

GEORGIA FORESTRY  
COMMISSION



A Program of the Georgia Forestry Commission  
with support from the U.S. Forest Service

# Community Wildfire Protection Plan

## *An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation and Conservation of Natural Resources*

### Pickens 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 Pickens County. The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect this county and its essential infrastructure. Prioritized activities to educate the public are included. It also includes a plan for wildfire suppression. Specifically, the plan includes community-centered actions that will:

- Educate citizens on wildfire, its risks, and ways to protect lives and properties,
- Support fire rescue and suppression entities,
- Focus on collaborative decision-making and citizen participation,
- Develop and implement effective mitigation strategies, and
- Develop and implement effective community ordinances and codes.

This plan should become a working document that is shared by local, state, and federal agencies that will use it to accomplish common goals. An agreed-upon schedule for meeting to review accomplishments, solve problems, and plan for the future should extend beyond the scope of this plan. Without this follow up this plan will have limited value.

## 2) COUNTY BACKGROUND-EXISTING SITUATION-INTERFACE INFORMATION

### Pickens County



Pickens County, located at the foot of the [Appalachian Mountains](#) in north central Georgia, was formally created on December 5, 1853, from [Gilmer](#) and [Cherokee](#) counties. The county was named for Andrew Pickens, a South Carolinian who served as a general during the [American Revolution](#) (1775-83). In the first decades following its creation, the county gained small tracts from Gilmer County and Cherokee County, while giving land to [Dawson](#), [Gordon](#), and Cherokee counties.

The history of modern settlement in the area began when Georgia created the [Federal Road](#), its first state highway, across the [Cherokee Nation](#) in 1805. (More of the remains of this unpaved route lie in Pickens than in any other county.) Native Americans, whites, and interracial families, some with [slaves](#), maintained taverns for travelers along this route, which was traveled by U.S. presidents Andrew Jackson and James Monroe.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions established the [Taloney mission](#) (later Carmel mission) for Cherokee children in the community of Taloney in 1819, and the missionary Isaac Proctor was later arrested there by the state of Georgia. (Historians differ on whether Taloney was in what would become Pickens County or Gilmer County.) Fort Newman, a stockade used during the [removal of the Cherokees](#) in 1838, also stood at the same site as Taloney.



[Taloney Mission](#)



[Pickens County Courthouse](#)

Although in 1832 new settlers obtained, through the Cherokee [land lottery](#), lands in the area, it remained sparsely settled due to speculation schemes by distant property owners. The region did become a cultural intersection, however, as a place where natives of the Tennessee and North Carolina mountains lived in proximity with hill-country families from Georgia's [Hall County](#). John M. Bozeman, the founder of a gold-rush trail in Montana called the Bozeman Trail, was born in 1835 in what would become Pickens County.

The Civil War (1861-65) divided the county's population for generations; Pickens County contributed men to both the Confederacy and the Union. A local committee protested the state's [secession](#) from the Union and raised a U.S. flag at the courthouse in Jasper.

The [marble industry](#), which had begun in the late 1830s through the efforts of Henry Fitzsimmons, was modernized by the arrival of the [railroad](#) in 1883. Marble from Pickens County went into major public buildings across the country and, reportedly, in 60 percent of the monuments in Washington, D.C. Mica was quarried for electric switchboards during the early 1900s, and copper, graphite, gold, iron, silver, slate, and talc mines have also operated in Pickens County.



[Blue Ridge Marble Company](#)

The county's first great era of progress, which began with the railroad, ended with the onset of the [Great Depression](#) in 1929. Marble, [cotton](#), and tourism rose and fell as profitable industries. Between 1930 and 1940 the population in the area declined from 9,687 to 9,136. By 1950 Pickens experienced a further decline to 8,855. The county did not grow appreciably until the 1960s, and its fragile economy suffered once again as a result of national recessions in the 1980s. The completion of Georgia 515/[Interstate 575](#) has caused a rapid expansion in the county's population and business since 1990, making Pickens County one of the fastest-growing areas in Georgia.

