



1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, Massachusetts 02169-7471
Phone: 617-770-3000 • Fax: 617-984-7056 • www.firewise.org

March 31, 2014



FWC/USA ID#: 01341

Linda Lapeyrouse
3444 Highway 246
Dillard, GA 30537

Dear Ms. Lapeyrouse:

Congratulations on achieving Firewise Communities/USA recognition status! It is with great pleasure that I welcome City of Sky Valley to the growing assembly of communities working to become safer from wildland fire hazards.

I am pleased to provide you with a Firewise Communities/USA Media Toolkit. The enclosed folder contains sample press releases, program fact sheets, media tips, a CD-Rom with electronic versions of all the materials and the Firewise Communities/USA logo artwork. You'll be receiving additional materials soon, including two Firewise Communities/USA signs, constructed for outdoor use, to be placed at the entries to your community. You'll find enclosed two 2013 decals that can be affixed to these signs. Each year when you renew your status, you will receive decals for that year.

Your hard work is already improving wildfire safety in City of Sky Valley. If you are seeking assistance to do more, your recognition status can help. Recognized Firewise Communities/USA sites get priority status in consideration for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's pre-disaster mitigation planning and project grants. Please note your identification number as shown in the upper right corner of this letter. This identifies City of Sky Valley as a unique participant in the recognition program.

You can post information about your community to the Firewise website by contacting our staff at firewise@nfpa.org with a short write-up and photos. Visit Firewise on Facebook (www.facebook.com/firewise) to connect with experts and other communities.

My staff and I look forward to working with you. Please feel free to contact the national office at tthorpe@nfpa.org or 617-984-7494 should you need any type of information or assistance. Again, congratulations on your work to achieve national recognition status.

Sincerely yours,

Michele Steinberg
Project Manager, Firewise Communities

cc: Eric Mosley, Firewise Liaison
Robert Farris, State Forester

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



Firewise Action Plan

***An Action Plan for Wildfire Mitigation
and the Protection of Structural
Ignitability in the Wildland Urban
Interface***

City of Sky Valley

Rabun County, Georgia



SEPTEMBER 18, 2013

FIREWISE SIGNATURE PAGE

 2-4-14
Date
Linda Lapeyrouse, City Manager
City of Sky Valley

 1/1/14
Date
James Reed, Assistant Chief
Rabun County Fire Department

 2-4-14
Date
Kauran Gurey, President
Sky Valley Property Owners Association

 01-14-14
Date
Shannon Dean, Chief Ranger Sr
Georgia Forestry Commission

 1/14
Date
Mark Sparrow, Wildland Urban Interface Specialist
Georgia Forestry Commission

 1/14/2014
Date
Mark White, Wildfire Prevention Specialist
Georgia Forestry Commission





Firewise Communities Introduction

NFPA's Firewise Communities Program is intended to serve as a resource for agencies, tribes, organizations, fire departments, communities and residents across the United States who are working toward a common goal: reduce the loss of lives, properties, and resources to wildland fire by building and maintaining communities in a way that is compatible with our natural surroundings.

The Firewise Communities approach emphasizes community responsibility for planning in the design of a safe community as well as effective emergency response, and individual responsibility for safer home construction and design, landscaping and maintenance. The Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program was designed as a tool that forestry and fire service professionals can use to work with residents to obtain voluntary compliance with existing wildfire safety rules, as well as to motivate community action toward wildfire safety in the absence of strict ordinances or laws. The Recognition Program encourages and acknowledges citizen involvement in reducing community wildfire risk.

The Firewise Communities goal is to promote community-wide participation in the use of technology, policy and practices that minimize the loss of life and property to wildfire, independent of firefighting efforts. The Firewise Communities/USA program is seamlessly contained in this goal, as communities learn when they begin the recognition process. With little or no preparation before a wildfire event, communities lose much. However, with an action plan and regular attention to community wildfire mitigation, wildfire can occur with little to no lasting effect on homeowners. This fact has been illustrated repeatedly around the United States. You can find updated information on how Firewise "saves" on the Firewise website at www.firewise.org.

The fact is that wildfires will continue in the wildland/urban interface (the WUI) as an ecological phenomenon. And communities will continue to be affected by them. While wildfire management agencies would like to help homeowners avoid home loss, all are aware that most houses are located on private property. What happens around them occurs at the discretion of the homeowners affected. Landowners understandably prefer to make choices related to their surroundings. Often, they are under the impression that there is nothing they can do....or that wildfire mitigation is too difficult for them or prohibitively expensive.

Firewise Communities/USA provides up-to-date, take-action information to homeowners and communities that help them change this situation. Residents who participate in the Firewise process create an action plan that commits them to a sustained program of wildfire

mitigation that is generally both physically attainable and cost-effective. The homeowners learn about home ignitability so they can create their own, unique solutions to their wildfire mitigation challenges. When people understand there is something they can do, they are more apt to act. They search out more information to validate what they have already learned. One of the most important things Firewise Communities/USA participants learn is that neighbors can help neighbors—and that they are often inextricably linked together in their mitigation solutions.



