

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION

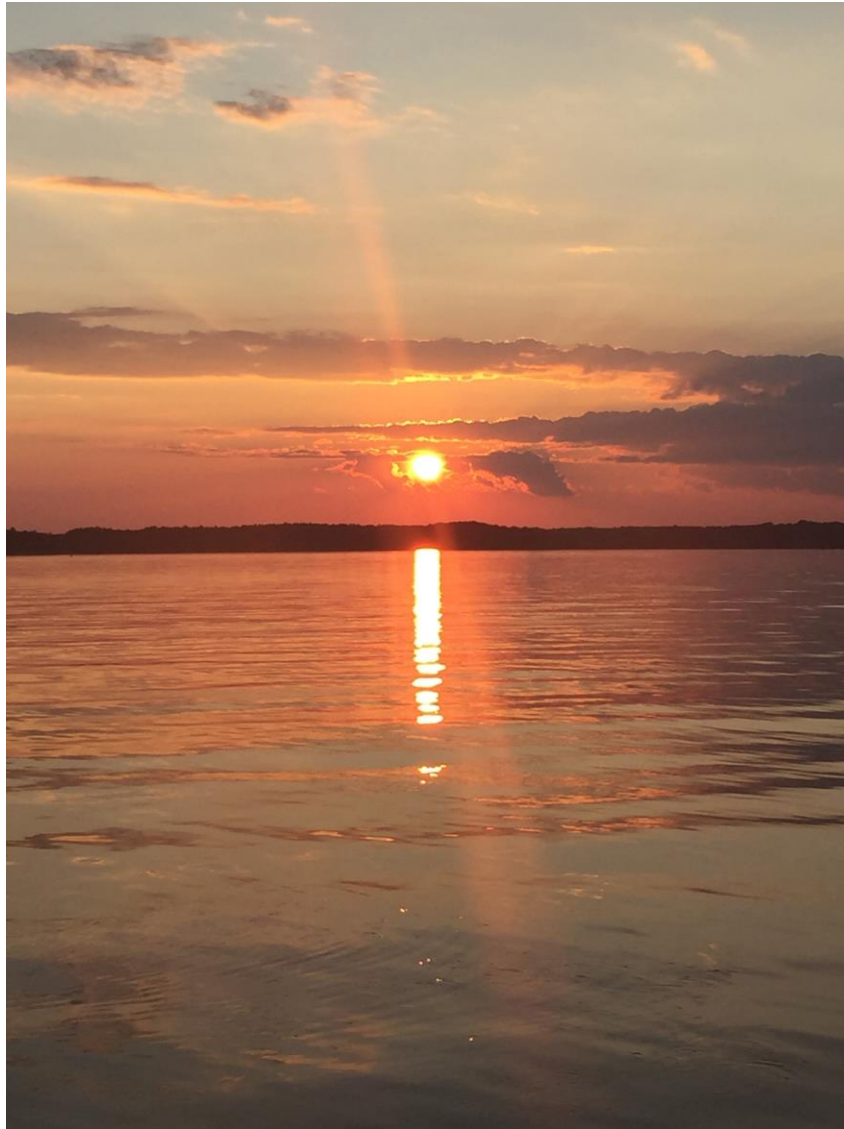


Community Wildfire Protection Plan

An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources

Elbert County, Georgia

A Program of the Georgia Forestry
Commission



SUNSET ON LAKE RICHARD B. RUSSELL

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Elbert County Wildfire Pre-suppression Plan

NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.

I. OBJECTIVES

The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Elbert County. The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect this community and its essential infrastructure. 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.

II. COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The core team convened on Oct 15th, 2009 to assess risks and develop the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The group is comprised of representatives from local government, local fire authorities, federal and state agencies responsible for forest management. Below are the groups included in the task force:

Elbert County Government
Elbert County Fire Department
Emergency Management Agency
Emergency Services

City of Elberton
Elberton Fire Department

US Army Corps of Engineers
Georgia Forestry Commission

It was decided to conduct community assessments on the basis of the individual fire districts in the county. The chiefs of the fire departments in the county assessed their districts and reconvened on Dec. 3rd, 2009. Plan was updated in November 2020 for the purpose of completing the following:

Risk Assessment	Assessed wildfire hazard risks and prioritized mitigation actions.
Fuels Reduction	Identified strategies for coordinating fuels treatment projects.
Structure Ignitability	Identified strategies for reducing the ignitability of structures within the Wildland interface.
Emergency Management	Forged relationships among local government and fire districts and developed/refined a pre-suppression plan.
Education and Outreach	Developed strategies for increasing citizen awareness and action and to conduct homeowner and community leader workshops.

III. COMMUNITY BACKGROUND AND EXISTING SITUATION

Background

In the northeast Georgia Piedmont, between the Savannah and Broad rivers, lies Elbert County. The area was originally settled before the American Revolution (1775-83) by pioneers filtering into the region from Virginia and the Carolinas. The legal occupation of the lands that would later become Elbert County took place on June 1, 1773, when Georgia's colonial governor, James Wright, negotiated a land cession with local Creek and Cherokee leaders. The cession, known as the New Purchase, contained about 2 million acres north of Augusta and was originally designated as Wilkes County.

During the American Revolution Wilkes County became the scene of severe partisan fighting among Tories, patriots, and Indians. One of the Revolution's most famous heroines, Nancy Hart, lived in a log cabin along the Broad River and earned a place in history by single-handedly defeating a party of Tories who had invaded her home.

After 1783 the area's population steadily increased. Many of the newcomers were veterans of the Revolution who had been awarded land grants in the region for their service to their country. On December 10, 1790, Elbert County was split from Wilkes County by an act of the state legislature and thus became Georgia's thirteenth county. It was named in honor of Samuel Elbert, who was a commander of Georgia's militia and Continental forces during the Revolution. Elbert later served as Georgia's governor from 1785 to 1786.

After the Revolution the most important town to emerge in the county was Petersburg, located at the fork of the Broad and Savannah rivers. From the 1790s through the 1830s Petersburg flourished as a commercial center serving Elbert County and the Goose Pond community along the Broad River.

Petersburg's prosperity was initially based on the tobacco trade, and a warehouse was set up in the town to inspect the staple crop before it was floated down the river on flat-bottomed "Petersburg boats" to Augusta. Petersburg's decline came gradually after the War of 1812 (1812-15) as many of its most prominent citizens moved west to newly opened lands. Tobacco became less important, too, and most of the area's farmers turned to the cultivation of cotton, which, unlike tobacco, did not have to be inspected. Railroads completely bypassed the town, hastening its demise. A series of floods and malaria outbreaks sealed the town's fate. Petersburg was virtually abandoned by the eve of the Civil War (1861-65).

Elberton, the county seat, was incorporated in 1803 near what was known as the old town spring, although people had been living at the site since the 1790s. Initially surpassed in importance by Petersburg, Elberton became, by the 1840s, the county's most important town. During this time the county boasted several other communities, including Ruckersville, the home of Joseph Rucker, one of Georgia's first millionaires, and Edinburg (Edinborough), a small hamlet founded by Scottish immigrants at the fork of Coldwater Creek and the Savannah River.

Elbert County was swept up in the sectional turbulence that gripped the nation during the 1850s, and as a slaveholding community primarily based on the production of cotton, it heavily endorsed secession. During the Civil War many of the county's men joined the Confederate army. Portions of the Fifteenth, Thirty-seventh, and Thirty-eighth Georgia Infantry Regiments included companies that were raised in Elbert County. Also, one company of the Seventh Georgia Cavalry came from Elbert County. Fortunately, General William T. Sherman's armies bypassed Elbert County during their march to the sea, sparing its citizens from the destruction and devastation visited upon other towns and communities in the state.

