

GEORGIA FORESTRY  
COMMISSION



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*

### Murray County



This plan is dedicated to the memory of Chief Ranger Ray Flood of Cherokee –Pickens counties and former Fire Tower Operator in Murray County.

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 Murray 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 AND EXISTING SITUATION

### Murray County



Murray County, Georgia's eighty-sixth county, was created in 1832 by [land lottery](#). Since then, the creation of new counties has reduced the area of Murray County from the entire northwest corner of the state (more than 1,400 square miles) to its current size of 344 square miles. Named for Thomas W. Murray, former Speaker of the [Georgia House of Representatives](#), this northwestern county is bounded by the Georgia-Tennessee state line and [Fannin](#), [Gilmer](#), [Gordon](#), and [Whitfield](#) counties.

Before the creation of Murray County, the territory was part of the [Cherokee Nation](#). The Cherokee people had governance over the area but accepted white merchants and traders into their communities. Among the most influential Cherokee families to inhabit what would become Murray County were the Vanns. James Vann, a prominent Cherokee chief, built a veritable empire at Spring Place; the Vann mill and trading post on the [Federal Road](#) generated enough wealth to enable him to construct a large brick home on Diamond Hill, now known as the [Chief Vann House Historic Site](#). His son, [Joseph Vann](#), was born in the county in 1798.

Vann also encouraged the formation of a [Moravian](#) mission at Spring Place in 1801. The [mission](#) organized schools and religious services that were attended by many local inhabitants. The Moravian mission thrived in Murray County until the 1830s, when political upheaval and the arrival of competing religious missions forced the small group out of Georgia.

After the official creation of Murray County, the area was infamous for its rampant disorder; political infighting, disputed elections, street brawls, and murders were common events. The lawlessness of Murray was compounded by Georgia's determination to have all land in the hands of white residents. This resulted in an 1834 law stating that any land held by people of Cherokee heritage would be forfeited if they broke any [state law](#). The law spurred the creation of legislation designed to limit the rights of the Cherokee people. The disenfranchisement of the Cherokee culminated in the forcible [removal](#) of the people from Georgia in 1838-39, an act remembered as the Trail of Tears.



[Murray County Courthouse](#)

Murray County continued to grow steadily in population after the Cherokee removal. Spring Place, the first county seat, bustled with activity as people ventured into the Georgia frontier. By the middle of the nineteenth century, many improvements had been made. Twenty schools were operating in the county, catering to the education of all children, regardless of their financial situation or gender. Spring Place also hosted many businesses and several churches. The arrival of the [Western and Atlantic Railroad](#) brought prospects for continued growth in the county, but that area became Whitfield

County in 1851.

Murray County on the eve of the Civil War (1861-65) had a very small population of slaveholding plantation owners. Consequently, when the question of Georgia's [secession](#) from the Union was raised, representatives from Murray County were sent to vote against it. When Georgia became a member of the Confederacy, however, the people of Murray County rallied to the call. Although no major battles were fought in Murray, many of the local soldiers did not survive the war, and the loss of lives was felt throughout the county.

During [Reconstruction](#) and beyond, the citizens of Murray County faced both prosperous and difficult times. Improvements trickled slowly into the area, but the early establishment of two very important boards aided in Murray's recovery and rebuilding. The Board of Revenue, Roads, Bridges, and Paupers was created in 1873 to assume responsibility for Murray County's [revenue](#), roads, bridges, and ferries, as well as decisions dealing with poor residents of the county. The board was also given the power to levy taxes for county improvements, to change or establish militia districts, and to abolish or establish roads, bridges, and ferries. The establishment of the Murray County Board of Education provided a means of cohesion for the county's [educational institutions](#), which numbered in the thirties by 1880. As the supervisory force behind the county's schools, the board made decisions ranging from [textbook](#) selection to teachers' contracts.

Like most of America, Murray County suffered during the [Great Depression](#). U.S. president [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#)'s [New Deal](#) agencies found a strong foothold in Murray County. The [Civilian Conservation Corps](#) (CCC) operated a camp out of the Eton district while they worked on the infrastructural development of [Fort Mountain State Park](#). The CCC contributed to the creation of walking trails, cabins, and picnic facilities in the park. Another New Deal program, the Works Progress Administration, erected a stone building on the grounds of Murray County High School, which consolidated the students and teachers from several smaller county high schools. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) provided affordable power to the entire region during the depression and beyond. Murray County is still connected to TVA electricity.



[Chief Vann House](#)

The Louisville and Nashville Railroad arrived in Murray after the turn of the century, bringing with it employment and industry and changing the structure of the county. The importance of the L&N's Chatsworth Station was underlined in 1913 when the county seat was relocated from Spring Place to Chatsworth. The L&N operated several stations in Murray County and provided transportation between Etowah, Tennessee, and [Cartersville](#), Georgia. By the 1960s, however, rail travel had declined, and the Chatsworth station was the only one that remained open. That depot has since been renovated and houses a museum dedicated to Murray County's talc industry.

The 2000 U.S. census counted Murray County's population as 36,506, an increase of nearly 40 percent since the 1990 census. The population is mostly white (95.3 percent), but the county also has African American (0.6 percent) and Hispanic (5.5 percent) residents.

The growth of industry, especially the manufacture of [carpet](#) and [textiles](#), has benefited workers; manufacturing accounted for more than half of the county's jobs in 2002. Today, one of the largest employers in the county is [Shaw Industries](#). However, textiles are not the only driving force in Murray's economy. As the population continues to grow, the Chatsworth–Murray County Chamber of Commerce predicts a welcome market for retail ventures and other forms of industry. Tourism is also an important industry. Such annual events as the Murray County Spring Festival and the Appalachian Wagon Train, as well as recreational facilities like Fort Mountain State Park, the Cohutta Wilderness Area, the Coosawattee Wildlife Management Area, and [Carters Lake](#), bring visitors into the area.



[Murray County Farm](#)

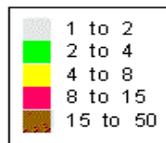
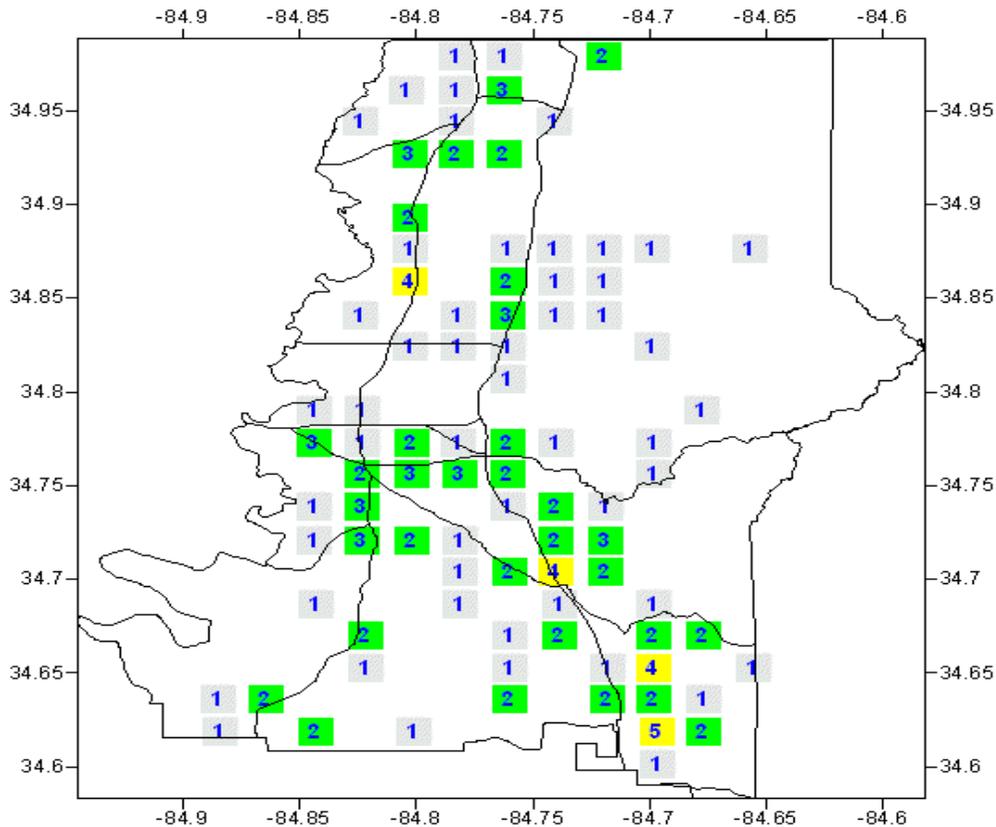
**The above information is courtesy of the New Georgia Encyclopedia**

**Fire History and Existing Situation**

Murray County has been fortunate not to have had a serious Wildland Fire problem. This is due to improvements and cooperation between responding agencies as well as fragmentation of the surface fuels that are available during prime burning periods. During the five year period that encompassed fiscal years 2005 through 2009, Murray County averaged 32.8 fires each year that burned an average of 254.07 acres. The following table outlines fire activity in Murray County for the past five complete fiscal years (July – June). It should be emphasized that the rise in statewide fire average in FY 2007 was influenced by the Sweat Farm, Big Turnaround, and Bugaboo Fires that burned in the Okefenokee Swamp.