Firewise Day at Sky Valley

I. OBJECTIVES

A Firewise Action Plan provides a community with a road map to reduce its risk from wildfire. The plan is designed through collaboration between state, federal and local fire agencies, homeowners and landowners, and other interested parties such as city councils, utilities, homeowners associations, environmental organizations, and other local timber companies. The plan identifies strategic sites and methods for risk reduction and structural protection projects across jurisdictional boundaries.

Comprehensive plans provide long-term guidance for growth, reflecting a community's values and future mitigation activities. The plan implements the community's values and serves to protect natural and community resources and public safety. Planning also enables communities to address their development patterns in the Wildland Urban Interface and determine how they can reduce their risk through alternative development patterns. The formal legal standing of the plan and its central role in local government decision making underscores the opportunity to use this planning process as an effective means for reducing wildfire risk.

The mission of the following plan is to set clear priorities for the implementation of wildfire mitigation in the City of Sky Valley. The plan includes prioritized recommendations for the appropriate types and methods of fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect this mountain 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

Wildfire risk reduction strategies are most effective when approached collaboratively – involving groups of residents, elected officials, community decision makers, emergency managers, and natural resource managers and when combined with effective outreach approaches.

Collaborative approaches make sense as the initial focus of any community attempting to work toward wildfire risk reduction. In all Firewise Action Plans collaborations, the goal is to cooperatively identify problems and reach a consensus for mutual action. In the case of wildfire mitigation, a reduction in the wildfire risk to the community's lives, houses, and property is the desired outcome.

Wildfire Prevention Specialist, Mark Wiles, Wildland Urban Interface Specialist, Mark Sparrow and TDL Firefighter Fred Beck, conducted a comprehensive Firewise assessment of the community based on concerns of the citizens of the community, as well as the findings of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which was completed in this community by the Georgia Forestry Commission and the Sky Valley/Scaly Mountain Fire Department. The local authorities expressed concern over the vacant ski chalets that were prevalent when the community was a

prominent ski resort several years ago. The ski resort community has since reverted to a golf course, which creates an excellent safety zone in the event of a wildfire; the course also serves to “break-up” the contiguous forested fuels in this heavily populated community. The City of Sky Valley has issued an ordinance to help control all outdoor burning in this community, which is beneficial in decreasing human caused fires.

Below are the participants included in the assessment process:

Fred Beck
Georgia Forestry Commission
Wildland Firefighter
(706) 782-2172

Mark Sparrow
Georgia Forestry Commission
Wildland Urban Interface Specialist
(706) 782-2172
msparrow@gfc.state.ga.us

Mark Wiles
Georgia Forestry Commission
Wildfire Prevention Specialist
(706) 988-6856
mwiles@gfc.state.ga.us



Mark Wiles, GFC and Bobby Mashburn, NCFS, working to make Sky Valley a safer community.

Firewise Board for Sky Valley includes:

Linda Lapeyrouse
City Manager
706-746-2204

James Reed
Assistant Fire Chief
706-782-2336

Mark Sparrow
WUI Specialist
706-782-2172

Laura Gurley
President POA
706-746-9983

It was decided to conduct community assessments and continued outreach throughout the Sky Valley community. It was also decided that the extreme fire danger areas should be more closely evaluated to determine strategies for mitigating the risk in these areas. The older ski chalets in the area that were un-kept, were considered one of these extreme focus areas, as well as residents who had property near USFS boundaries. These areas were assessed to be at extreme risk due to the steep topography and excessive fuel accumulations. There will be further recommendations outlined in this plan to address methods of mitigating these risks.

Risk Assessment

Assessed wildfire hazard risks and prioritized mitigation actions.
The wildfire risk assessment will help homeowners, builders,

developers, and emergency personnel whether the area needs attention and will help direct wildfire risk reduction practices to the areas at highest risk.

- 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, state agency, federal agency, fire department personnel 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. Outreach and education programs are designed to raise awareness and improve audience knowledge of wildfire risk reduction needs and practices. In the best cases, education and outreach programs will influence attitudes and opinions and result in effective action.



Steep slopes and narrow roadways will hamper firefighting efforts.

III. COMMUNITY BACKGROUND AND WILDFIRE HISTORY

Sky Valley Community

Sky Valley is the northernmost city in Georgia and its northern city limit is the Georgia/North Carolina State Line. According to the U.S. Census in 2000, Sky Valley had a population of 250 and a total land area of 3 square miles. Situated in a scenic mountain valley on the northwest side of Rabun Bald, Georgia's second highest mountain, Sky Valley's elevation is approximately 3,100 ft. above sea level so it is also the city with the highest elevation in Georgia.

Rabun Bald is adjacent to Brasstown Bald. With a peak elevation of 4,784 ft., Brasstown Bald is the tallest mountain in Georgia. Brasstown Bald is actually a barely discernible rise in the 8-mile long Wolfpen Ridge, a spine of Blue Ridge Mountains that also includes Rabun Bald, Blood Mountain and Trey Mountain. The spectacular 360 degree view from the top of Brasstown Bald includes parts of Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina. On a clear day, visitors can see the tops of the tallest buildings in Atlanta from the top of Brasstown Bald.