After the war Elbert County remained wedded to the cotton industry and existed as a rural, agricultural community. This began to change in 1882, when the first granite quarry was opened near the north fork of the Broad River to provide stone for railroad and home construction. By the 1920s Elberton's granite industry had become firmly established and had overtaken agriculture as the economic centerpiece of the county. Many immigrants, particularly Italians, who had historical roots in the granite trade, came to Elbert County between 1900 and 1930. During the Great Depression of the 1930s the industry not only survived but also expanded, justifying the town's boast that it was the "granite capital of the world."

Elbert remains primarily a rural county of agricultural fields and timberland, but its economy is firmly rooted in the granite industry. According to the 2014 U.S. census, the population was 20,184 (68.2 percent white, 29.4 percent black, and 5.5 percent Hispanic).

Two U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes lie on its eastern border with the Savannah River, making the county a prime destination for water-recreational activities. Clarks Hill Lake (also known as J. Strom Thurmond Lake), completed in the early 1950s, is located on the southern tip of the county, while just above it is Russell Lake, completed in the 1980s. Two state parks are located in Elbert County: Bobby Brown State Park, marking the site of the old town of Petersburg, which is under the waters of Clarks Hill Lake, and Richard B. Russell State Park on Russell Lake.

(Courtesy Clay Ouzts, *New Georgia Encyclopedia*)

Existing Situation

Elbert County located on the Savannah River in northeast Georgia, despite its agricultural presence and large reservoirs, is still almost 51% forested. Along with growing recreational and second home development along Lake Russell, there are homes and communities scattered throughout the county. The risks and hazards from the wildland urban interface are fairly general and substantial throughout the county even on the edges of the incorporated towns such as Elberton and Bowman.

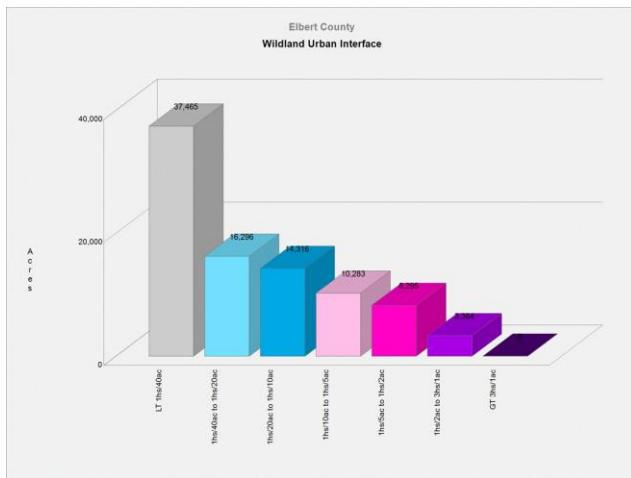
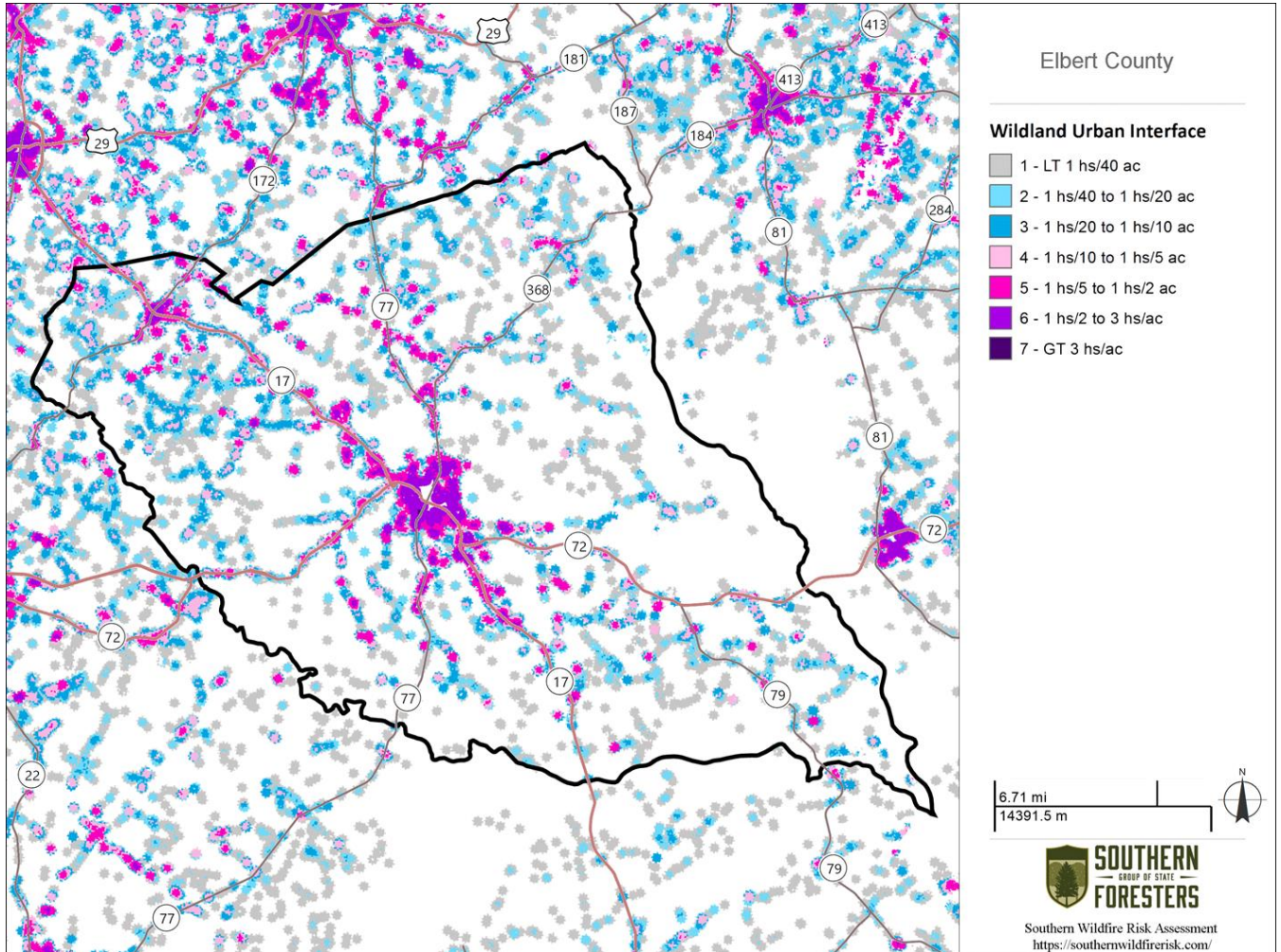
Elbert County is protected by organized fire departments in Elberton and Bowman along with eleven stations within the unincorporated areas. The Georgia Forestry Commission maintains a county protection unit located off of GA Hwy 72 on the Jones Ferry Road, which is four miles west of Elberton to respond to wildfires throughout the county. The two incorporated cities and the adjacent areas of the county are serviced by a pressurized water system with well placed hydrants throughout.

Over the past fifty years, Elbert County has averaged 40 reported wildland fires per year. The occurrence of these fires shows a pronounced peak in the months of March and April, but is pretty even the remainder of the year. These fires have burned an average of 101.38 acres annually. The monthly acreage burned fairly well corresponds with the number of fires. Using more recent data, over the past 20 years the annual numbers of fires and acres burned have dropped significantly to 30 fires burning an average of 61.26 acres a year. This reduction in wildfires is perhaps the result of better response and equipment from both the Georgia Forestry Commission and the increased presence of rural fire departments, as well as the expansion of the fire service throughout the county. Despite this welcome trend in fire behavior, as more homes are being built outside of traditional communities into the wildland urban interface the risk from wildfire will increase.

