



# **Caloosahatchee Forestry Center 2016 Wildfire Mitigation Action Plan**



***Collier, Hendry, and Lee Counties***



**Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**

**Adam H. Putnam, Commissioner**

The Caloosahatchee Forestry Center (CaFC) is responsible for wildfire mitigation and suppression in the counties of Collier, Hendry and Lee in Southwest Florida. Accelerating population growth in the region over the last several decades has resulted in an expansive wildland urban interface (WUI). The WUI presents the greatest challenge to mitigation and suppression efforts within the Center. In addition to wildfire mitigation and suppression, the Center manages two state forests, Picayune Strand State Forest (approximately 78,000 ac.) located in Collier County, and Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest (approximately 32,000 ac.) located in Hendry and Collier Counties.

Collier, Hendry and Lee Counties vary economically, demographically and topographically. Collier and Lee Counties include coastal communities, barrier islands, agricultural land and densely wooded areas and alternately offer high rise condominiums on the Gulf of Mexico and single family homes inland. Hendry County, by contrast, is less developed, lacks coastline and offers fewer amenities than the other two counties, largely due to its location. Agriculture dominates the economy of Hendry County.

Southwest Florida was one of the most sought after locations during the real estate boom that occurred just after the turn of the century. During this time, population growth and development accelerated, resulting in an expansion of the WUI within the CaFC. More and more residential and commercial structures were being built close to densely wooded areas, many of which had seen little or no vegetative fuel management.

By the end of the decade, the economic recession that began in 2008 had resulted in an abundance of vacant homes and commercial properties within the WUI of Southwest Florida. Many of these were abandoned altogether, and, due to a lack of fuels management, collectively increased the wildfire risk in numerous communities, many of which were already experiencing high-hazard levels. This posed a significant challenge to Center wildfire suppression resources that still exists today.

### **WILDFIRE MITIGATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Caloosahatchee Forestry Center has one of the most aggressive wildfire mitigation programs in the state, as evidenced by total acreage serviced and structures protected over the last five years. Center management capitalized on available funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to conduct fuel reduction activities that otherwise could not have been completed in previous years due to budget constraints. Most importantly, these funds allowed for the creation of a five-person mitigation team in Lehigh Acres, a large WUI community in Lee County. The team was supported by state funds through the end of the 2014 fiscal year.

Wildfire mitigation efforts in the Center are part of a larger wildfire prevention initiative that addresses challenges posed by WUI communities. Center staff members actively seek to educate residents and business owners about wildfire risk and prevention so that they are better equipped to reduce that risk and protect life and property. Prescribed fire and mechanical treatments are the primary tools used by the Florida Forest Service (FFS) for hazardous fuel reduction in the Center.

### **COLLIER COUNTY**

Collier County is the second largest county in Florida and the largest of the three in the Caloosahatchee Forestry Center, encompassing approximately 2,025 square miles. The southeastern portion of Collier County is dominated by publically-owned conservation lands (821,620 ac.) with active prescribed fire programs that include Picayune Strand State Forest (PSSF), Collier-Seminole State Park, Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Rookery Bay National

Estuarine Research Reserve, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Big Cypress National Preserve and Everglades National Park. Much of the inland area to the east and north of I-75 is WUI. One of the Center's highest wildfire hazard areas, Golden Gate Estates, is located in this part of the County. The coastal areas located to the west and southwest of I-75, including the barrier island of Marco, are heavily developed. The majority of the county's 91 golf courses are located in the coastal zone.

In 2013, the permanent county population increased to 339,642 from 321,520 in 2010, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates. The population exceeds 385,000 during winter months in Collier County when more 60,000 seasonal residents return each year. The population is concentrated in the western and northern areas of the County.

In 2014, non-Hispanic whites composed 64.3% of the population, while Hispanics accounted for 26.7%, African-Americans for 7.2% and Asians for 1.4%.

The population by age in Collier County in 2013 was well-distributed, however, 29.4% of the population was 65 years of age or older, compared to 19.1% of the population of the State of Florida. The per capita income for Collier County (past 12 months) was \$36,439, considerably greater than that for the State (\$26,236). Approximately 14.1% of the population (persons) had incomes below poverty level, compared to 16.3% for the State (2009-2013).

#### **HENDRY COUNTY**

Hendry County is the least developed of the three counties in the Center and covers 1,190 square miles. Much of the county is dominated by agricultural land uses. Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest covers more than 32,000 acres of the County. Few densely-populated areas exist in Hendry County, which has only two incorporated areas (Labelle and Clewiston) with populations above 11,000. Wildland-urban interface is largely concentrated in small residential areas around these towns. Most of the land in Hendry County is privately owned.

The population in Hendry County was estimated to be 38,508 in 2013, a decrease of 1.6% from 39,140 in 2010. Hispanics composed 50.9% of the population in 2014, while whites composed 33.9% of the population, blacks 13.2%, and Native Americans accounted for 2.2%.

Hendry County is the poorest of the three counties in the Caloosahatchee Forestry Center. The per capita income for Hendry County (past 12 months) was \$16,133, which is considerably lower than that for the State (\$26,236). Approximately 26.7% of the population had incomes below poverty level, compared to 16.3% for the State (2009-2013).

#### **LEE COUNTY**

Lee County is the most developed of the three counties in the Center and covers 1,213 square miles. There are no state forests within Lee County; however, it does contain numerous large publically-owned conservation/preservation lands (most of which are coastal) including J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Matlacha Pass National Wildlife Refuge, Estero Bay Preserve State Park, Prairie Pines Preserve, and Wild Turkey Strand Preserve, among others. Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary owned and managed by the Audubon Society is also located in Lee County. Extensive WUI exists in Lee County, primarily in the communities of Lehigh Acres, North Cape Coral and inland North Fort Myers.

The population of Lee County was estimated to be 679,513 in 2014, compared to 618,754 in 2010, reflecting an increase of 9.8%. In 2014, whites composed 69.2% of the population, Hispanics 19.6%, African Americans 9.1%, and Asians 1.7%.

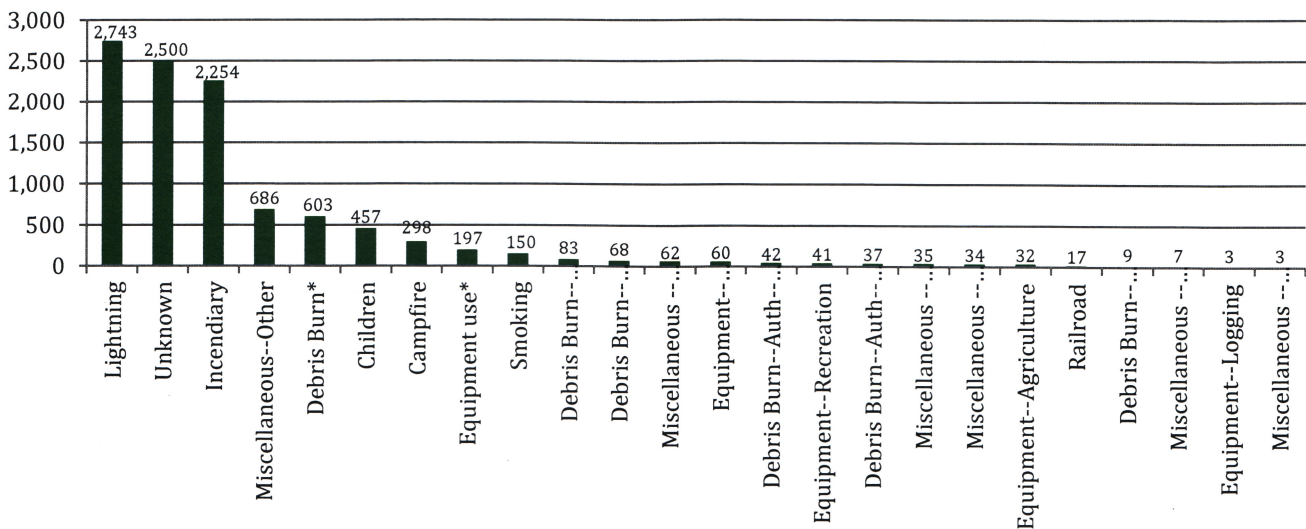
The per capita income for Lee County (past 12 months) was \$27,348, which is slightly above that for the State (\$26,236). Approximately 15.4% of the population had incomes below poverty level, compared to 16.3% for the State (2009-2013).

