2022 Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report

COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

San Juan County

Report was generated using
www.ColoradoForestAtlas.org

Report version: 3.0.0
Report generated: 11-30-2023

Table Of Contents

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Introduction

Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment Report

Welcome to the Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Reporting Tool.

This tool allows users of the Risk Reduction Planner application of the Colorado Forest Atlas web portal to define a specific project area and generate information for this area. A detailed risk summary report can be generated using a set of predefined map products developed by the Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment project which have been summarized explicitly for the user defined project area. The report is generated in PDF format.

The report has been designed so that information from the report can be copied and pasted into other specific plans, reports, or documents depending on user needs. Examples include, but are not limited to, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, Local Fire Plans, Fuels Mitigation Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, Homeowner Risk Assessments, and Forest Management or Stewardship Plans. Example templates for some of these reports are available for download on the Colorado Forest Atlas web portal.

The Colorado WRA provides a consistent, comparable set of scientific results to be used as a foundation for wildfire mitigation and prevention planning in Colorado.

Results of the assessment can be used to help prioritize areas in the state where mitigation treatments, community interaction and education, or tactical analyses might be necessary to reduce risk from wildfires.

The Colorado WRA products included in this report are designed to provide the information needed to support the following key priorities:

- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire
- Plan and prioritize hazardous fuel treatment programs
- Allow agencies to work together to better define priorities and improve emergency response, particularly across jurisdictional boundaries
- Increase communication with local residents and the public to address community priorities and needs

Products

Each product in this report is accompanied by a general description, table, chart and/or map. A list of available Colorado WRA products in this report is provided in the following table.

COWRA Product	Description
Wildland Urban Interface	Housing density depicting where humans and their structures meet or intermix with wildland fuel
Wildland Urban Interface Risk	A measure of the potential impact on people and their homes from wildfire
Wildfire Risk to Assets	The overall composite risk occurring from a wildfire derived by combining Burn Probability and Values at Risk Rating
Burn Probability	Annual probability of any location burning due to wildfire
Terrain Difficulty Index	Reflects the difficulty to suppress a fire given the terrain and vegetation conditions that may impact ground resource access and capabilities
Characteristic Flame Length	A measure of the expected flame length of a potential fire
Fire Intensity Scale	Quantifies the potential fire intensity by orders of magnitude
Fire Type	Potential for canopy fire type for extreme weather conditions (canopy fire potential)
Rate of Spread	The speed with which a fire moves in a horizontal direction across the landscape
Surface Fuels	Characterization of surface fuel models that contain the parameters for calculating fire behavior outputs
Vegetation	General vegetation and landcover types
Watershed Protection Risk	A measure of risk to watershed protection areas based on the potential negative impacts from wildfire.
Riparian Assets Risk	A measure of the risk to riparian areas based on the potential negative impacts from wildfire
Forest Assets Risk	A measure of the risk to forested areas based on the potential negative impacts from wildfire

COWRA Product	Description
Building Damage Potential	Estimates the potential for building loss
Defensible Space Index	The arithmetic mean of the three defensible space components: canopy, fuels, and slope. The colors shown represent the relative range and are the average for all of the buildings in the hexagon.

Wildland Urban Interface

Reflects housing density depicting where humans and their structures meet or intermix with wildland fuels

Colorado is one of the fastest growing states in the Nation, with much of this growth occurring outside urban boundaries. This increase in population across the state will impact counties and communities that are located within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The WUI is described as the area where structures and other human improvements meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. Population growth within the WUI substantially increases the risk from wildfire.

The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) layer reflects housing density depicting where humans and their structures meet or intermix with wildland fuels. In the past, conventional wildland-urban interface data sets, such as USFS SILVIS, have been used to reflect these concerns. However, USFS SILVIS and other existing data sources did not provide the level of detail needed by the Colorado State Forest Service and local fire protection agencies, particularly reflecting encroachment into urban core areas.

For the **San Juan County** project area, it is estimated that **1,088** people or **98%** percent of the total project area population (1,102) live within the WUI.

A more detailed description of the risk assessment algorithms is provided in the Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment (Colorado WRA) Final Report, which can be downloaded from www.ColoradoForestAtlas.com

The new WUI data set is derived using advanced modeling techniques based on the Where People Live (housing density) data set and 2021 LandScan USA population count data available from the Department of Homeland Security, HSIP data. WUI is simply a subset of the Where People Live data set. The primary difference is populated areas surrounded by sufficient non-burnable areas (i.e. interior urban areas) are removed from the Where People Live data set, as these areas are not expected to be directly impacted by a wildfire. Fringe urban areas, i.e. those on the edge of urban areas directly adjacent to burnable fuels are included in the WUI. Advanced encroachment algorithms were used to define these fringe areas.

Data is modeled at a 20-meter grid cell resolution, which is consistent with other CO-WRA layers. The WUI classes are based on the number of houses per acre. Class breaks are based on densities well understood and commonly used for fire protection planning.