The leading causes of these fires over the past 20 years was debris burning and causing 45% of the fires and 46% of the acres burned. Over the past six years records show that over 63% of the debris fires originated from the burning of household garbage.

Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Records show that in the past six years, three nonresidential buildings valued at \$1,000.00 have been lost due to wildfire. According to reports during this period 35 homes have been directly or indirectly threatened by these fires. Additionally, one piece of mechanized equipment valued at \$500.00 was lost. This is a substantial loss of non timber property attributed to wildfires in Elbert County.

IV. COMMUNITY BASE MAP



The WUI is described as the area where structures and other human improvements meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. Population growth within the WUI substantially increases the risk from wildfire.

For the **Elbert County** project area, it is estimated that **19,639** people or **97.3 % percent** of the total project area population (**20,184**) live within the WUI.

V. COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

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.

The wildland fire risk assessments conducted in 2009 by the Elbert County Fire Departments returned

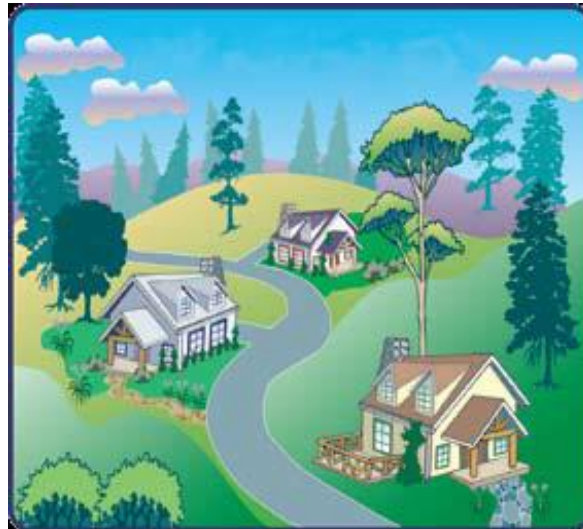
an average score of 104, placing Elbert County in the “moderate” hazard range. The risk assessment instrument used to evaluate wildfire hazards to Elbert County’s WUI was the Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment. The instrument takes into consideration accessibility, vegetation (based on fuel models), roofing assembly, building construction, and availability of fire protection resources, placement of gas and electric utilities, and additional rating factors. The following factors contributed to the wildfire hazard score for Elbert County:

- Dead end roads with inadequate turn arounds
- Narrow roads without drivable shoulders
- Narrow Driveways with overhanging trees
- Inadequate wooden bridges on private drives
- Minimal defensible space around structures
- Homes with wooden siding and roofs with heavy accumulations of vegetative debris
- Lack of pressurized water systems in areas
- Dry hydrant sources dried up during periods of drought
- Steep terrain around communities
- Undeveloped lots comprising half the total lots in many rural communities.
- High occurrence of wildfires in several locations

Summary of Elbert County Assessment Ratings

Fire District	Community Design	Site Hazard	Bldg Construction	Additional Factors	Score	Hazard Rating
Elberton	12	43	0	28	83	Moderate
Headquarters (1)	16	56	5	35	112	Moderate
Bowman (7)	16	54	5	36	111	Moderate
Wyche (8)	16	53	5	35	109	Moderate
Centerville (6)	16	56	5	35	112	Moderate
Deep Creek (5)	13	51	5	35	104	Moderate
Longstreet (4)	13	43	5	35	96	Moderate
Fortsonia (2)	15	51	5	30	101	Moderate
Rock Branch(3)	16	58	5	36	115	Moderate
Rice Town (9)	16	61	5	38	120	Moderate
Doves Creek (10)	15	55	5	26	101	Moderate
Ruckersville (11)	17	58	5	36	116	Moderate
Hardmont (12)	17	60	5	38	120	Moderate
Average	15	54	5	34	108	Moderate

(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.

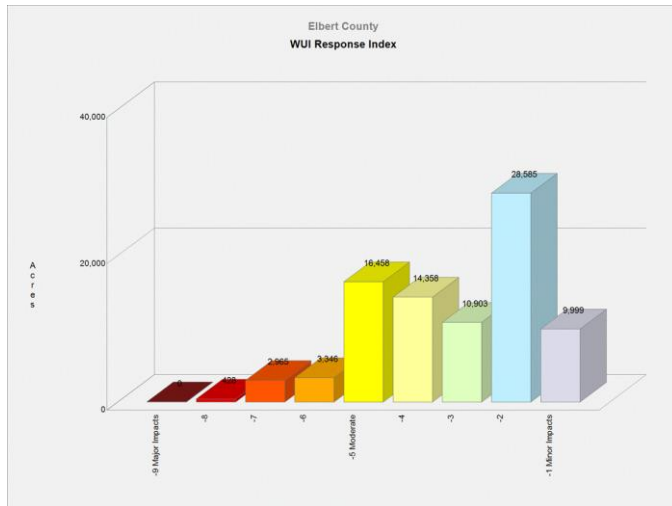
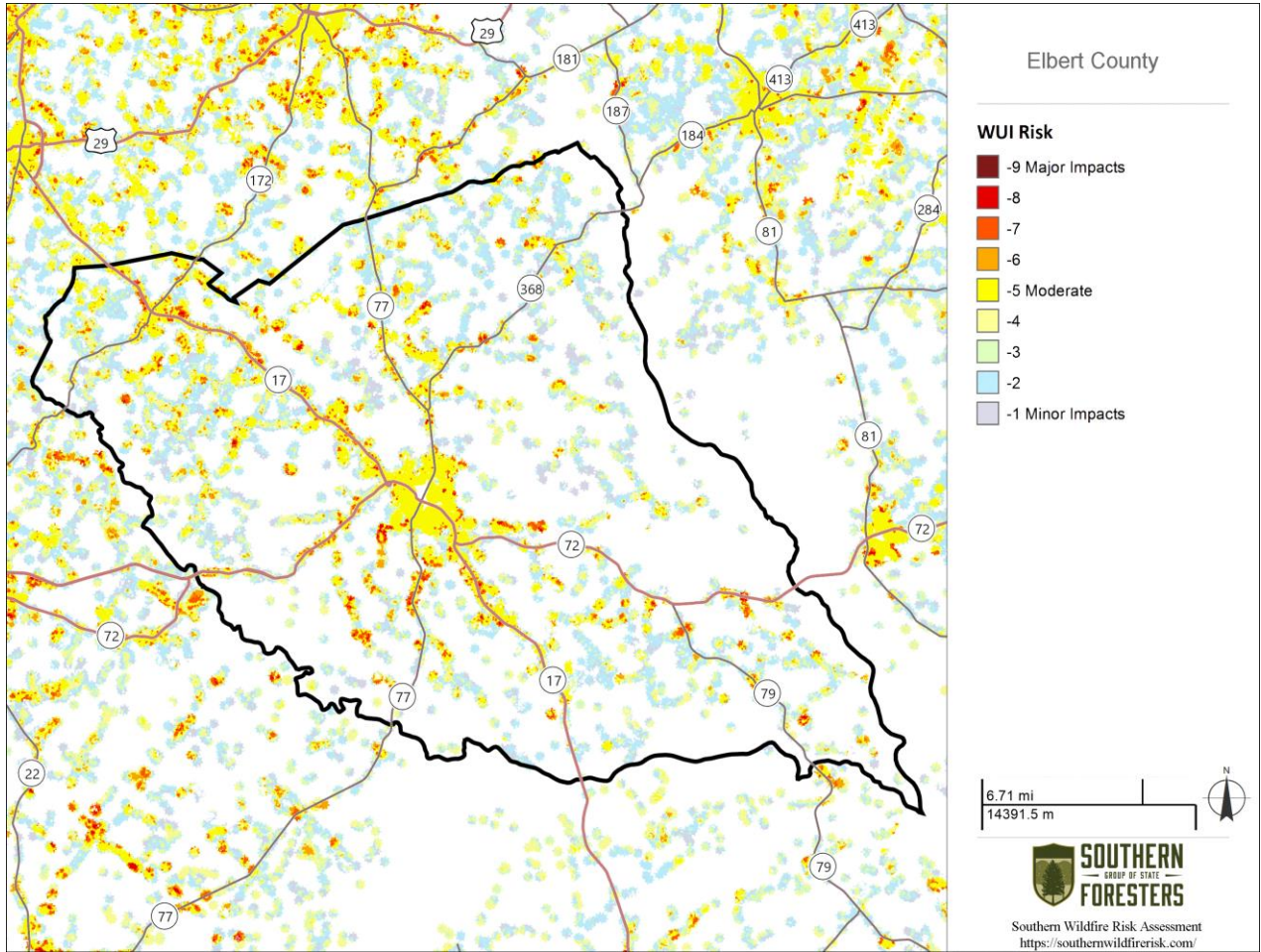
● Evacuation occurring