**WILDFIRE HISTORY**

**CALOOSAHATCHEE FORESTRY CENTER**

Human activities have been the leading cause of wildfires in the Caloosahatchee Forestry Center since 1981. Approximately 42.2% (4,298) of the 10,421 wildfires that have occurred are attributed to human error or negligence. Incendiary fires account for the greatest percentage of human-caused fires at 52.4% (and 21.6% of all wildfires). Lightning remains the leading non-human cause of wildfires, accounting for 26.3%. The Center Manager and Forest Area Supervisors continue efforts to educate wildland firefighters about how to better identify causes of wildfires to reduce the percentage attributed to an unknown cause.

**No. of Wildfires by Cause for CaFC (Collier, Hendry & Lee Co., FL) 1/1/81 - 12/31/15**



**WILDFIRE TRENDS**

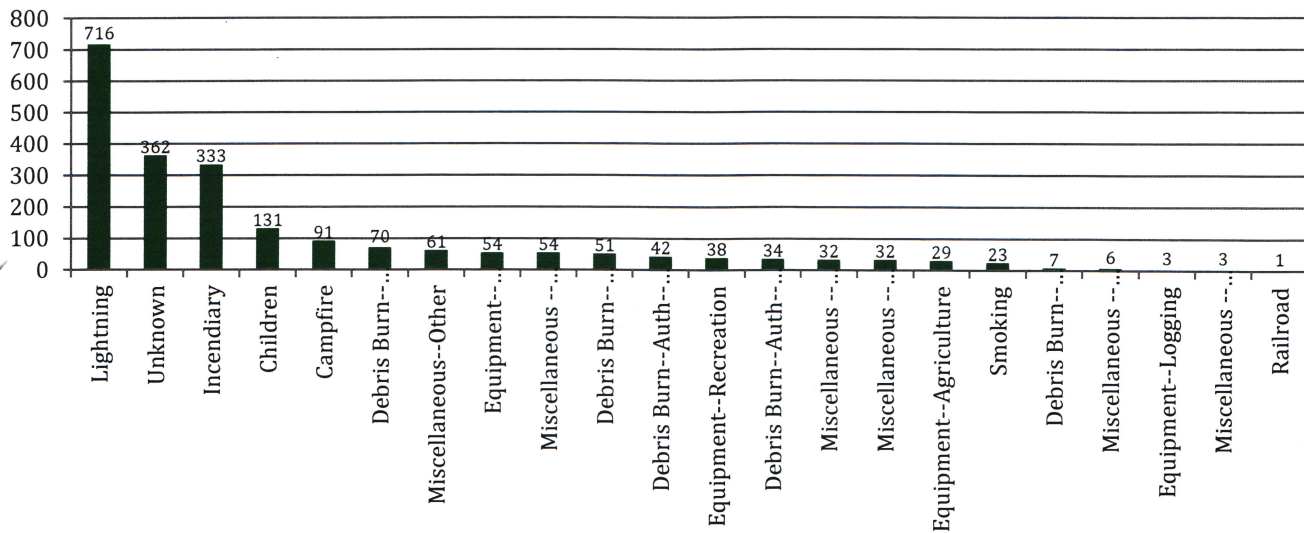
The number and sizes of wildfires in Collier, Hendry, and Lee Counties have fluctuated relative to weather patterns. Periodic spikes in wildfire incidents have been largely associated with dry springs. Beginning in 2000, the counties experienced two years of La Nina weather patterns (drier and warmer than normal winters) that persisted into spring, resulting in active fire seasons. Those conditions reappeared in 2011, resulting in a similarly busy wildfire season with a forecast for another La Nina weather pattern in 2012. Conditions in 2012 were less severe, however. 2013 saw a relatively inactive fire season in the Center, likely due to a number of significant rain events that helped keep conditions wetter than usual much of the year. 2014 experienced a moderate fire season, with an increase in both

number of fires and acreage burned over 2013. These increases were primarily attributable to lightning. 2015 resulted in a moderate fire season; due to a strong El Nino weather pattern 2016 is projected to be a very wet season.

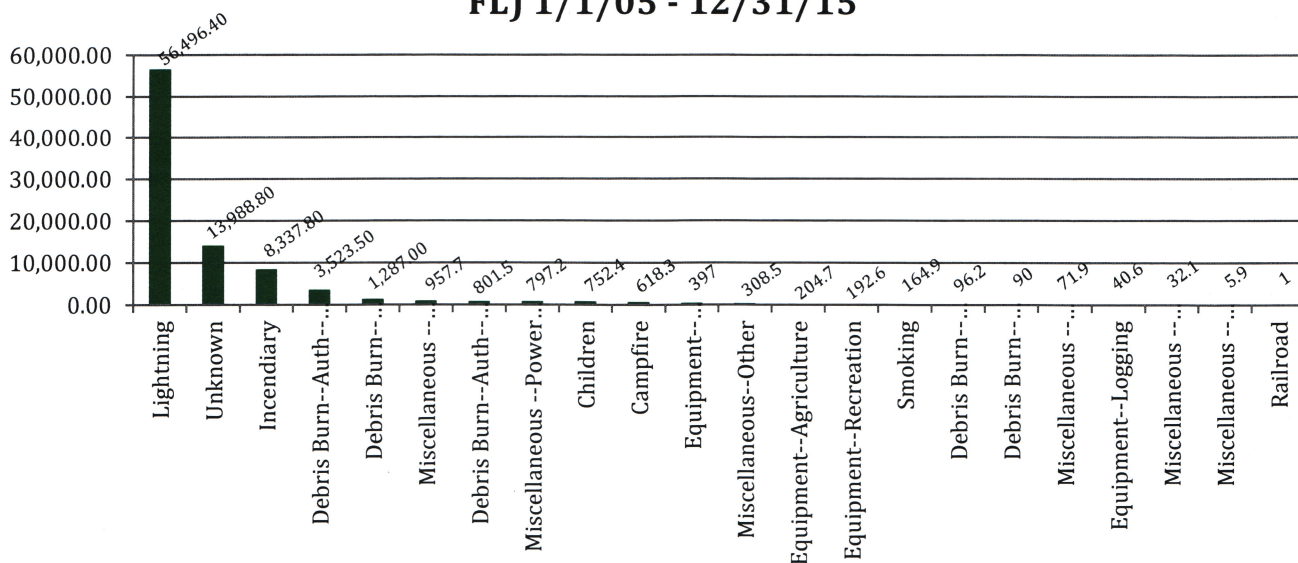
Lightning and incendiary activities are typically the dominant singular causes of wildfires. Analyses of wildfire trends appear to indicate that mitigation efforts have reduced the number and sizes of wildfires. Wildfires in Lehigh Acres that occurred from 2009-2011 were less intense likely as a result of mitigation work, due to the efforts of residents to maintain defensible space around their homes. The Center mitigation specialist conducted research in 2012 that confirmed ongoing roller chopping successfully reduced wildfires in the community.

The following graphs show the number of wildfires and acreages by cause in the Center's three counties during the 10-year period between 2005 and 2015.

**No. of Wildfires by Cause for CaFC (Collier, Hendry & Lee Co., FL) 1/1/05 - 12/31/15**



### Wildfire Acreage by Cause for CaFC (Collier, Hendry & Lee Co., FL) 1/1/05 - 12/31/15



#### COLLIER COUNTY 2005 - 2015

Unlike Hendry and Lee Counties, lightning was the leading cause of wildfires in Collier County from 2005 to 2015, accounting for 39.4% of the 810 wildfires. Human activity was a close second, accounting for 19.6% of all wildfires.

The Golden Gate Estates experienced a significant wildfire in 2008 that burned 800 acres and destroyed three homes. The Slope Fire of 2011 threatened 1,200 homes, destroyed one home, a travel trailer, and burned more than 2,800 acres. In 2015 the Triple G Fire burned 750 acres in Picayune Strand State Forest, threatening 20 homes. Other large fires have also occurred on conservation areas in lightly populated eastern portions of the county.