Sky Valley did not exist as a community until the 1970's. During the late 1960's, a group of investors purchased a 2,500 acre cattle ranch in the area and developed the Sky Valley Resort for snow skiing in the North Georgia Mountains. In 1969, the Sky Valley Resort opened as the southernmost ski resort community in the United States with the only snow skiing facilities in Georgia. Sky Valley was incorporated as a city in March of 1978. In 2004, the Sky Valley Resort was sold and the new owners closed the ski slopes.

The Sky Valley Resort & Country Club is situated in a beautiful mountain valley surrounding a 12 acre lake and it contains an 18-hole championship golf course, a swimming pool, tennis courts and many hiking trails.

Wildfire History

Recent data show that a majority of the fastest growing areas in the U.S. are in wildfire-prone environments. It is not a surprise that some of these fastest growing areas are in Georgia. In the last decade of the 20th Century, Georgia's population increased substantially. Homeowners in Georgia must contend with natural hazards including wildfire, tornados, and flooding. This combination of factors – burgeoning population, abundant natural areas, development pressures, and lack of public awareness makes Georgia a perfect state for creating solutions to various hazards. Georgia is looked to throughout the southern region as a leader in comprehensive and hazard mitigation planning.

Many of Georgia's existing and new residents living in the urban interface are unaware of the vital role fire plays in our landscape and that their homes are extremely vulnerable to wildfire damage. Balancing development pressures with wildfire risk reduction and education creates a unique challenge for local governments, emergency managers, and wildfire management agencies such as the Georgia Forestry Commission, US Forest Service, and the Sky Valley/Scaly Mountain Fire Department. The Sky Valley Community is situated in Rabun County; and is dubbed as the city at the highest elevation in Georgia.

Over the past five years, Rabun County has averaged 8.20 reported wildfires per year. The occurrence of these fires is fairly uniform throughout the year with a slight peak in the months of May through July and a slight decrease during the fall and winter months. The fires in Rabun County have burned an average of 58.81 acres annually. This average size fire reveals that fires in Rabun County tend to be larger, and more difficult to suppress due to the steep topography, and densely forested regions throughout the county. While the numbers of fires remain fairly similar every month, there is a marked difference in the monthly acreage affected. The monthly acres affected during the late Spring through summer period show a dramatic increase over the acres affected during the fall and early winter. Additionally while the annual numbers of fires have not increased noticeably during the 50 year period that records are available, the annual acreage affected appears to have increased in later years. This is perhaps a result of the decrease in the practice of prescribed burning and the resultant increase in wildland fuel loadings. Despite this alarming upward trend in fire behavior, more homes are being built outside of traditional communities into the wildland urban interface.

The leading cause of wildfire in Rabun County was incendiary, followed closely by debris burning, according to the 5 year average of fire occurrence in the area. These fire causes lead our state as the most common points of ignitions for wildfires in our state.

Georgia Forestry Commission Wildfire Records show that in the past five years, no homes have been lost or damaged by wildfire in Rabun County. While homes in this mountain community have been fairly lucky compared to most communities in this regard, the potential is there for significant losses to non-timber property from wildfire.



Firewise Day at Sky Valley

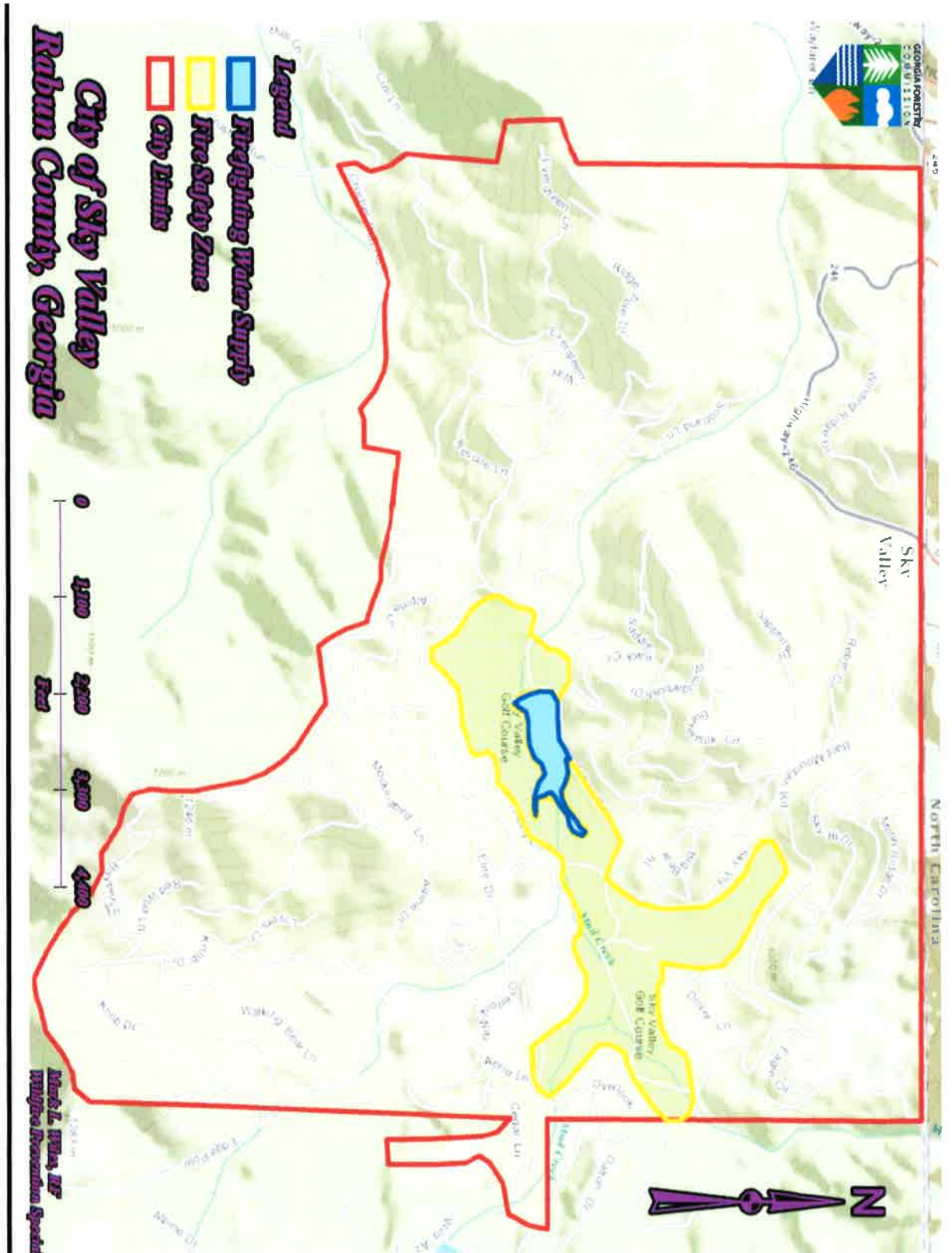
Rabun County Five Year Average Fire Cause and Size

