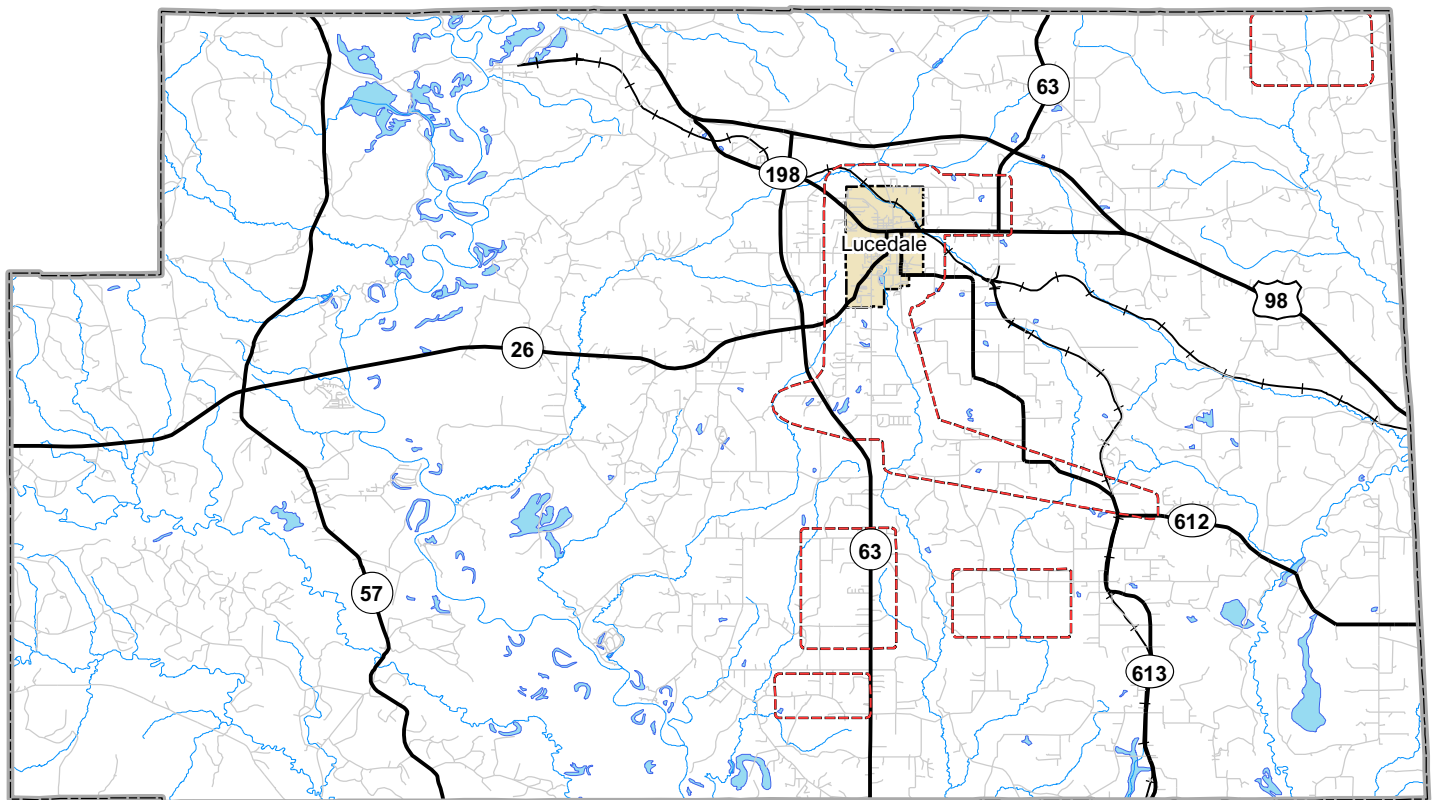


GEORGE COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

COUNTY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN



DECEMBER 2007

PREPARED BY SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT WITH FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION AND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

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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 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, George 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.

In March 2007, SMPDD officials began gathering geographical data and historical fire information. Planners then met with the local 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 representatives from the George County Board of Supervisors, the George County Fire Coordinator, the Mississippi Forestry Commission and The Nature Conservancy.

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: a County Risk Assessment, a Mitigation Projects List, Structure Ignitability Recommendations, an Action Plan and Assessment Strategy and Geographic Information System produced maps. It is the intent of the Steering Committee that this plan will be utilized to 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 which is currently being written and the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

Area Description

George County is located in the southeastern portion of the State of Mississippi and is rural in character. The only incorporated area is the City of Lucedale. The county is strategically located between Mobile, Alabama; Hattiesburg, Mississippi; and the Mississippi Gulf Coast cities of Pascagoula, Biloxi and Gulfport. State Highway 63 and U.S. Highway 98 are major transportation corridors to the north and south. State Highway 26 travels east through George County and terminates in Lucedale. Highway 98 provides direct access to Mobile and the City of Hattiesburg. Highway 63 provides access to Pascagoula and Moss Point on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The population of George County in 2000 was 19,144, showing a 14.8% growth in residency since 1990. This is a much faster growth rate than the 9% reported for the previous ten-year period from 1980-1990. Estimates projected by Angelou Economics as part of the Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan commissioned by Governor Haley Barbour in 2006 indicate that George County experienced a 14% population increase between 2005 and 2006; this increase was attributed primarily to the migration of coastal county residents following Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates a 2006 population of 21,430, reflecting an 11.9% increase from 2000. By 2010, the population is expected to rise to 22,817.

George County contains 483 square miles with land largely held by private landowners. Approximately 72% of the county land area is contained within commercial forests. The DeSoto National Park is located in George County. Recreational activities in the area are enhanced by the proximity of DeSoto National Forest, Red Creek Game Management Area, Pascagoula Game Management Area, and the Pascagoula and Escatawpa Rivers. The Bilbo Basin Shell Deposit Site in George County is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (prehistoric resource). The George County Courthouse and the Merrill Bridge have been named Mississippi Landmarks.

Located in the Coastal Plain, George County is heavily influenced by the coastal climate and is mild, with mean annual temperatures in the upper 60's. Average winter temperatures range from 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit with summer temperatures ranging from 85 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit. County wind speeds are generally less than 10 miles per hour, with a high peak near 11 during the month of March, and a low below 7 in August. Speeds often increase during thunderstorms, which occur frequently and are sometimes accompanied by strong to severe winds, including tornadoes. Average rainfall amounts range from 3.72" in the Fall to 6.04" in the Summer. Rainfall in the County is drained through the Pascagoula River Basin, comprising about 8800 square miles as Mississippi's second largest basin. The Basin empties into the Gulf of Mexico near Pascagoula. Major streams in the County include the Pascagoula, Leaf, and Chickasawhay Rivers, and the Black and Red Creeks. Bottomland hardwood forests cover 77% of the Pascagoula River area, along with aquatic habitats (14%), pine forests (4%), freshwater scrub/shrub (2%), and mixed habitats (3%).