- 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

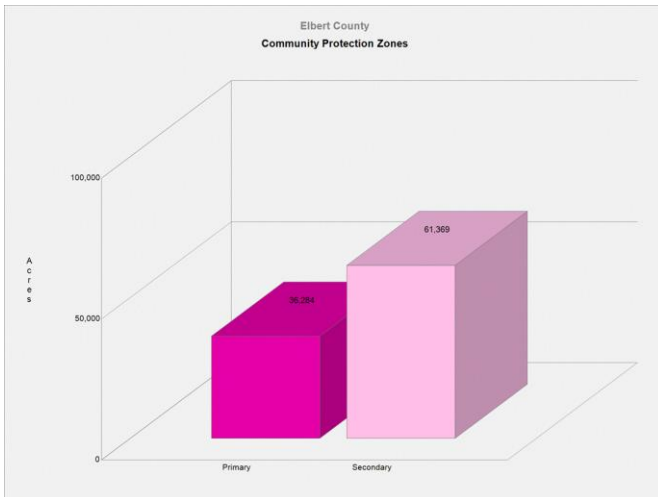
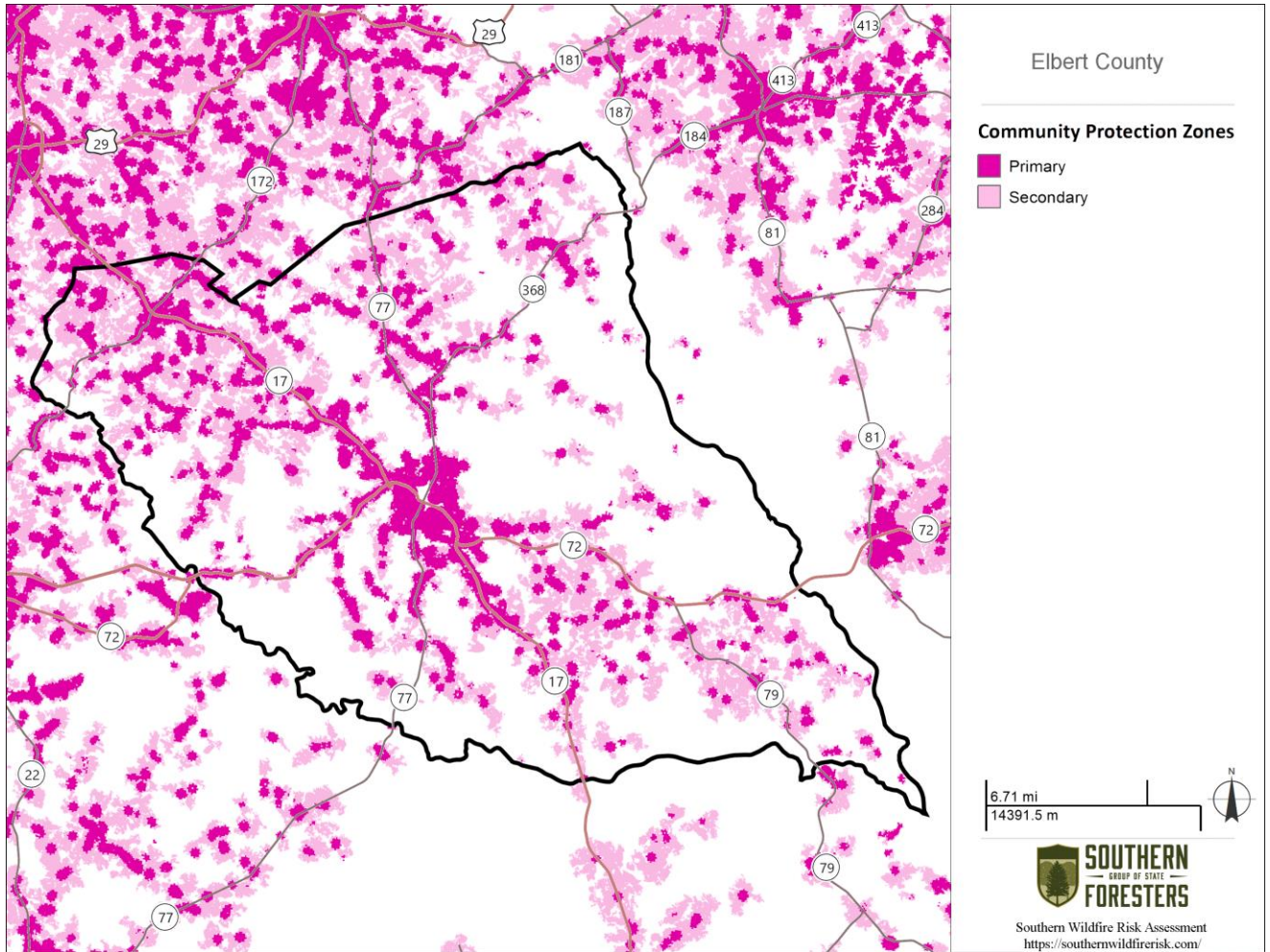
- Narrow one-lane roads with no turn-around room, inadequate or poorly maintained bridges and culverts are frequently found in wildland urban interface areas. Access should be sized-up and an evacuation plan for all emergency personnel should be developed.