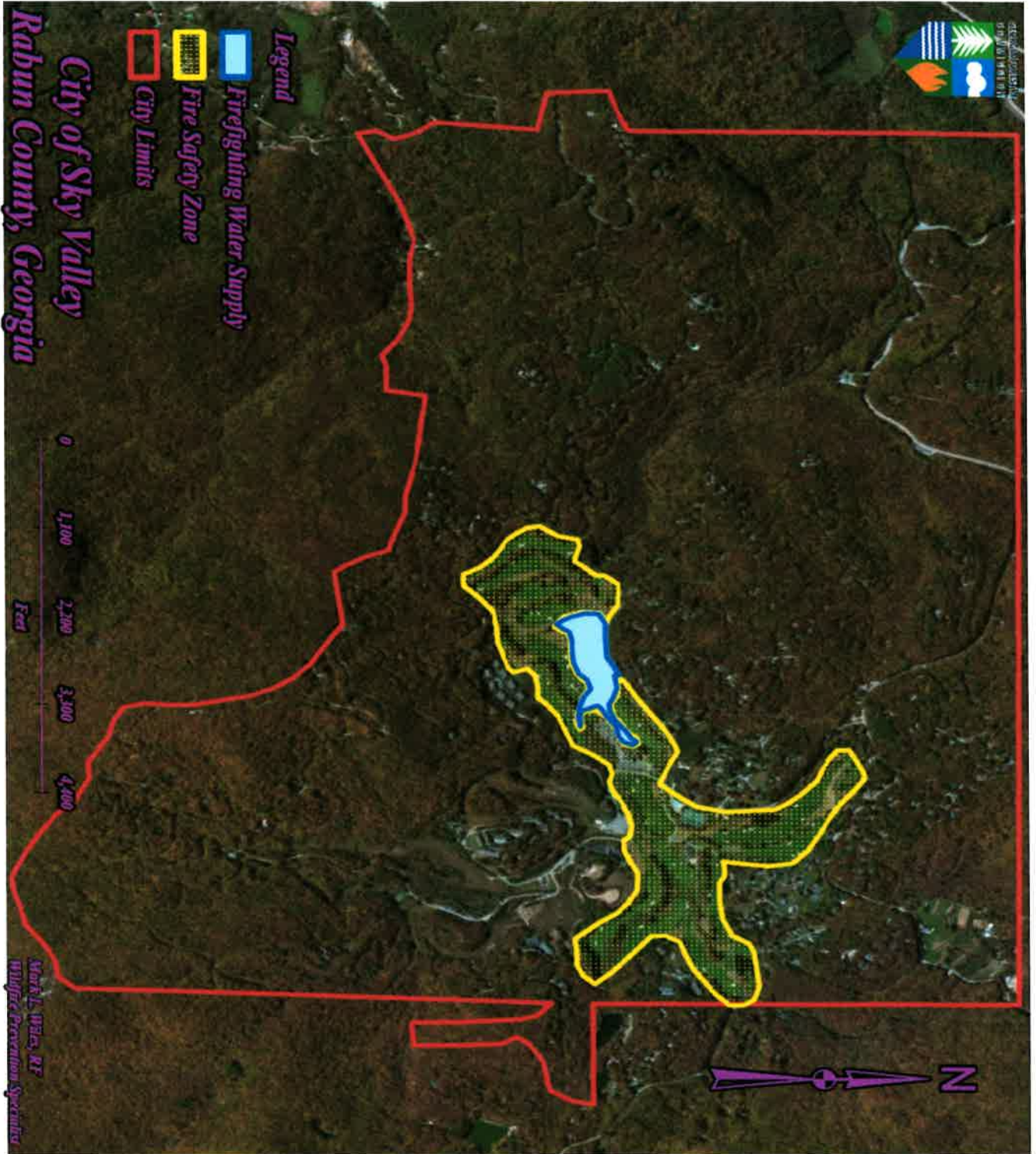
Cause	Fires		Acres	Fires 5 Yr Avg	Acres 5 Yr Avg
Campfire	0		0.00	0.40	0.56
Debris: Ag Fields, Pastures, Orchards, Etc	0		0.00	0.20	0.44
Debris: Construction Land Clearing	0		0.00	0.40	0.36
Debris: Household Garbage	0		0.00	0.40	3.56
Debris: Residential, Leafpiles, Yard, Etc	1		1.51	2.20	2.32
Incendiary	0		0.00	2.80	40.97
Lightning	0		0.00	0.20	0.00
Machine Use	0		0.00	0.20	0.01
Miscellaneous	0		0.00	1.00	7.53
Miscellaneous: Other	1	↑	0.30	0.20	0.06
Undetermined	1	↑	15.00	0.20	3.00
Totals for County: Rabun Year: 2013	3		16.81	8.20	58.81



