



St James Firewise Committee

Assessment 2023 Results



What is Firewise and why should we care?

- ▶ St James scored in the High Risk Category in recent NCFS Firewise assessment.
- ▶ Firewise USA® recognition program is a tool that will help St. James residents understand their wildfire risks.
- ▶ St James is one of 3 communities in Brunswick County with Firewise certification



But first some facts to level set



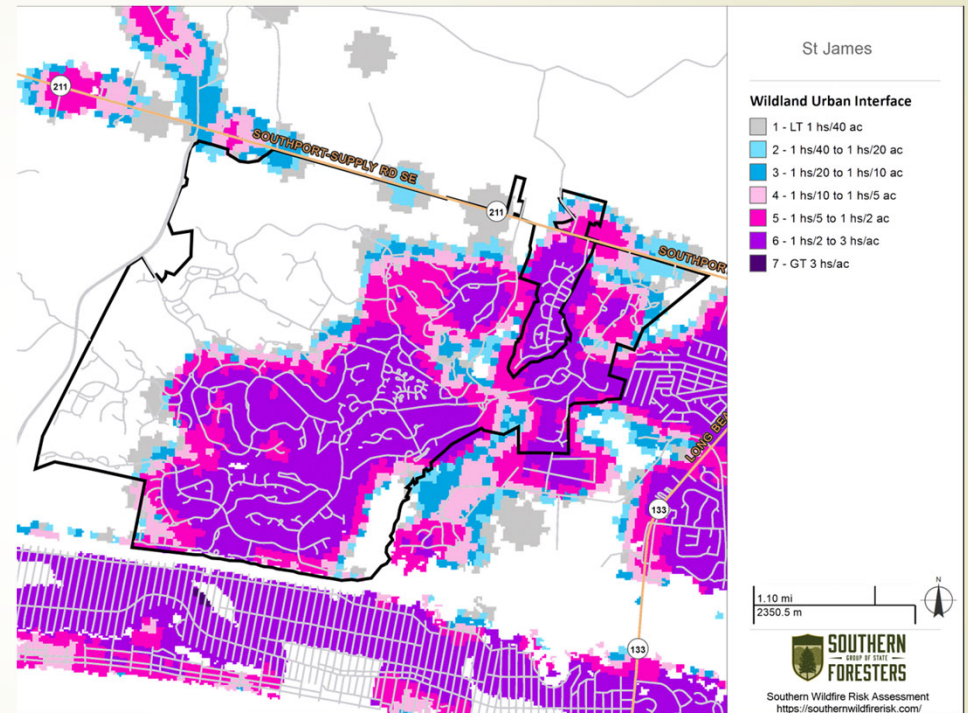
The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) layer reflects housing density depicting where humans and their structures meet or intermix with wildland fuels

- ▶ Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) – where structures and humans intermingle with forested wildland.
 - ▶ Which state do you think has the largest percentage of WUI?
 - ▶ California ?
 - ▶ Wyoming ?
 - ▶ Montana ?
 - ▶ **Nope; its NC.**
- ▶ Wildland is unfit for, or has not been modified by, cultivation or other human activity



Why is this important?

- ➔ **99.8% of STJP lives within the WUI.**



Lessons Learned from Lahaina

- ▶ <https://weather.com/safety/wildfires/video/lessons-learned-from-lone-un-scarred-lahaina-home>



So why did we score so high?

- ▶ Our High-Risk rating was driven by the following factors:
 - ▶ 1. Lack of defensible space throughout the community
 - ▶ 2. Combustible deck construction and not screened
 - ▶ 3. Needle and leaf litter present and touching the homes
 - ▶ 4. Proximity of shrubs and landscaping to homes and structures
 - ▶ 5. Proximity of LP gas tanks to homes
 - ▶ 6. Cul-de-sacs with less than 100 feet radius
 - ▶ 7. Addresses not clearly marked with 4-inch reflective numbers on each side



Things that we can't change

- ▶ Road width less than 50ft
- ▶ Cul de Sac radius sizes
- ▶ Above ground LP tanks closer than 30 ft to structures



Things we can change

- ▶ Strive for at least 10 feet of defensible space. The understory (brush, litter) should be thinned out or removed.
- ▶ The high over hanging trees should be pruned to at least 10 feet high.
- ▶ On smaller trees, prune low hanging branches no more than one third of the tree's height.



➤ Add metal mesh screening to decks

- Wind-driven fire will create a blizzard of embers that will blow into confined spaces and ignite debris.
- Reduce the likelihood of embers to blowing into confined spaces



Litter Clean up

- Keep roofs, gutters, and around homes clear of leaves or needle debris
- Clean out from under decks or porches.
- Remove piles of firewood, anything that could catch embers or ignite
- Move LP Gas tanks, firewood piles, grills, at least 30 feet away from structures



Homeowners must consider the risk with landscaping choice

- ▶ Avoid ornamental juniper, Leyland cypress, Italian cypress, rosemary, arborvitae, eucalyptus, and some ornamental grasses
- ▶ Remove highly flammable Bay trees & Wax Myrtle
- ▶ Keep a fire-free zone within 5 feet of foundation.
- ▶ Use a non-combustible pea gravel or river rock mulch



Maintain Turnaround Space in cul-de-sacs

- ▶ Cul-de-sacs are less than 100 feet in diameter
- ▶ There is not enough turning radius for equipment
- ▶ It is imperative to keep clear for an emergency



Ensure emergency responders can find you

- ▶ Recommended that all homes have adequate address markers
- ▶ Numbers should be at least 4 inches tall, reflective, and visible from both directions.
- ▶ Wildfire emergency often responds in dark, smoky conditions, which make visibility challenging.



Some say it takes a Village...

- ▶ When adequately prepared, our homes can likely withstand a wildfire.
- ▶ Our homes can be both Firewise and compatible with the area's ecosystem. And aesthetically pleasing.
- ▶ The Firewise USA® program is designed to enable communities to achieve a high level of protection against WUI fire loss.



What is Firewise recommending next

- ▶ Educating St. James residents of the wildfire risk and how they can effectively protect their homes using a variety of media and print material
- ▶ With the assistance of the Town Board, arranging a presentation to the POA to educate them on wildfire risk and how they can assist in developing landscaping guidelines in line with Firewise recommendations
- ▶ Determining what other community organizations could benefit from understanding this issue.





Thank you