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Georgia Forestry Commission
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Chatham County Wildfire Pre-suppression Plan

Preface

Extreme weather conditions which are conducive to wildfire disasters (usually a combination of extended drought, low relative humidity, and high winds) may occur in this area of Georgia every 10-15 years. This is not a regular event, but as the number of homes being built in or adjacent to forested and/or wildland areas within Chatham County increases, any wildfire has the potential to quickly develop into a major disaster. Wildfires move fast and can quickly overwhelm the resources of even the best equipped fire departments. Advance planning can save lives, homes and businesses.

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) includes a locally assessed evaluation of the wildland urban interface areas of Chatham County, looking at the critical issues regarding access to these areas, risk to properties from general issues such as building characteristics and “Fire wise” practices and response from local fire fighting resources. It further incorporates a locally devised action plan to mitigate these risks and hazards though planning, education and other avenues that may become available to address the increasing threat of wildland fire. The CWPP does not obligate Chatham County or its Municipal Jurisdictions financially in any way, but instead lays a foundation for improved emergency response if and when grant funding becomes available.

This Plan is provided at no cost to Chatham County and can be very important resource and reference for County and Municipal Applications for hazard mitigation grant funds through the National Fire Plan, FEMA mitigation grants and Homeland Security. Under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003, communities (counties) that seek grants form the federal government for hazardous fuels reduction work are required to prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

This plan will:

- Enhance public safety
- Raise public awareness of wildfire hazards and risks
- Educate homeowners on how to reduce home ignitability
- Build and improve collaboration at multiple levels

The public does not have to fall victim to this type of disaster. Homes (and communities) can be designed, built and maintained to withstand a wildfire even in the absence of fire equipment and firefighters on the scene. It takes planning and commitment at the local level before the wildfire disaster occurs and that is what the Community Wildfire Protection Plan is all about.
I. Objectives

The mission of the following report is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in Chatham 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

Representatives from Chatham Emergency Management Agency (CEMA) and Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) met on August 14, 2014 to discuss development of this CWPP. It was decided to conduct interviews of fire officials within those areas of Chatham County with the Highest Occurrences and Highest Levels of Concern for wildfire; and to conduct community assessments on the basis of the general conditions in the wildland urban interface areas throughout the County. The group reconvened on Aug 19th & 29th, 2014 for the purpose of conducting the interviews and community assessments.

Participating Fire Officials:

Chief Ashley Fields               Port Wentworth Fire Department
Chief Furman Tyler               Bloomingdale Fire Department
Chief Garron Cole                 Southside Fire Department/EMS/Security
Chief James Crosby              Garden City Fire Department
Chief Skip Sasser                  Tybee Island Fire Department
Chief Wade Simmons           Pooler Fire Department
Lieutenant Kurt Lewi,            Southside Fire Department/EMS/Security

Assessment Methodology included:

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

Chatham County is the northernmost of Georgia's six coastal counties. Named for William Pitt the Elder, earl of Chatham, it was formed out of Christ Church Parish and St. Philip Parish in 1777. It is the fifth oldest county in Georgia and is the home of Savannah, which serves as the County Seat. Other incorporated municipalities include Bloomingdale, Garden City, Pooler, Port Wentworth, Thunderbolt, and Tybee Island.

In addition to Tybee Island, the islands of Little Tybee, Wassaw, and Ossabaw fall within Chatham's borders. Situated between the Savannah River and the Ogeechee River, Chatham County is bordered by Effingham County, Bryan County, and the state of South Carolina. On the coast, Chatham County shares St. Catherines Sound with Liberty County.

Although Georgia was originally planned as a colony with no slaves, Savannah and Chatham County became a port for the importing of slaves after 1750. The Port of Savannah was also used to ship cotton, naval stores, and other trade goods.

During the American Revolution, (1775-83), Chatham County was occupied by the British starting in 1778. In October 1779 the British successfully defended Savannah from the colonial and French armies during the Siege of Savannah. After the war Chatham County grew in population along with Savannah, which became one of the South's most important ports.