The population of Pickens County, according to the 2000 census, was 22,983 (96 percent white, 1 percent black, and 2 percent Hispanic), a 59 percent increase from 1990. The county has one of Georgia's few remaining administrator governments. [Jasper](#), the county seat, has seen three courthouses; one was destroyed by fire in 1947 (although no significant loss of records occurred). Besides Jasper, the county's other incorporated cities are Nelson and [Talking Rock](#). The county is home to the regional [Chattahoochee Technical College](#) and Amicalola Electric Membership Corporation.

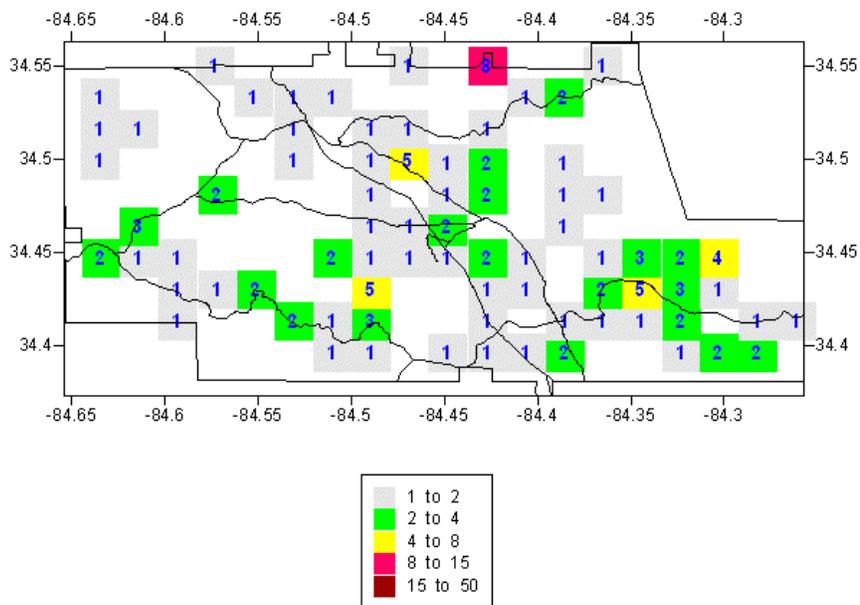
**The above information is courtesy of the New Georgia Encyclopedia**

## Existing Situation

Fire activity in Pickens County has been reduced in past years. This is mainly attributed to near to normal rainfall during recent years. Excellent interagency cooperation and rapid response keeps acreages lower than the typical statewide average. Numbers were significantly reduced during Fiscal Years 2010, 09, and 08. In Fiscal years 2007 and 2006 numbers were higher and were more typical of dry conditions that prevailed during those years. The higher statewide average during FY 2007 was attributed to the large fires that occurred in the Okefenokee. The following table outlines fire activity for fiscal years 2005 through 2009. It is followed by an occurrence map for Fiscal years 2005 -2009. There is also a map in the appendix that outlines fires responded to by the Georgia Forestry Commission during the period 1997 – 2002.

Fiscal Year	Number of Fires	Acres	Average Size	Statewide Average Size
2009	9	20.44	2.27	3.90
2008	14	21.53	1.54	4.56
2007	51	372.27	7.30	18.64
2006	51	191.91	3.76	3.93
2005	18	30.89	1.72	3.15

## Fire Occurrence Map for Pickens County for Fiscal Year 2005-2009



The table below outlines fire activity during Fiscal year 2010 which was the most complete fiscal year. FY 2010 was a year of reduced fire activity across the state.