Golden Gate Estates was the direct beneficiary of eight contract mitigation projects, made possible by federal stimulus funds, that created a series of 70-foot-wide fuel break corridors east and west of Everglades Boulevard from Immokalee Road to Interstate 75. Rangers conducted several mitigation projects and prescribed burns as well. The work occurred from 2009-2011; in 2016 a retreat of project one will take place with contractual funds from the Wildland Urban Interface Grant. Center officials hope that the completion of the area’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan will provide community organizations with the ability to advocate for additional mitigation measures from local sources utilizing grants or other measures.

#### HENDRY COUNTY 2005 - 2015

Lightning was the leading non-human cause of wildfires and accounted for 26.6% of the 421 wildfires in Hendry County that occurred from 2005 to 2015. Unknown and human activity was the second leading cause of wildfires during the same period, accounting for 18.5% each. Incendiary causes represented 12.8% of wildfires. Roller chopping has been conducted periodically in Montura Ranch over the last decade, and county officials continue to maintain rights of ways around the county, particularly in Pioneer Plantation, where the impact of a 130-acre wildfire in 2011 was lessened as a result. Roller chopping has been conducted

periodically in Montura Ranch over the last decade, and county officials continue to maintain rights of ways around the county, particularly in Pioneer Plantation, where the impact of a 130-acre wildfire in 2011 was lessened as a result.

### **LEE COUNTY 2005 - 2015**

In general, the causes of wildfires in Lee County over the last decade mirror those for the Center. Human activity caused 32.9% of the wildfires during this period, while lightning accounted for 29.6%. Children accounted for 7.9% of wildfires in Lee County, the greatest among the three counties. The Daniels Rd fire in 2015, located next to the Southwest Florida International Airport, burned a total of 550 acres.

Federal stimulus funding allowed for the creation of a Lehigh Acres mitigation team that began operations in 2010. The team averages 5 to 10 acres of mechanical mitigation work per day. Wildfire acreages have dropped significantly in Lehigh Acres since 2006. Rangers continue to implement prescribed fires in WUI areas throughout Lee County and cooperate with county and other lands managers to conduct prescribed fires on their properties.

### **WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE CHALLENGES**

A considerable portion of Collier, Hendry and Lee Counties is composed of WUI. Wildfire prevention, mitigation and suppression in the interface is challenging for many reasons. Most of the challenges facing the WUI in Southwest Florida are those shared with WUI communities throughout the country and are well-documented: lack of resources, resident/landowner apathy, absenteeism and opposition, lack of cooperation between municipal governments and/or other public agencies and residents, legal and political barriers (land ownership disputes, zoning laws, etc.), poor urban planning, etc. However, several factors further complicate wildfire mitigation efforts in the Center, including an:

- **Influx of seasonal residents**  
Seasonal residents present several challenges to wildfire mitigation efforts. Most seasonal residents are not knowledgeable about the role of fire in Florida's ecosystems and the use of prescribed fire as a management tool. Opposition to burning by seasonal residents can hinder cost-effective fuel reduction efforts via prescribed fire. Additionally, most seasonal residents reside in their primary homes outside of Florida during the height of wildfire season and, as such, may not understand or appreciate the wildfire risk posed to Southwest Florida communities. This lack of understanding undermines both fire mitigation and prevention activities by fostering the belief that these efforts are unnecessary. Lastly, increased numbers of people living in the interface results in greater numbers of high risk communities and/or properties.
- **Extended growing season and abundance of invasive exotic plant species resulting in part from a subtropical climate.**

The extended growing season of Southwest Florida results in a profusion of live and dead vegetative fuels each year. Many mitigated areas require re-treatment every two to three years in order to be maintained. In years experiencing above-average rainfall, fuel levels can be extreme. Management of these fuels is both labor-intensive and expensive.

### **COMMUNITIES AT RISK**

The following maps show the current areas of concern within each county in CaFC and were developed using data from the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (SouthWRAP). While the Center's fire

prevention program attempts to educate residents from every area of the counties it serves, outreach efforts are primarily focused on those with high wildfire risk. The areas of greatest concern are Lehigh Acres in Lee County and Golden Gate Estates in Collier County. In Hendry County, the areas of highest concern include Pioneer Plantation and Montura Ranch Estates.

**COLLIER COUNTY**

Collier County’s primary areas of concern are located in the western portion of the County, as illustrated on the map below. The residential area of Golden Gate Estates consists mostly of single-family homes located in heavily wooded areas and accounts for a significant portion of the wildland urban interface in the county.

Picayune Strand State Forest and numerous publically-managed lands are located in the southeastern portion of the county. Several large wildfires have occurred in this area over the last decade.

Wildfire prevention efforts are largely concentrated in western Collier County.

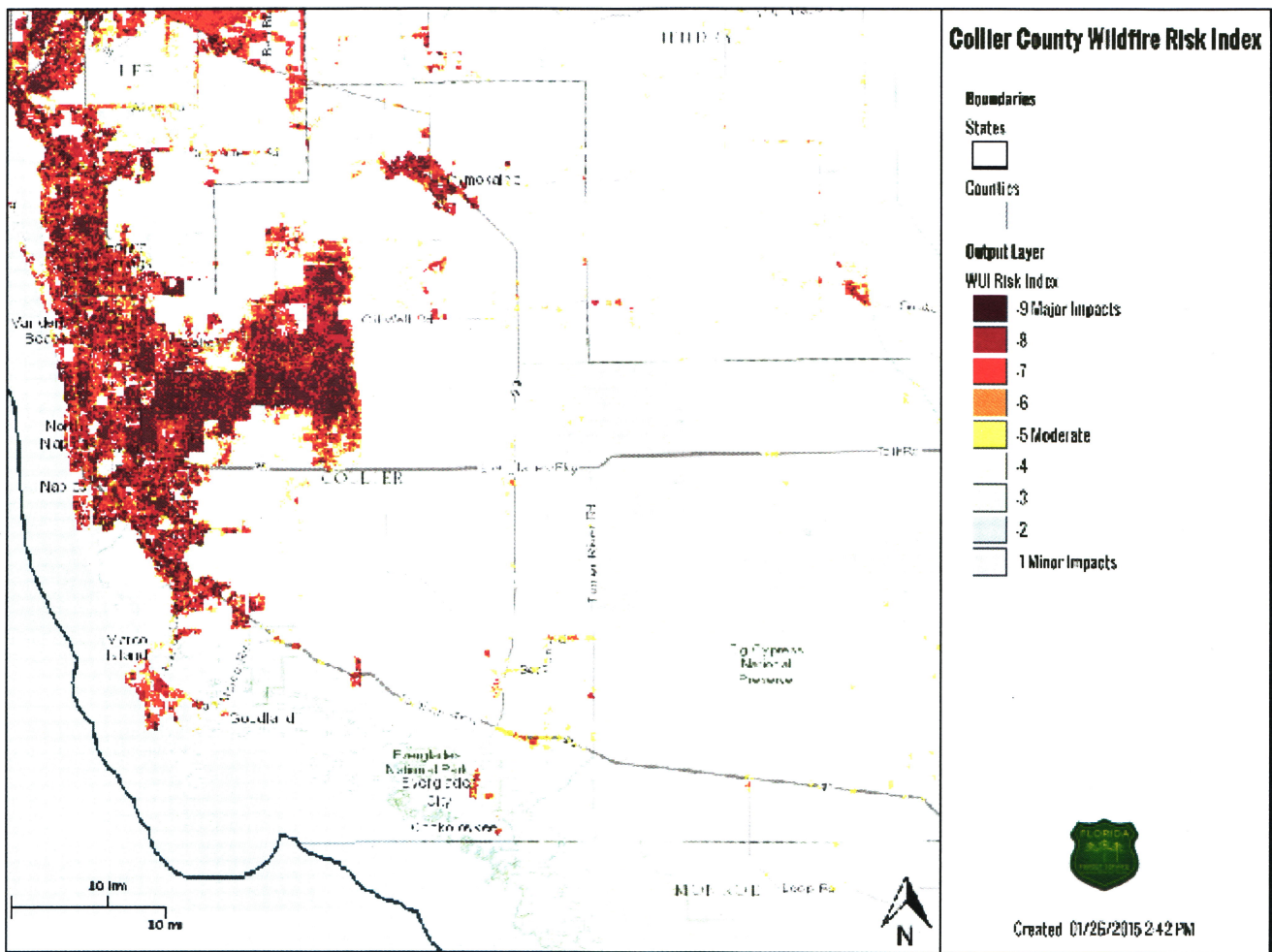


Figure 1

## HENDRY COUNTY

The areas of greatest concern in Hendry County are concentrated in the WUI areas of Pioneer Plantation, Montura Ranch Estates, Labelle, and Clewiston.

