas that are within a 2-hour fire spread distance. This is referred to as the Secondary CPZ.

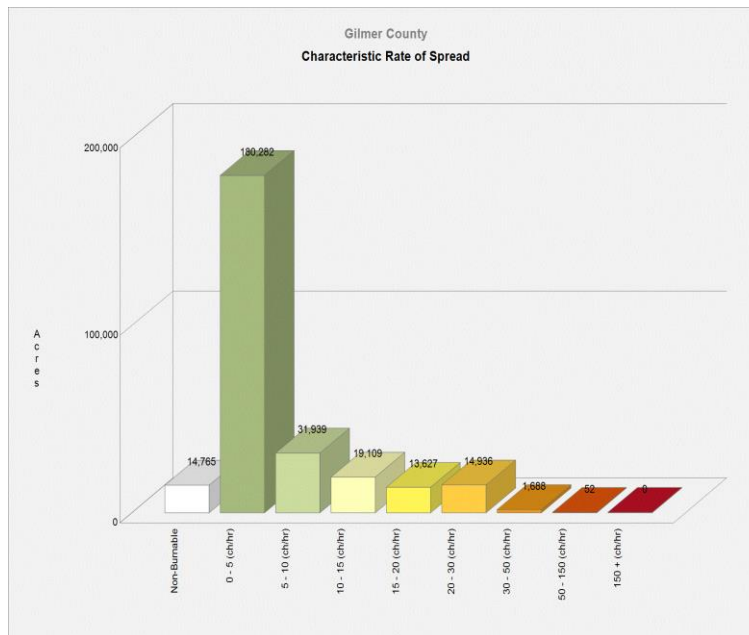
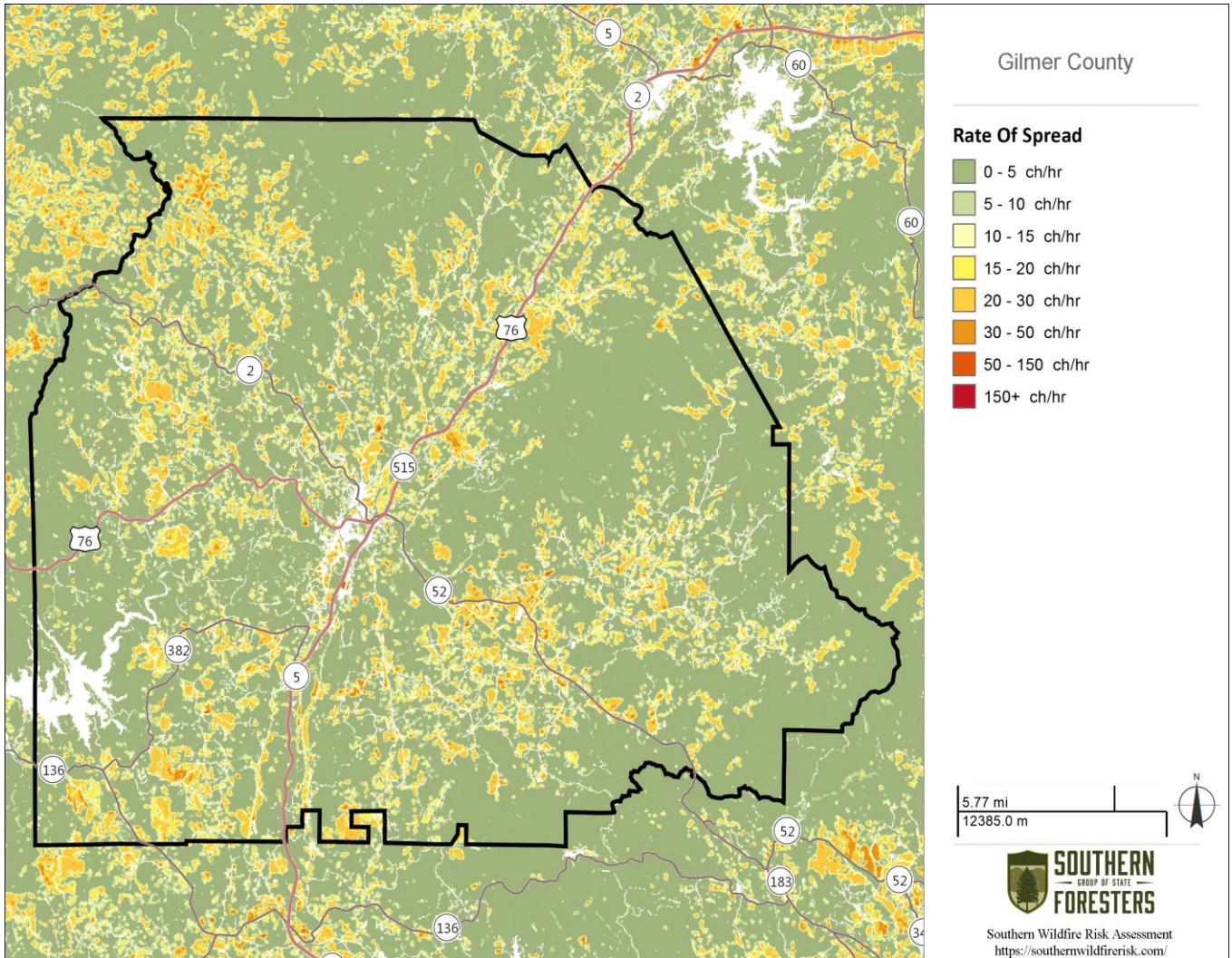
General consensus among fire planners is that for fuel mitigation treatments to be effective in reducing wildfire hazard, they must be conducted within a close distance of a community. In the South, the WUI housing density has been used to reflect populated areas in place of community boundaries (Primary CPZ). This ensures that CPZs reflect where people are living in the wildland, not jurisdictional boundaries.



The Burn Probability (BP) layer depicts the probability of an area burning given current landscape conditions, percentile weather, historical ignition patterns and historical fire prevention and suppression efforts.

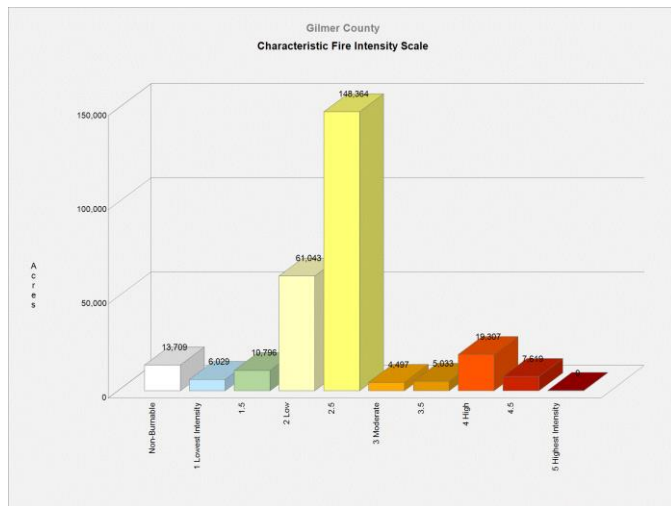
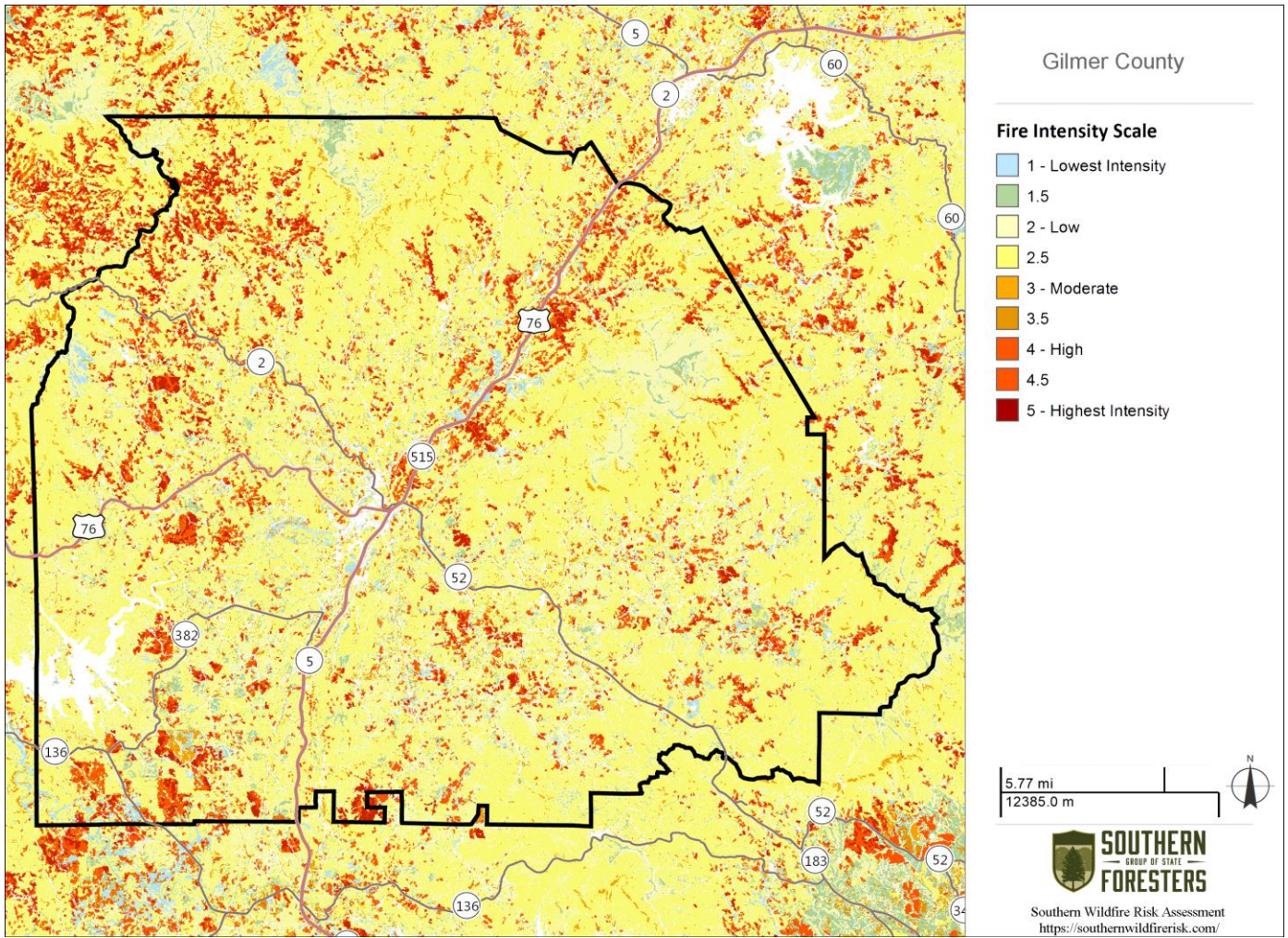
Describe in more detail, it is the tendency of any given pixel to burn, given the static landscape conditions depicted by the LANDFIRE Refresh 2008 dataset (as resampled by FPA), contemporary weather and ignition patterns, as well as contemporary fire management policies (entailing considerable fire prevention and suppression efforts).

The BP data does not, and is not intended to, depict fire-return intervals of any vintage, nor do they indicate likely fire footprints or routes of travel. Nothing about the expected shape or size of any actual fire.



Characteristic Rate of Spread is the typical or representative rate of spread of a potential fire based on a weighted average of four percentile weather categories. Rate of spread is the speed with which a fire moves in a horizontal direction across the landscape, usually expressed in chains per hour (ch/hr) or feet per minute (ft/min). For purposes of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment, this measurement represents the maximum rate of spread of the fire front. Rate of Spread is the metric used to derive the Community Protection Zones.

Rate of spread is a fire behavior output, which is influenced by three environmental factors - fuels, weather, and topography. Weather is by far the most dynamic variable as it changes frequently.



Characteristic Fire Intensity Scale (FIS) specifically identifies areas where significant fuel hazards and associated dangerous fire behavior potential exist based on a weighted average of four percentile weather categories. Similar to the Richter scale for earthquakes, FIS provides a standard scale to measure potential wildfire intensity. FIS consist of 5 classes where the order of magnitude between classes is ten-fold. The minimum class, Class 1, represents very low wildfire intensities and the maximum class, Class 5, represents very high wildfire intensities.

Class 1, Very Low:

Very small, discontinuous flames, usually less than 1 foot in length; very low rate of spread; no spotting. Fires are typically easy to suppress by firefighters with basic training and non-specialized equipment.

Class 2, Low:

Small flames, usually less than two feet long; small amount of very short range spotting possible. Fires are easy to suppress by trained firefighters with protective equipment and specialized tools.

Class 3, Moderate:

Flames up to 8 feet in length; short-range spotting is possible. Trained firefighters will find these fires difficult to suppress without support from aircraft or engines, but dozer and plows are generally effective. Increasing potential for harm or damage to life and property.

Class 4, High:

Large Flames, up to 30 feet in length; short-range spotting common; medium range spotting possible. Direct attack by trained firefighters, engines, and dozers is generally ineffective, indirect attack may be effective. Significant potential for harm or damage to life and property.

Class 5, Very High:

Very large flames up to 150 feet in length; profuse short-range spotting, frequent long-range spotting; strong fire-induced winds. Indirect attack marginally effective at the head of the fire. Great potential for harm or damage to life and property.

8) Appendix

- Risk Summary table organized by responding station
- County maps of Surface fuels, Wildland Fire Susceptibility, Historical fire occurrence, Aspect, and USFS Blue Ridge Ranger District
- Gilmer County Pre-Suppression plan. (This document will be separate and will be the most up-to-date version of the County Fire plan)
- Propane tank safety in the interface

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