Heavy fuel accumulations due to storm damage and insect infestations can result in very intense fire behavior.

IV. COMMUNITY BASE MAP





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 intermingle 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.

VI. PRIORITIZED MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

As Northeastern Georgia continues to see increased growth from other areas seeking less crowded and cooler more scenic regions, new development will occur more frequently on forest and wildland areas. The community 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 for the Sky Valley Community by the interagency partners as a result of surveying and assessing fuels and structures and by conducting meetings and interviews with local partners from the local, state, and federal partners. A priority order was determined based on which mitigation projects would best reduce the hazard of wildfire in the assessment area.

Immediate Risk

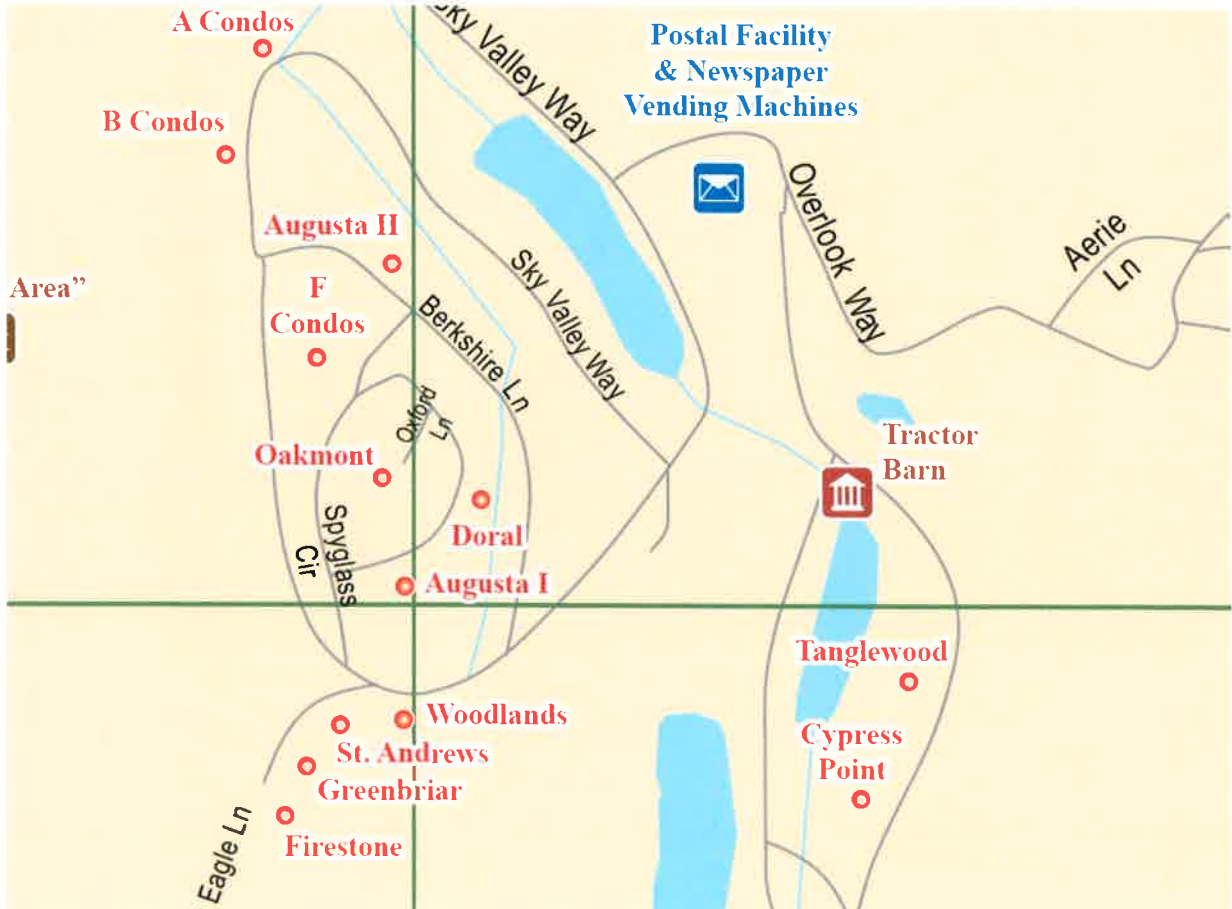
A. Fuel Accumulations Near Structures

1. A large portion of the Sky Valley Community served as the ski resort in the past. The remnants of this resort can still be found in the vacant ski lodge, and numerous unoccupied ski chalets found up slope of the lodge. The lodge, as well as many of these chalets are vacant and in ill repair. Some of the chalets have 3 apartment units that are connected, with some of these apartments are occupied, while others are vacant, for sale, or vacation rentals. The problem is further complicated by the fact that the landscape around some these structures is unmaintained. Many of these structures are situated on very steep slopes

with no “Home Ignition Zone” and have the potential to burn with great intensity should a wildfire threaten these structures. The residents that reside in the occupied apartments will certainly be at risk should a wildfire impact these chalets. The landscape beyond the “Home Ignition Zone” of these structures is densely wooded, and is laden with heavy fuel accumulations on very steep mountainous slopes.

Condos at risk:

- Condos A, B and F on Sky Valley Way
- Augusta II on Berkshire Lane
- Oakmont, Doral and Augusta I on Oxford Lane
- Woodlands, St. Andrews Greenbrier and Firestone on Nesting Eagle Lane
- Tanglewood and Cypress Point on Knob Drive



2. The chalets are constructed of wood and all have open decks with heavy build-up of leaf litter under some of the decks. The roofing materials of these structures are cedar shake

shingles, which are highly flammable.

3. Many of these chalets have no driveway marker, or house number that is visible from the roadway. A fire call in this region could be difficult to locate if the chalet, or home threatened, does not have a clearly marked and visible physical address numbering displayed along the driveway

Recommendations for Mitigation of Risk