During the Civil War (1861-65), Chatham County became an important center of trade for the Confederacy, as the multitude of creeks and rivers in the area made the total blockade of the port of Savannah difficult for the Union. Other than the brief attack on Fort Pulaski in April 1862, and a minor skirmish on Whitemarsh Island, the war bypassed Chatham County until the very end, when Union general William T. Sherman occupied the area in December 1864 at the conclusion of his march to the sea. Sherman issued his famous "Forty Acres and a Mule" Field Order No. 15 here on January 16, 1865.

Modern Chatham County is now an important industrial and transportation center. Major companies including International Paper, Weyerhaeuser, and JCB have major facilities in the County. The Savannah–Hilton Head International Airport serves both Coastal Georgia and South Carolina and is home to Gulfstream Aerospace.

The port facilities along the Savannah River spanning the jurisdictions of Savannah, Garden City, and Port Wentworth, are operated by the Georgia Ports Authority; are the fourth busiest port facilities on the east coast and services ships from around the world. Tourism has become a major industry in the Savannah-Chatham area as well. The annual St. Patrick's Day parade through the historic district is one of the largest such events in the United States. The summer months attract visitors to Tybee Island, which has one of the few public beaches in Georgia. The City of Savannah has become a popular location for Hollywood filmmaking. Many movies and television shows have been shot there, including Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil, Forrest Gump, and Glory. In 1912 Juliette Gordon Low established the nation's first Girl Scout troop in Savannah.

According to the 2010 U.S. census, the population of Chatham County is 265,128, an increase from the 2000 population of 232,048.
Existing Situation

Chatham County located on the coast in south eastern Georgia is the largest metropolitan area south of the fall line in Georgia. For much of its history, the vast majority of the population lived concentrated within the city of Savannah and areas immediately adjacent with a few small isolated communities to the west along Highway 80 and along the Savannah River. In the second half of the 20th century homes and developments rapidly filled the numerous previously forested barrier islands located east and south of the city, while vast tracts of paper company woodlands occupied much of the western half of the county with little development outside of the few small west side communities.

This all changed toward the end of the last century when the coastal barrier islands and south side were about developed out and focus was re-centered on the west side and the large undeveloped timberland tracts. These areas suffered large forest fires during major drought periods in the 1930’s and 1950’s and continued to have a significant fire history even to as recent as 10 years ago. Much of the northwestern quadrant of the county incurred rapid growth in the past two decades as homes and subdivisions sprouted in formerly densely wooded tracts around Pooler, Garden City, Port Wentworth and Bloomingdale. In areas previously exposed to large wildfires with little risk to homes and infrastructure, the area is now seeing rapid development of residential and commercial properties still exposed to significant areas of wildlands with heavy fuel loadings. These areas categorized as being wildland urban interface (WUI) are a growing concern in the southeastern US.

There are still large blocks of industrial timberland in the southwestern quadrant of the county located primarily along Little Neck Road and Fort Argyle Road (Hwy204). Much of this was slated for development prior to the financial downturn a few years back, but eventually will be developed as the economy improves increasing the WUI risk in years to come. It is essential that these risks and hazards are identified and mitigated in the coming years.

For many years these tracts of woodlands were under the careful management of the timber and paper industry with fuel reduction programs such as regular prescribed burning. In recent years most of these remaining timberlands have been transferred to development and investment interests with a new focus and the loss of careful fuel management strategies resulting in heavier fuel loadings than have seen in modern times. This is similar to what happened in NE Florida some 30 years ago as industrial timberlands gave way to a wave of residential development resulting in catastrophic loss of homes to wildfires in the last 20 years.

