



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

Whitfield 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 Whitfield 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. It is intended to become part of the master hazard mitigation plan for the County. 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-EXISTING SITUATION-INTERFACE INFORMATION

Whitfield County



Whitfield County is located in northwest Georgia at the southern end of the Appalachian Mountains, about thirty miles south of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and eighty miles north of [Atlanta](#). It shares a northern border with Tennessee and covers nearly 290 square miles.

The county was formed from part of [Murray County](#) in 1851 and named for the [Reverend George Whitefield](#), an Englishman who first visited Georgia in 1738. Whitefield created the [Bethesda](#) orphan house near [Savannah](#) in 1740. In writing the act that created the county, the [state legislature](#) omitted the "e" in "Whitefield," to reflect the correct pronunciation of the name.

Early History

The [Cherokee Indians](#) originally inhabited the land that forms Whitfield County. The first white inhabitants were Indian traders, including Nathan Hicks, who married a Cherokee woman and settled on the Hiawassee River. Their well-educated son, Charles Hicks (born in 1767), established a home nine miles northwest of [Dalton](#) and served as the Cherokee interpreter to the U.S. government for thirty years. In 1827 he died at the age of sixty, only two weeks after becoming principal chief of the Cherokees.

The United States signed a treaty with the Cherokees in 1798, guaranteeing their rights to the land in north Georgia that included Whitfield County. In violation of that treaty, however, the state of Georgia claimed authority over the area in 1828. In 1838 the U.S. government, pressured by the state, [removed the Cherokee Indians](#) from their lands in Georgia to a reservation in Oklahoma. The forced march from Georgia became known as the Trail of Tears, owing to the number who died along the route.



[Whitfield County Courthouse](#)

Even before the removal was complete, the Georgia legislature organized [Cherokee County](#) and held a [land lottery](#) for white settlers in 1832. Several months later, the legislature created Murray County from Cherokee County. In the 1830s Cross Plains was the primary settlement, which was absorbed into the town of Dalton in 1847. Edward White, a New York merchant, named the town he founded after his mother and grandfather, Mary Dalton White and Tristram Dalton, respectively. White laid out the streets in Dalton and donated land for a park and churches.

The arrival of the railroad and resulting prosperity prompted the legislature to carve Whitfield out of Murray County in 1851, and Dalton was named the county seat. The thriving community supported Prater's Mill, which was built in 1855 and offered various milling services, a wool carder, a [cotton gin](#), a general store, and a blacksmith shop. Today the mill building, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, is open to the public during the Prater's Mill Country Fair, held each October. In addition to Dalton, the other incorporated cities in the county are Cohutta, Tunnel Hill, and Varnell.

Civil War and Reconstruction

The area's prosperity, combined with the presence of very few [slaves](#), led two of the county's three delegates to vote against [secession](#). During the [Civil War](#) (1861-65), Dalton and other areas of Whitfield County stood in the path of Union general William T. Sherman's [Atlanta campaign](#). After arriving with reinforcements for Union troops at [Lookout Mountain](#) and Missionary Ridge in the winter of 1863-64, Sherman was put in charge of the Army of the Cumberland and 100,000 men. His initial move into Georgia pushed a disarrayed Confederate army into Dalton. After Confederate general Braxton Bragg resigned, Joseph E. Johnston replaced him at the head of the 50,000-man Army of the Tennessee. Johnston immediately established strong defenses on the mountains north and west of Dalton and camped for the winter and spring at Tunnel Hill, the city named for the nearby 1,477-foot railroad tunnel dug through Chetogeta Ridge.



[Tunnel Hill](#)

While one-third of his men tried to outflank Johnston in the mountain passes, Sherman moved against Dalton and pushed Confederate troops out of Tunnel Hill, where he set up headquarters at the home of a [Unionist](#). Sherman's flanking maneuver worked and forced Confederate troops to retreat to Resaca in May 1864. The county was devastated by thirteen battles or skirmishes, including those at Crow Valley, Mill Creek Gap, Resaca, Rocky Face, and Tunnel Hill. Union troops also destroyed much of Dalton, and today the city claims the only standing [monument](#) to Johnston. In 2000 the [Georgia Civil War Commission](#) purchased the Resaca battlefield site, a tract of 508 acres shared by [Gordon](#) and Whitfield counties.

