



News Release

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FIREWISE COMMUNITIES ASSOCIATION NAMED IN NORTH GEORGIA

Four north Georgia neighborhood groups have banded together to become Georgia's first multi-community Firewise USA Association. In a ceremony March 9, the Georgia Forestry Commission and Firewise USA recognized The Wildcat Community, Inc., for achieving a high level of protection against wildland and urban interface fires. The Wildcat Community is made up of connected communities near Burnt Mountain in Pickens and Dawson Counties, totaling 2500 acres.

"Pro-active measures taken by the Wildcat Community are an outstanding example of how neighbors can work together to mitigate the effects of wildfire," said Robert Farris, Interim Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). "Research has shown that communities whose residents take proactive steps to reduce their vulnerability have a greater probability of withstanding a wildfire. Earning the Firewise Communities distinction shows a true commitment to, and awareness of, what it means to live in the wildland/urban interface."

Half of all Georgia homes are located in the wildland urban interface. With state population figures expected to double by 2030, even more homes will be at risk.

The national Firewise Communities program is a multi-agency effort designed to reduce the risk of wildland fires before they start by reaching beyond the fire service to involve homeowners, community leaders, developers and others. The Firewise Communities' approach emphasizes community responsibility for planning and design, effective emergency response and individual responsibility for safer home design, construction, landscaping and maintenance.

The Wildcat Community, Inc. is made up of Sassafra Mountain Estates, Monument Falls, Tomahawk Mountain Civic Association and Wintermont. It is partnered with the GFC and the Emergency Management Departments of Dawson and Pickens County. Wildcat joins 212 communities across the U.S. which have achieved Firewise Community status.

"The selection of The Wildcat Community is quite an honor," said Carol Sweatman, GFC Firewise Specialist. "We believe the joint effort of these communities, with their proactive landscaping and construction efforts, can serve as a role model for the entire state."

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