County = Pickens	Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
<a href="#">Children</a>	Children	0		0.00	1.40	1.78
<a href="#">Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc</a>	Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	1		1.00	1.40	6.66
<a href="#">Debris: Construction Land Clearing</a>	Debris: Construction Land Clearing	2	↑	0.35	1.40	1.17
<a href="#">Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn</a>	Debris: Escaped Prescribed Burn	1	↑	2.90	0.20	0.58
<a href="#">Debris: Household Garbage</a>	Debris: Household Garbage	0		0.00	1.20	0.87
<a href="#">Debris: Other</a>	Debris: Other	1		0.50	1.60	2.06
<a href="#">Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc</a>	Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	0		0.00	3.80	11.63
<a href="#">Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related</a>	Debris: Site Prep - Forestry Related	0		0.00	0.20	0.00
<a href="#">Incendiary</a>	Incendiary	2		0.55	6.40	36.15
<a href="#">Lightning</a>	Lightning	1	↑	0.01	0.60	31.79
<a href="#">Machine Use</a>	Machine Use	1		1.00	3.00	14.34
<a href="#">Miscellaneous</a>	Miscellaneous	1		6.00	3.20	14.06
<a href="#">Railroad</a>	Railroad	0		0.00	0.80	1.71
<a href="#">Smoking</a>	Smoking	0		0.00	1.80	0.89
<b>Totals for County: Pickens Year: 2010</b>		10		12.31	27.00	123.69

Causes of wildland fire range across almost all categories. Incendiary fires have been one of the leading causes for many years in Pickens County. Thus far in Fiscal Year 2011 which started on July 1, 2010 there have been two fires. One was attributed to machine use and one to miscellaneous causes. These fires were roughly one quarter acre each.

## **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)

Pickens County is typical of a county that is undergoing a rapid transition from an isolated rural county to a more urbanized county. This transition resulted from the development of Hwy. 515 which connected Pickens County to the metropolitan areas to the south. It contains mixtures of both boundary and intermix interface.

## **Wildland Urban Interface Hazards**

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

- **Hazardous Materials**  
Common chemicals used around the home may be a direct hazard to firefighters from flammability, explosion potential and/or vapors or off-gassing. Such chemicals include paint, varnish and other flammable liquids; fertilizer; pesticides; cleansers; aerosol cans, fireworks, batteries and ammunition. In addition, some common household products such as plastics may give off very toxic fumes when they burn. Stay OUT of the smoke from burning structures and any unknown sources such as trash piles.
- **Illicit Activities**  
Marijuana plantations or drug production labs may be found in wildland urban interface areas. Extremely hazardous materials such as propane tanks and flammable/toxic chemicals may be encountered, as well as booby traps.
- **Propane tanks**  
Both large (household size) and small (gas grill size) liquefied propane gas (LPG) tanks can present hazards to firefighters, including explosion. See the "LPG Tank Hazards" discussion for details.
- **Utility lines**  
Utility lines may be located above and below ground and may be cut or damaged by tools or equipment. Don't spray water on utility lines or boxes.
- **Septic tanks and fields**  
Below-ground structures may not be readily apparent and may not support the weight of engines or other apparatus.

- **New construction materials**

Many new construction materials have comparatively low melting points and may "off-gas" extremely hazardous vapors. Plastic decking materials that resemble wood are becoming more common and may begin softening and losing structural strength at 180° F, though they normally do not sustain combustion once direct flame is removed. However, if they continue to burn they exhibit the characteristics of flammable liquids.
- **Pets and livestock**

Pets and livestock may be left when residents evacuate and will likely be highly stressed, making them more inclined to bite and kick. Firefighters should not put themselves at risk to rescue pets or livestock.
- **Evacuation occurring**

Firefighters may be taking structural protection actions while evacuations of residents are occurring. Be very cautious of people driving erratically. Distraught residents may refuse to leave their property, and firefighters may need to disengage from fighting fire to contact law enforcement officers for assistance. In most jurisdictions firefighters do not have the authority to force evacuations. Firefighters should not put themselves at risk trying to protect someone who will not evacuate!
- **Limited access**

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

### 3) Risk Summary

Following a meeting between the Georgia Forestry Commission and Pickens County Fire and Rescue department personnel on May 26, 2009 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 January 14, 2010. Thirty eight (38) areas were assessed. Five (5) areas were classified as extreme, Three (3) were high, Twenty-six (26) were moderate, and four (4) were low. Results from this assessment process are summarized in a spreadsheet entitled 'Risk Summary Pickens 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 Level of Concern and Fire Occurrence maps and show the locations of the assessment areas.