- a) The most economical fix for this liability is to create a “Home Ignition Zone” for these structures. The front and sides of the structure should have at least 60 feet of clear open space, which is free of debris, leaf litter and other flammable vegetation. Larger trees within this “Home Ignition Zone” will need to be pruned up to 6’ or 8’ above ground level. The shrubs around the structures will need to be pruned, or removed. The shrubs that are left in place will need to be mulched with a non flammable material, such as river stone. The slopes on the backside of these structures will need a “Home Ignition Zone” of at least 150 feet, and will likely need to be created and maintained by hand. Once the shrubs and smaller trees have been cut in these areas they should be removed from the area so that they don’t become part of the fuel problem. Property owners who do not live in the area should be made aware of the risk, and instructed on the mitigation of the risk. These areas will qualify for the Community Protection Grant, which is sponsored by the US Forest Service, as well as the Georgia Firewise Community Hazard Mitigation Grant administered by the Georgia Forestry Commission. These areas will qualify for mastication (woodland mowing), if the topography allows.
- b) The construction of the chalets in the past required wood construction and cedar shake shingles, as well as open deck areas. The maintenance of these structures should include an upgrade to fire resistant materials, such as stone, brick or hardy board. The replacement of this siding will greatly reduce the risk of the combustion of these structures. The wooden roof should be replaced with metal or fiberglass shingles, and gutters should either be removed, or replaced. These gutters will need to be cleaned of debris about two times a year as leaf and litter accumulations become apparent on the roof.
- c) Require all property owners to clearly mark and display their properties physical address along driveway. It is recommended that the numbers posted be reflective for easy nighttime identification.

B. Evacuation and Safety Zones

1. The City of Sky Valley is comprised of a network of roadways. These roadways serve two purposes. These roads are well maintained surfaced roadways that provide quick and easy access to homes and property for firefighters should the need arise. The majority of the roadways evaluated were two lanes, and could accommodate the ingress and egress of firefighting equipment. The roadways will also serve as firebreaks should a wildfire erupt in the community. The roads could be used as anchor points for firefighting, and would make controlling wildfire less challenging.
2. The heart of Sky Valley consist of a 18 hole championship golf course, which could serve as a safety zone for in the event of a wildfire. This could be used as a gathering place for citizens and visitors of the community, but only if evacuation from the community is impossible through the established road system.

Recommendations for Mitigation of Risk

- a) All roadways should be clearly marked with road name signage at each intersection. The assessment revealed that the majority of these roads were indeed identified. Any roadways without signage should be promptly identified.
- b) Since most of the roads meander through the community, and eventually lead back to the main highway it would be wise to prepare an evacuation route plan, and identify the evacuation route with reflective signage along the roadway. The Ready, Set, Go program can help educate the community on evacuation methods, and should serve as a topic of training at an upcoming property owners meeting in 2014. It is recommended that the community be made aware of each evacuation route, and maps be created and provided to the residents of Sky Valley. Mapping and the creation of maps for evacuation is an approved grant project.