Because of relatively high annual precipitation amounts, George County is not usually prone to property-damaging wildfires. However, occasional drought-like conditions prompt fire service officials to issue bans against burning, and encroachment of urban development into wildlands becomes more of a concern. Since the beginning of 2007, fire activity has been concentrated primarily in those parts of the United States that have experienced drought and abnormally dry conditions. Drought conditions contribute to an enhanced risk of wildfires affecting populated areas in George County. For the Southeast region of the United States, the first 6 months of the year have been persistently dry. In fact, December 2006-May 2007 has been drier than average for 7 of the past 9 years. Mississippi had the driest December-May in their 113-year record. The latest U. S. Drought Monitor report (November 27, 2007) indicates that the majority of George County is not currently considered to be in a drought condition, except for a very small portion of the northeast corner of the County, which is categorized as D0, Abnormally Dry.

About 80 percent of the land in George County is use-classified as timber, open, or agriculture, creating an enhanced risk to the county of wildfires. Streams and drainage basins create natural barriers that help reduce this risk. Woodlands fires are controlled by rural firefighting departments and/or forestry service personnel. Over the last three years, 938 wildfires (all woods fires) have been recorded in George County according to local volunteer fire department run, or call-out, records. Based on historical occurrences, wildfires can be expected annually in the less urbanized parts of the county. It is the threat of a spread of rural wildfires to the urban fringe that poses the greatest concern. Mitigation measures such as prescribed burns, training and equipping firefighters, and public education on fire protection and Firewise strategies all help to control the risk to life and property.

While climate conditions and debris can cause ignitability, certain industrial operations and facilities can also raise the threat of fire. These include the storage and/or transportation of flammable, toxic, and/or explosive materials. In George County, the County Cooperative stores a variety of hazardous materials. American Tank & Vessel, a major George County business, houses Type 2 hazards, which are addressed in the County's CEMP. Several pipelines crisscross George County and pose certain associated risks. Of the four pipelines in George County, two transport natural gas, one transports crude oil, and one transports diesel fuel, gasoline, kerosene, and turbine fuel.

George County has seen tremendous growth over the last several years. Most of the growth has been in the southern portion of the county. Due to this growth, there has been an increase in the development that the George County Volunteer Fire Departments protect. As development increases in the future so will the demands placed on the volunteer fire departments.

George County is divided into four fire grading districts covering the unincorporated portions of the county. Three of the districts are rated Class 8 and one district is rated Class 10. All the firefighters are volunteers and receive no compensation for the fire protection services. The fire grading districts all have a firefighter who has completed

medical first responder's training. Assistance is given to the George County Ambulance Service upon request. Total number of volunteers is based on current staffing levels, but seasonal fluctuations occur.

Fire Department	Fire Response Area	Station Location(s)	Total Number of Volunteers
Rocky Creek (8)	Grading District 1	1250 Rocky Creek Rd.	30
Shipman (8)	Grading District 1	3161 Shipman Rd.	18
Bexley (8)	Grading District 1	109 Bexley Rd. North	20
Agricola (8)	Grading District 2	6191 Hwy 613	14
Movella (8)	Grading District 2	1131 Hwy 613	10
Howell (8)	Grading District 2	4257 Howell Tanner Cha.	18
Ward (8)	Grading District 2	2167 Weeks Rd.	12
Barton (8)	Grading District 3	2112 Grain Elevator Rd.	18
Basin (8)	Grading District 3	1174 Pleasant Hill Church	22
Central (8)	Grading District 3	4146 Basin Central Rd.	13
Twin Creek (8)	Grading District 3	163 Camellia Rd.	14
Benndale (10)	Grading District 4	4271 Hwy 26 West	25
Broome (10)	Grading District 4	8109 Broome School Rd.	12
Salem (10)	Grading District 4	7269 Hwy 57 N	10

Strategic Goals of the County Wildfire Protection Plan

At the beginning of the planning process, the George County Fire Coordinator agreed to several goals for the CWPP. These goals were set to provide a vision for the overall process and to identify specific results to be obtained upon completion of the final document.

1. Define the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) for George 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. Identify needs of volunteer fire departments
 - Equipment (especially to fight wildfires)
 - Volunteer firefighter retention
6. Give recommendations to increase abidance with burn bans and strengthen enforcement policy
7. Improve water system
 - West side of river near Benndale
 - Southeast George County
8. Strengthen subdivision regulations
 - Access to private roads
 - Posting of house numbers
9. Identify strategies to encourage collaboration between George County and the Mississippi Forestry Commission

Mapping

The George 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 George County Base Map, George County Risk Assessment Ratings, George County Fire Data 2000-2006, High Occurrence Wildfire Areas, Arson Fires 2000-2004, George 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 is highly vegetated with many areas where wildland meets development. For this reason, the George 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 E-911 communication tower. 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. MFC data for George County shows a total of 123 fires in the year 2000, 76 fires in 2001, 56 fires in 2002, 51 fires in 2003, 46 fires in 2004, 69 fires in 2005, and 102 fires in 2006. 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 2000-2006, by the MFC, are reflected on the George County Wildfires

2000-2006 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 three 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 southern area of the county. Area 2 is geographically located in the mid-central area of the county near Highway 26. Area 3 is located in the eastern area of the county near Highway 98.

According to Mississippi Forestry Commission wildfire data, approximately 53% or 188 out of 352 fires tracked from 2000-2004 were attributed to arson. The map of Arson Fires by Year reflects the geographic distribution of these fires throughout the county.

The George County Fire 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 2000-2006 as well as fire district boundaries and department locations has been included. Wildfires 2000-2006 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 wildfires 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 enable available financial and human resources to be concentrated 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
- Medium-High
- High

Critical Infrastructure:

- Water Towers: Combined Utilities, Rocky Creek Utilities, Multimart Water District and Bexley Utilities

The various water towers located throughout the county were rated as medium. These structures have a low ignitability potential and are well maintained by the individual water associations. They would, however, be a significant loss if damaged or destroyed. Therefore, the water towers were rated medium.

- George Regional Hospital

The hospital is rated medium. There is a moderate risk for fire but a high smoke risk. Damage to the facility or loss of use would be significant to the community.

Vulnerable Facilities:

- Pipelines – located where the four-lane portion of Highway 63 intersects with Old Highway 63

The pipelines traversing the county are rated high. While there is only a minor possibility for ignitability, the location and function warrant a high rating.

Areas of Community Importance

- Glen Oaks Nursing Center

Risk of fire low but smoke risk high. Rated high overall

- Smith Manor

Risk of fire low but smoke risk high. Rated high overall

- Ramsey Springs Personal Care Home

Risk of fire low but smoke risk high. Rated high overall

- Silver Crest Personal Care Home

Risk of fire low but smoke risk high. Rated high overall

- George County High School

The high school has more of a smoke risk than a fire risk. It is located within a mile of a fire station, as are all of the schools. Due to its function as a shelter, the high school is rated medium.

- George County Senior Citizens Center

There is a high smoke risk but less of a fire risk. The rating is medium.

- Central Elementary School

While some risks exist, a fire station is located adjacent to the school. The rating is low.

- Agricola Elementary School

While some risks exist, a fire station is located adjacent to the school. The rating is low.

- Benndale Elementary School

The fire and smoke risk is nominal but the school's function as a shelter gives it a rating of medium.

- Rocky Creek Elementary School

The fire and smoke risk is nominal but the school's function as a shelter gives it a rating of medium.