VI. COMMUNITY HAZARDS MAPS



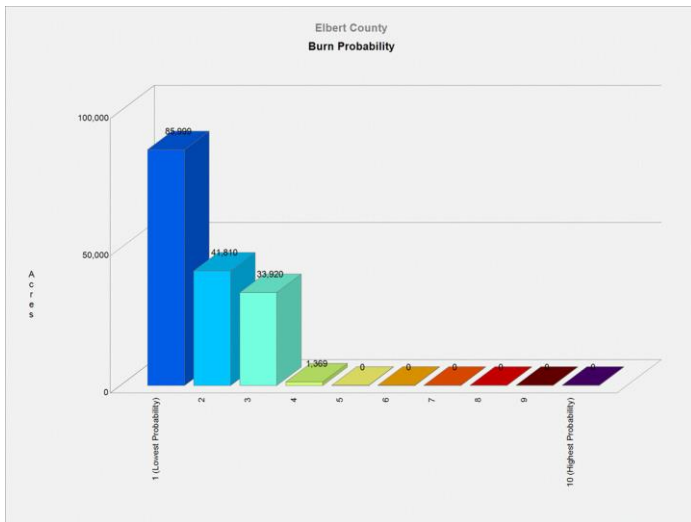
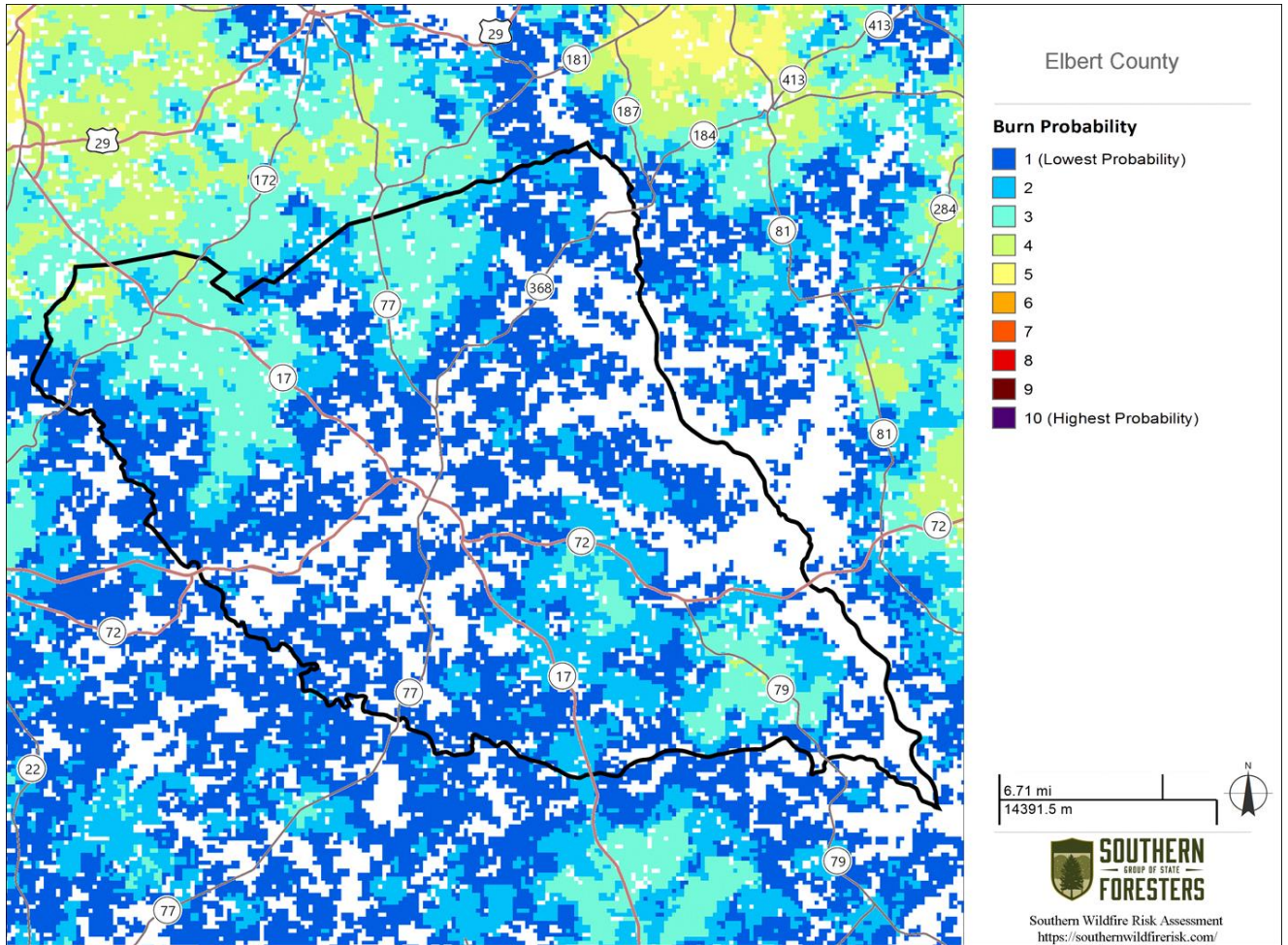
The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk Index layer is a rating of the potential impact of a wildfire on people and their homes. The key input, WUI, reflects housing density (houses per acre) consistent with Federal Register National standards.

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.



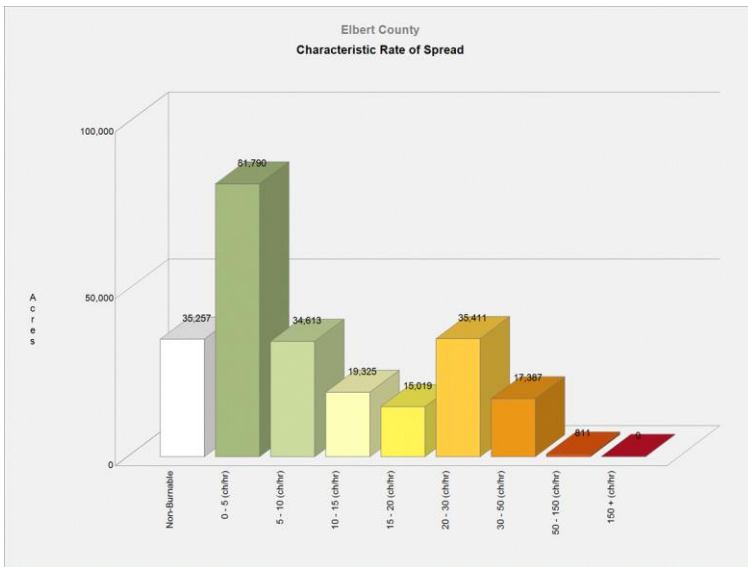
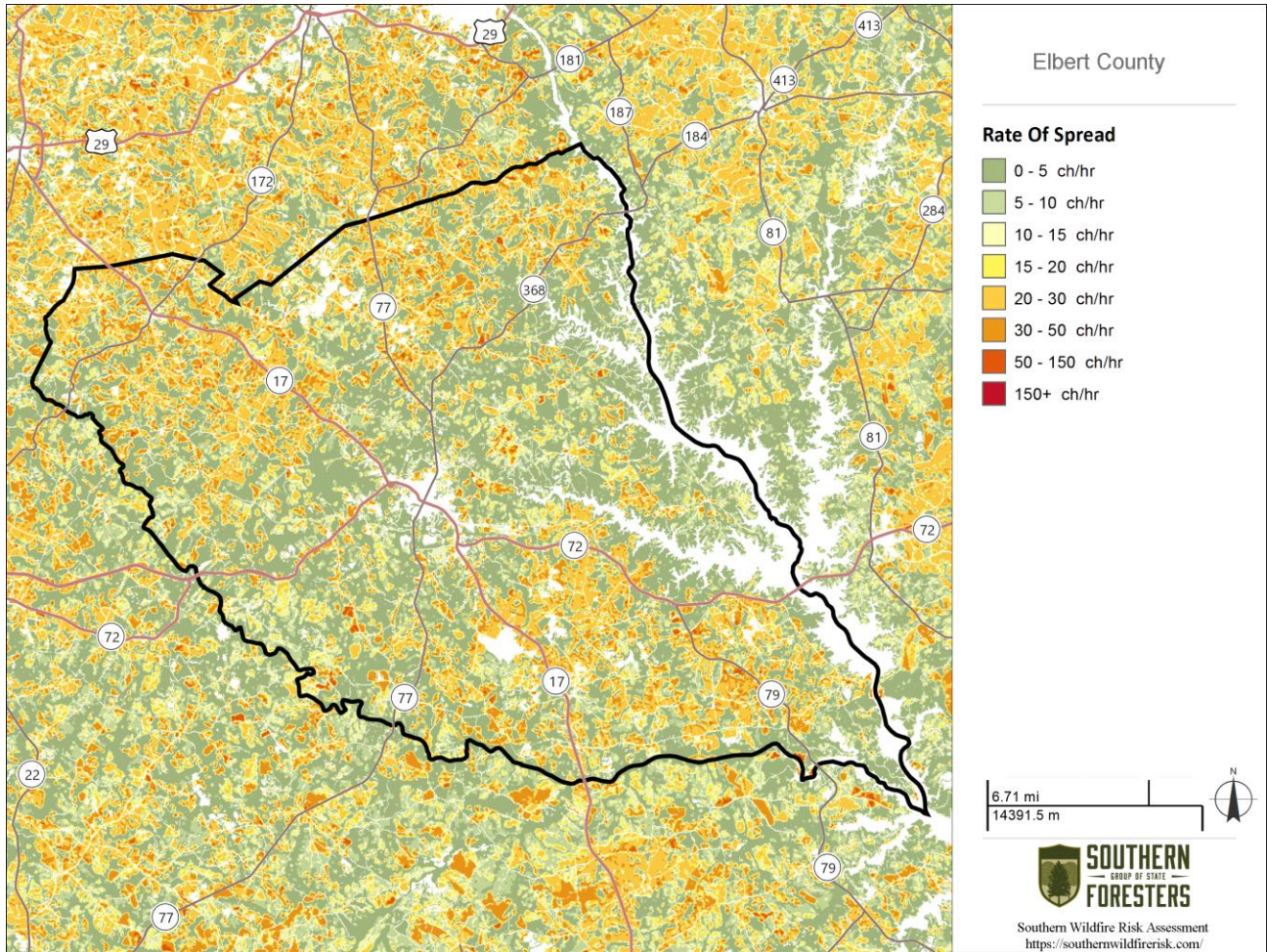
Community Protection Zones (CPZ) represent those areas considered **highest priority for mitigation planning activities**. CPZs are based on an analysis of the Where People Live housing density data and surrounding fire behavior potential.