Chatham County is protected by organized modern fire departments within the cities of Savannah, Garden City, Pooler, Bloomingdale, Port Wentworth, Thunderbolt and Tybee Island (See map on page 9). Much of the unincorporated areas of the County are protected the Southside Fire Department, a subscription service with 13 modern fire stations. Initial wildfire response is currently provided by the affected jurisdiction’s Fire Services with additional support provided by Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) units in Pembroke, Bryan County and Springfield, Effingham County. Planning has begun on a new GFC unit in Blichton on Hwy 80 which is about eight miles north of the Chatham County line. Once build, this will provide improved response times by GFC to requests for assistance from Chatham County during
Wildland Fire Events.
Modern pressurized water systems are available through much of the county; particularly the incorporated areas and developed subdivisions in the unincorporated areas. Aerial firefighting resources are also available through the County’s Mosquito Control Office. Aerial resources include rotary winged aircraft (helicopters) equipped with a dip bucket and a fixed winged aircraft (Air Tractor) available if needed.

Over the past 56 years Chatham County has averaged 73 reported wildland fires per year, burning an average of 475 acres per years. Using more recent figures over the past 20 years, this number has declined significantly to an average of 38 fires per year burning 245 acres annually. The occurrence of these fires during this period shows a pronounced peak during the months of January, February, March and April. There is a significant decrease during the remainder of the year, particularly during the summer months.

Over the past 20 years, the leading causes of these fires, was debris burning and arson causing 25% and 21% respectively of the fires while lightning was the origin of 26% of the acres burned. Over the past six years records show that over 83% of the debris fires originated from some form of residential burning.

Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Records show that in the past eight years, 313 homes (including barns, garages and other outbuildings) have been threatened by wildfire in Chatham County while estimated losses of almost $300,000 of residential property and equipment have been the result of wildfire. This is a substantial loss of non timber property attributed to wildfires in Chatham County.

NOTE: THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS BASED ON GFC RECORDS ONLY. CHATHAM COUNTY FIRE JURISDICTIONS DO NOT MAINTAIN RECORDS OF LOCAL WILDLAND FIRE RESPONSES AND THERE IS NOT A REPORT SHARING PROCEDURE IN PLACE WITH GFC.
IV. Community Base Map

Chatham Co Fire Response Accessibility Index

Does not include City of Savannah Fire Stations

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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.

(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 a 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 smoke from burning structures and any unknown sources such as trash piles.

Illicit Activities

- Marijuana growing areas and/or drug production labs may be found in the wildland urban interface areas. Extremely hazardous materials such as propane tanks and flammable/toxic chemicals may be encountered.

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 equipment.

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 degrees F, though they normally do not sustain combustion once direct flame is removed. However if the 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 protect 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.
The wildland fire risk assessments were conducted in 2014 by the Chatham County EMA assessment team. The risk assessment instrument used was the Hazard and Wildfire Risk Assessment Checklist which was developed looking at six areas of concern:

1. Community Access looks at the number of entrances to the community, road width and condition, dead end roads, turn around areas along with road signs and address visibility.
2. Surrounding Vegetation looks at the wildland fuels adjacent to and its closeness to structures.
3. Building Construction looks at the flammability of roofing and siding materials and skirting or underpinning of structures.
4. Fire Protection looks at the distance from staffed departments and the availability of supplemental water sources from pressurized hydrants, dry hydrants and drafting places.
5. Utilities looks at hazards to fire suppression equipment, both engines and forestry plow units from electrical service lines, propane tanks and unmarked septic tanks.
6. Additional Factors consider large adjacent areas of wildlands, canal or ditch presence, closeness of structures, presence of undeveloped unmaintained lots, wildfire history in the area and the availability of homeowner associations to remediate issues.

The following factors contributed to the wildfire hazard scores for Chatham County:

- Narrow roads without drivable shoulders
- Inadequate driveway access
- Minimal defensible space around structures
- Homes with wooden siding
- Large, adjacent areas of forest or wildlands
- Heavy fuel buildup in adjacent wildlands
- Lack of wildland equipment and training
- Long response time for wildland fire equipment (GA Forestry Commission)
- Lack of prescribed burning in many areas of the county
- Undeveloped lots comprising half the total lots in many sections.
- Lack of homeowner or community organizations
Southern Fire Risk Assessment System Maps.