Almost all of the assessment areas are located on the north and east side of the county. There are two large developments (Bent Tree and Big Canoe) that were built in the late 60's to early 70's. Assessments were not completed for these developments. Fire response in these communities comes from internal stations. These communities are located on terrain that is very mountainous. Fires that occur on this type of terrain are particularly difficult to suppress due to slope and vegetation type. There are also areas influenced by western and southern aspects which lead to more rapid drying of available fuel. Fires can also be influenced by steep sided drainages which can lead to "chimney" influenced spread. Many of the assessment areas in the northeast part of the county outside of these developments are also located in areas influenced by extreme slope, south and west aspects, steep sided drainages and extensive unbroken wildland fuel. It should be noted that under extreme fire danger many of the areas that were assessed could be at a higher degree of risk than was indicated by the assessment process. There are still ample opportunities for assessment in the county particularly in the area north of Hwy 108 in the Bethany Salem jurisdiction. There are developments in this area that have higher degree of hazard due to terrain and fuel influences.

Developments generally have covenants that restrict residents from altering vegetation on their property. This can lead to higher degrees of structural ignitability and less defensible space. Many structures are occupied part time which can lead to less maintenance. This can also contribute to higher danger regarding structural ignitability.

## 4) Prioritized Mitigation Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed during follow-up meetings with County and State fire response agencies. A priority order was determined based on which mitigation projects would best reduce the hazard of wildland fire to communities and infrastructure. The following priorities were considered.

- Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction
- Wildland Fuel reduction or modification
- Improvements to capabilities of Wildland response agencies
- Public Education regarding risk of wildland fire

### **Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities**

<u>Hazard</u>	<u>Mitigation</u>	<u>Method</u>
Lack of defensible space	Improve defensible space around structures in communities at risk	All departments should examine structures in communities at risk in their response areas. Improvements to defensible space as referenced in firewise guidelines should be conveyed to residents through media or direct contact.
Access problems for initial attack	Improve access problems	All County response agencies and the Georgia Forestry Commission should closely examine access in all communities identified to be at risk. When problems are identified corrective measures should be made.

## Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

Hazard	Mitigation	Method
Structural Ignitability	Reduce structural ignitability	Citizens in communities at risk should be educated regarding methods to reduce structural ignitability as referenced in firewise guidelines. This can be accomplished through media or direct contact.
Local Codes and Ordinances	Improve and amend to codes and ordinances pertaining to infrastructure and community protection from wildland fire.	Examine all existing codes and ordinances for problems regarding direct conflicts to wildland safety or lack of needed codes or enforcement.

## Proposed Wildland Fuel Reduction or modification Priorities

Hazard	Mitigation	Method
Fuel Hazards near Communities at risk	Prescribed Burning and permanent firebreaks	Determine Communities at risk where Prescribed burning would be appropriate to use. Seek cooperation from adjacent landowners. Find funding to cover cost of burning. Prioritize burn compartments and execute. Should burning be inappropriate or not accepted by residents, permanent or semi-permanent firebreaks could be installed and maintained.
Fuel Hazard in public or shared spaces	Fuel Modification or reduction	Determine where hazards exist. Determine appropriate method for modification or reduction. Chipping, raking and piling, County pick-up, Organized Community Clean-up days could be beneficial. Organized burning could be conducted on these days supported by local fire department personnel.