C. Training and Public Education

1. Education is the key to protecting the community from wildfire. Citizens should understand how to prevent destructive wildfire. They should also understand how to protect their homes from wildfire.
2. Firefighters need the appropriate training so that they can understand the techniques of home and community assessment. Educating the Fire and Rescue personnel will create a well coordinated group of professionals that can handle the Wildland/Urban Interface called Sky Valley.

Recommendations for Mitigation of Risk

- a) Continue the educational outreach established by the Georgia Forestry Commission. Invite Georgia Forestry Commission, U.S. Forest Service and Sky Valley/Scaly Mountain Fire Department to scheduled Homeowners Association meetings for educational programs on Firewise and Ready, Set, Go. It is recommended that the homeowners association schedule a series of Firewise educational programs as part of their scheduled meetings starting in the spring of 2014. Contact Wildfire Prevention Specialist Mark Wiles at 706-988-6856 to schedule these educational sessions.
- b) Utilize the local cable network to broadcast the Firewise message for those who are not reached by meetings and announcements. Firewise messages should be part of the community bulletin board on local cable for the months of January, February and March.
- c) Fairs, Festivals and events should have a booth dedicated to the Firewise campaign. Insure that Georgia Forestry Commission and U.S. Forest Service officials are invites to these events. Contact Wildfire Prevention Specialist Mark Wiles at 706-988-6856 to schedule a Firewise representative for these events.
- d) Georgia Forestry Commission should continue Firewise Home Assessments in the Sky Valley Community. To date 30 Firewise Home Assessments have been completed by the Georgia Forestry Commission. Encourage Sky Valley/Scaly Mountain Firefighters to assist in the Firewise Home Assessments. All firefighters in the Sky Valley/Scaly Mountain Fire Department were trained by Georgia Forestry Commission specialist on Firewise Home Assessments in September 2013.
- e) Training courses through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), such as S130, S190 and S215, as well as Firewise Training will train firefighters on various techniques of dealing with fire in the Wildland/Urban Interface. These courses should be scheduled with USFS or GFC staff. Contact Wildland Urban Interface Specialist Mark Sparrow to coordinate these courses in 2014.

Proposed Community Hazard and Structural Ignitability Reduction Priorities

Primary Protection for Community and Its Essential Infrastructure		
Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Recommended 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	Cutting, mowing, mulching	Cut, prune, and mow vegetation in shared community spaces once a year during clean-up days.
4. Driveway Access	Address Markers	Display addresses in large, reflective lettering on right side of every homes driveway.
5. Road Access	Identify needed road improvements	When possible, widen to minimum standards with at least 50 foot diameter cul-de-sacs or turn-around.
Proposed Community Wildland Fuel Reduction Priorities		
Treatment Area	Treatment Types	Treatment Method(s)
1. Adjacent WUI Lands	Reduce hazardous fuels	<p>Encourage prescribed burning for private landowners in appropriate areas based on local regulations and federal timberlands particularly adjacent to residential areas.</p> <p>Conduct understory fuel mastication work in large woodland tracts outside of the National Forest area throughout the Sky Valley Community.</p> <p>Take advantage of the use of selective herbicides in areas previously mowed and masticated.</p>

Proposed Improved Community Wildland Fire Response Priorities		
1. Water Sources	Pressurized Hydrants	Inspect, maintain and improve access to existing water sources.
2. Fire Stations	Equipment	Wildland hand tools. Lightweight Wildland PPE Gear. Investigate need and funds for additional “brush” trucks and firefighters throughout the community.
3. Water Sources	Drafting equipment	Investigate need for additional drafting pumps.
4. Personnel	Training	Obtain Wildland Fire Suppression training for fire personnel to include S130, S190, and S215, as well as Firewise Training.
5. Evacuations	Ready, Set, Go.	Establish and review annually an evacuation plan for the mountain community.
**Actions to be taken by homeowners and community stakeholders		

Proposed Education and Outreach Priorities

<p>1. Conduct “How to Have a Firewise Home” Workshop for Sky Valley Community Residents</p> <p>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. These programs should be part of the spring, summer and fall homeowners association meetings in 2014.</p> <p>Distribute materials promoting Firewise practices, principles and planning.</p>
<p>2. Conduct “Firewise” Workshop for Community Leaders</p> <p>Arrange for GFC Firewise Coordinator to continue work with local community leaders and governmental officials, as well as firefighters, on the importance of “Firewise Planning” in developing ordinances and codes as the county as the need arises. Meeting with the officials of the Property Owners Association, Sky Valley/Scaly Mountain Fire Department and the Sky Valley City Council.</p>

3. Mitigation Event

Conduct interagency mitigation event every winter involving the Georgia Forestry Commission, Fire Departments, U.S. Forest Service, and other nearby federal partners. 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, Interagency Partners and Fire Departments discussing and commending the work accomplished.