During the 1870s [Mormon](#) missionaries arrived in the area. One of them, [Joseph Standing](#), was murdered in 1879 in Varnell, near Dalton, by citizens of [Catoosa](#) and Whitfield counties who saw the missionaries as a threat to their communities. Standing is commemorated in Joseph Standing Memorial Park in Varnell.

Economy

The economy of Whitfield County suffered during [Reconstruction](#) but improved with the opening of the Crown Cotton Mill in Dalton in 1884. The [cotton](#) mill was the first large-scale manufacturing plant in that part of Georgia. By 1916, 1,000 employees operated 50,000 spindles and 1,200 looms. The mill pushed economic and industrial growth in north Georgia, while thousands of white farmers moved from the country to the mill village.

The [Great Depression](#) and the General Textile Strike of 1934 dealt severe blows to the Crown Cotton Mill, which managed to stay in operation until 1969. Modern Dalton still testifies to the strong legacy of the [carpet](#) and [textile](#) industries. As a leading industrial center in the country, the city confidently proclaims itself the "Carpet Capital of the World."



[Crown Cotton Mill](#)

Carpet manufacturing in Dalton has its roots in the [tufted bedspread](#) industry.

In the late nineteenth century Catherine Evans Whitener began producing bedspreads using the old craft of "candlewicking" or tufting. The demand for her products led to the growth of a cottage industry by the 1920s, and twenty years later the industry had become mechanized with specialized machine shops producing a range of new products, including rugs.

Unlike northern manufacturers who produced woven wool rugs, the industry in Dalton produced tufted cotton rugs at much cheaper prices. The industry boomed with the introduction of durable synthetic fibers. By the end of the twentieth century, 80 percent of the carpet produced in the United States, and more than 70 percent of the world's

carpet, was produced by four companies located in Georgia, three of them—[Beaulieu of America](#), Mohawk, and [Shaw Industries](#)—located in Dalton.



[Mill Houses](#)

Immigration and Education

During the 1980s and 1990s, large numbers of Hispanic immigrants moved to Dalton to fill jobs in the carpet manufacturing industry. By 2000 Hispanics comprised 22.1 percent of the county's population, and almost half the students in Dalton's schools were Hispanic.

In the mid-1980s Dalton resident and Mexican native Teresa Sosa established an annual parade to celebrate Mexico's Independence Day, which falls on September 16. In 2008 around 200 people participated in the twenty-fifth anniversary of the parade, while hundreds more gathered to watch.

The influx of so many Spanish-speaking students strained the resources of the Dalton-area schools. This problem came to the attention of Erwin Mitchell, a local [lawyer](#). In 1997, with the help of Robert Shaw, of Shaw Industries, and partners at Mexico's University of Monterrey, Mitchell established the [Georgia Project](#), a pioneer program to promote bilingual education in Dalton's [public schools](#). The Georgia Project brought Spanish-speaking teachers to Dalton to assist with the burgeoning Hispanic population in the city's schools and sent Dalton teachers to Mexico to learn Spanish. With this initiative and others, Dalton sought to smooth the process of globalization for the community.

In addition to the public schools, the county supports [Dalton State College](#), a unit of the [University System of Georgia](#) chartered in 1963.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, the population of Whitfield County was 102,599, an increase from the 2000 population of 83,525.