- George County Middle School

This school is actually within the city limits of Lucedale and within the WUI. However, the committee chose to rate it because it functions as a shelter. The ranking is medium.

- George County Regional Correctional Facility

The risk is nominal and the facility receives a ranking of low.

- Bilbo Basin Shell Deposit Site

The site is listed only because of its status as a listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The ranking is low.

- Merrill Bridge

The rating is low for the historic bridge. It is a Mississippi Landmark and is of cultural value to the county but the risk of fire is low.

- Pascagoula River Wildlife Management Area

While some risks exist, the area is extremely well maintained. The rating is low.

Areas of Concern (may or may not be high occurrence areas)

- Whispering Pines Subdivision

Located off Highway 63 on a portion of former International Paper property, there is a substantial amount of pine timber in the area. The area is rated medium.

- South central portion of county near Highway 63 South

There is a fair amount of timber in the area and it is historically a high call area for the volunteer fire department. The area is rated medium.

- South end of Highway 98 in eastern part of county

There is pine timber in the area and it has been a target of arson in the past. The trees are located next to a major highway and could pose a smoke risk if wildfire were to breakout. The area is rated medium.

- Hunting camps in southwestern portion of county

There is heavy fuel in this area and the occasional practice of hunters burning property causes a potential threat of wildfire. The area is rated low.

- Southeastern portion of county

There is widespread growth of Cogon Grass in the area. If ignited it could spread fast with detrimental results. However, the county maintains a good spray program, so the area is rated medium.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness for each of the county volunteer fire departments was reviewed as a part of this planning process. Based on information provided by the fire coordinator, this assessment involved factors such as equipment availability and age, public protection classification and manpower.

Mutual aid agreements are in place with Jackson County, Greene County and the City of Lucedale. There is a limited mutual aid agreement with Stone County. The county owns all of the fire department buildings, trucks and equipment. A contract is in place between the county and the 14 fire departments for the volunteers to provide fire fighting services to 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 George County are listed below. All four of them are Class 8 except the area adjunct to Stone County, which is Class 10.

Mississippi State Rating Bureau Public Protection Classification List

District	Class
Rocky Creek	8
Shipman	8
Bexley	8
Agricola	8
Movella	8
Howell	8
Ward	8
Barton	8
Basin	8
Central	8
Twin Creek	8
Benndale	10
Broome	10
Salem	10

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, especially with the high population growth in the county.

There are approximately 160 volunteer firefighters in the county. While George County has experienced tremendous growth in recent years, many residents commute outside of the county for work. This puts a strain on the number of volunteer firefighters

available to fight daytime fires. There are no paid personnel in the county and only one full-time staff member in the City of Lucedale. In some cases, this has resulted in only one fire fighter being able to initially respond to a call. 911 Dispatch handles central dispatch from the basement of the George County Courthouse. Each of the fire grading districts has firefighters that have completed training to be medical first responders. They assist George County Ambulance Service when requested.

In addition, there are many cases when it is necessary for George County volunteer firefighters to work side-by-side with the Mississippi Forestry Commission. This has been a successful relationship resulting in improved protection of land area within George County. In order to better this relationship and improve the firefighting efforts by both agencies, it is recommended that biannual meetings be established for information sharing purposes. These meetings would allow inter-agency concerns to be addressed as well as provide training opportunities and project coordination. For instance, it has been reported that something as simple as parking a truck in the wrong place can destroy evidence. The roles and responsibilities of each agency need to be clarified and understood.

The minimum age to join a volunteer fire department is 18. This allows an individual to fight fires and drive a truck. The county also has a Junior Firefighter Program whereby 15 year olds can train to be a volunteer. The fire coordinator indicates that it is hard to recruit volunteers in some parts of the county but retention is a bigger problem.

George County should consider some incentive and recruitment techniques used for other volunteer fire departments across the nation. First, a community outreach program should be implemented that will target young adults to consider volunteer fire fighting. This program could be implemented through the local high school where students could be made aware of the opportunity to serve and might consider doing so at the legal age of 18.

Another community outreach/recruitment effort is for volunteer fire departments to become 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.

It is suggested that the fire service create and maintain an on-going recruitment program which identifies the current manpower needs as well as those expected over the next five years. Creating and having recruitment kits on-hand for prospective candidates and enlisting the local community through newspaper inserts and recruitment flyers placed at local restaurants and other businesses may be successful.

Adding recruitment information to the county website, local cable service announcements and any community mail-outs or newsletters as well as coordinating recruitment efforts with other county efforts (e.g. Public Works) will save on cost and reach potential recruits who would otherwise be missed.

While it unlikely that the county currently has the resources to hire full-time, paid firefighters or offer fringe benefits as incentives to volunteers, there are some low-cost or no-cost strategies that may help to retain firefighters. Points can be awarded to individuals for response calls, meeting attendance, drills, fundraisers, training courses or any other set activity. These accumulated points then correspond with certain “prizes.” Prizes may include gift certificates to area merchants or restaurants (donated), tickets to sporting events or other community events and complimentary membership to county sponsored/owned amenities (parks, pools, concerts).

In addition to the MSRB Rating and manpower issues, equipment status is tracked and assessed. A listing of current available information on large equipment with description, age and location is provided below. Currently, the departments utilize a variety of large firefighting equipment with no immediate needs identified. However, a concern may arise in the future as this equipment ages if funds are not available for replacement.

Most of the fire equipment in George County is relatively new. The oldest Class A Pumper is a 1997 model. The threshold for rating purposes is 15 years. The fire coordinator indicates that there is limited equipment suitable to fight wildfires. More brush trucks are needed in the county. Since Hurricane Katrina, several FEMA grants have been awarded to buy equipment.

George County Fire District Equipment List

Department	Year	Make/Model	Type	Owner	Grant	Station
AGRICOLA	2005	Sterling	Vacuum Tanker	County	X	FEMA
	2000	International 4900	Pumper	County	X	RFTAAP
	1976	Ford 750	Truck	County		
	1994	Dodge Dakota	Truck	County		
AGRICOLA			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		
BARTON	2000	International 4900	Pumper	County	X	RFTAAP
	2004	Ford F750	Tanker	County	X	FEMA
	1974	Dodge W30	Pumper	County		
	1977	Ford F750	Tanker	County		
	1985	Ford F700		County		
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Generator, 5500 watt	County		
BASIN	1997	International 4900	Pumper	County		
	1979	International CO1950B	Pumper	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		

Department	Year	Make/Model	Type	Owner	Grant	Station
	2004	International	Pumper Tanker	County	X	FEMA
	1993	GMC Topkick	Tanker	County		
	1990	Ford F Superduty	Brush Truck	County		
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		
BENNDALE	2000	International	Pumper	County	X	RFTAAP
	1978	International	Tanker	County		
	1978	Ford 700	Tanker	County		
	1977	Dodge	Brush Truck	County		
	1977	Ford 750	Tanker	County		
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		
BEXLEY	1976	Ford F750	Pumper	County		
	1979	Ford F700	Tanker	County		
	1990	Chevrolet 3500	Brush Truck	County		
	2000	International 4900	Pumper	County	X	RFTAAP
	2004	International 4400	Vacuum Tanker	County	X	FEMA
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		
BROOME	1988	Chevrolet CC7	Pumper	County		
	1985	GMC	Tanker	County		
	2005	Freightliner	Pumper	County	X	RFTAAP
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		
CENTRAL	2000	International 4900	Pumper	County	X	RFTAAP
	1975	Ford F750	Pumper	County		
	1989	Chevrolet	Tanker	County		
	1987	International S2500	Tanker	County		
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		
HOWELL	2004	Freightliner M2	Pumper	County	X	FEMA
	1983	Ford 370-4v	Pumper	County		
	1984	GMC	Brush Truck	County		
	2006	Kenworth	Tanker	County	X	RFTAAP
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		