**Proposed Improvements to capabilities of Wildland Response Agencies Priorities**

Problem or need	Improvement or solution	Details
Lack of qualification or training	Provide training opportunities	Examine training records of all wildland responders to insure training and qualifications match expected duties. Insure that all wildland responders have Basic Wildland Certification. Locate and secure funding for enhanced training from state and federal agencies.
Equipment needs	Improve or acquire Wildland fire equipment	Determine specific equipment needs to bring all wildland response equipment to NWCG Standards. Provide appropriate PPE to all County wildland responders. Provide wildland hand tools to County departments. Investigate needs for improvements to all wildland water handing and supply (dry hydrants, brush trucks, hose, etc.)

## Proposed Public Education Priorities

Educational Priority	Responsible party	Method
<p>Increase public awareness concerning firewise principles and fire prevention through direct contact</p>	<p>Federal, State, County, and municipal governments</p>	<p>Conduct firewise meetings by each fire response jurisdiction assisted by Georgia Forestry Commission (state) and USDA Forest Service (federal). Conduct a door to door campaign in particularly hazardous communities</p>
<p>Increase public awareness concerning firewise principles and fire prevention through use of media</p>	<p>County, State, and municipal governments</p>	<p>Use PSA's in local newspapers and local radio stations. Utilize firewise displays in local post offices and banks. Seek use of local EMC newsletter for firewise message. Create poster sized notices for use in common public places (stores, post offices, etc. adjacent to high hazard areas advising residents about the hazard and how to protect themselves and their property. Distribute public notices concerning firewise at local sporting events and other public gatherings.</p>
<p>Increase public awareness concerning firewise principles and fire prevention through formal certification and recognition</p>	<p>Federal, State, County, and municipal governments</p>	<p>Supported by the USFS and the Georgia Forestry Commission each local fire station should set a goal of achieving firewise status for at least one extreme or high risk category community before the end of calendar year 2011. The goal of adding at least one community annually should extend beyond this initial goal.</p>

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

### POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES:

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

Publications / Brochures –

- FIREWISE materials are available at [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org).
- Another source of mitigation information can be found at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).
- Access to 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

**Pickens County has had a consistent history of incendiary fires in most years. All fires that are attributed to this cause should be investigated by the appropriate agency having jurisdiction.**

### 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 Pickens 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	Pickens 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	Pickens 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 and steeper terrain, 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 Pickens County Wildland firefighters	Chief Ranger Seth Pierce, District Manager Troy Floyd Jr. of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Pickens County Fire Chief Howard 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 Pickens 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 Pickens 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 Pierce and Fire Chief Howard.

## 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 Pickens County Fire personnel should conduct firewise meetings in conjunction with normally scheduled fire department meetings. People living in or near extreme and high risk communities should be invited to these meetings by use of door to door campaigns or by mailbox flyers. Notices regarding these meetings could be placed in local post offices or stores near communities at risk. A Firewise display should be acquired and utilized at this meeting. This display would be retained by the Gilmer / Pickens 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 Pickens 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 2011 the Georgia Forestry Commission and Pickens County Fire should obtain Firewise certification for Bent Tree Community. Should this goal not be realistic, another community from the risk summary should be selected for certification.</p>

## 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 winter of 2010-11.
- 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 2010-11. Any other priority burn projects or installation of pre suppression fuel breaks should take place during this same window.
- Steps to reduce fuels in communities at risk should coincide with steps to improve defensible space and reduce structural ignitability. Timing of these actions would be dependent upon Fire station availability during the late winter of 2010 - 11.

#### 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 2011
- 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 2010 update of the Georgia Forestry Commission Pickens County Fire plan and the 2008 update of the Big Canoe Fire plan are included in the appendix of this plan. The Big Canoe Fire plan is in need of update to reflect changes in Dawson and Pickens County Fire Suppression organizations.

## 7) County Base and Hazards Maps

Maps of the Level of Concern, Surface Fuels, Aspect, and Fire Occurrence areas are included in the appendix of this plan. The Aspect 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 Level of concern, surface fuels, aspect, and fire occurrence areas
- Pickens County Pre-Suppression plan.
- Big Canoe Pre-Suppression plan

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