Fiscal Year	Number of Fires	Acres	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2009	24	107.44	4.48	3.90
2008	16	33.46	2.09	4.56
2007	53	544.34	10.27	18.64
2006	50	515.13	10.30	3.93
2005	21	69.98	3.33	3.15

**Fire Occurrence Map for Murray County for Fiscal Year 2005-2009**



Murray County is typical of many North Georgia counties in which Incendiarism occurs. The problem is not quite as pronounced as it is in other counties in Northwest Georgia however. Incendiarism was the leading cause in FY 2009 and in 2007 (14 fires of the 53 that occurred). Generally speaking, Murray County experiences fires across the spectrum of most all causes. Machine use and escaped debris burns remain a common cause. The following table outlines fire activity for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010. Numbers in this current fiscal year reflect the overall trend towards reduced activity due to normal to above normal rainfall. This trend is evident statewide.

County = Murray	Cause	Fires	Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
<a href="#">Campfire</a>	Campfire	0	0.00	0.60	1.38
<a href="#">Children</a>	Children	1	3.11	2.00	4.18
<a href="#">Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc</a>	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	0	0.00	0.60	1.46
<a href="#">Debris: Construction Land Clearing</a>	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	1	0.70	1.20	5.40
<a href="#">Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn</a>	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	1	20.18	1.00	46.08
<a href="#">Debris: Household Garbage</a>	Debris: Household Garbage	1	6.60	2.00	4.04
<a href="#">Debris: Other</a>	Debris: Other	0	0.00	0.80	2.62
<a href="#">Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc</a>	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	5	11.40	6.60	21.48
<a href="#">Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related</a>	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	0	0.00	0.20	1.19
<a href="#">Incendiary</a>	Incendiary	2	2.78	7.20	80.21
<a href="#">Lightning</a>	Lightning	0	0.00	1.00	14.23
<a href="#">Machine Use</a>	Machine Use	0	0.00	3.20	15.64
<a href="#">Miscellaneous</a>	Miscellaneous	0	0.00	3.00	49.59
<a href="#">Railroad</a>	Railroad	0	0.00	1.00	1.40
<a href="#">Smoking</a>	Smoking	0	0.00	0.40	0.12
<b>Totals for County: Murray Year: 2010</b>		11	44.77	30.80	249.3

The map located in the appendix entitled 'Fire Occurrence areas Murray County' depicts data from fire reports submitted by the Georgia Forestry Commission during the period 1997 – 2002. It is a representation of the number of starts within a 1000 acre grid applied to the county landscape.

## 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)

Murray County is undergoing a transition from a relatively rural county to one that is undergoing development of both boundary and intermix interface. Influence from the I-75 corridor as well as development of mountain residence communities continues.

## **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 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

Following an initial meeting held on September 16, 2009 attended by personnel from the Georgia Forestry Commission, Murray County Fire Service, and the USDA Forest Service an assessment was made of communities at risk in Murray County. Decisions on where to make assessments were based on guidance from CWPP specialist Carl Melear who provided data from the Southern Fire Risk Assessment. It was stressed at the meeting that local fire services personnel could use this data supplemented by their own knowledge about high risk interface areas in the county. Assessments were made in the fall and winter of 2009 using the GFC form 140 Woodland Community Wildfire hazard assessment and were declared complete on February 19, 2010. Assessments were reviewed at a follow up meeting between the Georgia Forestry Commission and Murray County Fire Services held on March 11, 2010. At this meeting assessment areas were considered in light of the best method of mitigating the wildland fire hazard that they experience. Twenty Five (25) areas were assessed. Of these, 11 were considered to be at extreme risk, 3 were at high risk, and 11 were considered moderate. Findings from the assessment process are summarized in a spreadsheet entitled 'Risk Summary for Murray County' which is located in the appendix. These areas are designated on two maps entitled Level of Concern North and South. The map numbers in the Risk Summary spreadsheet correspond to the numbers on the maps. Original copies of the assessments are retained by the Murray unit of the Georgia Forestry Commission. The original assessments contain more specific information and field notes made by the assessor. This could be helpful to local stations in making specific steps toward hazard mitigation for a particular area.