Department	Year	Make/Model	Type	Owner	Grant	Station
MOVELLA	2000	International	Pumper	County	X	RFTAAP
	1991	GMC	Tanker	County		
	1974	Dodge	Brush Truck	County		
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		
ROCKY CREEK	1997	International	Pumper	County		
	2007	International	Vacuum Tanker	County		
	1976	Ford F750	Pumper	County		
	1976	Ford 750	Tanker	County		
	1984	Ford 9000	Tanker	County		
	1977	Dodge	Brush Truck	County		
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Generator, 10 hp	County		
		Mobile & Portable Radios	County			
SALEM	1985	Ford F750	Pumper	County		
	1979	GMC C7D	Tanker	County		
	2005	Freightliner	Pumper	County	X	RFTAAP
	2007		Vacuum Tanker	County	X	FEMA
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Generator, 10 hp	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		
SHIPMAN	2003	International	Tanker	County	X	FEMA
	2000	International 4900	Pumper	County	X	RFTAAP
	1990	Ford F700	Pumper	County		
	1977	Dodge 4X4	Brush Truck	County		
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
		Mobile & Portable Radios	County			
TWIN CREEK	2000	International 4900	Pumper	County	X	RFTAAP
	2006	International	Tanker	County	X	FEMA
	1993	Ford F250	Truck	County		
	1969	Ford HR72	Pumper	County		
	1979	Chevrolet C70	Tanker	County		
	1984	International	Tanker	County		
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
		Mobile & Portable Radios	County			
WARD	2000	International	Tanker	County	X	RFTAAP
	1984	Chevrolet	Brush Truck	County		

Department	Year	Make/Model	Type	Owner	Grant	Station
	1976	Ford	Pumper	County		
			Chainsaws (2)	County		
			Generator, 5500 watt (2)	County		
			Mobile & Portable Radios	County		

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 specific treatments were identified or found to be necessary at this time. The facilities and infrastructure in George County are generally well maintained and have moderate to low ignitability potential.

The sites identified as Vulnerable Facilities involve the use or transport of petroleum or other hazardous materials. There is an increased potential for structure ignitability at or near these sites due to the natural characteristics of these operations. Education of citizens residing near these facilities appears to be the best defense. Developers should be aware of these facilities and plan accordingly when building new subdivisions.

Mitigation projects for High Occurrence Wildfire Areas were limited to a community outreach and education program involving the identification and prosecution of arsonists. The Steering Committee also identified the need for these areas to be revisited in the future for creation and implementation of other mitigation projects.

Mitigation Projects

COUNTY

1. Develop a homeowner education program
2. Encourage large developments to become Firewise USA Communities
3. Maintain program to eradicate/control Cogon grass

In addition to mitigation projects, structure ignitability recommendations can be formulated and then 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.

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.

Structure Ignitability Recommendations

Homeowners

1. Provide a clearing of at least 30 feet around structure 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

Action Plan and Assessment Strategy

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

1. Purchase of brush trucks to better fight wildfires.

Responsibility: George County Fire Coordinator, Board of Supervisors in coordination with fire departments

Funding: \$150,000 through Homeland Security or other grant funds

Timetable for Completion: 5 years or as grants become available

Expected Outcome: Better access and firefighting capability

Assessment Timetable: 5 years
2. Establish biannual meetings between the Mississippi Forestry Commission and the George County Volunteer Fire Departments.

Responsibility: George County Fire Coordinator and the Mississippi Forestry Commission

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: Implement Immediately

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

Assessment Timetable: 2 – 5 years
3. 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. Instructions on proper addressing should be listed.

Responsibility: George County Fire Coordinator 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 2008, Coordinate with Fire 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 noncompliant residential burns

Assessment Timetable: Summer 2008

4. Suggest changes/additions to Subdivision Regulations relating to access to private roads and driveways and to mandate proper posting of house numbers for presentation to Board of Supervisors.

Responsibility: George County Volunteer Fire Departments, Fire Coordinator, Board of Supervisors

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: Immediately

Expected Outcome: Better access, improved safety and decrease in response time for local volunteer firefighters

Assessment Timetable: Spring 2008

5. Develop a community outreach program to educate citizens, specifically young adults, 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. Also to include National Fire Protection Association public service announcements.

Responsibility: George County Fire Coordinator in coordination with local Volunteer Fire Departments, Mississippi Forestry Commission

Funding: Volunteer Fire Departments, grants, Mississippi Forestry Commission

Timetable for Completion: 1-2 times per year in coordination with Fire Awareness Month

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

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

Responsibility: George County Fire Coordinator

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

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

Responsibility: George County Fire Coordinator, 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

8. Determine the best sites and methods to install more deep wells at stations, dry hydrants and elevated tanks, especially near Benndale and in the southeast portion of the county. Also, map landowners with private ponds that could be used as a water source until a permanent solution is found.

Responsibility: George County Fire Coordinator, Water Associations

Funding: Seek grant funding

Timetable for Completion: 5 years

Expected Outcome: More access to water to fight wildfires

Assessment Timetable: Review progress every 2 years

9. Encourage Mississippi Insurance Commissioner to consider rebate program to allow for home assessments and homeowner mitigation projects.

Responsibility: George County Fire Coordinator, Board of Supervisors, Volunteer Fire Departments, Mississippi Forestry Commission

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: Spring 2008

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 2008 after legislative session ends.

10. Research funding a position to assist the fire coordinator for George County.

Responsibility: George County Fire Coordinator, Board of Supervisors

Funding: \$0

Timetable for Completion: 3 years

Expected Outcome: Better staffing of fire service

Assessment Timetable: Review funding status on an annual basis

11. Develop a program to educate the public on the seriousness of burn bans in the aftermath of a storm.

Responsibility: George County Fire Coordinator

Funding: \$500 for printed materials; seek grant funds; also public service announcements at no cost

Timetable for completion: Early Summer 2008

Expected Outcome: Fewer fires caused by negligence after storms

Assessment Strategy: Winter 2009 (after heavy storm season) and every winter thereafter

Potential Funding Sources

1. Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program
Website: www.firegrantsupport.com
Application Deadline: Spring, 2008
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 Deadline: 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 Deadline: Summer, 2008
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 Deadline: December 28, 2007
Program Description: Donation of Polaris Ranger 6X6 utility vehicles for firefighting, rescue, police, emergency medical service, and wildlife law enforcement organizations.
6. First Responder Institute Website
Website: www.firstresponder.org
Program Description: Provide support to local U.S. fire departments and emergency service personnel.
7. Responder Knowledge Base Website
Website: www.rkb.mipt.org
Program Description: Website contains information on currently available products, standards, training and grants

8. Grants Office
Website: www.firegrants.info and www.grantsoffice.com
Program Description: Provides info, tools, and tips to help fire departments be more successful at obtaining funds from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program.