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.



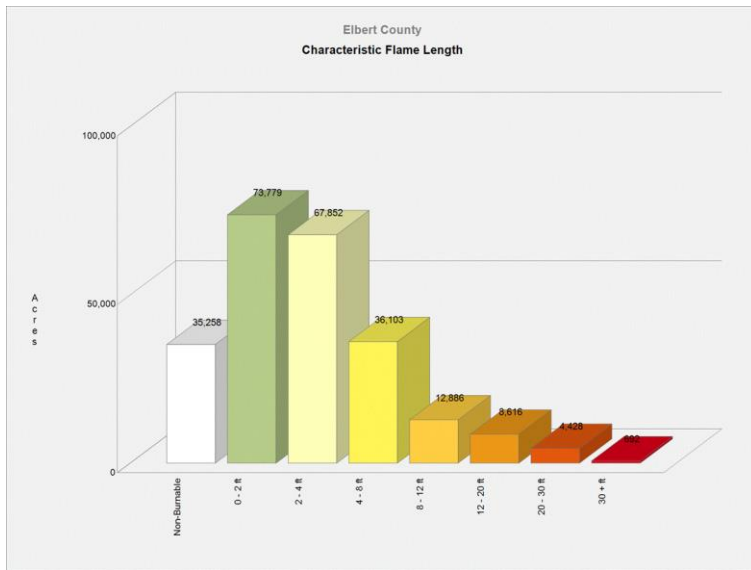
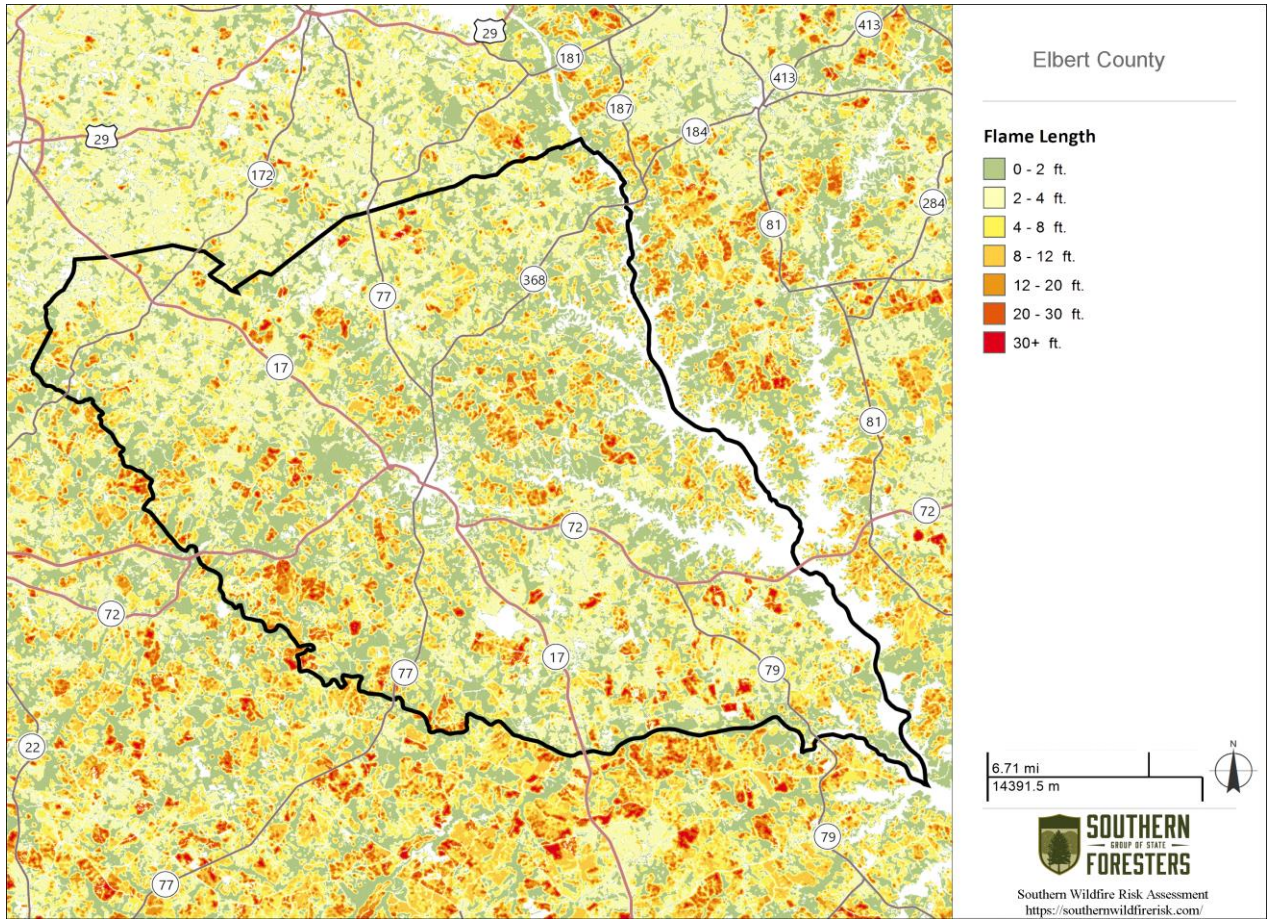
The Burn Probability (BP) layer depicts the probability of an area burning given current landscape conditions, percentile weather, historical ignition patterns and historical fire prevention and suppression efforts.