### 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 if possible to do so.
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 including rakes, shovels, and wind brooms (blowers). Investigate needs for improvements to wildland water handing and supply (dry hydrants, brush trucks, hose, etc.)

## Proposed Public Education Priorities

<b>Educational Priority</b>	<b>Responsible party</b>	<b>Method</b>
<p>Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through direct contact</p>	<p>Federal, State, County, and municipal governments</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through use of media</p>	<p>County, State, and municipal governments</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Increase public awareness concerning Firewise principles and fire prevention through formal certification and recognition</p>	<p>Federal, State, County, and municipal governments</p>	<p>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 before the end of calendar year 2011. The goal of adding at least one community annually should extend beyond this initial goal.</p>

## 5) Action Plan, Timetables, and Assessment Strategy

### POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES:

As funding is questionable in these times of tight government budgets and economic uncertainty, unconventional means should be identified whereby the need for funding can be reduced or eliminated.

Publications / Brochures –

- FIREWISE materials are available at [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org).
- Another source of mitigation information can be found at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).
- Access to reduce cost or free of charge copy services should be sought whereby publications can be reproduced.
- Free of charge public meeting areas should be identified where communities could gather to be educated regarding prevention and firewise principles.

Mitigation –

- Community Protection Grant:
  - USFS sponsored prescribed burn program. Communities with at risk properties that lie within 3 miles of the USFS border may apply with the GFC to have their forest land prescribed burned free of charge.
  - FEMA Mitigation Policy MRR-2-08-01: through GEMA - Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre Disaster Mitigation (PDM)
    - To provide technical and financial assistance to local governments to assist in the implementation of long term cost effective hazard mitigation measures.
    - 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 fuels reduction to protect life and property.
    - With a complete and registered plan (addendum to the State plan) counties can apply for pre-mitigation funding. They will also be eligible for HMGP if the county is declared under a wildfire disaster.
  - GFC - Plowing and burning assistance can be provided through the Georgia Forestry Commission as a low cost option for mitigation efforts.
  - Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act
    - These funds are designated for Firewise Communities, Community Wildfire Protection Plan Development, and emergency operations on federal lands.
- Individual Homeowners –
  - In most cases of structural protection ultimately falls on the responsibility of the community and the homeowner. They will bear the cost; yet they will reap the benefit from properly implemented mitigation efforts.
  - GEMA Grant - PDM (See above)

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 the risk summary table and level of concern maps, the Georgia Forestry Commission and Murray 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	Murray 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	Murray 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. Locations for safe burning common to all residents could be located. Should no areas exist for non supported burning, fire departments could consider designated days for burning supported by fire department personnel.

### Steps to implement improvements to wildland response capability

Improvement needed	Responsible Party and specific action
Improve training and qualification of Murray County Wildland firefighters	Chief Ranger Vicky Edge, District Manager Troy Floyd Jr. of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Murray County Fire Chief Bain 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 Murray 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 fire fighting equipment	All stations for Murray 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 Edge and Fire Chief Bain.

## 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	Prior to the onset of fire season(s) rangers of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Murray 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 Murray County unit of the Georgia Forestry Commission and used for all Firewise meetings in Murray County. Local news media should be invited to these meetings. Goals for potential Firewise certified communities in Murray County could be considered after these meetings are completed.
Improve Public Education through use of media	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.
Improve Public Education through formal certification	Before the end of calendar year 2011 the station listed below should seek and obtain Firewise certification for the communities listed. Should lack of interest or other problems prevent certification of the listed communities an effort should be made with another community listed on the Communities at Risk list.

### Station 6 Fort Mountain Estates

## 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 prior to the next fire season (late summer to early fall of 2010).
- 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 2011. 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 2010 - 2011.

#### 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 2010
- 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 Incendiarism 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, and 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

Maps of historical fire occurrence, level of Concern for North and South portions of the County, Surface Fuels, and a map of the east portion of the Conasauga Ranger District of USDA Forest Service land are included in the appendix of this plan. These maps are in PDF format and are available from the Georgia Forestry Commission. When viewed in this electronic format increased magnification and resolution capabilities are realized which will make these maps more useful. Large format printing capabilities are also realized.

## 8) Appendix

Risk Summary

County Base and Hazard maps

Murray County Pre-Suppression plan

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COMMISSION



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