References

1. George County
Hazard Mitigation Plan
Under draft form – currently being written
2. George County
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. George County Emergency Management
355 Cox Street, Suite J
Lucedale, MS 39452
Phone: (601) 947-7557
Fax: (601) 947-9225

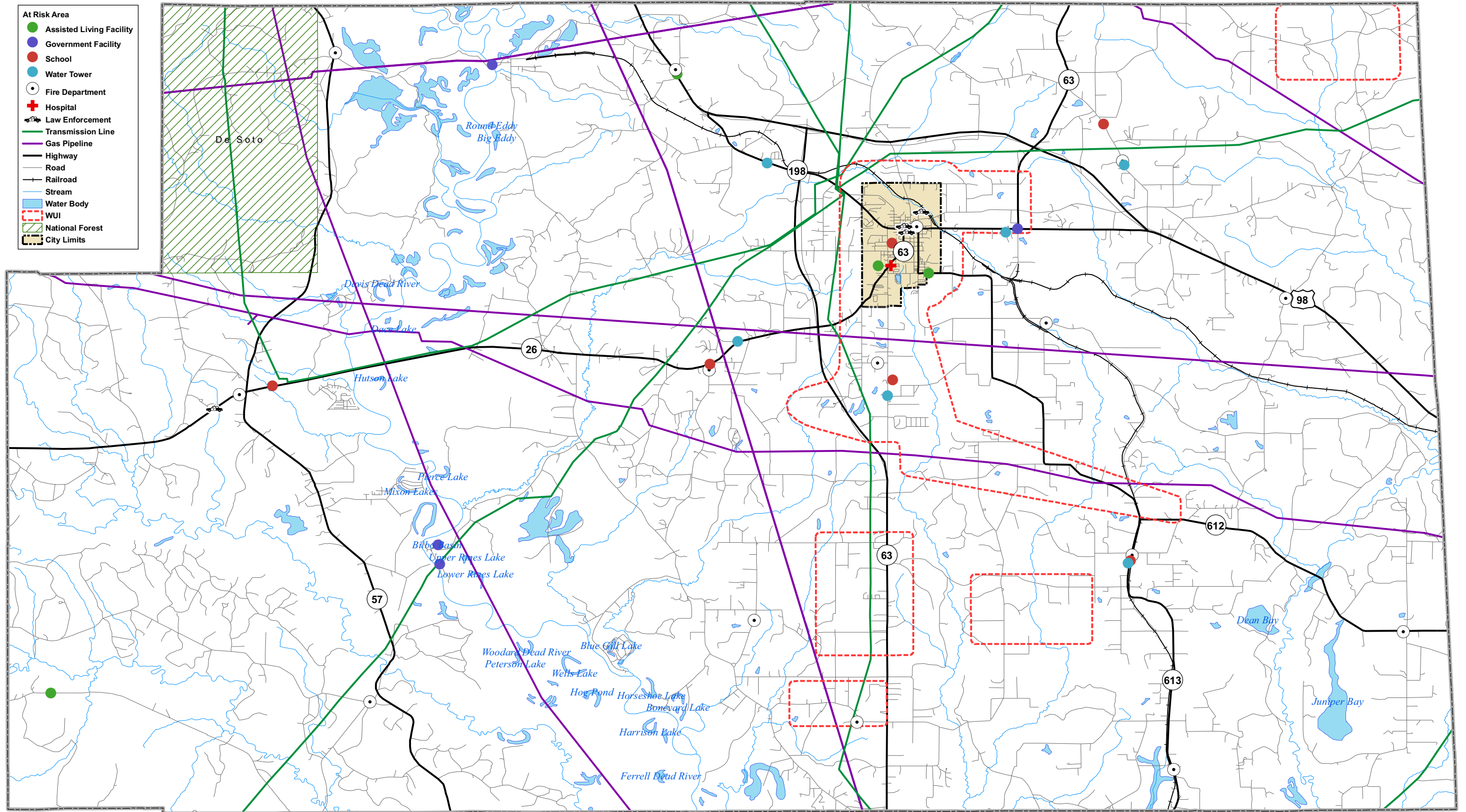
2. Mississippi Forestry Commission
477 South Gate Road
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
Phone: (601) 583-4240
Fax: (601) 583-2500
www.mfc.state.ms.us

3. The Nature Conservancy
405 Briarwood Drive, Suite 101
Jackson, MS 39206
Phone: (601) 713-3355
Fax: (601) 982-9499
www.tnc.org

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

George County, Mississippi

- At Risk Area
- Assisted Living Facility
- Government Facility
- School
- Water Tower
- Fire Department
- Hospital
- Law Enforcement
- Transmission Line
- Gas Pipeline
- Highway
- Road
- Railroad
- Stream
- Water Body
- WUI
- National Forest
- City Limits