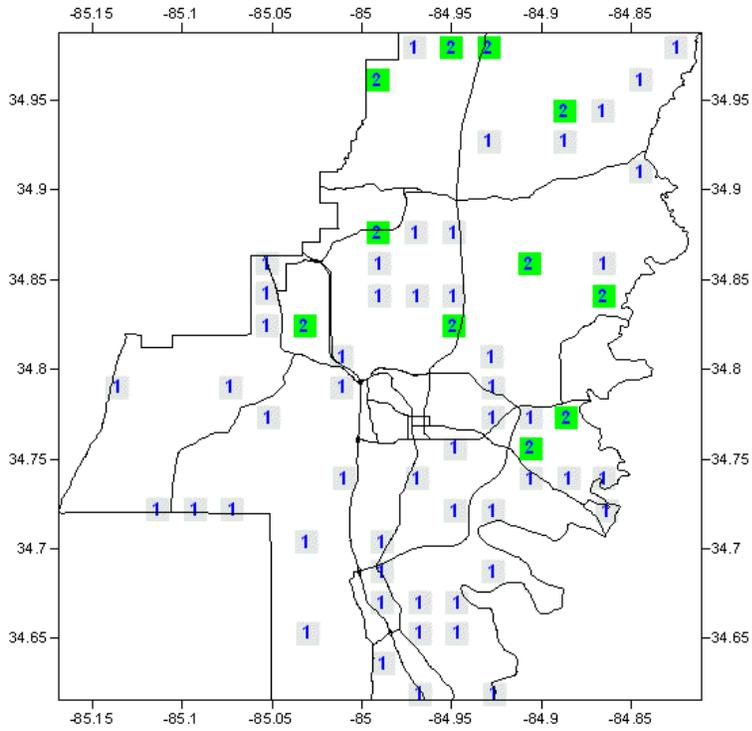
The above material is courtesy of the New Georgia Encyclopedia

Fire History and Existing Situation

Wildland fire activity in Whitfield County has been consistent during past years. Reported wildland fire is low in comparison to most counties in Georgia. This is due to rapid initial attack on most ignitions and excellent interagency cooperation. Examination of Georgia Forestry Commission records shows that incendiaryism and debris escapes, remains the leading causes for the past 5 years. In FY 2013, which began on July 1, 2012, there have been 13 responses by the Georgia Forestry Commission. Causes range across most cause categories recognized by the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Fiscal Year	Number of Fires	Acres	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2012	11	13.68	1.24	4.98
2011	28	42.67	1.52	16.16
2010	12	123.52	10.29	3.56
2009	14	42.01	3.00	3.90
2008	23	250.34	10.88	4.56

Fire Occurrence Map for Whitfield County for Fiscal Year 2008-2012



This table represents fire activity for the most complete fiscal year 2012 that began on July 1, 2012 and ended on June 30, 2013.

County = Whitfield	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	Campfire	1		22.70	1.40	7.40
Children	Children	0		0.00	1.40	0.99
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	1		5.60	1.60	5.85
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	0		0.00	0.60	0.19
Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	0		0.00	0.40	0.78
Debris: Household Garbage	Debris: Household Garbage	2	↑	1.35	1.80	1.93
Debris: Other	Debris: Other	0		0.00	0.40	16.92
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	2	↑	3.70	1.20	7.39
Incendiary	Incendiary	1		7.10	2.60	7.34
Machine Use	Machine Use	1		60.20	1.00	12.81
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	0		0.00	0.80	2.50
Miscellaneous: Other	Miscellaneous: Other	1	↑	0.80	0.20	0.16
Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	Miscellaneous: Power lines/Electric fences	3	↑	0.74	0.60	0.15
Railroad	Railroad	0		0.00	0.80	0.24
Smoking	Smoking	0		0.00	0.60	0.18
Undetermined	Undetermined	1	↑	0.23	0.20	0.05
Totals for County: Whitfield Year: 2013		13		102.42	15.60	64.86

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The Wildland-Urban Interface

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

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

1. **“Boundary” wildland-urban interface** is characterized by areas of development where homes, especially new subdivisions, press against public and private wildlands, such as private or commercial forest land or public forests or parks. This is the classic type of wildland-urban interface, with a clearly defined boundary between the suburban fringe and the rural countryside.
2. **“Intermix” wildland-urban interface** areas are places where improved property and/or structures are scattered and interspersed in wildland areas. These may be isolated rural homes or an area that is just beginning to go through the transition from rural to urban land use.
3. **“Island” wildland-urban interface**, also called occluded interface, are areas of wildland within predominately urban or suburban areas. As cities or subdivisions grow, islands of undeveloped land may remain, creating remnant forests. Sometimes these remnants exist as parks, or as land that cannot be developed due to site limitations, such as wetlands.
(courtesy *Fire Ecology and Wildfire Mitigation in Florida* 2004)

Wildland Urban Interface Hazards

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

- **Hazardous Materials**
Common chemicals used around the home may be a direct hazard to firefighters from 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.