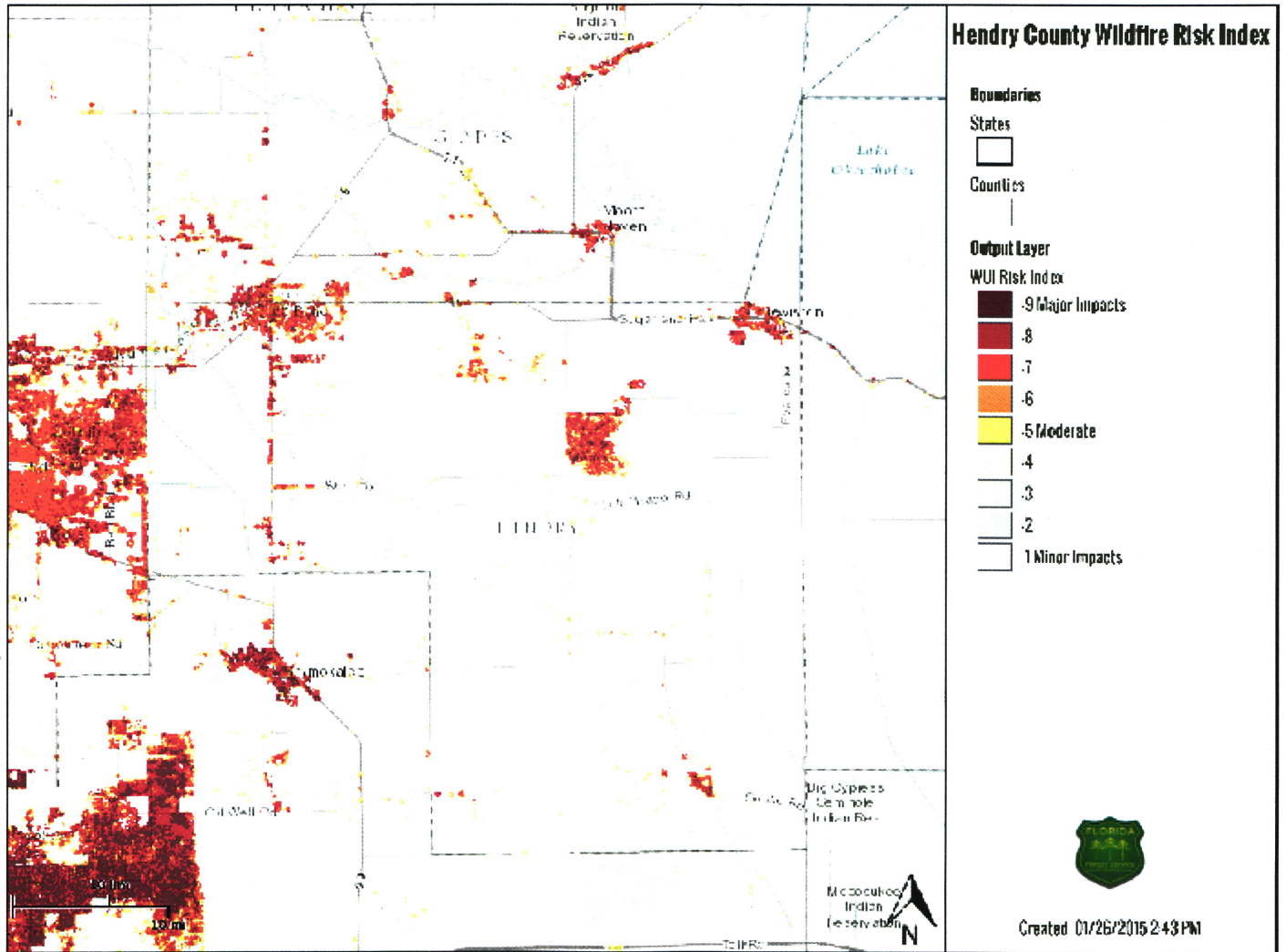


Figure 2

**LEE COUNTY**

Lee County has several areas of concern. The largest of these is in the eastern portion of the County in the Lehigh Acres community. Cape Coral, North Ft. Myers and south Lee County also present several areas of high concern.

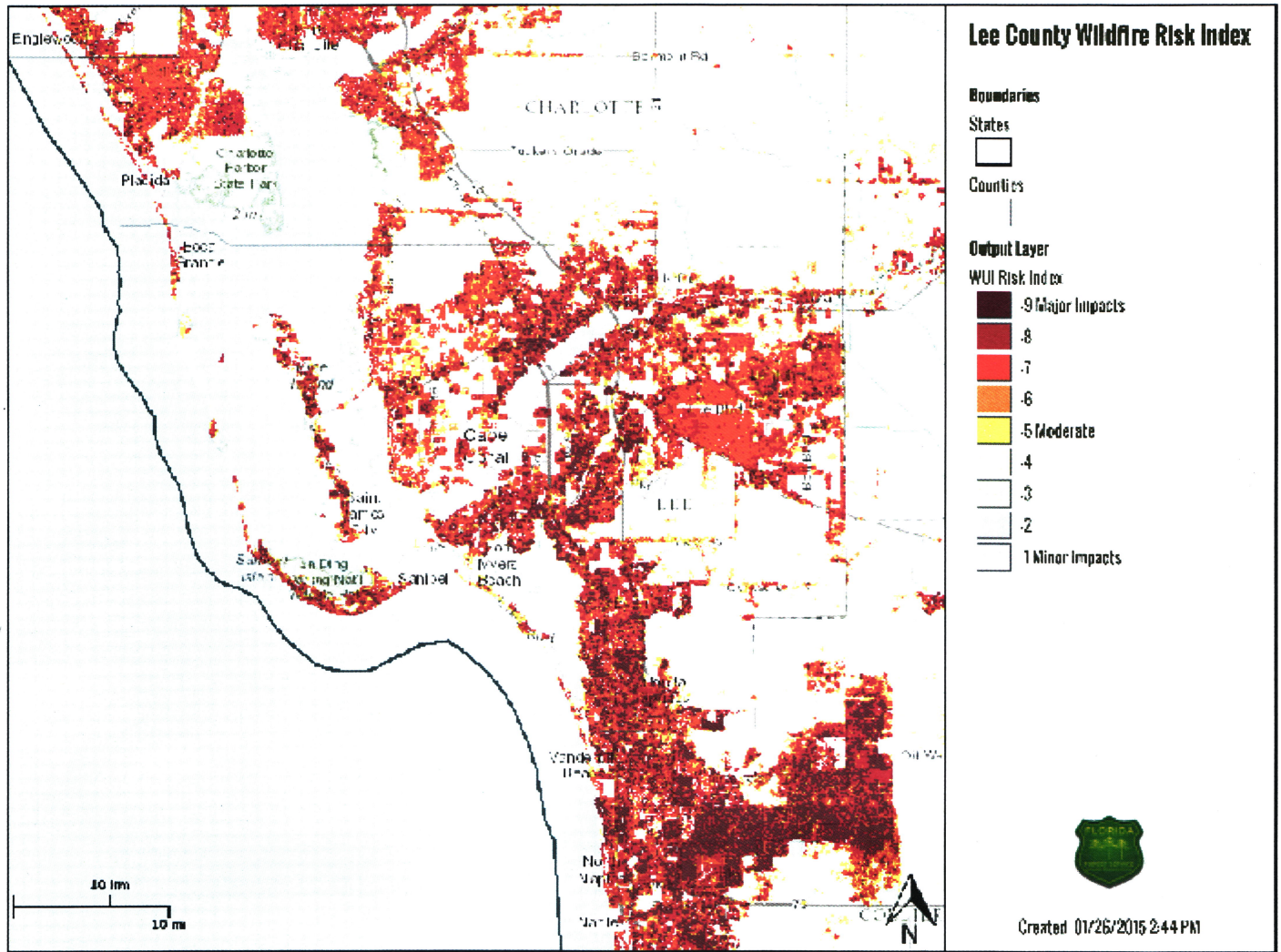


Figure 3

**WILDFIRE MITIGATION GOALS**

A cohesive campaign of aggressive mitigation efforts and wildfire prevention programs is most effective for reducing wildfire risk and loss. Federal economic stimulus monies awarded from 2010-12 gave the center the means to increase wildfire fuel reduction work in areas where rangers were previously unable to do so due to limited staffing and resources. The Center’s wildfire mitigation specialist conducted a process evaluation that found that those efforts effectively reduced the size and intensity of wildfires in the WUI in Lehigh Acres. However, more long-term research is needed to account for the growth of vegetation and weather trends. Center staff members agree that any available funds will be concentrated

on wildfire fuel reduction work and education. Wildfire prevention programs will emphasize the need for residents and business owners to take responsibility to protect their assets through program like firewise and others.