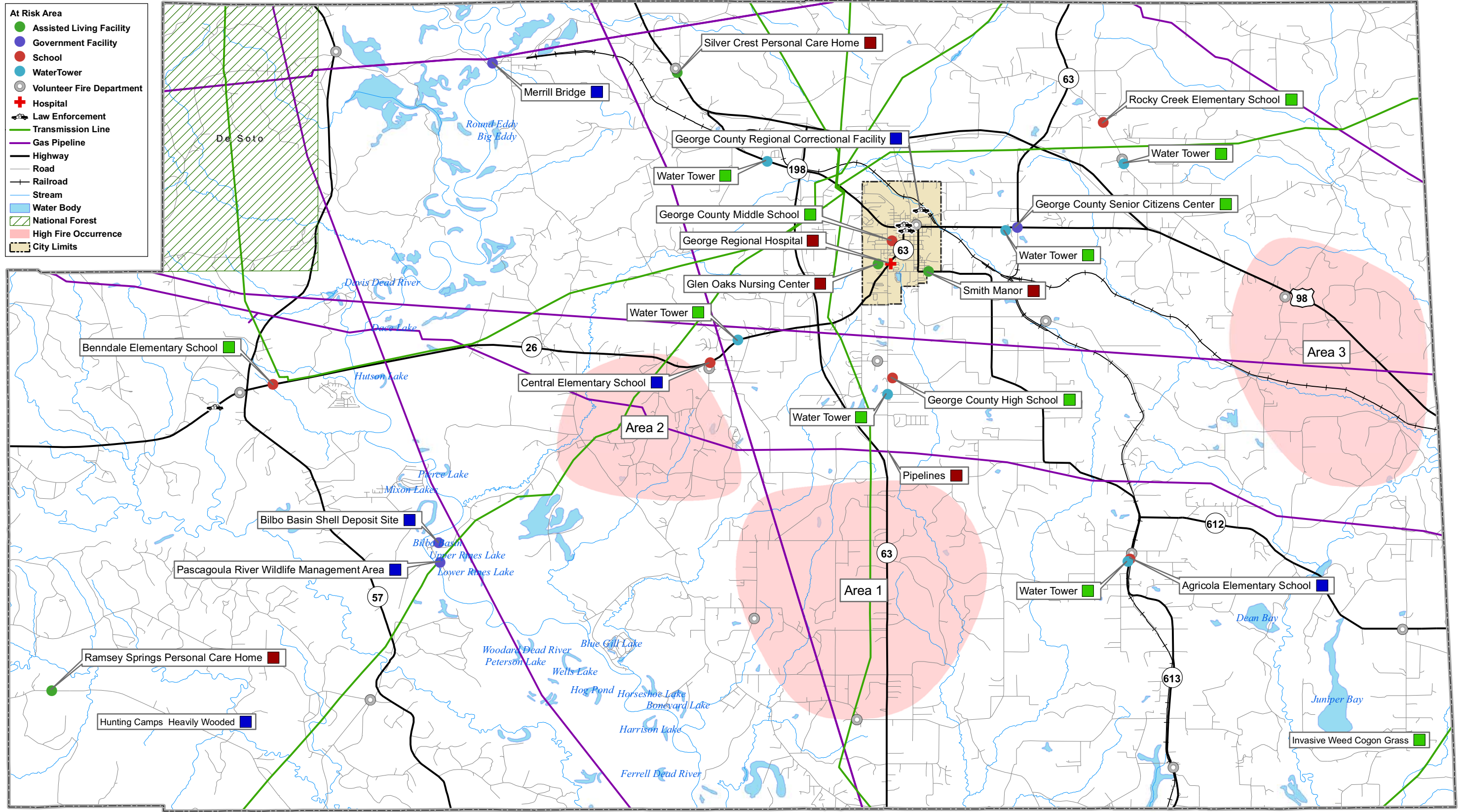


Wildfire Protection Plan Base Map



George County, Mississippi

- At Risk Area**
- Assisted Living Facility
 - Government Facility
 - School
 - Water Tower
 - Volunteer Fire Department
 - + Hospital
 - + Law Enforcement
 - Transmission Line
 - Gas Pipeline
 - Highway
 - Road
 - + Railroad
 - Stream
 - Water Body
 - National Forest
 - High Fire Occurrence
 - City Limits

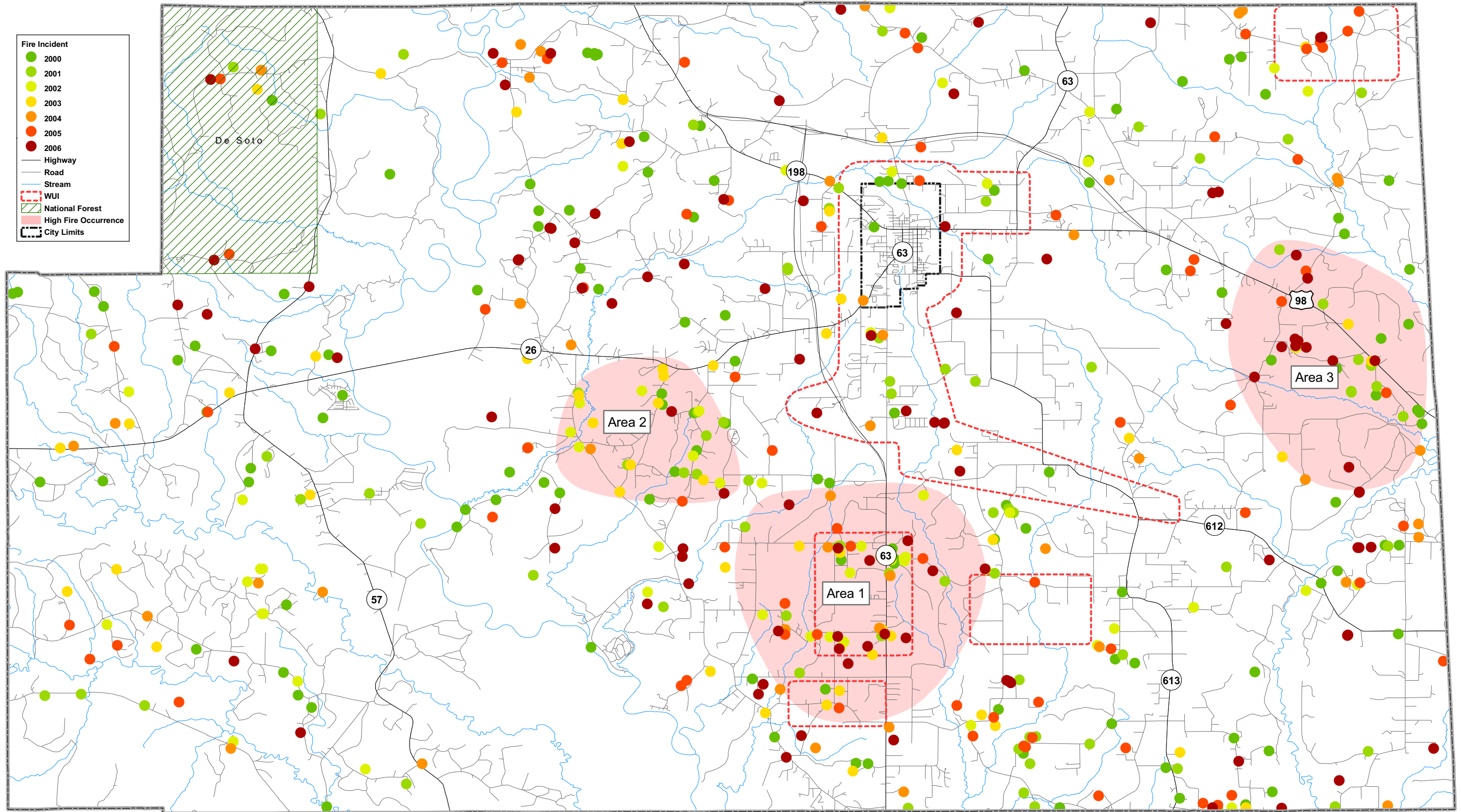


Wildfire Protection Plan Risk Assessment Ratings

- Risk Assessment Rating**
- Low
 - Medium
 - Medium-High
 - High

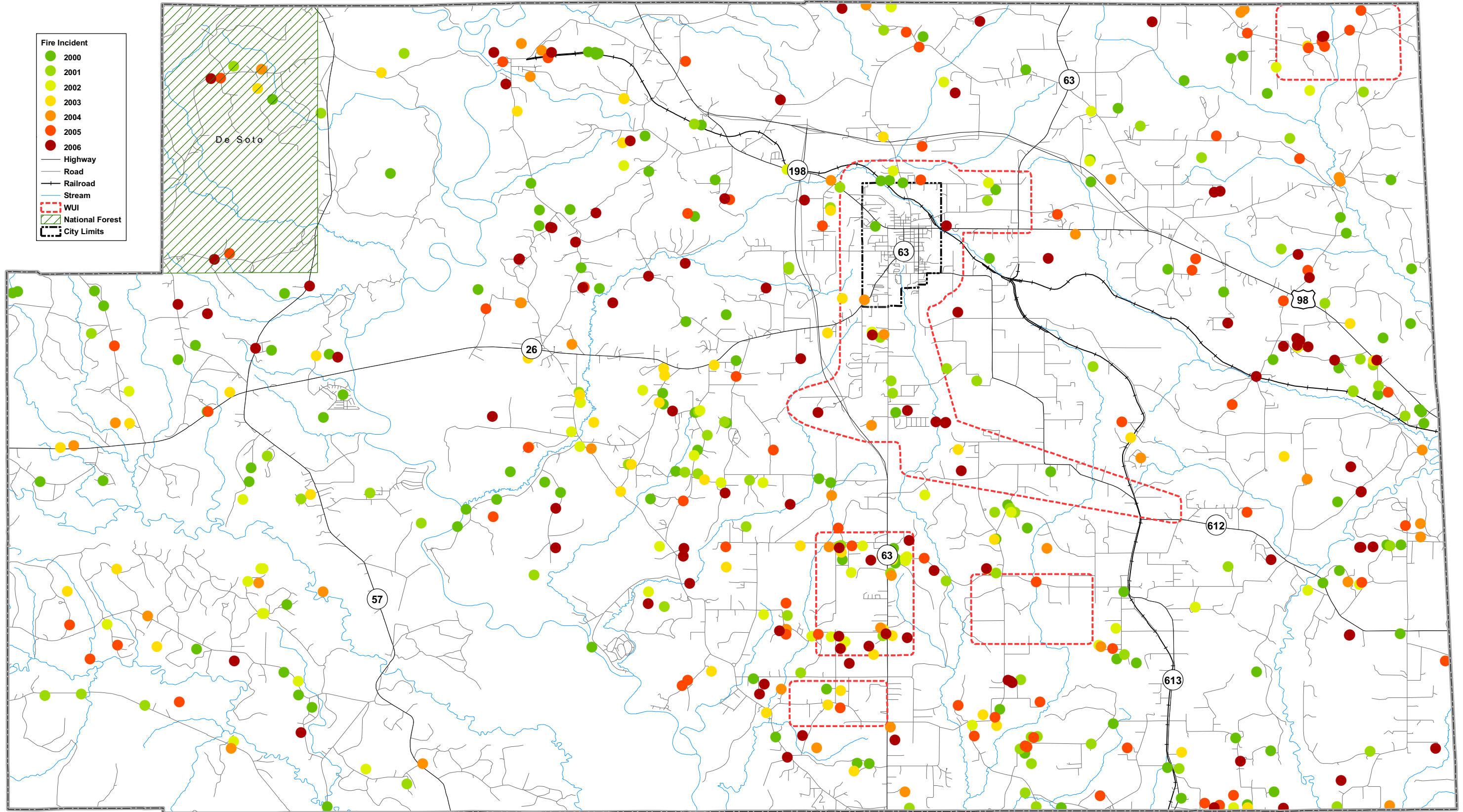


George County, Mississippi



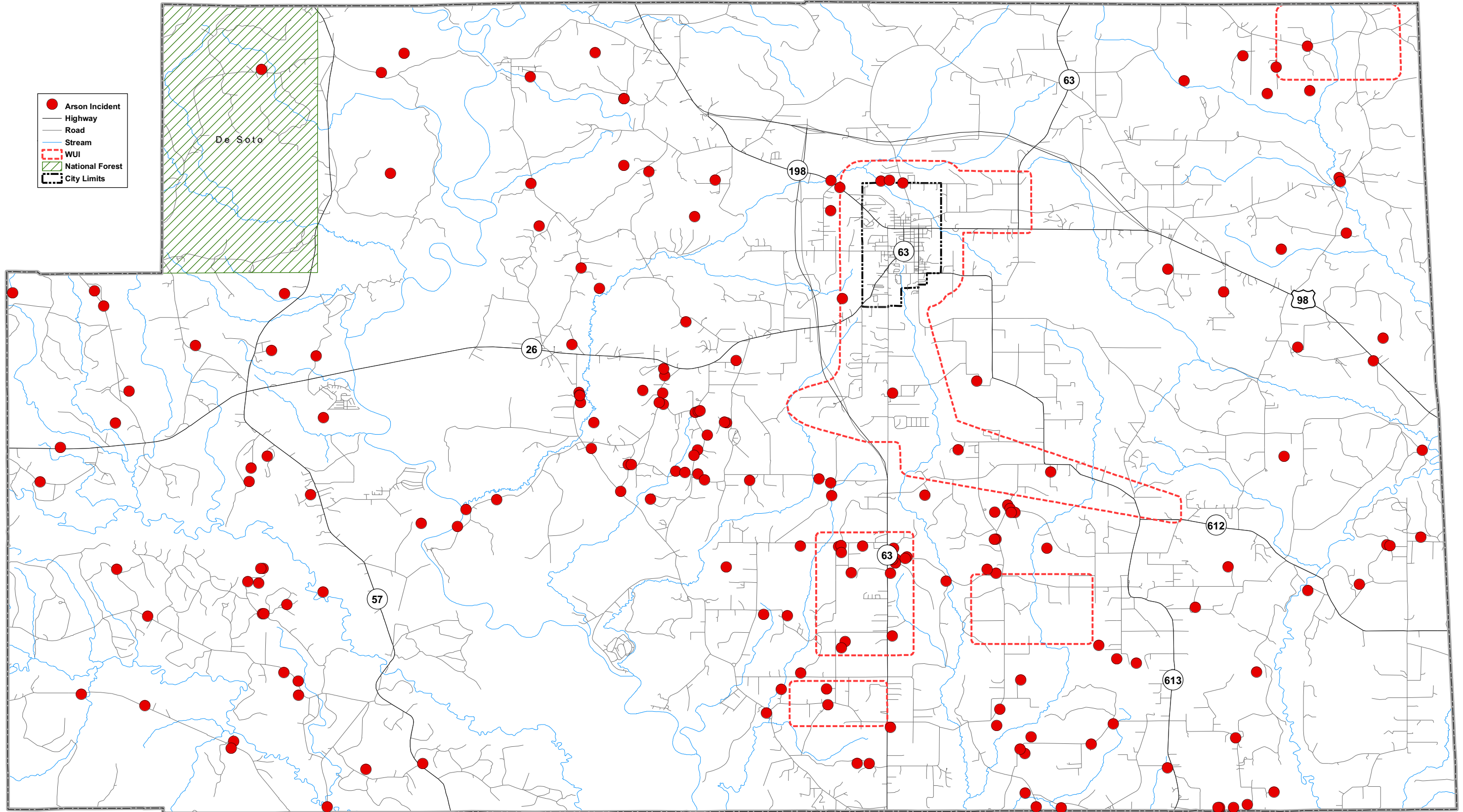
Wildfire Protection Plan High Occurrence Wildfire Areas

George County, Mississippi



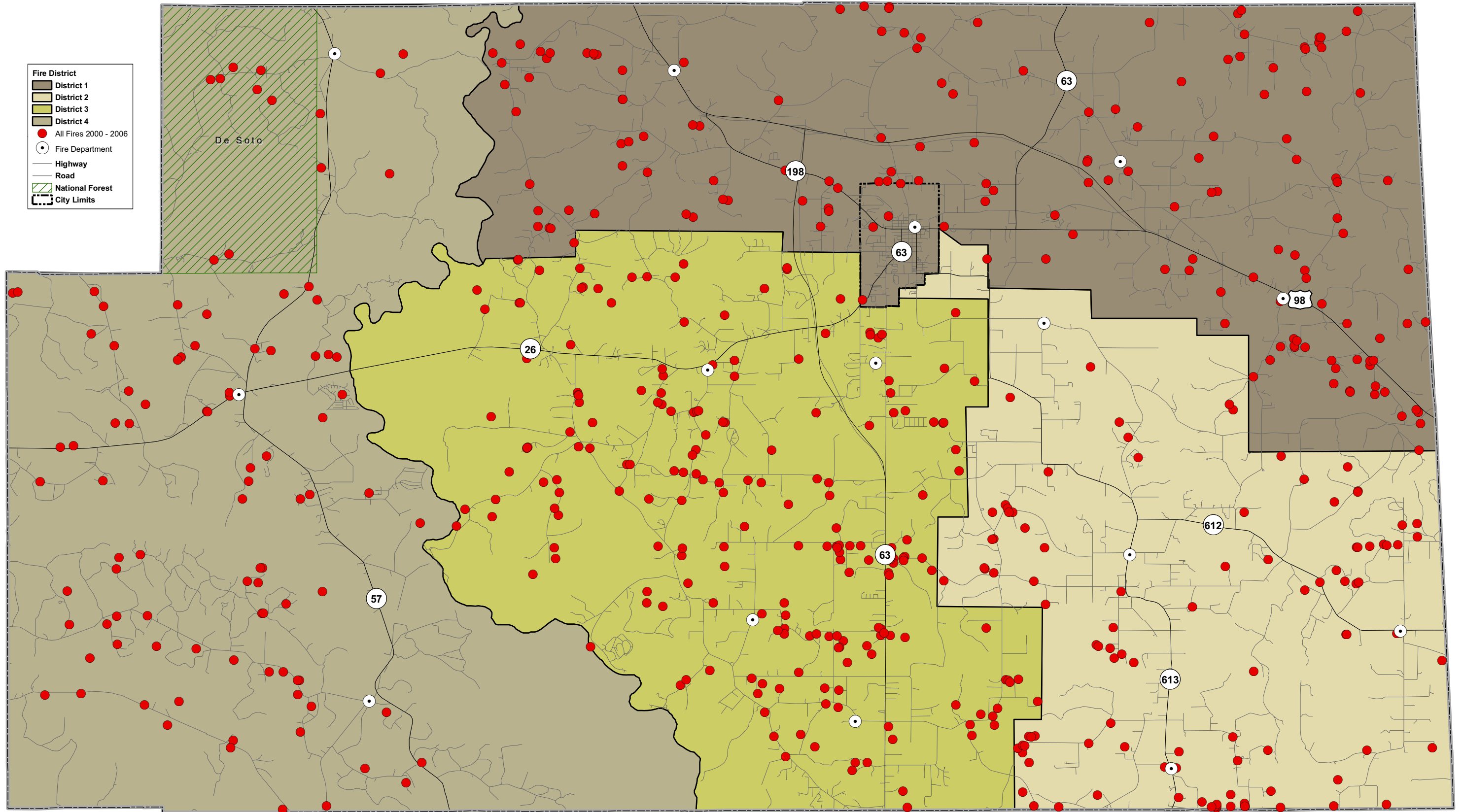
Wildfire Protection Plan
Fire Data 2000 - 2006

George County, Mississippi



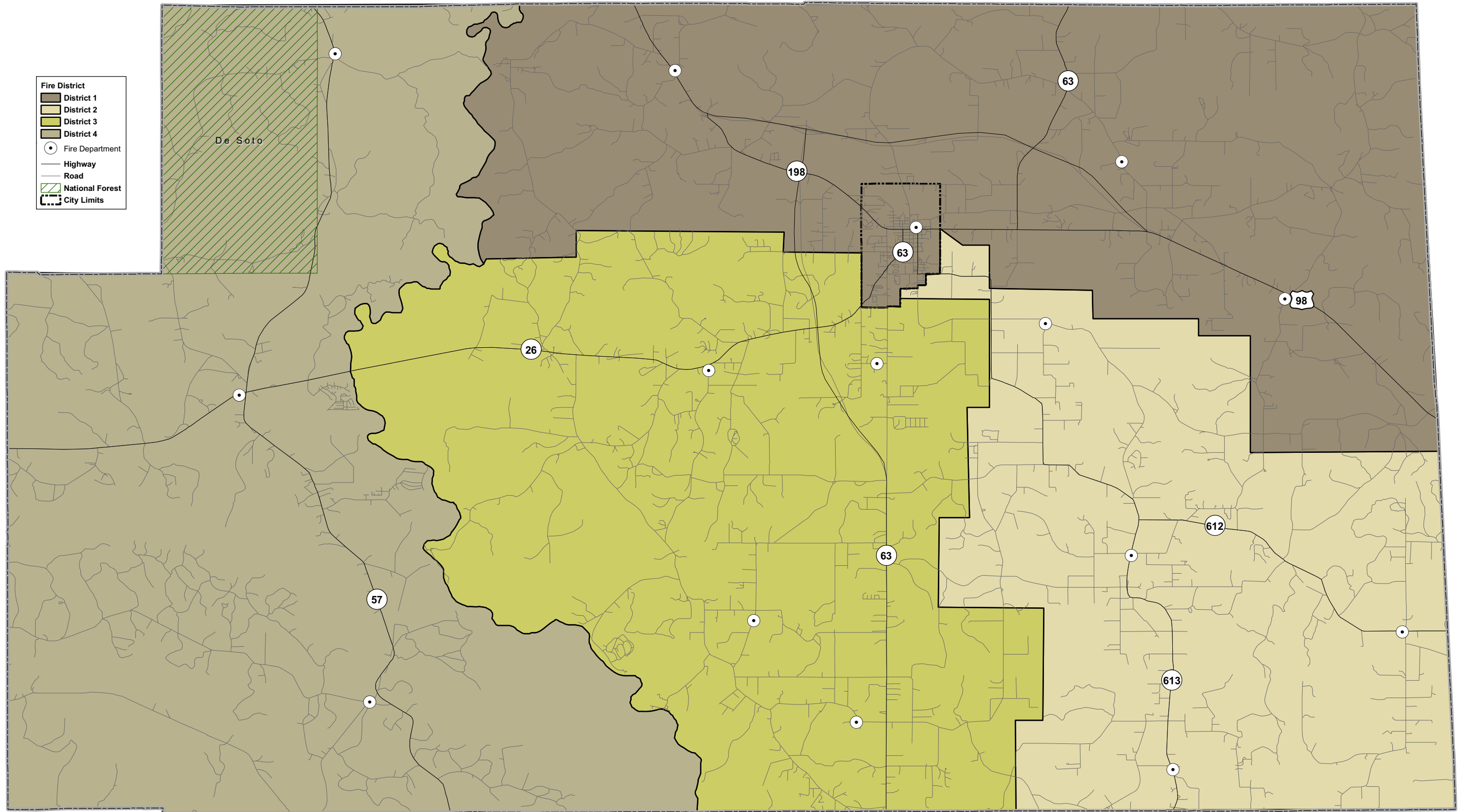
Wildfire Protection Plan Arson Fires 2000 - 2004

George County, Mississippi



Wildfire Protection Plan Wildfires by Response Area

George County, Mississippi



Wildfire Protection Plan Fire Response Areas