Liquefied Propane Gas (LPG) Tank Hazards

Liquefied Propane Gas (LPG) tanks are commonly found in the wildland-urban interface and present hazards to firefighters in that environment. LPG tanks may be found in a number of other environments such as motor homes, travel trailers, grills, camp stoves, lanterns, etc. Directly attacking LPG tank fires is a structural fire task involving hazardous materials and should only be attempted by trained personnel using full structural personal protective equipment and equipped with a volume of water adequate to safely attack the fire.

● Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapor Explosions (BLEVE)

- The most recognized hazard with LPG tanks is BLEVE (Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapor Explosions) or sudden complete failure of the tank. Some training courses have directed responders to approach the tank from the sides, believing that the force of the explosion will occur on the ends of the tank. However, this is not a guarantee that you will be safe from projectiles or missiles from the explosion, as they may travel in ALL directions up to 2,500 feet away. Leave the area immediately if you smell propane, hear a rising sound from venting safety devices or see discoloration or deformation of the tank. If you leave the area, get at least 2,500 feet away and do not go down wind or down slope of the leaking propane. BLEVEs are a major hazard to emergency responders!

● Fuel Reduction Around Tanks

- Wildland firefighters may take action to prevent direct flame impingement on LPG tanks by removing wildland fuels in the area. However, be aware that lines from the tank to structures may be above or below ground, and may be cut by tools or equipment. Propane gas is heavier than air, and may move along the ground at some distance, and may ignite when it reaches open flame or another ignition source. Use extreme caution when doing fuels reduction around tanks, and flag any lines you encounter.

● Other Wildland Fire Considerations

- Do not position engines or other apparatus near LPG tanks or downwind / down slope from tanks.
- Do not deploy fire shelters near LPG tanks or downwind / down slope from tanks.

● Cooling Tanks

- In light fuels such as grasses, where any heat exposure to the tank will be very limited, rapid application of cooling water on the outside of the tank above the liquid level can reduce the likelihood of container failure by lowering the external temperature of the shell of the exposed tank. Water should not be directed at the valve safety devices, due to the potential of "Icing" the valve closed.
- In heavy fuels where long duration heat exposure to the LPG tank is likely, evacuate all personnel and equipment 2,500 feet away and not down slope or down wind. NFPA says that direct flame impingement protection requires water flow of at least 500 gpm from an unmanned monitor nozzle. This is a situation for properly trained, equipped and supported structural firefighters.

References:

[Propane Safety Web Site](#)

[Natl. Institute for Occupational Safety & Health's Web Site](#)

[National Propane Gas Association's Web Site](#)

[National Fire Protection Association's Web Site](#)

Have an idea? Have feedback? Share it.

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3) Risk Summary

Following a meeting between the Georgia Forestry Commission and Whitfield County Fire and Rescue department personnel on February 22, 2012 assessments of communities at risk from wildland fire was undertaken. This assessment process was based on information provided by the Georgia Forestry Commission from the Southern Fire Risk Assessment supplemented by local knowledge of high risk areas. Communities were assessed using the Georgia Forestry Commissions Form 140 for Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment. This form determines risk based on four criteria subdivision design, site hazard, building construction, and additional factors. Communities are assigned a risk category based on a numerical score. Communities are designated as being at extreme, high, moderate, or low risk. Assessments were declared complete on August 9 2012. Eighteen (18) areas were assessed. One area was found to be at high risk, fifteen were moderate, and two were at low risk. Results from this assessment process are summarized in a spreadsheet entitled 'Risk Summary Whitfield County' which is included in the appendix. This document contains summary information from the assessment forms. The map numbers listed on the spreadsheet correspond to the numbers on the Wildland Fire Susceptibility Map and show the locations of the assessment areas. Opportunities for community assessment still are available in the County.