4. Wildfire Protection Display

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

5. Media

Invite the local and regional news media to community “Firewise” functions for news coverage and regularly submit press releases documenting wildfire risk improvements in the Sky Valley Community. Local cable companies, radio and the newspaper, The Clayton Tribune, should be used to promote the program

VII. 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	
<p>Sky Valley Community Interagency WUI Partners (City of Sky Valley, Sky Valley/Scaly Mountain Fire Dept, Georgia Forestry Commission and the U.S. Forest Service)</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Key Messages to focus on</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping 2 Debris Burning Safety 3 Firewise information for homeowners 4 Understory fuel mastication projects 5 Evacuation plans
<p>Communications objectives</p>	<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 around their homes. 5. Explain grants and in kind funding available to landowners.
<p>Target Audiences</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Homeowners 2 Homeowner Associations Elected Officials 3 City Council 4 Visitors/Tourist 5 City Staff
<p>Methods</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 News Releases 2 Personal Contacts 3 Key messages and prevention tips 4 Visuals such as signs, brochures and posters

Funding Needs

The following funding is needed to implement the action plan:

Project	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
1. Create a <u>minimum</u> of 30 feet of defensible space around structures. This space will be greater than 30 feet on down slope regions near structures.	Varies	Community Protection Grant, State Firewise Grant
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	Boy Scout, community civic organizations to assist the elderly and disabled with this task.
3. Improve roadways and engineer these roadways to be more accessible to firefighting equipment.	Varies	Work with local city council, and the Georgia DOT to seek out grants for these projects
4. Create fuel breaks around sites where needed	Varies	Funding through U.S. Forest Service (Community Protection Grant) and local State Firewise Grant.

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 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) cities 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**

Glossary of Terms

Community-At-Risk – *A group of two or more structures whose proximity to forested or wildland areas places homes and residents at some degree of risk.*

Critical Facilities – *Buildings, structures or other parts of the community infrastructure that require special protection from an approaching wildfire.*

CWPP – *The Community Wildfire Protection Plan*

Defensible Space – *The immediate landscaped area around a structure (usually a minimum of 30 ft.) kept “lean, clean and green” to prevent an approaching wildfire from igniting the structure.*

Dry Hydrant - *A non-pressurized pipe system permanently installed in existing lakes, ponds and streams that provides a suction supply of water to a fire department tank truck.*

FEMA – *The Federal Emergency Management Agency whose mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.*

Firewise Communities Program – *A national initiative whose purpose is the reduction of structural losses from wildland fires.*

Firewise Communities/USA – *A national recognition program for communities that take action to protect themselves from wildland fire.*

Fuels – *All combustible materials within the wildland/urban interface or intermix including, but not limited to, vegetation and structures.*

Fuel Modification – *Any manipulation or removal of fuels to reduce the likelihood of ignition or the resistance to fire control.*

Hazard & Wildfire Risk Assessment – *An evaluation to determine an area’s (community’s) potential to be impacted by an approaching wildland fire.*

Healthy Forests Initiative - *Launched in August 2002 by President Bush (following passage of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act by Congress) with the intent to reduce the risks severe wildfires pose to people, communities, and the environment.*

Home Ignition Zone (Structure Ignition Zone) - *Treatment area for wildfire protection. The “zone” includes the structure(s) and their immediate surroundings from 0-200 ft.*

Mitigation – *An action that moderates the severity of a fire hazard or risk.*

National Fire Plan – *National initiative, passed by Congress in the year 2000, following a*

landmark wildland fire season, with the intent of actively responding to severe wildland fires and their impacts to communities while ensuring sufficient firefighting capacity for the future.

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) - An international nonprofit organization established in 1896, whose mission is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.

Southern Group of State Foresters – Organization whose members are the agency heads of the forestry agencies of the 13 southern states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Stakeholders– Individuals, groups, organizations, businesses or others who have an interest in wildland fire protection and may wish to review and/or contribute to the CWPP content.

Wildfire or Wildland Fire – An unplanned and uncontrolled fire spreading through vegetative fuels.

Wildland/Urban Interface - The presence of structures in locations in which the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) determines that topographical features, vegetation, fuel types, local weather conditions and prevailing winds result in the potential for ignition of the structures within the area from flames and firebrands from a wildland fire (NFPA 1144, 2008 edition).

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Publications/ Brochures/Websites

- FIREWISE Communities materials can be ordered at www.firewise.org
- Examples of successful wildfire mitigation programs can be viewed at the website for National Database of State and Local wildfire Hazard Mitigation Programs sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service and the Southern Group of State Foresters
www.wildfireprograms.com
- Information about a variety of interface issues (including wildfire) can be found at the USFS website for Interface South: www.interfacesouth.org
- Information on codes and standards for emergency services including wildfire can be found at www.nfpa.org
- Information on FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) can be found at www.firegrantsupport.com
- Information on National Fire Plan grants can be found at <http://www.federalgrantswire.com/national-fire-plan--rural-fire-assistance.html>
- General wildland fire information and education topics can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/fire/wildland-fire/learning-center.cfm>

Assessment Strategy

To accurately assess progress and effectiveness for the action plan, the Sky Valley Community and the Georgia Forestry Commission will implement the following:

- 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 6 months following workshop date.
- Georgia Forestry Commission representative(s) will assist the Sky Valley Community, and the Sky Valley/Scaly Mountain Fire Department with ongoing projects and assessments.

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