The goals and objectives of the 2016 CaFC Mitigation Action Plan have been developed by the Caloosahatchee District's Mitigation Specialist and three Forest Area Supervisors under the guidance of the Center Manager and Forestry Operations Administrator. Wildfire mitigation goals and objectives are achieved primarily through the activities of the Mitigation Specialist and Forest Rangers (under the guidance of the Forest Area Supervisors); however, other personnel also contribute to mitigation efforts.

### **GOAL 1**

Improve effectiveness of mitigation activities by increasing acres treated in high-hazard areas and maximizing structures protected per treated acre (with a minimum of 2 structures/acre treated).

*Objective 1:* Conduct prescribed burns and/or mechanical fuel reduction treatments as follows:

- Collier County: 100 ac. (minimum 600 structures protected)
- Hendry County: 100 ac. (minimum 600 structures protected)
- Lee County: 200 ac. (excluding Lehigh Acres mitigation team acreage) (minimum 600 structures protected)

### **GOAL 2**

Monitor mitigation projects utilizing GIS.

*Objective 1:* Ensure field staff follow proper procedures for gathering mitigation data in the field

*Objective 2:* Provide annual training on required mitigation project documentation and procedures to Forest Rangers involved in mitigation.

*Objective 3:* Update mitigation project shapefile biweekly or monthly as necessary.

### **GOAL 3**

Complete Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for Collier County:

*Objective 1:* Update preliminary draft with information produced at last meeting.

*Objective 2:* Conduct final meeting with planning committees for plan review.

*Objective 3:* Complete final drafts of CWPP.

*Objective 4:* Create local working groups to monitor/implement CWPP recommendations.

### **GOAL 4**

Develop and conduct semi-annual workshops for homeowners requesting hazard removal that will educate them about wildfire risk and mitigation techniques they can implement themselves to maintain areas following FFS mitigation treatment. Location(s) of workshops will be determined by need.

*Objective 1:* Develop workshop content.

*Objective 2:* Develop method for selecting, communicating with and tracking participants.

### **GOAL 5**

Improve and diversify wildfire mitigation informational materials and incorporate web-based applications whenever possible.

*Objective 1:* Create one additional informational door-hanger to include information on potential wildlife impacts of various mitigation treatments.

*Objective 2:* Create Spanish versions of select existing informational materials.

#### **GOAL 6**

Create a wildfire mitigation task force that will enhance the sustainability of wildfire mitigation fuel reduction projects through community involvement and leadership.

*Objective 1:* Collier County: Solicit input from the public and agency stakeholders to build community consensus on mitigation project needs and execution in two high-visibility wildfire risk areas.

*Objective 2:* Lee County: Create opportunities for two additional educational workshops and work days within high-visibility wildfire risk areas to build community capacity for sustainable projects.

#### **GOAL 7**

Pursue additional funding sources for fuel reduction projects with the Wildland Urban Interface Grant.

#### **GOAL 8**

Improve educational effectiveness of mitigation activities by increasing information dissemination in areas where mitigation work occurs.

*Objective 1:* Distribute educational mitigation door hangers and/or other educational materials on/to homes bordering mitigation project areas.

*Objective 2:* Place existing "Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Project" signs in visible portions of mitigation project areas for duration of project.

*Objective 3:* Provide training to key personnel on community relations and education strategies for wildfire mitigation projects.

#### **GOAL 9**

Develop new, and enhance existing relationships with local government planners to properly integrate Firewise landscaping and Fire Adapted Communities principles into land development codes. Refine the review of overgrown preserves to provide neighborhoods an efficient means of reducing fuel levels without compromising the intent of the conservation areas and preserves.

*Objective 1:* Conduct at least one meeting in each county with local government or non-profit partners to discuss barriers to wildfire hazard risk reduction.

*Objective 2:* Create a template for environmental permits amongst agency stakeholders necessary for owners of land with conservation easements to on their own legally conduct wildfire mitigation work.

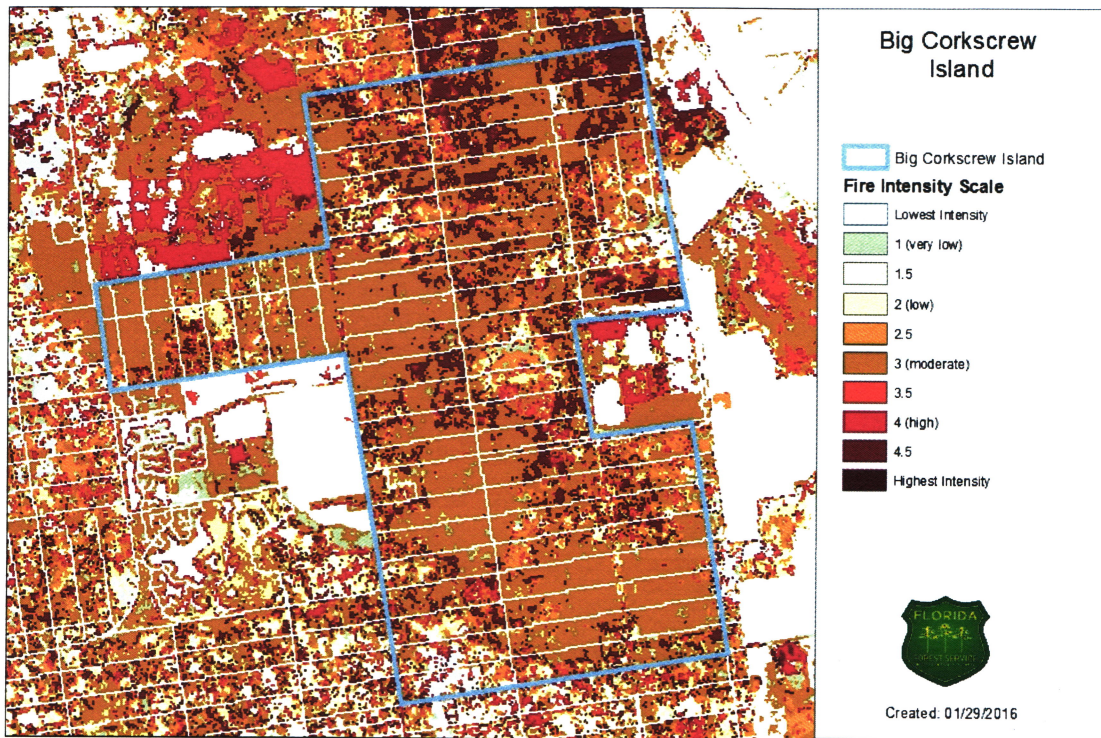
**2016 MITIGATION PROJECTS**

**COLLIER COUNTY**

**Priority 1: Big Corkscrew Island**

The priority one project area represents the highest level of fire concern in Collier County when FRAS modeling is reviewed (fig.1). The priority one area is characterized by homes dispersed on 2.5 acre parcels among areas of 40-80' tall mature natural south Florida slash pine intermixed with cabbage palms of various heights, and a well developed shrub layer of wax myrtle, grape vine and ground fuels of various grasses. The fuel loads have not been maintained for many years on most parcels from a combination of local and state regulations and the difficulty of conducting prescribed burns due to fuel loading. There are some scattered areas of under 2' tall grasses without tree cover. Horizontal and vertical continuity are continuous in this priority area and the native vegetation is extremely fire adapted and readily burns year round. The conditions in priority area 1 collectively increase the potential for extensive property damage and containment issues in the event of a wildfire in the area when combined with limited defensible space on many parcels and the presence of mile of dead-end roads that limit evacuation.