4) Prioritized Mitigation Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed by collaboration between the Georgia Forestry Commission and various County Fire and Emergency Services. A priority order was determined based on which mitigation projects would best reduce the hazard of wildfire in the assessment area. **It is noted that as incendiary fire remains one of the leading causes in the county, all fires that are determined to be caused by arson should be investigated as 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 and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities:

1. **Locate lack of and improve defensible space around structures in communities at risk**
2. **Identify access problems that affect initial attack in communities at risk**
3. **Identify structural ignitability concerns in communities at risk**
4. **Identify and resolve problems with codes, covenants, or ordinances that negatively influence structural ignitability**

Proposed Wildland Fuel Reduction or Modification Priorities:

1. **Reduction or modification of wildland fuel in proximity to communities at risk**
2. **Reduction or modification of fuel concentrations in shared spaces inside communities at risk**

Proposed Improvements to capabilities of Wildland Response agencies:

1. **Identify needs and improve training and qualification of wildland response agencies**
2. **Identify needs and recommend equipment acquisitions for wildland response agencies**

Proposed Education and Outreach Priorities:

1. **Improve public knowledge in communities at risk and in the general population of the County regarding Firewise principles.**
2. **Notification of communities at risk regarding wildland fire hazard**
3. **Improvements to public notification during periods of high to extreme fire danger.**

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.
- Another source of mitigation information can be found at www.nfpa.org.
- Access to reduced 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.
- 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
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 Whitfield 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	Whitfield 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	Whitfield 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, 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 adjacent to Communities at risk where burning is determined to be appropriate. Due to the nature of smaller sizes holdings extensive development, burn projects may have to be small scale and carefully managed.
Fuel Continuity between 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 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 Whitfield County Wildland firefighters	Chief Ranger Chuck Arnold, and Whitfield County Fire Chief Collins should examine all training records for personnel under their supervision. All personnel assigned or anticipated to be assigned wildland response responsibilities should be certified Georgia Basic Wildland Firefighter or higher in qualification. Additional training and qualification should be sought for personnel identified in the Whitfield County Fire plan who are assigned specific Incident Command System (ICS) functions. Sources for available funds for training should be sought at local, state, and federal levels.
Improve or acquire wildland fire fighting equipment	All stations for Whitfield 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 responses should be examined by Chief Ranger Arnold and Fire Chief Collins.

5) Action Plan

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

Opportunity	Responsible Party and Specific Action
<p>Improve Public Education through direct contact</p>	<p>Prior to the onset of fire season(s) rangers of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Whitfield County Fire personnel should conduct firewise meetings in conjunction with normally scheduled fire department meetings. People living in or near 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 Catoosa Whitfield unit of the Georgia Forestry Commission and used for all firewise meetings in those Counties. Local news media should be invited to these meetings. Goals for potential Firewise certified communities in Whitfield County could be considered after these meetings are completed.</p>
<p>Improve Public Education through use of media</p>	<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. Signs directing residents to the firewise website could be effective. Firewise materials could be provided to the County building permit office.</p>

<p>Improve Public Education through formal certification</p>	<p>Before the end of calendar year 2013 the Georgia Forestry Commission and Whitfield County Fire should obtain Firewise certification for <u>Loundon Village</u> Community. Should this goal not be realistic, another community from the risk summary should be selected for certification.</p>
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5) Action Plan

Timetables for Actions

Steps to implement Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Priorities

- Steps to examine communities at risk for defensible space and structural ignitability should take place during the fall of 2013
- 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 2013 - 2014. 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 2013 – 2014.

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 2013
- 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 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 Plans

The 2012 update of the Georgia Forestry Commission Whitfield County Fire plan is included in the appendix of this plan.

7) County Base and Hazards Maps

Maps of the Wildland Fire Susceptibility, Surface Fuels, and Fire Occurrence areas are included in the appendix of this plan. The Fire Occurrence and Surface Fuels maps contain minimum feature information to preserve continuity of what they represent. 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. File sharing is also facilitated.

8) Appendix

- Risk Summary table
- County maps of Wildland Fire Susceptibility, surface fuels, and fire occurrence areas
- Whitfield County Pre-Suppression plan.



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