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).



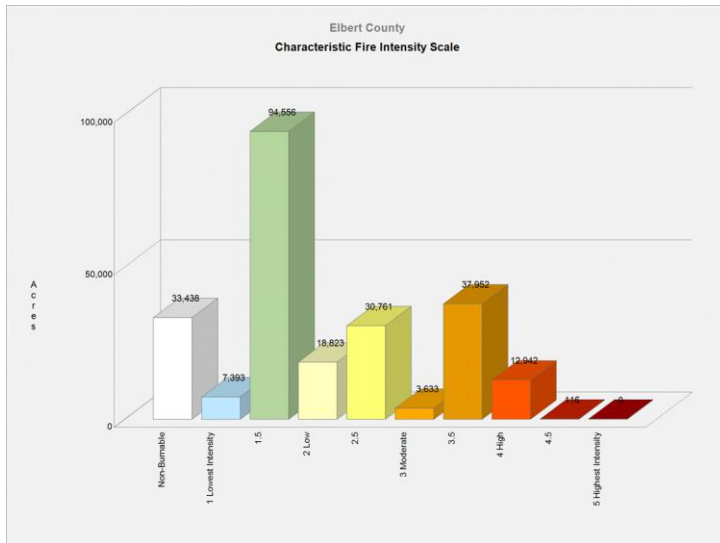
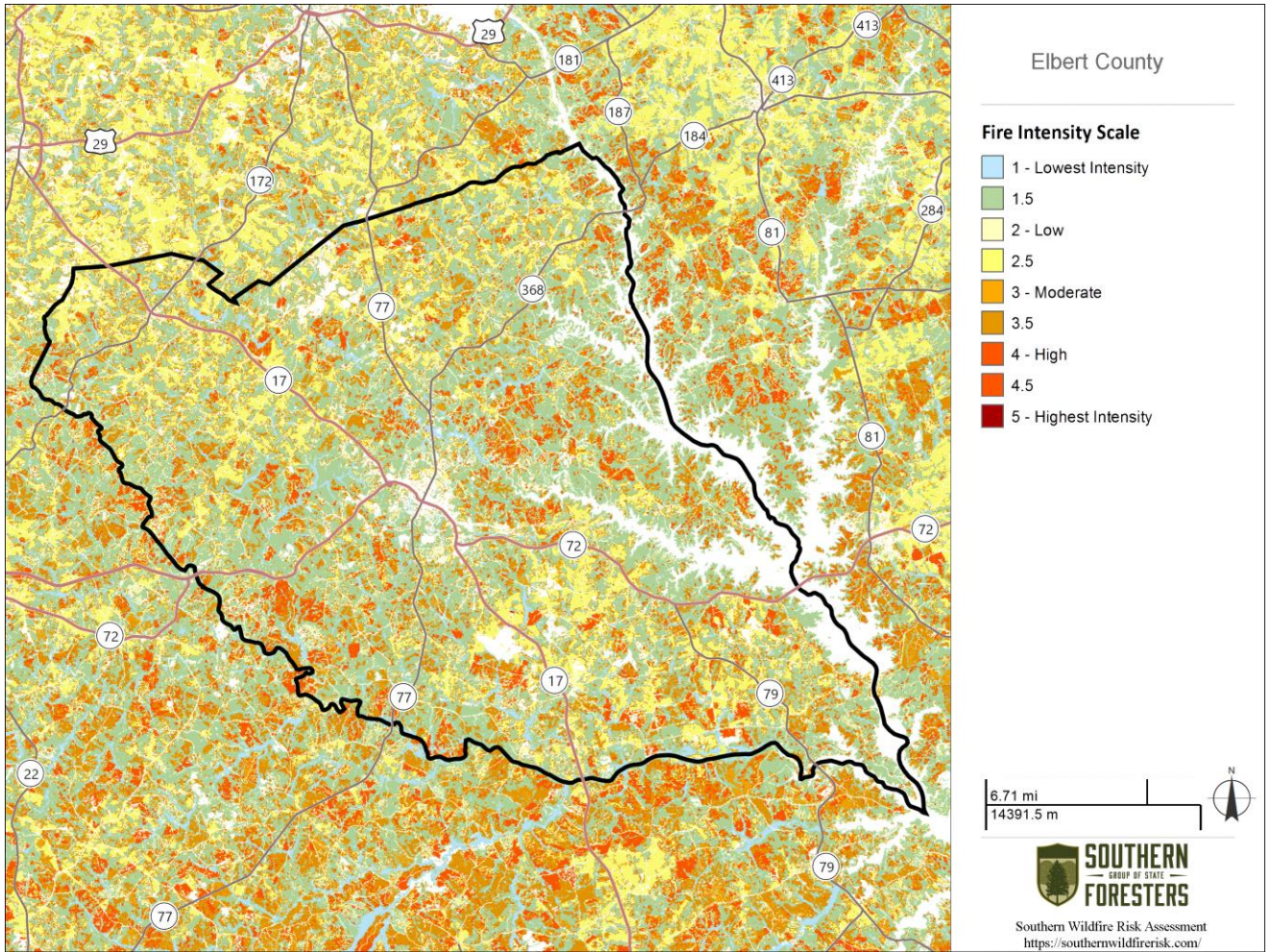
Characteristic Rate of Spread is the typical or representative rate of spread of a potential fire based on a weighted average of four percentile weather categories.

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.



Characteristic Flame Length is the typical or representative flame length of a potential fire based on a weighted average of four percentile weather categories.

Flame Length is defined as the distance between the flame tip and the midpoint of the flame depth at the base of the flame, which is generally the ground surface. It is an indicator of fire intensity and is often used to estimate how much heat the fire is generating. Flame length is typically measured in feet (ft). Flame length is the measure of fire intensity used to generate the response index outputs for the SWRA.



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.

VII. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

As Georgia continues to see increased growth from other areas seeking less crowded and warmer climates, new development will occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. Elbert County will have an opportunity to significantly influence the wildland fire safety of new developments. It is important that new development be planned and constructed to provide for public safety in the event of a wildland fire emergency.

Over the past 20 years, much has been learned about how and why homes burn during wildland fire emergencies. Perhaps most importantly, case histories and research have shown that even in the most severe circumstances, wildland fire disasters can be avoided. Homes can be designed, built and maintained to withstand a wildfire even in the absence of fire services on the scene. The national Firewise Communities program is a national awareness initiative to help people understand that they don't have to be victims in a wildfire emergency. The National Fire Protection Association has

produced two standards for reference: NFPA 1144 Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire. 2008 Edition and NFPA 1141 Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas.

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

The following recommendations were developed by the Elbert County CWPP Core team as a result of surveying and assessing fuels and structures and by conducting meetings and interviews with county and city officials. A priority order was determined based on which mitigation projects would best reduce the hazard of wildfire in the assessment area.

Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

Primary Protection for Community and Its Essential Infrastructure		
Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. All Structures	Create minimum of 30-foot of defensible space**	Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet from structures, trim overhanging limbs, replace flammable plants near homes with less flammable varieties, remove vegetation around chimneys.
2. Applicable Structures	Reduce structural ignitability**	Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters, store firewood appropriately, install skirting around raised structures, store water hoses for ready access, and replace pine straw and mulch around plantings with less flammable landscaping materials.
3. Community Clean-up Day	Cutting, mowing, pruning**	Cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces.
4. Driveway Access	Right of Way Clearance	See that adequate clearance is maintained to allow emergency vehicle access.
5. Road Access	Identify needed road improvements	As roads are upgraded, widen to minimum standards with at least 50 foot diameter cul de sacs or turn arounds.
6. Codes and Ordinances	Examine existing codes and ordinances.	Amend and enforce existing building codes as they relate to skirting, propane tank locations, public nuisances (trash/debris on property), Property address marking standards and other relevant concerns Review Subdivision and development ordinances for public safety concerns. Continue Enforcement of uniform addressing ordinance.
7. Burn Permits	Education and Enforcement	Greater Burn Permit enforcement and education from the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities		
Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. Adjacent WUI Lands	Reduce hazardous fuels	Encourage prescribed burning for private landowners and industrial timberlands particularly adjacent to residential areas. Coordinate land management activities, particularly fuel reduction, with state and federal managers on public lands adjacent to WUI areas.
2. Railroad Corridors	Reduce hazardous fuels	Encourage railroads to better maintain their ROW eliminating brush and grass through herbicide and mowing. Maintain firebreaks along ROW adjacent to residential areas.
3. Existing Fire Lines	Reduce hazardous fuels	Clean and re-harrow existing lines.
Proposed Improved Community Wildland Fire Response Priorities		
1. Water Sources	Dry Hydrants	Inspect, maintain and improve access to existing dry hydrants. Add signage along road to mark the hydrants. Locate additional dry hydrants as needed. Locate and pre-clear helicopter dip sites
2. Fire Stations	Equipment	Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland Nomex PPE Gear.
3. Water Sources	Water Handling	Investigate need for additional tenders and overhead storage tanks at stations
4. Road Names	Road Signage	Improved Road Signage at Crossroads. “Dead End” or “No Outlet” Tags on Road Signs
5. Personnel	Training	Obtain Wildland Fire Suppression training for Fire Personnel.
**Actions to be taken by homeowners and community stakeholders		

Proposed Education and Outreach Priorities

1. Conduct “How to Have a Firewise Home” Workshop for Elbert County Residents

Set up and conduct a workshop for homeowners that teach the principles of making homes and properties safe from wildfire. Topics for discussion include defensible space, landscaping, building construction, etc. Workshop will be scheduled for evenings or weekends when most homeowners are available and advertised through local media outlets.

Distribute materials promoting firewise practices and planning through local community and governmental meetings.

2. Conduct “Firewise” Workshop for Community Leaders

Arrange for GFC Firewise program to work with local community leaders and governmental officials on the importance of “Firewise Planning” in developing ordinances and codes as the county as the need arises. Identify “Communities at Risk” within the county for possible firewise community recognition.

3. Spring Clean-up Event

Conduct clean-up event every spring involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Elbert County Fire Departments and community residents. Set up information table with educational materials and refreshments. Initiate the event with a morning briefing by GFC Firewise coordinator and local fire officials detailing plans for the day and safety precautions. Activities to include the following:

- Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters
- Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet away from structures
- Trim overhanging limbs
- Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties

Celebrate the work with a community cookout, with Community officials, GFC and Elbert County Fire Departments discussing and commending the work accomplished.

4. Informational Packets

Develop and distribute informational packets to be distributed by building inspectors, realtors and insurance agents. Included in the packets are the following:

- Be Firewise Around Your Home
- Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction
- Firewise Communities USA Bookmarks

5. Wildfire Protection Display

Create and exhibit a display for the general public at Elbert County Festivals and other local events. Display can be independent or combined with the Georgia Forestry Commission display.

Hold Open House at individual Fire Stations during Fire Prevention Month to promote Community Firewise Safety and develop community support and understanding of local fire departments and current issues.

6. Press

Invite the local news media and to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in Elbert County. Utilize community access channel on CATV systems and city and county websites to distribute “Firewise” info to residents.

VIII. ACTION PLAN

Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities have been developed to implement the action plan:

Role	Responsibility
Hazardous Fuels and Structural Ignitability Reduction	
Elbert County WUI Fire Council	Create this informal team or council comprised of residents, GFC and USACE officials, Elbert County Fire department officials, representatives from the city and county government and the EMA Director for Elbert County. Meet periodically to review progress towards mitigation goals, appoint and delegate special activities, work with federal, state, and local officials to assess progress and develop future goals and action plans. Work with residents to implement projects and firewise activities.
Key Messages to focus on	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping 2 Debris Burning Safety 3 Firewise information for homeowners 4 Prescribed burning benefits
Communications objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Create public awareness for fire danger and defensible space issues 2 Identify most significant human cause fire issues 3 Enlist public support to help prevent these causes 4 Encourage people to employ fire prevention and defensible spaces in their communities.
Target Audiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Homeowners 2 Forest Landowners and users 3 Civic Groups 4 School Groups
Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 News Releases 2 Radio and TV PSAs 3 Personal Contacts 4 Key messages and prevention tips 5 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters

Spring Clean-up Day	
Event Coordinator	Coordinate day's events and schedule, catering for cookout, guest attendance, and moderate activities the day of the day of the event.
Event Treasurer	Collect funds from residents to cover food, equipment rentals, and supplies.
Publicity Coordinator	Advertise event through neighborhood newsletter, letters to officials, and public service announcements (PSAs) for local media outlets. Publicize post-event through local paper and radio PSAs.
Work Supervisor	Develop volunteer labor force of community residents; develop labor/advisory force from Georgia Forestry Commission, Elbert County Fire Departments, and Emergency Management Agency. Procure needed equipment and supplies. In cooperation with local city and county officials, develop safety protocol. Supervise work and monitor activities for safety the day of the event.

Funding Needs

The following funding is needed to implement the action plan:

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
1. Create a minimum of 30 feet of defensible space around structures	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
2. Reduce structural ignitability by cleaning flammable vegetation from roofs and gutters; appropriately storing firewood, installing skirting around raised structures, storing water hoses for ready access, replacing pine needles and mulch around plantings with less flammable material.	Varies	Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.
3. Amend codes and ordinances to provide better driveway access, increased visibility of house numbers, properly stored firewood, minimum defensible space brush clearance, required Class A roofing materials and skirting around raised structures, planned maintenance of community lots.	No Cost	To be adopted by city and county government.
4. Spring Cleanup Day	Varies	Community Business Donations.
5. Fuel Reduction Activities	\$35 / acre	FEMA & USFS Grants

GRANT FUNDING AND MITIGATION ASSISTANCE

- 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 Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG): Assist communities with the creation of a comprehensive Community Wildfire Protection Plan, as well as assist with funding associated with the recommendations prescribed in the 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, as well as forest mastication 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



Assessment Strategy

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness for the action plan, the Elbert County WUI Fire Council will implement the following:

- Annual wildfire risk assessment will be conducted to re-assess wildfire hazards and prioritize needed actions.
- Mitigation efforts that are recurring (such as mowing, burning, and clearing of defensible space) will be incorporated into an annual renewal of the original action plan.
- Mitigation efforts that could not be funded in the requested year will be incorporated into the annual renewal of the original action plan.
- Continuing educational and outreach programs will be conducted and assessed for effectiveness. Workshops will be evaluated based on attendance and post surveys that are distributed by mail 1 month and 6 months following workshop date.
- The Elbert County WUI Council will publish an annual report detailing mitigation projects initiated and completed, progress for ongoing actions, funds received, funds spent, and in-kind services utilized. The report will include a “state of the community” section that critically evaluates mitigation progress and identifies areas for improvement. Recommendations will be incorporated into the annual renewal of the action plan.
- An annual survey will be distributed to residents soliciting information on individual mitigation efforts on their own property (e.g., defensible space). Responses will be tallied and reviewed at the next Elbert County WUI Council meeting. Needed actions will be discussed and delegated.

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



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