Mechanical treatments will be implemented to rehabilitate the 70' corridors previously created in this area. Additional large parcels in need of fuel treatments will be identified to conduct roller chopping. A small burn may be possible in this priority area.

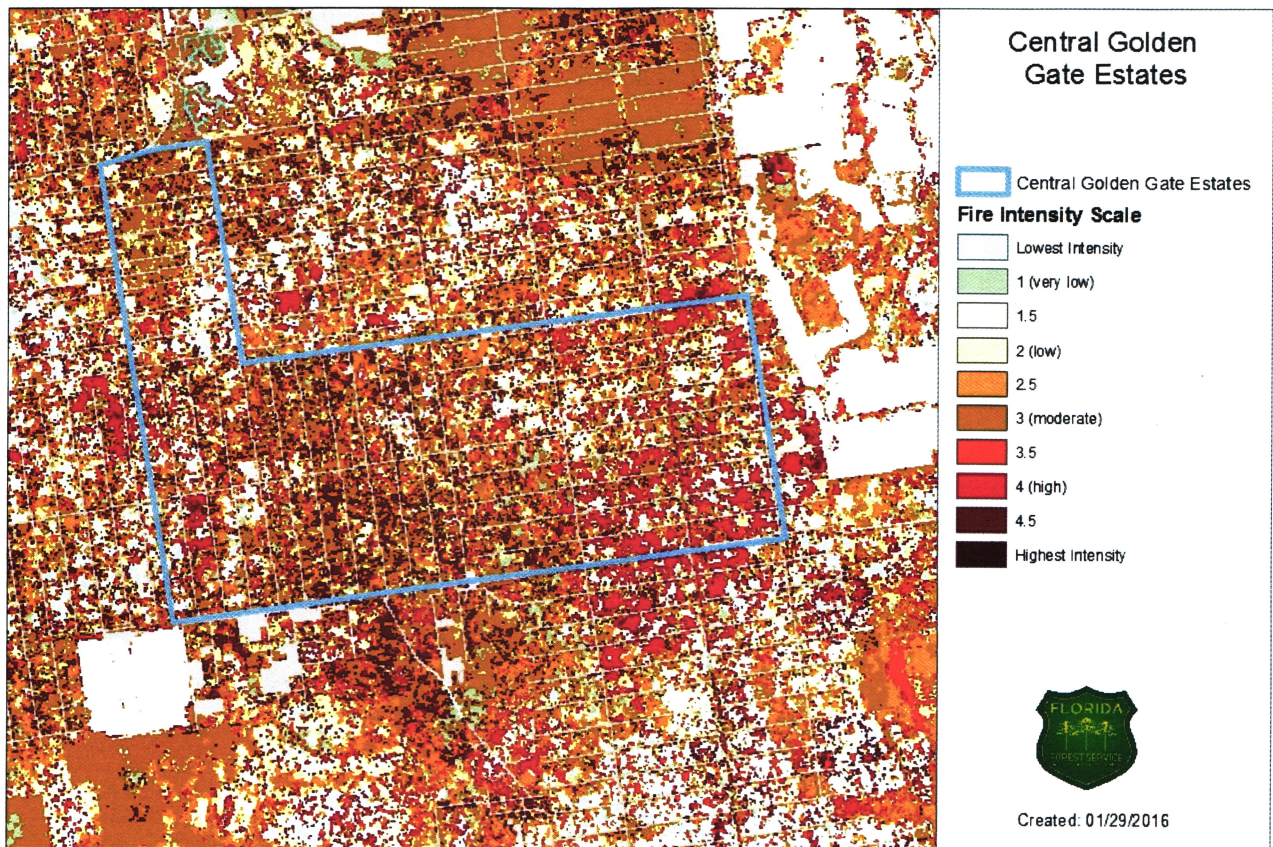


**Figure 4**

**Priority 2: Central Golden Gate Estates**

The priority two project area is comprised of 2.5-acre parcels with heavy fuel loading near structures. The fuel loads have not been maintained for many years on most parcels from a combination of local and state regulations and the difficulty of conducting prescribed burns due to fuel loading. Fuels are composed of 60-80 foot tall south Florida slash pine, cabbage palm, saw palmetto, wax myrtle, grape vine, and grasses, including an increase in cogon grass. There is contiguous horizontal and vertical continuity of fuels in close proximity to homes and across the landscape. Wildfires in the area could cause containment issues and loss of values due to a high potential for spotting, limited access, limited defensible space and heavy fuel loading.

Fuel reduction efforts in this priority area will include mechanical treatments to maintain previously installed corridors or relocate corridors where homes have been built. Heavy fuel loads will likely preclude the use of prescribed fire in this area.



**Figure 5**

## HENDRY COUNTY

Hendry County mitigation project priority areas are concentrated in the WUI communities of Montura Ranch Estates and Pioneer Plantation.

Wildfire mitigation activities conducted in Hendry County will include prescribed burning and roller chopping. Grinding may also be used around homes where thick pine stands prevent the use of larger equipment. Fuels in Montura Ranch and Pioneer Plantation are dominated by pine overstory with a moderately to very dense palmetto understory. A primary concerns in these areas are the abundance of abandoned homes and properties and the accompanying fences that inhibit access to them.



Figure 6

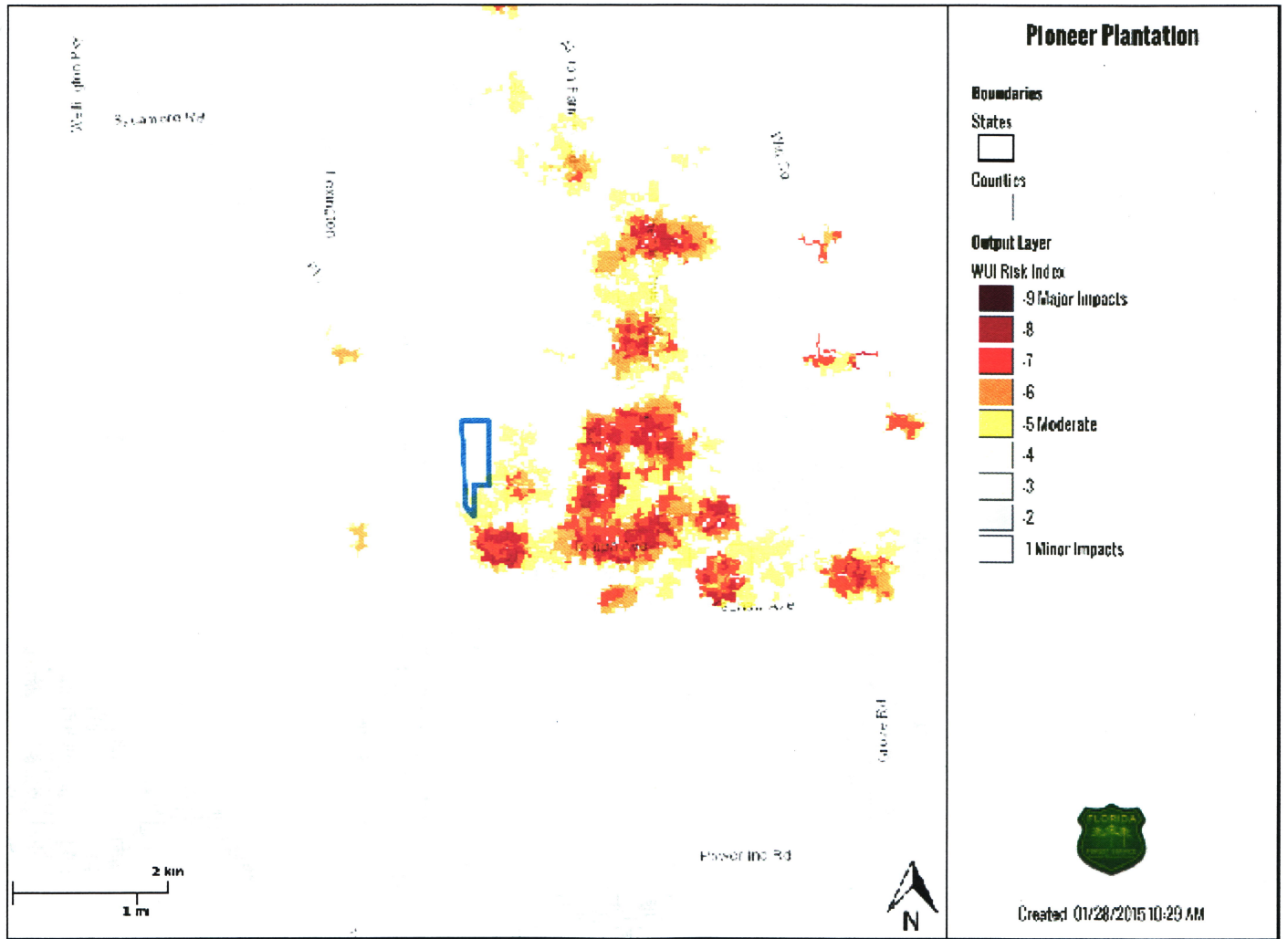


Figure 7

## LEE COUNTY

Mitigation projects will employ the use of prescribed burning, mechanical fuel reduction, and education. The type of treatment used will be site specific and determined based on several factors to include safety of the public/personnel, protection of values at risk, fire occurrence, public perception, and efficacy of the project in the short and long term. Mechanical fuel reduction projects will consist of roller chopping and mowing/mulching depending on site conditions. Most projects will require a combination of tactics to accomplish.

The objectives for Lee County in 2016 are to complete prescribed burning and accomplish mechanical fuel reduction over a minimum of 200 acres. Additionally, work (primarily mechanical) will be conducted by a team (2 employees in 2016) specifically dedicated to Wildfire Mitigation in Lehigh Acres. The 200 acre objective for Lee County does not include work done by the Lehigh Acres Mitigation Team. The mitigation project goal for the Lehigh Mitigation Team in 2016 is 1,333 acres.

Specific projects planned for completion in 2016 are shown in a series of maps below. If all planned projects for 2016 are completed, wildfire mitigation activities would be conducted over 1,527 acres. This is possible provided staffing levels remain at capacity and equipment failures are minimal.

Additional projects may be identified throughout the year based on need and request. Other project areas will focus within identified priority areas. Lee County has several priority areas for fuel reduction. Priority areas are large, general geographic areas, and listed in order of focus. Priority areas primarily follow zip code boundaries. Projects in these areas would only represent a very small section of these areas. The purpose of identifying priority areas is to bring focus to those sections of the county with the highest wildfire risk.

Wildfire risk assessment is completed when assessing projects planned for completion. In addition, risk assessment is the main driver for determining priority areas in the county. These risk assessments were completed using the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal, [www.southernwildfirerisk.com](http://www.southernwildfirerisk.com). The primary tools used to assess wildfire risk within Lee County were: the Wildland Urban Interface Risk Index, wildfire occurrence, fuel levels, and general fire behavior outputs to include rate of spread and flame length. These specific factors were chosen based on their direct link to fire suppression operations and potential danger to structures and the public. Local knowledge of fire risk and fuel levels were also used in the assessments.

### Project Areas

Figure 8 shows the project areas for 2016 in Lee County. The majority of the project acreage is located in Lehigh Acres with approximately 190 acres located in North Fort Myers. Projects in North Fort Myers focus on prescribed burning in natural pine upland around housing communities. Some of these areas have not seen fire in over 10 years. Mechanical fuel reduction to reduce heavy fuel concentrations around homes will be required prior to burning in some areas. Additionally, pre-suppression lines will need to be put in place in some areas. Projects in Lehigh Acres focus primarily on mechanical fuel reduction, mostly roller chopping. Much of this work will be conducted by the Lehigh Mitigation Crew. If personnel availability and time allows, prescribed burning may be conducted following or in conjunction with some roller chopping projects. Door hangers will be handed out to property owners in project areas for the purpose of education and to provide contact information.

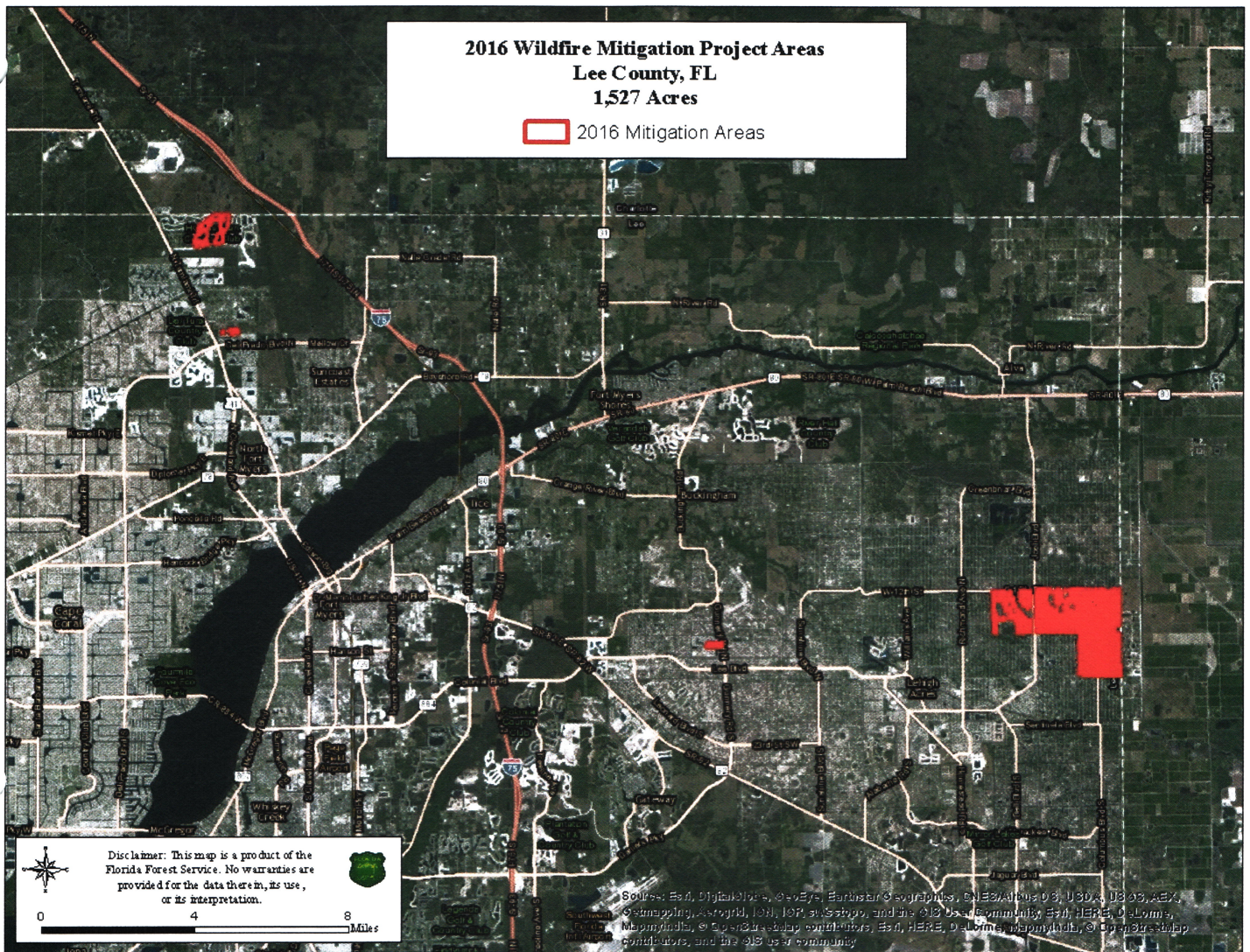


Figure 8

Figure 9 shows project areas in Lehigh Acres, mostly to be completed by the Lehigh Acres Mitigation Team. The fuels reduced will range from light to heavy southern rough. Areas of grass fuels exist and will be avoided in mechanical reduction. These areas may be captured in follow up burns. Non-native invasive species, specifically cogon grass, will be avoided completely.

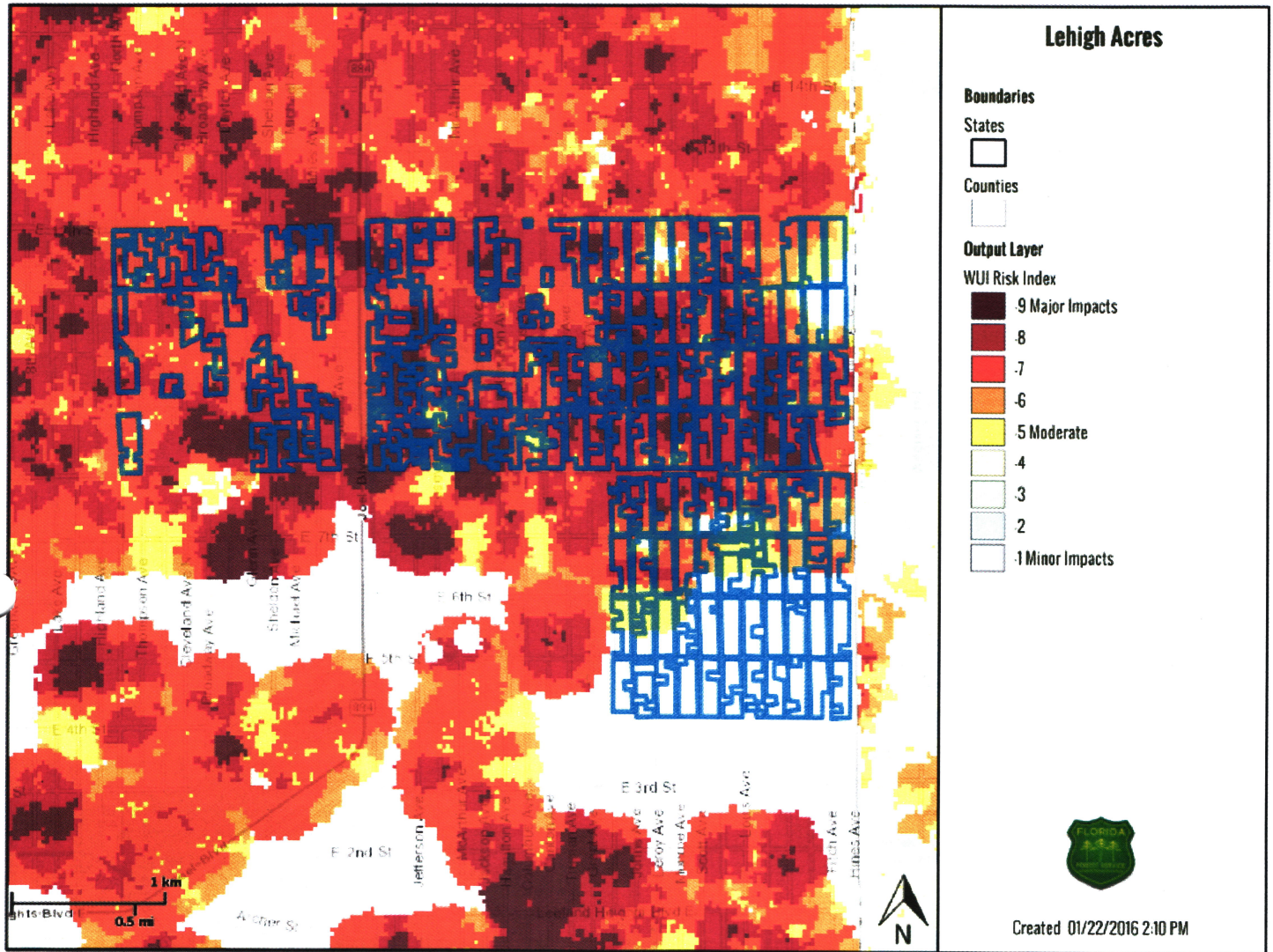
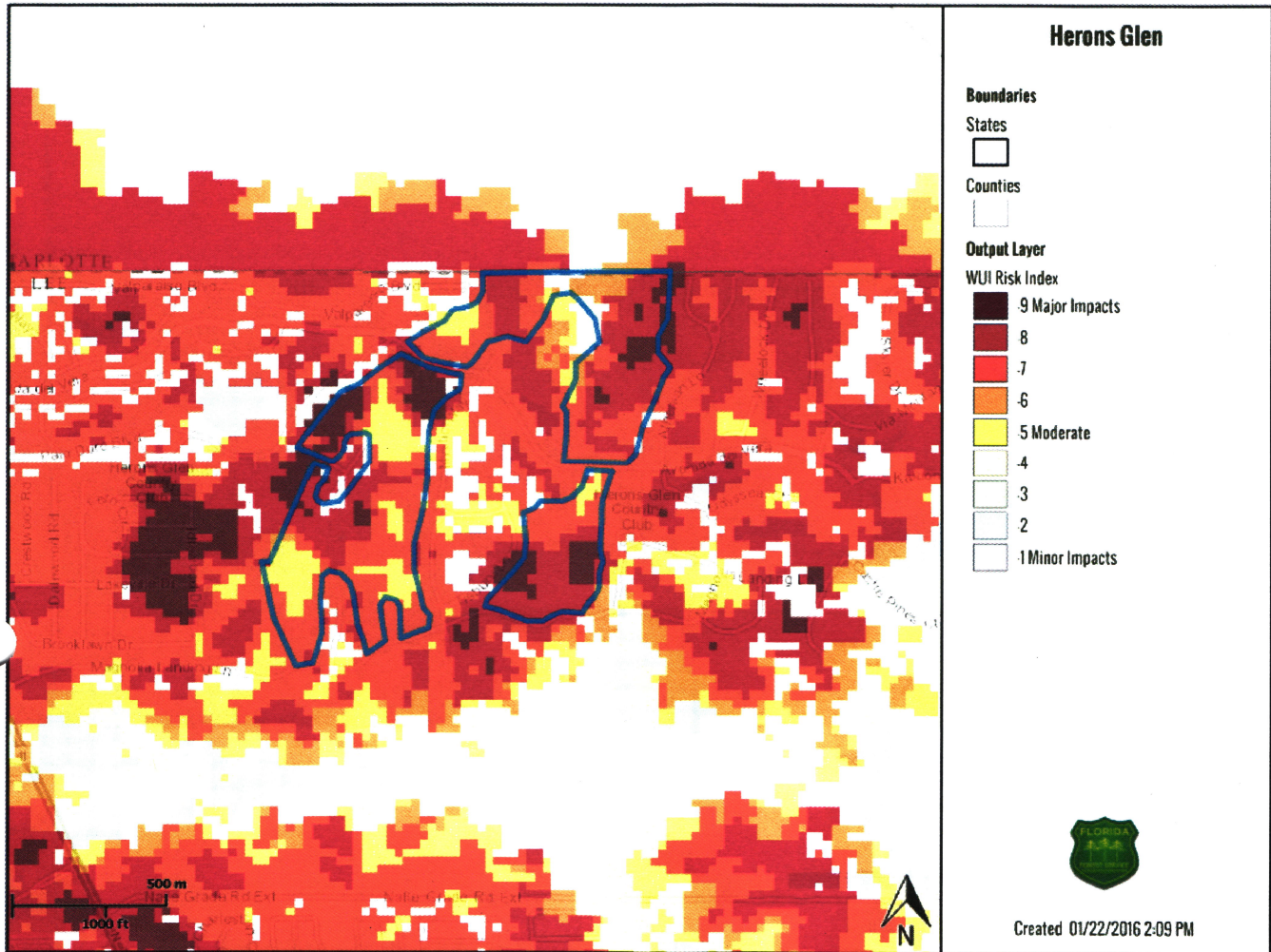


Figure 9

**Figure 10** shows a 184-acre project located in North Fort Myers, within a Firewise Community preserve area (Herons Glen). This project will primarily be completed using prescribed burning. Some mechanical fuel reduction may take place adjacent to homes. Pre-suppression plowing will need to be done to divide the area into manageable burn blocks. Fuels are palmetto and mixed native grass under a south Florida slash pine overstory.



**Figure 10**