The attached maps were generated from a computerized Geographical Information System (GIS) program developed by the Sanborn Company under contract from the Southern Group of State Foresters to model the various risks to life and property within the southeastern US. The program is known as the Southern Fire Risk Assessment System (SFRAS). It utilizes multiple layers of data developed cooperatively from the various states and the US Forest Service under the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA).

Wildland Urban Interface maps are developed using data from the SILVIS Lab at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. WUI is composed of both interfaced and intermixed communities. In both interface and intermix communities, housing must meet or exceed a minimum density of one structure per 40 acres. Intermix communities are places where housing and vegetation intermingle. In intermixed, wildland vegetation is continuous, more than 50 percent vegetation, in areas with more than one house per 40 acres. Interface communities are areas with housing in the vicinity of continuous vegetation. Interface areas have more than one house per 40 acres, have less than 50 percent vegetation, and are within 1.5 miles of an area (made up of one or more contiguous Census blocks) over 1,325 acres that is more than 75 percent vegetated. The minimum size limit ensures that areas surrounding small urban parks are not classified as interface WUI.

Fire Response Accessibility Index is a relative measure of how long it would take initial attack resources to drive from their station to various areas of the county. This index is derived from assigning average speeds to the various road classes in the county. For the purpose of this analysis the following speeds were assigned: 55 mph for level 1 roads, primarily interstates and four lane open highways, 50 mph for level 2 roads, primarily state and federal highways, 40 mph for level 3 roads, primarily paved two lanes collector roads and 25 mph for level 4 roads, mainly city streets and rural roads, paved and unpaved. For areas away from roads a travel speed of 3 mph is assigned as it is assumed travel will be by foot or extremely slow moving equipment.

Fire Occurrence Areas maps (see page 15) use data from wildfire reports over the period from 1997-2002. The fire occurrence rates mapped are the probability of the number of fires occurring per 1000 acres per year base on this historic information.

Level of Concern maps (see page 16) are a complex calculation using the Wildland Fire Susceptibility Index (previously described) and the Fire Effects Index which is calculated using data layers of transportation and infrastructure, urban interface and timber values along with suppression difficulty ratings. This provides an output categorizing the expected levels of concern from low to high.
VI. COMMUNITY HAZARDS MAPS

Chatham Co Fire Occurrence Areas
AOI: Chatham  Description: Published Results Dataset for the AOI

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VII. PRIORITY MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary
As Chatham County continues to see increased growth from retirees and other areas seeking less crowded and warmer climes, new development will occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. Chatham 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 Chatham 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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Treatment Area</th>
<th>Treatment Types</th>
<th>Treatment Method(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All Structures</td>
<td>Create minimum of 30-feet of defensible space**</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Applicable Structures</td>
<td>Reduce structural ignitability**</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Community Clean-up Day</td>
<td>Cutting, mowing, pruning**</td>
<td>Cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces.</td>
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<td>4. Driveway Access</td>
<td>Right of Way Clearance</td>
<td>Maintain vertical and horizontal clearance for emergency equipment. See that adequate lengths of culverts are installed to allow emergency vehicle access.</td>
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<td>5. Road Access</td>
<td>Identify needed road improvements</td>
<td>As roads are upgraded, widen to minimum standards with at least 50 foot diameter cul de sacs or turn arounds.</td>
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<td>6. Codes and Ordinances</td>
<td>Examine existing codes and ordinances.</td>
<td>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. Enforce uniform addressing ordinance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Burn Permits</td>
<td>Education and Enforcement</td>
<td>Greater Burn Permit enforcement and education from the Georgia Forestry Commission.</td>
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## Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities

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<th>Treatment Area</th>
<th>Treatment Types</th>
<th>Treatment Method(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adjacent WUI Lands</td>
<td>Reduce hazardous fuels</td>
<td>Encourage prescribed burning for private landowners and industrial timberlands particularly adjacent to residential areas. Seek grant for prescribed burning in WUI areas. Seek grant for WUI mitigation team.</td>
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<td>2. Railroad Corridors</td>
<td>Reduce hazardous fuels</td>
<td>Encourage railroads to better maintain their ROW eliminating brush and grass through herbicide and mowing. Maintain firebreaks along ROW adjacent to residential areas.</td>
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<td>3. Existing Fire Lines/Breaks</td>
<td>Reduce hazardous fuels</td>
<td>Clean and re-harrow existing lines.</td>
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## 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 |
| 4. Mapping            | GIS                           | Up to date mapping of roads and water sources.                                      |
| 5. Road Names         | Road Signage                 | Improved Road Signage at Crossroads. “Dead End” or “No Outlet” Tags on Road Signs    |

*Actions to be taken by homeowners and community stakeholders*
## Proposed Education and Outreach Priorities

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<tr>
<th>1. Conduct “How to Have a Firewise Home” Workshop for Chatham County Residents</th>
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<tr>
<td>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. Target local schools, community groups and local senior centers. Distribute materials promoting Firewise practices and planning through local community and governmental meetings.</td>
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<tr>
<th>2. Conduct “Firewise” Workshop for Community Leaders</th>
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<td>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.</td>
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<th>3. Community Clean-up Events</th>
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<td>Consider conducting annual clean-up events in selected high risk communities involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Chatham County Fire Departments and community residents. Set up information tables with educational materials and refreshments. Include briefings by GFC Firewise coordinator and local fire officials detailing plans for the day and safety precautions. Activities to include the following:</td>
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<td>• Clean flammable vegetative material from roofs and gutters</td>
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<td>• Trim shrubs and vines to 30 feet away from structures</td>
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<td>• Trim overhanging limbs</td>
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<td>• Clean hazardous or flammable debris from adjacent properties</td>
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Celebrate the work with a community cookout, with Community officials, GFC and Chatham County Fire Departments discussing and commending the work accomplished. |

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<th>4. Informational Packets</th>
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<td>Develop and distribute informational packets to be distributed by realtors and insurance agents. Included in the packets are the following:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Be Firewise Around Your Home</td>
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<td>• Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction</td>
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<td>• Firewise Communities USA Bookmarks</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### VIII. ACTION PLAN

#### Roles and Responsibilities

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hazardous Fuels and Structural Ignitability Reduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMAG</td>
<td>Share information on a regular basis. Meet periodically to review progress towards mitigation goals, appoint and delegate special activities, work with state, and local officials to assess progress and develop future goals and action plans. Work with residents to implement projects and Firewise activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEPC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCFCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Key Messages to focus on**
  1. Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping
  2. Debris Burning Safety
  3. Firewise information for homeowners
  4. Prescribed burning benefits

- **Communications objectives**
  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**
  1. Homeowners
  2. Forest Landowners and users
  3. Civic Groups
  4. School Groups

- **Methods**
  1. News Releases
  2. Radio and TV PSA’s for area stations and cable access channels
  3. Personal Contacts
  4. Key messages and prevention tips
  5. Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters
### Funding Needs
The following funding is needed to implement the action plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
<th>Potential Funding Source(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Create a minimum of 30 feet of defensible space around structures</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Residents will supply labor and fund required work on their own properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Amend codes and ordinances to provide better driveway access, increased visibility of house numbers, minimum defensible space brush clearance, required Class A roofing materials and skirting around raised structures, planned maintenance of community lots.</td>
<td>No Cost</td>
<td>To be adopted by city and county governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fuel Reduction Activities</td>
<td>$35/acre</td>
<td>FEMA &amp; USFS Grants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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 for cost of shipping only 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 reduced costs or frees of charged 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.

Assessment Strategy

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness for the action plan, CEMA will implement the following:

- An 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.
- CEMA will make available information detailing any mitigation projects initiated and completed, progress for ongoing actions, funds received, funds spent, and in-kind services utilized.
- The CWPP will be updated every 5 years.

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.
GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION

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1-800-GA-TREES
GaTrees.org

The Georgia Forestry Commission provides leadership, service, and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia’s forest resources. An Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider