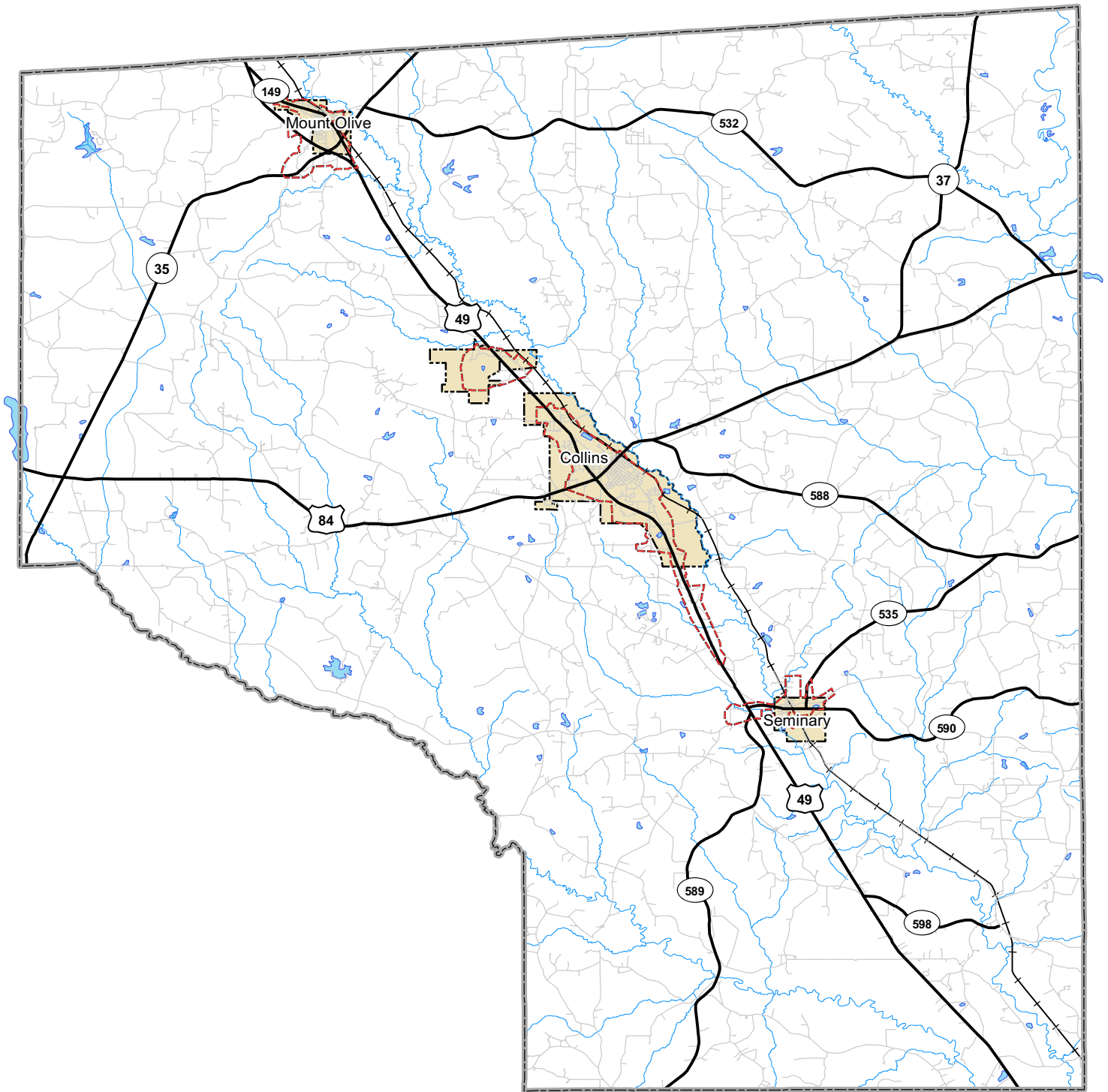


COVINGTON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

COUNTY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN



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PREPARED BY SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
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Introduction

In late 2006, the Mississippi Forestry Commission and The Nature Conservancy commissioned the preparation of wildfire protection plans for a fifteen-county south Mississippi region. The plan is an effort to address changes to the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) brought about by Hurricane Katrina as well as from increased development in many parts of the region in recent years. While some downed timber was salvaged, an increased risk of future wildfire remains a threat because of residual debris.

The Wildland-Urban Interface, where structures and other developments merge with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels, can create one of the most dangerous and complex situations for firefighters. The WUI zone can pose a significant risk to communities in the event of a large-scale wildfire. In a proactive effort to address these increased risks and others, Covington County has agreed to create a County Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). A CWPP can reduce the potential for loss in the event of a wildfire by identifying priorities for the protection of life, property and critical infrastructure within the WUI.

With 5 plans already completed by the end of 2007, SMPDD officials began gathering geographical data, historical fire information, etc. for Covington County in early 2008. Planners then met with the local county fire coordinator to review the information and obtain input on the strengths and weaknesses of the county fire departments and their ability to fight wildfires. Later, a Steering Committee was formed through cooperation of local, state and federal agencies, and other interested parties. The Steering Committee included a subcommittee of members from the Covington County Emergency Management Agency, the Mississippi Forestry Commission, the County Fire Coordinator, and Volunteer Fire Departments.

Over the next several months the Steering Committee, with the opportunity for public input, produced a County Wildfire Protection Plan. The Plan includes several components: Geographic Information System produced maps, a County Risk Assessment, a Mitigation Projects List, Structure Ignitability Recommendations and an Action Plan and Assessment Strategy. It is the intent of the Steering Committee that this plan will guide development and educate landowners, as well as address and then treat at-risk wildfire areas within the County.

This plan was developed with an effort toward consistency with the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, the county's Hazard Mitigation Plan (currently under final review by MEMA/FEMA) and the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

Area Description

Covington County is located in the upper northwest portion of the District. It is flanked by the counties of Jones and Jefferson Davis to the East and West respectively. Covington County is generally rural in context and is not part of a metropolitan area. The City of Collins is the largest municipality in Covington County, with other communities of significant size including Mount Olive to the North and Seminary to the South. All three of these municipalities are connected by U.S. Highway 49, which runs North and South through the entire county.

The population of Covington County in 2000 was 19,407 people, evidencing a growth rate of 17.4% since 1990, surging well beyond the 3.8% population increase reported for the 1980-1990 interval. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates a 2007 population of 20,361, reflecting a 4.7% increase since the previous census.

Covington County contains 414 square miles with land largely held by private landowners. Approximately 60% of County land area is contained within commercial forests. Recreational opportunities in Covington County consist of two lakes; offering opportunities for fishing, camping, and picnics. Lake Mike Connor is located west of Collins off U.S. 84, and Dry Creek Water Park is located in the Mt. Olive area. As the State of Mississippi's only white water rapids, the Okatoma River is one of Covington County's main attractions and offers unique opportunities for fishing and canoeing. As well, outdoor recreation is facilitated by two tributaries of the Leaf River, numerous ball fields, tennis courts, and swimming facilities.

The climate of Covington County is mild with mean annual temperatures in the 60's. Average winter temperatures range from 35 to 58 degrees Fahrenheit with summer temperatures ranging from 71 to 91 degrees Fahrenheit. Rainfall averages approximately 60 inches annually with the majority of the accumulation from December to April. Because of high annual precipitation amounts, Covington County is not usually prone to property damaging wildfires. Occasionally, however, drought-like conditions prompt fire service officials to issue bans against burning and encroachment of urban development into wildlands becomes more of a concern. County Wind speeds are generally less than 10 miles per hour, but often increase during storms. Thunderstorms occur frequently and are sometimes accompanied by strong to severe winds, including tornadoes.

Several facilities located within Covington County use, store or process flammable, toxic and/or explosive materials. Covington County's location along U.S. Highway 49, a major transportation artery, creates exposure to transportation incidents involving hazardous materials. Also, there are several wells and pipelines traversing the County which contain crude oil, natural gas, and other substances.

Covington County is divided into the following ten (10) rural fire response areas covering the entire county: Collins, East Covington, Hot Coffee, Lone Star, Mt. Olive, Northwest, South East, South West, Seminary, West Covington. All fire response areas and station locations are listed below.

Fire Response Area	Fire Department	Station Location(s)	Total Number of Volunteers
Collins	Collins VFD	200 Beech St. Collins, MS 39428	24
East Covington	East Covington VFD	912 E. Leaf River Church Rd. Seminary, MS 39479	19
Hot Coffee	Hot Coffee VFD	1857 Hwy. 532 Mt. Olive, MS 39119	18
Lone Star	Lone Star VFD	178 Moss Hill Rd Collins, MS 39428	18
Mt. Olive	Mt. Olive VFD	201 S. 5 th St. Mt. Olive, MS 39119	22
Northwest	Northwest VFD	922 Leonard Rd Mt. Olive, MS 39119	20
South East	South East VFD	213 Hwy. 598 Seminary, MS 39479	17
South West	South West VFD	645 Oak Dale Church Rd. Seminary, MS 39479	15
Seminary	Seminary VFD	217 W. Main St. Seminary, MS 39479	16
West Covington	West Covington VFD	368 McDonald Chapel Rd Collins, MS 39428	19

Strategic Goals of the County Wildfire Protection Plan

At the beginning of the planning process, the Covington County CWPP Steering Committee identified several goals. These goals were set to provide a common vision during the process and to identify specific results to be obtained upon completion of the final document.

1. Define the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) for Covington County.
2. Identify and prioritize high-risk areas within the WUI.
3. Identify treatment methods for prioritized high risk areas.
4. Make recommendations to reduce structure ignitability.
5. Purchase and install GPS units in all fire trucks.
6. Develop new volunteer firefighter recruitment program.
7. Identify strategies to encourage collaboration and increase communication between Covington County and the Mississippi Forestry Commission.
8. Develop safety and maintenance programs for vehicles and other equipment at each Fire Department.
9. Research volunteer firefighter retention programs; such as: gas reimbursement, pay per call, etc.
10. Placement of radio repeaters on water towers to improve emergency communications between the fire departments.
11. Research and apply for grants to purchase vehicles, equipment and turnout gear. Also, grants are need for volunteer firefighter training.

Mapping

The Covington County Wildfire Protection Plan contains seven maps created by the Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District (SMPDD) Geographic Information System Department. These maps were created for planning purposes to aid in the assessment of county wildfire occurrence and emergency preparedness. The maps include the Covington County Base Map, Covington County Risk Assessment Ratings, Covington County Fire Data 2001-2007, High Occurrence Wildfire Areas, Arson Fires 2001-2007, Covington County Fire Response Area, and Wildfires by Fire Response Area.

The county-wide base map provides a graphic baseline of infrastructure, roadways, inhabited areas, areas of community importance and a WUI designation. Initially, the WUI was set at ½-mile from existing municipal boundaries in accordance with the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003. The Steering Committee then edited this line to include area developments within the county but not adjacent to municipalities. It was noted by the Steering Committee that the county has many areas where wildland meets development. For this reason, the Covington County WUI will identify areas where the highest amount of development occurs and aid in identifying specific risk factors and treatment projects that have the potential to reduce the risk to life, property and critical infrastructure.

In addition to the WUI, the Steering Committee identified several areas of critical infrastructure including roadways for evacuation, water towers, utilities and the communication towers. The Base Map has become a visual representation of the core elements of county protection as identified for the CWPP.

The Risk Assessment Map graphically reflects the results of the risk assessment portion of the county wildfire protection plan process. The risk assessment process is explained in detail below. The resulting map reflects the infrastructure, roadways, municipalities and areas of community importance found on the base map. The Steering Committee assigned a risk rating to each of these attributes by considering available fuel load, frequency of wildfire occurrence, vulnerability of development and infrastructure, and emergency preparedness. These ratings were then displayed in map form to better enable review and assessment of the entire county.

Several fire occurrence maps were created from data collected from the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC). The data reflect both wildfires and controlled burns, and several different causes of fires. Fire causes include lightning, campfire, smoking, debris burning, arson, and equipment use. Mississippi Forestry Commission data for Covington County shows a total of 28 fires in the year 2001, 46 fires in 2002, 29 fires in 2003, 60 fires in 2004, 68 fires in 2005, 123 fires in 2006, and 36 fires in 2007. The fire occurrence maps were utilized in the Risk Assessment portion of the CWPP and as a valuable reference during the process of formulating mitigation projects and action items.

Through the use of the SMPDD Geographic Information System, all fires and all causes, tracked for years 2001-2007 by the MFC, are reflected on the Covington County

Wildfires 2001-2007 map. When these data are mapped, it becomes apparent that there are specific geographic areas where there is a high occurrence of wildfire.

The High Occurrence Wildfire Areas are based on a computer calculation used to determine density and distribution by comparing each fire occurrence to its surrounding neighbors. The resulting calculation was then separated into nine classes to isolate areas with higher density. The lowest six classes were eliminated, and the remaining three classes were converted to single polygons to represent the eight regions displayed as high occurrence areas. The regions were then manually edited to exclude fringe incidents leading to distinct and cohesive boundaries. Area 1 is geographically located in the north-central portion of the county from the east side of Mount Olive along Highway 532 to its eastern edge in the vicinity of Keys & Clark Rd. Area 2 is geographically located in the northeast area of the county along Highway 532 from its western edge near New Liberty Church Rd to its eastern edge in the vicinity of Gilmer Rd. Area 3 is an elongated hourglass shaped area in the west portion of the county running northwest to southeast with Highway 84 transecting its mid-section. Area 4 is located north of Highway 84 and just west of Collins. Area 5 runs northeast to southwest with a portion located within the northwest section of Seminary.

A majority of the fires within Covington County, approximately 40.5%, are attributed to debris burning. According to Forestry Commission wildfire data, 158 out of 390 fires tracked from 2001-2007 were attributed to debris burning. The second highest cause of fires, approximately 36.5%, are attributed to arson. The map of Arson Fires by Year reflects the geographic distribution of these fires throughout the county.

The Covington County Response Area map reflects the county fire station response areas with respective boundaries, as well as each volunteer fire station location. In addition, a map reflecting all wildfires 2001-2007 as well as fire district boundaries and department locations has been included. Wildfires 2001-2007 by Fire Response Area will aid in the assessment of numbers of fires and their general location within each district.

County Risk Assessment

Through the County Risk Assessment, fuel hazards, frequency of wildfire occurrence, vulnerability of development and infrastructure, and emergency preparedness were all considered to compile the following list of county areas at risk from wildfire.

The Steering Committee attempted to identify large facilities that may be at risk from wildfire due to their location, function, or potential impact to the community if damaged or lost to wildfire. Once identified, these at-risk areas were prioritized to focus available financial and human resources on specific mitigation projects in the future.

For the purpose of this exercise, these areas were rated from low to high. Areas receiving the highest rating pose an increased risk due to their function, amount of nearby fuel load or may cause significant community impact in the event of damage or loss due to a wildfire. Mitigation projects for the at-risk areas include a wide array of activities. Removal or reduction in fuel load may be suggested for some areas, with a public awareness campaign suggested for others.

Rating Key

- Low
- Medium
- High

Critical Infrastructure:

- Mississippi Power Substation on Hwy. 535 in Seminary

The effect on the local community if the substation was damaged is very high. This risk rating is high.

- North Covington Water Well South System on Flowers Rd. in Mt. Olive

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high. This risk rating is high.

- North Covington Water Well North System at 100 Water Well Rd. in Mt. Olive

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high. This risk rating is high.

- Southwest Covington Water Association

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high. This risk rating is high.

- Cold Springs Water Association

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- Okatoma Water Association (tank and well – 2 locations)

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- Willow Grove Water Association

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- Salem Water Well #1 at 11 Cagle Road in Collins.

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- Salem Water Well #2 at 291 Cagle Road in Collins.

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- Radio Tower Building at 57 Wolverton Drive in Collins

This is the only emergency communication tower in the county. This risk rating is high.

- Southeast Covington Volunteer Fire Department at 213 Hwy 598 in Seminary

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- East Covington Volunteer Fire Department at 501 Hwy. 84 W in Collins

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- Lone Star Volunteer Fire Department at 1683 Hwy 84 in Collins

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- North West Covington Volunteer Fire Department

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- Hot Coffee Volunteer Fire Department #1 at 1857 Hwy. 532 in Collins

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- Hot Coffee Volunteer Fire Department #2 at 5 Firehouse Lane in Tayorsville

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- Southwest Covington Volunteer Fire Department at 645 Oakdale Church Rd. in Seminary

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

- West Covington Volunteer Fire Department at 368 McDonald Chapel Rd., Collins

The effect on the local community if this facility was damaged is very high.
This risk rating is high.

Vulnerable Facilities

- Grain Elevator – Sanderson Farms – Hazardous Materials
- Grain Elevator – Company Name Unknown – Hazardous Materials
- Petroleum Storage Facility at 135 Hwy. 588, Collins – Petroleum
- Pipeline - Plantation Pipeline Company – Oil, Petroleum, Natural Gas
- Petroleum Storage Facility at 355 Hwy. 588, Collins – Petroleum
- Pipeline – Colonial Pipeline Company – Oil, Petroleum, Natural Gas
- Natural Gas Storage Facility – Salt Dome - Natural Gas

All of the above facilities pose some risk due to function and impact to the community and beyond if damaged or destroyed. It is noted that the companies that operate the facilities take adequate fire precautions. However, the overall rating for each is high.

Areas of Community Importance

- Hopewell Elementary School at 824 Hopewell Rd., Collins

- Dry Creek Voting Precinct at 296 Pittman Rd., Mt. Olive
- Yawn Voting Precinct at 1496 Salem Church Rd., Collins
- Gilmer Voting Precinct at 480 Lilly Valley Church Rd., Mt. Olive
- District 5 County Barn at 62 Nursery Drive, Mt. Olive
- Hot Coffee Community Center at 1859 Hwy. 532, Mt. Olive
- Okahay Voting Precinct at 2515 Hwy. 532, Mt. Olive
- Station Creek Voting Precinct at 93 Melvin Mauldin Rd., Collins
- Sanford Voting Precinct at 663 Old Hwy. 49, Seminary

The centers listed above are important to the quality of life of the residents of Covington County. There is not, however, a substantial smoke or fire risk. All of the centers are ranked low.

Areas of Concern

- Any areas in the county that continue to have a heavy fuel load, in the form of downed timber, especially since Hurricane Katrina. The risk is medium.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness for each of the county volunteer fire departments is continually reviewed and assessed by Covington County. This assessment involves factors such as equipment availability and age, public protection classification, and manpower.

There are informal mutual aid agreements outside of the county, but it is recommended that formal written agreements be established with the neighboring counties (Forrest, Jones and Greene). It is important to note that any fire department can be dispatched to assist with fires in any part of the County. Currently, there is a disparity between equipment and manpower and wildfire occurrence in the County. For instance, the southern portion of Covington County has historically less wildfire calls but they have more manpower and equipment than the northern part of the county.

Fire Districts and municipalities in the State of Mississippi receive a public protection classification through the Mississippi State Rating Bureau (MSRB). This classification is the basis for determining the fire insurance rating for each district. The Fire Districts within Covington County are listed below, with the corresponding MSRB classification.

Mississippi State Rating Bureau Public Protection Classification List

District	Class
Collins	7
East Covington	10
Hot Coffee	9
Lone Star	10
Mt. Olive	8
North West	10
Seminary	8
South East	8
South West	8
West Covington	8

In general, the departments are well-equipped and able to respond to the needs of the areas they serve. However, Steering Committee members did identify improvements that could be made to provide better service within the districts.

Often times, the local firefighters work side-by-side with the Mississippi Forestry Commission. Generally, there is a good relationship between the two agencies. However, it is suggested that biannual meetings be established to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each agency. These meetings would allow any other inter-agency concerns to be addressed as well as to provide training opportunities and project

coordination. Currently, MFC is dispatched out of Bay Springs. This means that more often than not, the VFD's in Covington County are already on the scene and have a fire out before MFC even arrives. Radio communication is poor between MFC and local firefighters. There is a need to have 2-way communication.

Covington County is generally rural and many residents commute to work in nearby cities. Some of the volunteer firefighters find work outside their fire district and have trouble leaving work to respond to a fire call. To help alleviate this problem, it is recommended that a larger volunteer force be recruited. There is only one paid part time employee, the county fire coordinator. There are very few new volunteers. The "cost" to volunteer prohibits an increase, especially with the cost of fuel. There is no reimbursement for volunteer fuel cost.

A community outreach and awareness program may help address some of the manpower issues. Several volunteer fire departments across the county are involved with the local Boy Scouts of America through the explorer program (www.scouting.org/). Many times, BSA can provide program direction, resources, and insurance to cover the department which allows for much more involvement by an explorer scout than a typical youth under 18.

An apprentice firefighter program working with local youth is also an option. While not allowed to fight fires, these youth may be able to gain training through department exercises. The youth would support by providing drinks, supplies or other equipment that is needed on-site. Involvement in the program may then lead to a career as a volunteer firefighter.

Additionally, recruitment kits should be created and kept on-hand for prospective candidates. Recruitment messages can be posted in local newspaper inserts and by placing flyers at local restaurants and other businesses. Adding recruitment information to the county website and local cable service announcements may also be effective.

In addition to the MSRB Rating and manpower issues, equipment status is tracked and assessed. A current listing of large equipment with description and location is provided below. The county would like to purchase brush trucks, tankers and pumpers and strategically place them throughout the county for use by multiple stations. Ideally, the county would like to have a GPS unit in each pumper truck. More equipment needs are expected to arise as the existing equipment ages.

Covington County Volunteer Fire Department Equipment List

Department	Year	Make/Model	Type
Collins	2008	Ford Expedition	Command Vehicle
	2008	Freightliner E-1	Engine (1000 gallon)
	1997	International Pierce	Engine (1000 gallon)
	1987	Ford E-1	Engine (1000 gallon)

Department	Year	Make/Model	Type
	1980	Ford E-1	Engine (1000 gallon)
	1990	International 4x4	Brush Truck (1000 gallon)
	1996	Ford F-150 4x4	Brush Truck (250 gallon)
	1994	Ford F-250 4x4	Service Unit
	1991	Ford E-350	Rescue Unit
East Covington	2003	Freightliner	Pumper (3000 gallon)
	1979	GMC 5 ton 4x6	Pumper (2800 gallon)
	1984	Chevy 5 ton 4x4	Brush Truck
	1984	Chevy 1 ton	Equipment Truck
	1986	Chevy Blazer	Equipment Truck
Hot Coffee #1	1989	International	Tanker (5000 gallon)
	1985	Kaizer	Tanker (2700 gallon)
	1999	Ford	Pumper (1000 gallon)
	1985	Chevy	Brush Truck
	1990	Ford	Equipment Truck
Hot Coffee #2	1990	Ford	Tanker (2000 gallon)
	1972	Ford	Pumper (1000 gallon)
Lone Star	2003	Freightliner	Pumper
	1997	International	Tanker (2000 gallon)
	1972	2 ½ ton	Brush Truck
	1988	1 ton 4x4	Equipment Truck
Mt. Olive	2004	Freightliner	Tanker
	1982	International 2 ton	Tanker
	1988	Ford F 900	Pumper
	1999	Ford F 250	Brush Truck
	1995	Chevy 3500	Rescue Truck
North West	1997	Ford	Pumper (1500 gallon)
	1997	Ford L 9000	Tanker (5500 gallon)
	1986	5x5	Tanker
	1995	Chevy ¾ ton	Brush Truck (200 gallon)
Seminary	2006		Pumper (1200 gallon)
	1993		Pumper (1000 gallon)
	1993	Chevy	Tanker
	1985	Chevy	Brush Truck
	1992	Ford	Equipment Van
South East	1997	Ford 8000	Pumper (1500 gallon)
	1985	Ford	Pumper
	1990	GMC	Tanker (2500 gallon)
	1985	Mack	Tanker (3000 gallon)
	1985	Dodge 4x4	Brush Truck
	2006	Ford 550	Rescue Truck
South West		GMC	Pumper (1500 gallon)
		5 Ton Military	Tanker (2500 gallon)
		2 ½ Ton	Brush Truck (600 gallon)
		Chevy 3500	Rescue Truck 250g/50g Foam

Department	Year	Make/Model	Type
West Covington	1984	Chevy	Tanker (2500 gallon)
	2001	Freightliner	Pumper
	2008		Rescue Truck

While the county water sources are adequate at this time, it is recommended that the fire departments work with the independent rural water associations to ensure that new towers are erected in the high growth areas.

Mitigation Projects and Structure Ignitability Recommendations

Through the Community Risk Assessment several areas for improvement were identified. Mitigation projects for the at-risk areas may involve removal or reduction in fuel load for some, a public awareness campaign for others, or a combination approach.

No fuel treatment projects for Critical Infrastructure, Vulnerable Facilities or Areas of Community Importance were identified or found to be necessary at this time. These sites are generally well maintained and have moderate to low ignitability potential. However, it is suggested that the county partner with the Mississippi Forestry Commission to work with large, private landowners to identify areas with dead trees, remove them and/or create fire breaks. No specific landowners were named.

Structure ignitability recommendations should be addressed by the county and distributed to homeowners. These recommendations, as condensed from information found at www.firewise.org, are steps that property owners can take to improve the protection and survivability of a structure in the event of a wildfire. It was also recommended by the Steering Committee that a minimum distance between structures should be designated and included in county construction ordinances.

Structure Ignitability Recommendations

County

1. Develop a homeowner education program
2. Encourage new, large residential developments to become Firewise USA Communities
3. Home assessments to help residents identify ways to create defensible space

Homeowners

1. Provide a clearing of at least 30 feet around structures for firefighting equipment access
2. Provide a driveway at least 12 feet wide with 13 feet of vertical clearance
3. If home is gated, display a clearly visible address, provide a gate that swings inward and is at least 30 feet off of the main road.
4. Remove "ladder fuels" that can link grasses to tree tops
5. Maintain an irrigation system
6. Prune tree limbs so the lowest is between 6' - 10' from the ground

7. Remove leaf clutter from roof and yard
8. Mow regularly
9. Remove dead and overhanging branches
10. Store firewood away from the house
11. Don't keep combustible materials under decks or elevated porches
12. Make trellises of non-flammable metal
13. Prevent sparks from entering house by covering vents with wire mesh no larger than 1/8"
14. Use construction materials that are fire-resistant or non-combustible when possible
15. Prevent collection of leaf clutter or other combustible materials beneath mobile homes by installing proper skirting

County Ordinance

1. Maintain minimum distance between structures as recommended by the National Fire Protection Association
2. Maintain a minimum radii of outside edge at dead-end turnaround circle of 45 feet to provide for emergency vehicles on both surface ditch and curb/gutter roadways
3. Maintain minimum width standards for subdivision roads and access roads to individual homes per pending subdivision regulations

Min. width of surface ditch roadway with *local* designation: 28 ft.

Min. width of surface ditch roadway with *collector* designation: 34 ft.

Min. width of curb and gutter streets with *local* designation: 27 ft.

Min. width of curb and gutter streets with *collector* designation: 33 ft.

Action Plan and Assessment Strategy

The action plan and assessment strategy portion of the County Wildfire Protection Plan serves to identify roles and responsibilities, determine funding needs, set timetables for carrying out identified activities and measure the plan's effectiveness.

The Action Plan is an outline of the work to be completed. The Assessment Strategy portion of the CWPP will ensure that Mitigation Projects and Action Plan items are accomplished in a timely manner and monitored to measure the project's success.

1. Purchase brush trucks, pumpers, tankers and first responder equipment that could be strategically placed at fire stations to better fight wildfires.

Responsibility: Covington County Emergency Management Agency, Volunteer Fire Departments, Board of Supervisors

Funding: Possibly through Homeland Security or other grant funds

Timetable for Completion: Every 2 years or as grants become available

Expected Outcome: Better access and firefighting capability

Assessment Timetable: Review progress annually

2. Establish biannual meetings between the Mississippi Forestry Commission and the Covington County Volunteer Fire Departments.

Responsibility: Covington County Emergency Management Agency and the Mississippi Forestry Commission

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: Implement immediately

Expected Outcome: Improved communication and coordination in the areas of firefighting, training, safety and project management

Assessment Timetable: 2–5 years

3. Create community outreach and education program including mail-out and county website, listing specific fire concerns in the area and steps that homeowners can take to reduce ignitability potential. Include steps that will improve response time such as proper house numbering, signage and access to locked gates at private residences.

Responsibility: Covington County Emergency Management Agency in coordination with Mississippi Forestry Commission and local Volunteer Fire Departments

Funding: Homeland Security Fire Safety Grant, possible coordination with local utility or county agency for inclusion in regular mail-out

Timetable for Completion: October 2010, possibly coordinate with Fire Prevention Awareness Month

Expected Outcome: Implementation of Firewise safety measures by homeowners, including an increase in properly assigned and visible residential addressing as well as a decrease in non-compliant residential burns

Assessment Timetable: Winter 2011

4. Community outreach program to educate citizens, specifically young adults (18 years of age and older), about the volunteer firefighter program and its importance. This program could include a high school component where students are made aware of the program so that they might consider serving at some point in the future. Program also to include National Fire Protection Association public service announcements.

Responsibility: Covington County Emergency Management Agency, Volunteer Fire Departments, Mississippi Forestry Commission

Funding: Volunteer Fire Departments, grants, Mississippi Forestry Commission

Timetable for Completion: 1-2 times per year, before peak fire seasons.

Expected Outcome: Increased community awareness of the need for volunteer firefighters and increase in volunteer recruitment

Assessment Timetable: Annual review of recruitment efforts and numbers

5. Maintain and update the grants/funding resource list included in CWPP document.

Responsibility: Covington County Emergency Management Agency, Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: Yearly

Expected Outcome: Additional grant applications resulting in an increase of grant funds

Assessment Timetable: Review applications v. funding annually

6. Maintain, update and redistribute the CWPP maps to all county departments, volunteer fire departments and other organizations utilizing the document.

Responsibility: Covington County Emergency Management Agency and Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: Yearly

Expected Outcome: Increased awareness of fire activity leading to implementation of action plan in an effort toward reduction of fire incidents

Assessment Timetable: Make any additions or changes to maps on an annual basis and interview other organizations to see if the maps make their role in wildfire prevention more effective

7. Encourage Mississippi Insurance Commissioner to consider rebate program to allow for home assessments and homeowner mitigation projects (creating defensible space).

Responsibility: Covington County Emergency Management Agency, Board of Supervisors, Volunteer Fire Departments, Mississippi Forestry Commission

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: Spring 2009

Expected Outcome: More homeowners participating in mitigation activities, lower insurance premiums for homeowners and additional funds for volunteer fire departments

Assessment Timetable: Review progress in May 2009 after legislative session ends

8. Draft and execute formal mutual aid agreements between Covington County and its neighboring counties to include equipment use and manpower.

Responsibility: Covington County Emergency Management Agency, Board of Supervisors

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: Fall 2009

Expected Outcome: Increased ability to fight fires.

Assessment Timetable: Review progress in January 2010

9. Purchase and install GPS units in all pumper and rescue trucks.

Responsibility: Covington County Emergency Management Agency, Board of Supervisors, Volunteer Fire Departments

Funding: \$3,000

Timetable for Completion: Purchase 5 each year

Expected Outcome: Better response time for firefighters, and could be required for proper NIMS documentation in the future.

Assessment Timetable: Review progress annually

10. Develop safety and maintenance programs for vehicles and other equipment at each Fire Department.

Responsibility: Covington County EMA and Covington County Volunteer Fire Departments

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: Spring 2009

Expected Outcome: Confidence that the vehicles and equipment are in proper working order before being called to a wildfire.

Assessment Timetable: One year after implementation

11. Research strategies to reimburse or incent volunteer firefighters and present to Board of Supervisors.

Responsibility: Covington County EMA

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: Summer 2009

Expected Outcome: More interest in becoming a volunteer firefighter

Assessment Timetable: Fall 2009, following county budget approval

Potential Funding Sources

1. Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program
Website: www.firegrantsupport.com
Application Period: Spring 2009
Program Description: Funding for training, equipment, vehicles, firefighter health and safety program and operations
2. Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Grant Program
Website: www.firegrantsupport.com
Application Period: Fall 2008
Program Description: Outreach to high risk target groups including children, seniors and firefighters. Monitor website for further information on eligible activities
3. Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program
Website: www.firegrantsupport.com
Application Period: Summer 2009
Program Description: Funding for the hiring of fire personnel and incentives for volunteer recruitment and retention
4. USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Grant Program
Website: www.rurdev.usda.gov
Application Deadline: Contact local USDA Representative
Program Description: Funding for assistance in developing an essential community facility. Funds can be used to construct, enlarge, or improve community facilities for health care, public safety and community and public services.
5. U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company Polaris Ranger Donation Program
Website: www.ustinc.com
Application Period: October 2008
Program Description: Donation of Polaris Ranger 6X6 utility vehicles for firefighting, rescue, police, emergency medical service, and wildlife law enforcement organizations.
6. Responder Knowledge Base Website
Website: www.rkb.us/
Program Description: Website contains information on currently available products, standards, training and grants
7. Firegrantshelp.com Website
Website: www.firegrantshelp.com
Program Description: Website contains information on resources for Fire and EMS assistance

References

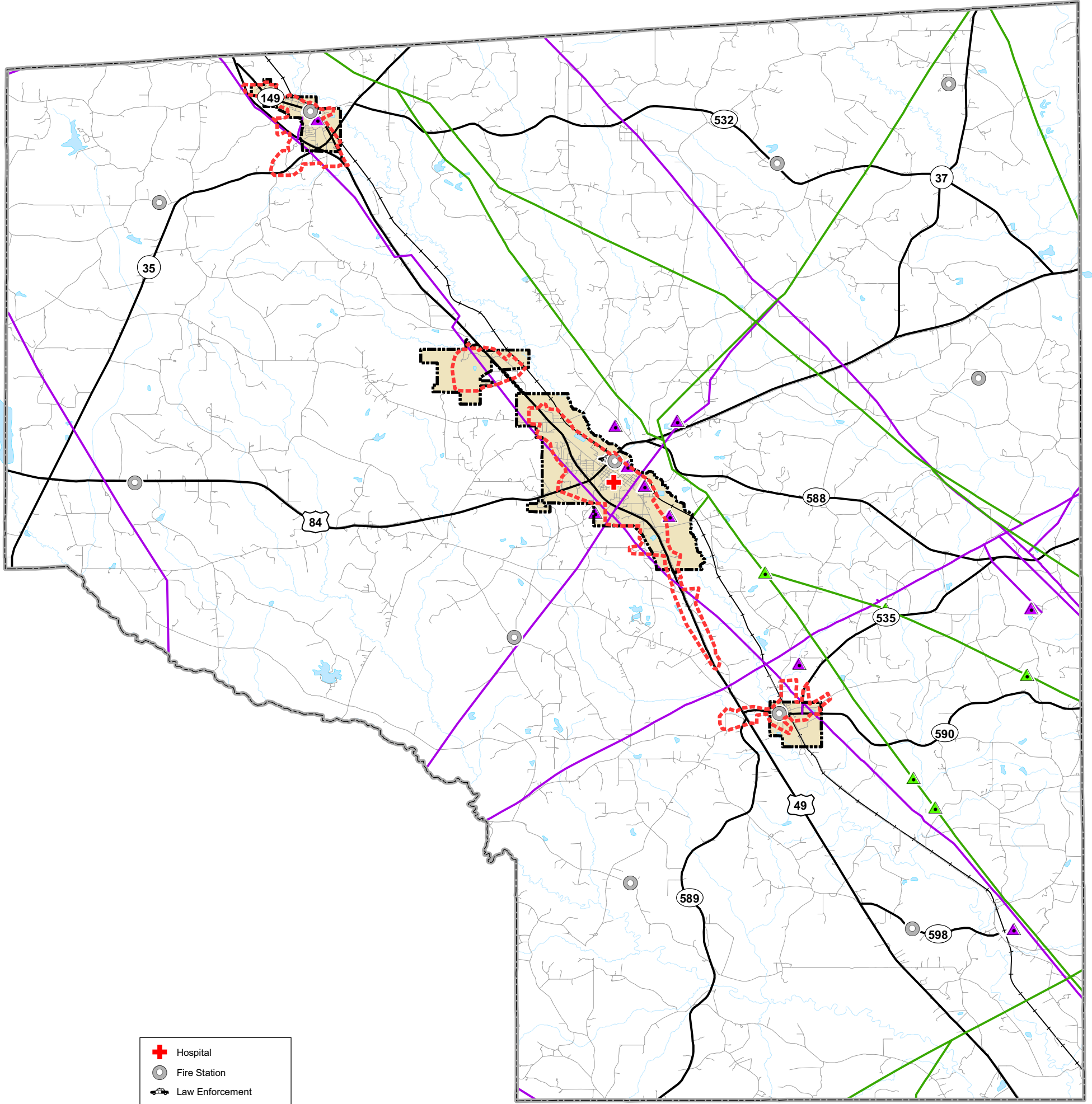
1. Covington County Hazard Mitigation Plan (under review)
2. Covington County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
3. Firewise
Around Your Home brochure
www.firewise.org
4. USDA Forest Service
Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan
March 2004

Project Contact Information

1. Covington County Emergency Management Agency
P.O. Box 848
Collins, MS 39428
Phone: (601) 765-1961
Fax: (601) 765-0283
gsandford@covingtoncountymms.gov

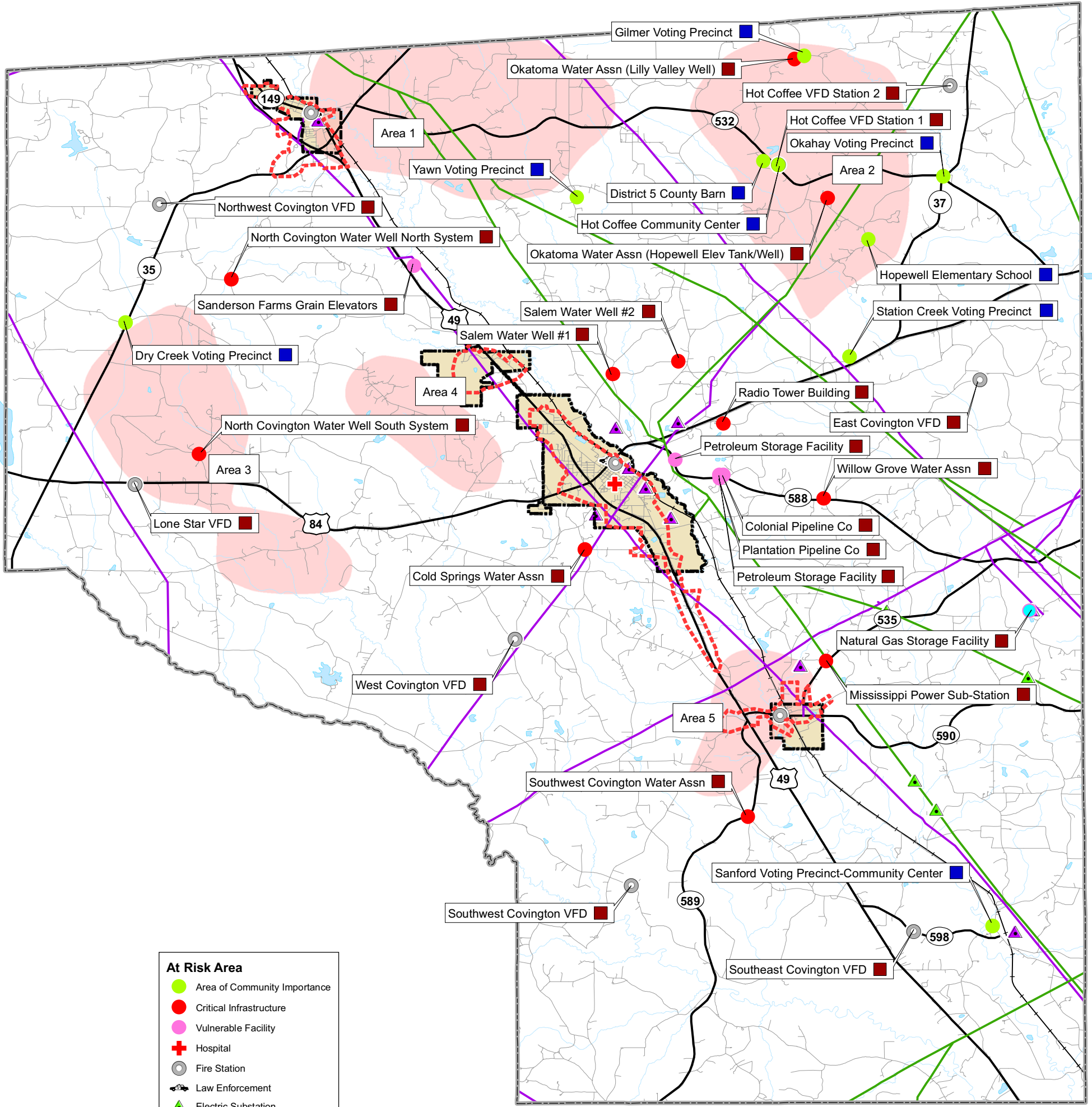
2. Mississippi Forestry Commission
477 South Gate Road
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
Phone: (601) 583-4240
Fax: (601) 583-2500
www.mfc.state.ms.us

3. Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District
9229 Highway 49
Gulfport, MS 39503
Phone: (228) 868-2311
Fax: (228) 868-7094
www.smpdd.com



- + Hospital
- Fire Station
- Law Enforcement
- ▲ Electric Substation
- ▲ Gas/Oil Facility
- Transmission Line
- Gas/Oil Pipeline
- Highway
- Road
- +— Railroad
- Named Stream
- Water Body
- Wildland-Urban Interface
- Incorporated City

Covington County, Mississippi
Wildfire Protection Plan
Base Map



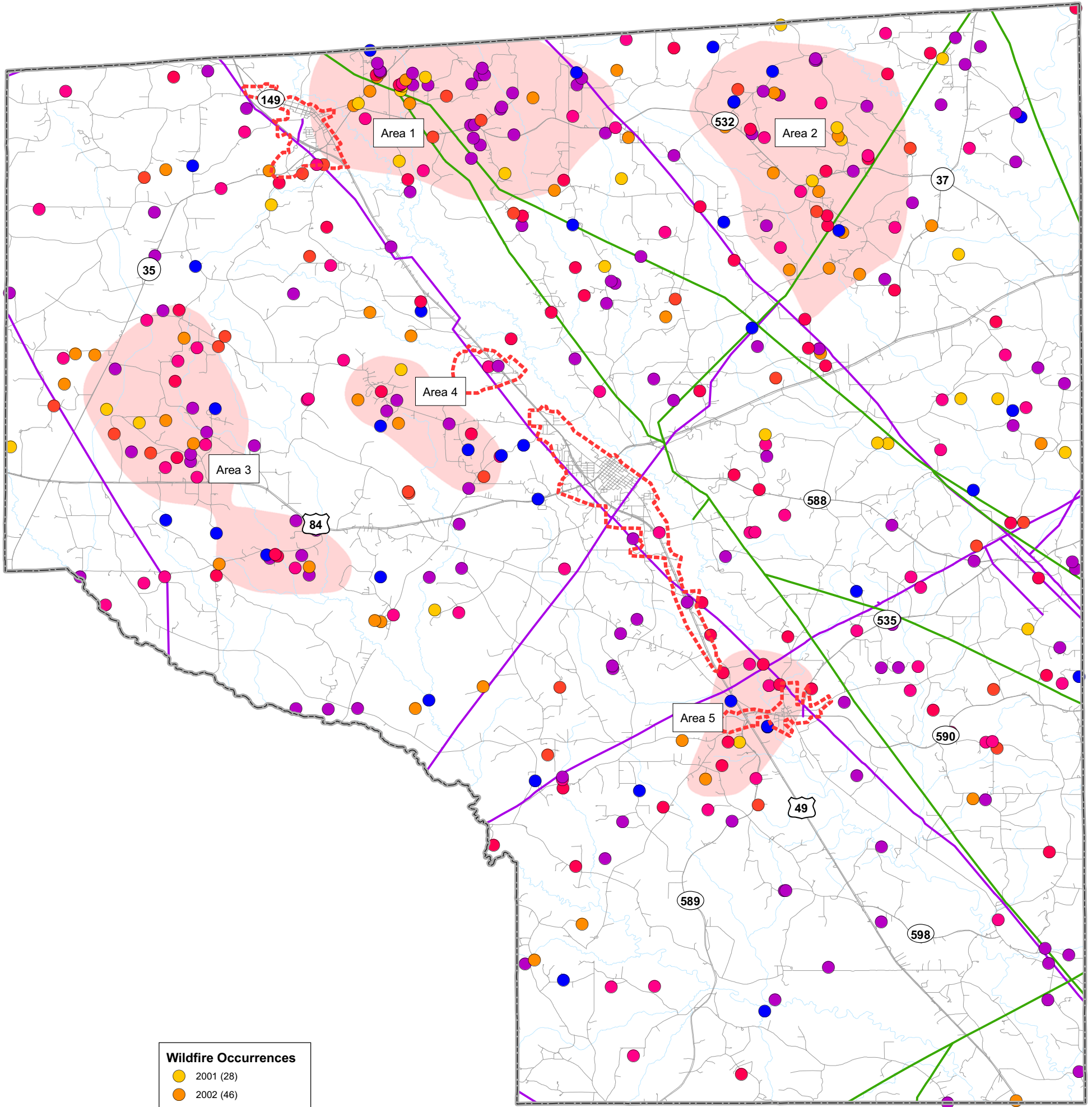
At Risk Area

- Area of Community Importance
- Critical Infrastructure
- Vulnerable Facility
- + Hospital
- Fire Station
- Law Enforcement
- ▲ Electric Substation
- ▲ Gas/Oil Facility
- Transmission Line
- Gas/Oil Pipeline
- Highway
- Road
- Railroad
- Named Stream
- Water Body
- High Fire Occurrence
- Incorporated City

Risk Assessment Rating

- Low
- Medium
- Medium-High
- High

Covington County, Mississippi Wildfire Protection Plan Risk Assessment Ratings

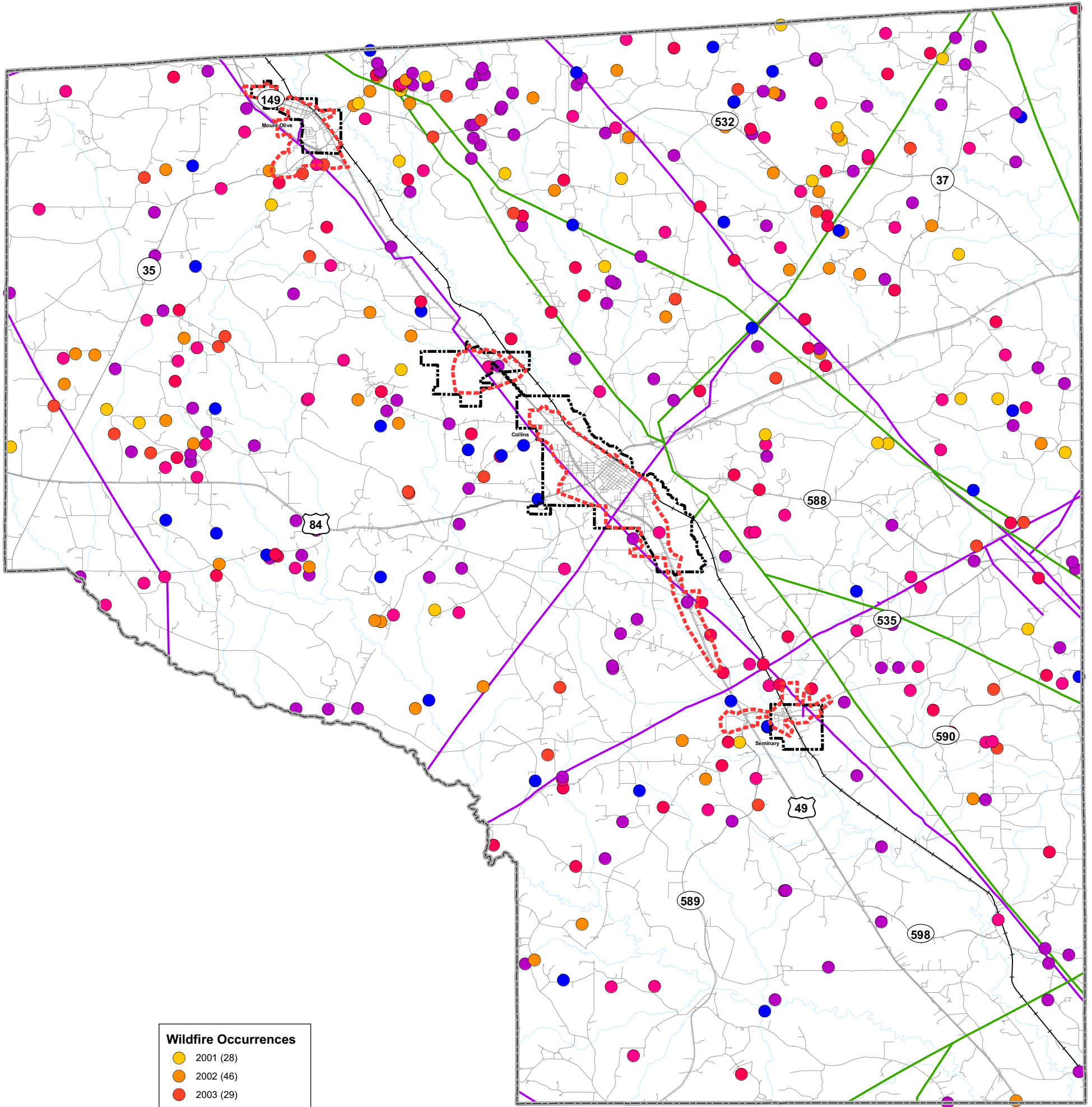


Wildfire Occurrences

- 2001 (28)
- 2002 (46)
- 2003 (29)
- 2004 (60)
- 2005 (68)
- 2006 (123)
- 2007 (36)

- Transmission Line
- Gas/Oil Pipeline
- Road/Highway
- Named Stream
- High Fire Occurrence
- ▭ Wildland-Urban Interface

Covington County, Mississippi
Wildfire Protection Plan
High Occurrence Wildfire Areas

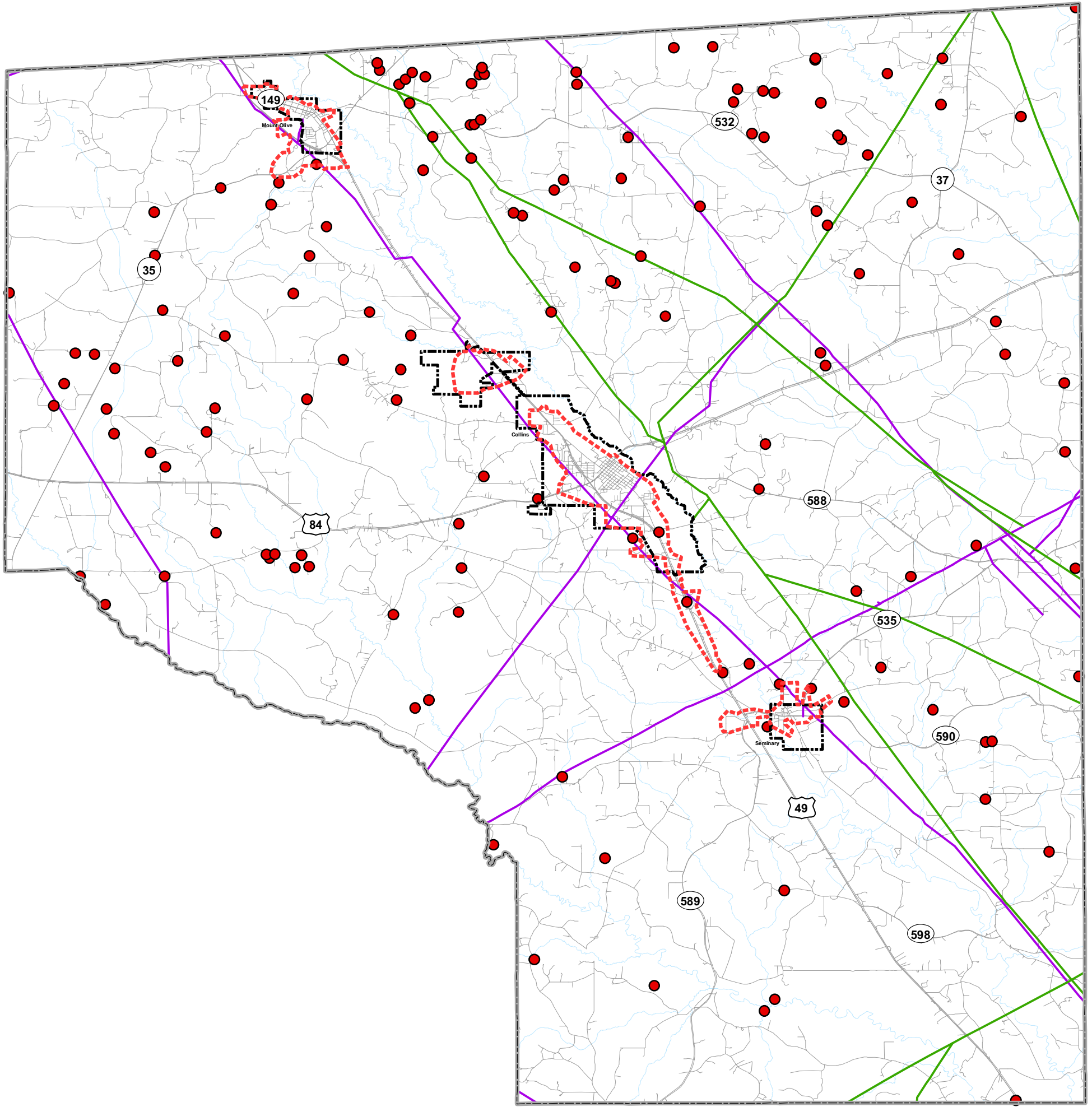


Wildfire Occurrences

- 2001 (28)
- 2002 (46)
- 2003 (29)
- 2004 (60)
- 2005 (68)
- 2006 (123)
- 2007 (36)

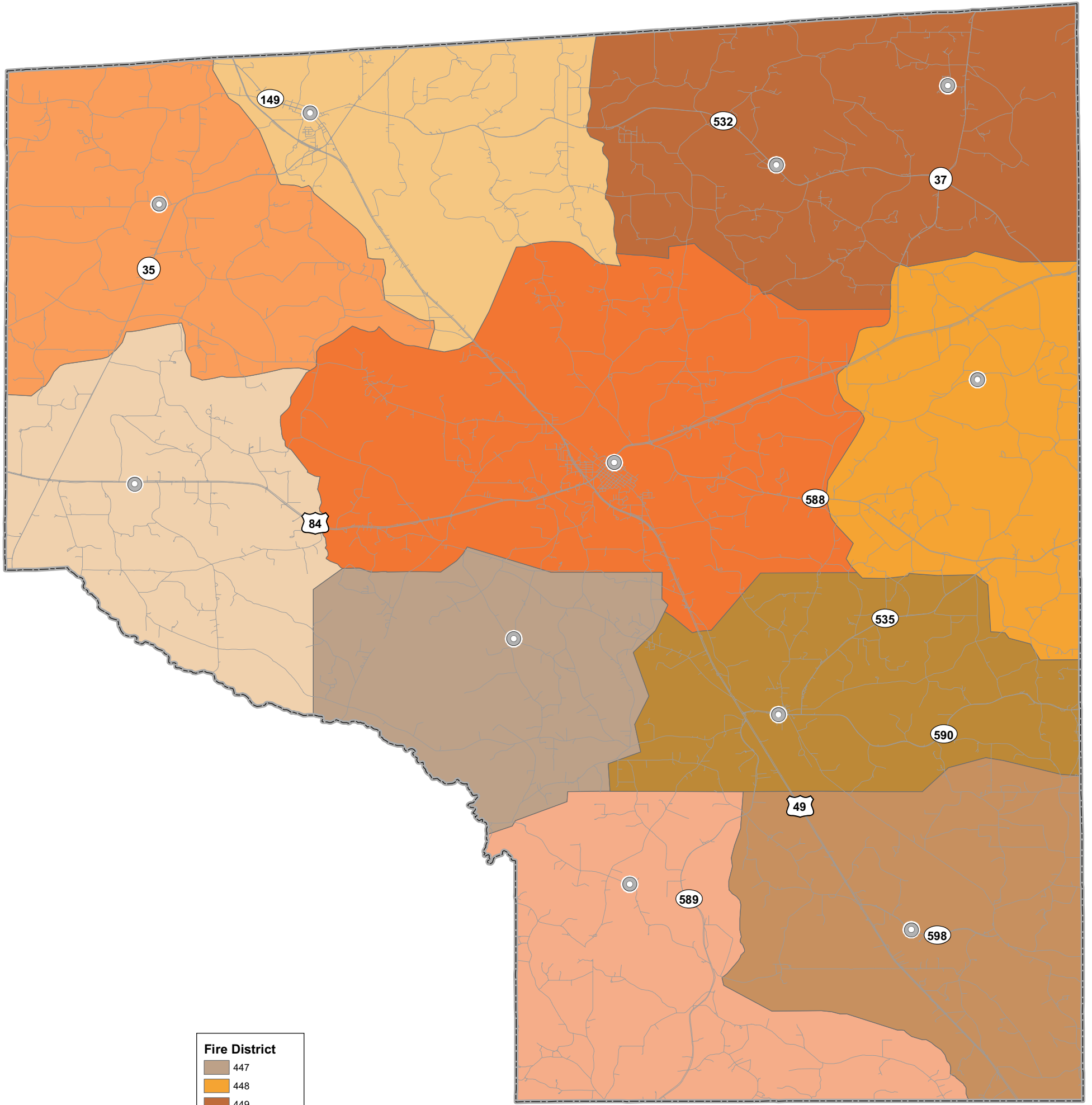
- Transmission Line
- Gas/Oil Pipeline
- Road/Highway
- Railroad
- Named Stream
- ▭ Wildland-Urban Interface
- ▭ Incorporated City

Covington County, Mississippi
 Wildfire Protection Plan
 Fire Data 2001 - 2007



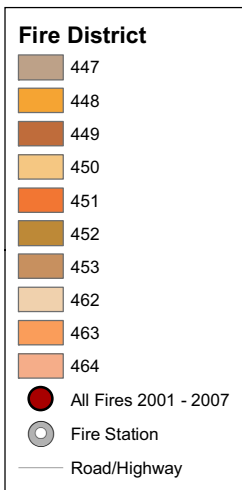
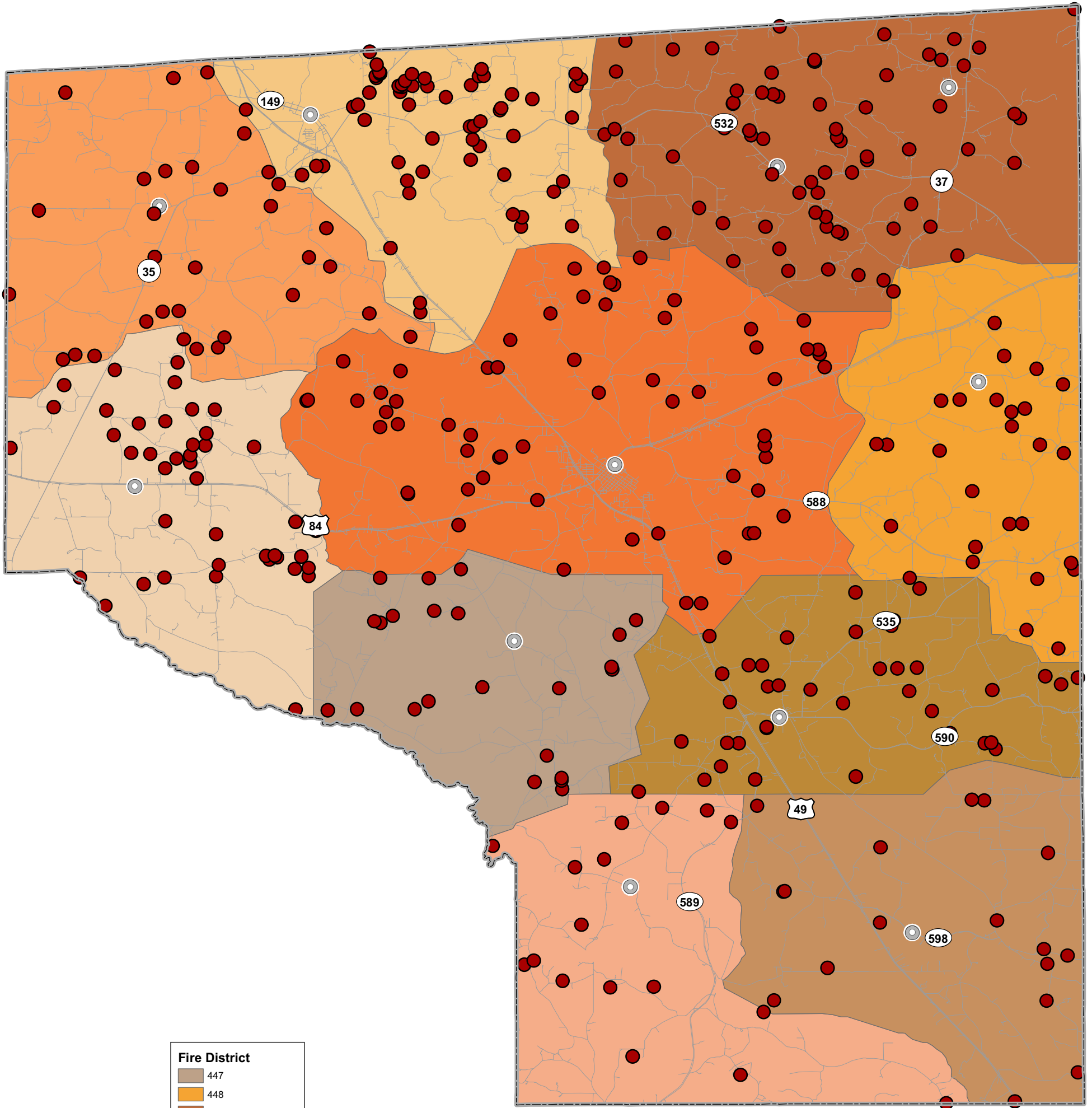
- Arson_Fires_2001_2007
- Transmission Line
- Gas/Oil Pipeline
- Road/Highway
- Named Stream
- Wildland-Urban Interface
- Incorporated City

Covington County, Mississippi Wildfire Protection Plan Arson Fires 2001 - 2007



Fire District	
	447
	448
	449
	450
	451
	452
	453
	462
	463
	464
	Fire Station
	Road/Highway

Covington County, Mississippi Wildfire Protection Plan Fire Response Areas



Covington County, Mississippi
 Wildfire Protection Plan
 Wildfires by Response Area