Housing Density	WUI Population	Percent of WUI Population
1 - Less than 1 house/40 ac	3	0.3%
2 - 1 house/40 ac to 1 house/20 ac	10	0.9%
3 - 1 house/20 ac to 1 house/10 ac	3	0.3%
4 - 1 house/10 ac to 1 house/5 ac	31	2.8%
5 - 1 house/5 ac to 1 house/2 ac	34	3.1%
6 - 1 house/2 ac to 3 houses/ac	584	53.7%
7 - More than 3 houses/ac	423	38.9%
Total	**1,088**	**100%**

Housing Density	WUI Acres	Percent of WUI Acres
1 - Less than 1 house/40 ac	382	22.1%
2 - 1 house/40 ac to 1 house/20 ac	334	19.4%
3 - 1 house/20 ac to 1 house/10 ac	198	11.5%
4 - 1 house/10 ac to 1 house/5 ac	175	10.2%
5 - 1 house/5 ac to 1 house/2 ac	212	12.3%
6 - 1 house/2 ac to 3 houses/ac	343	19.9%
7 - More than 3 houses/ac	82	4.7%
None	**1,726**	**100%**

Wildland Urban Interface - Acres

San Juan County
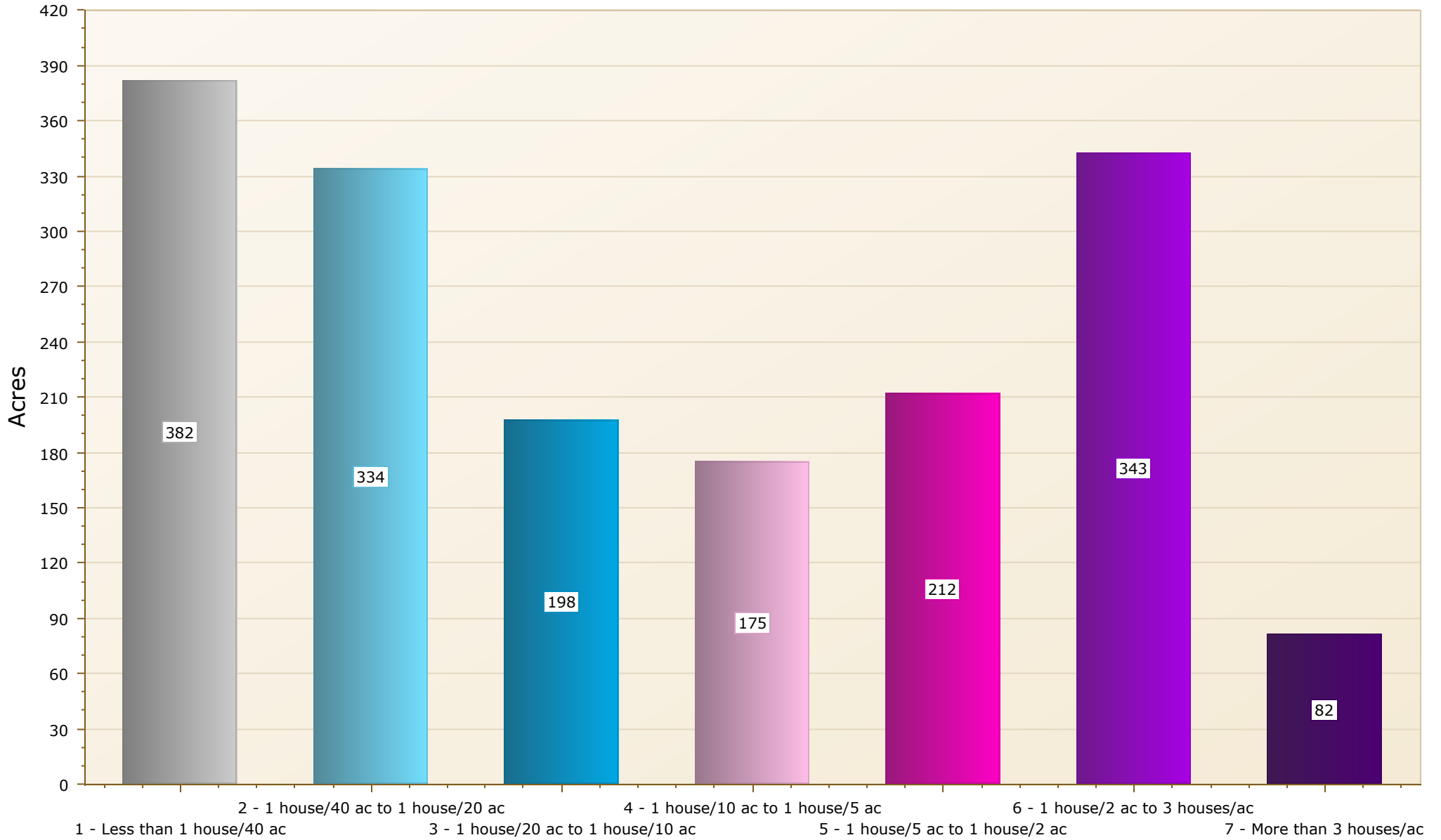
Wildland Urban Interface - Population

San Juan County
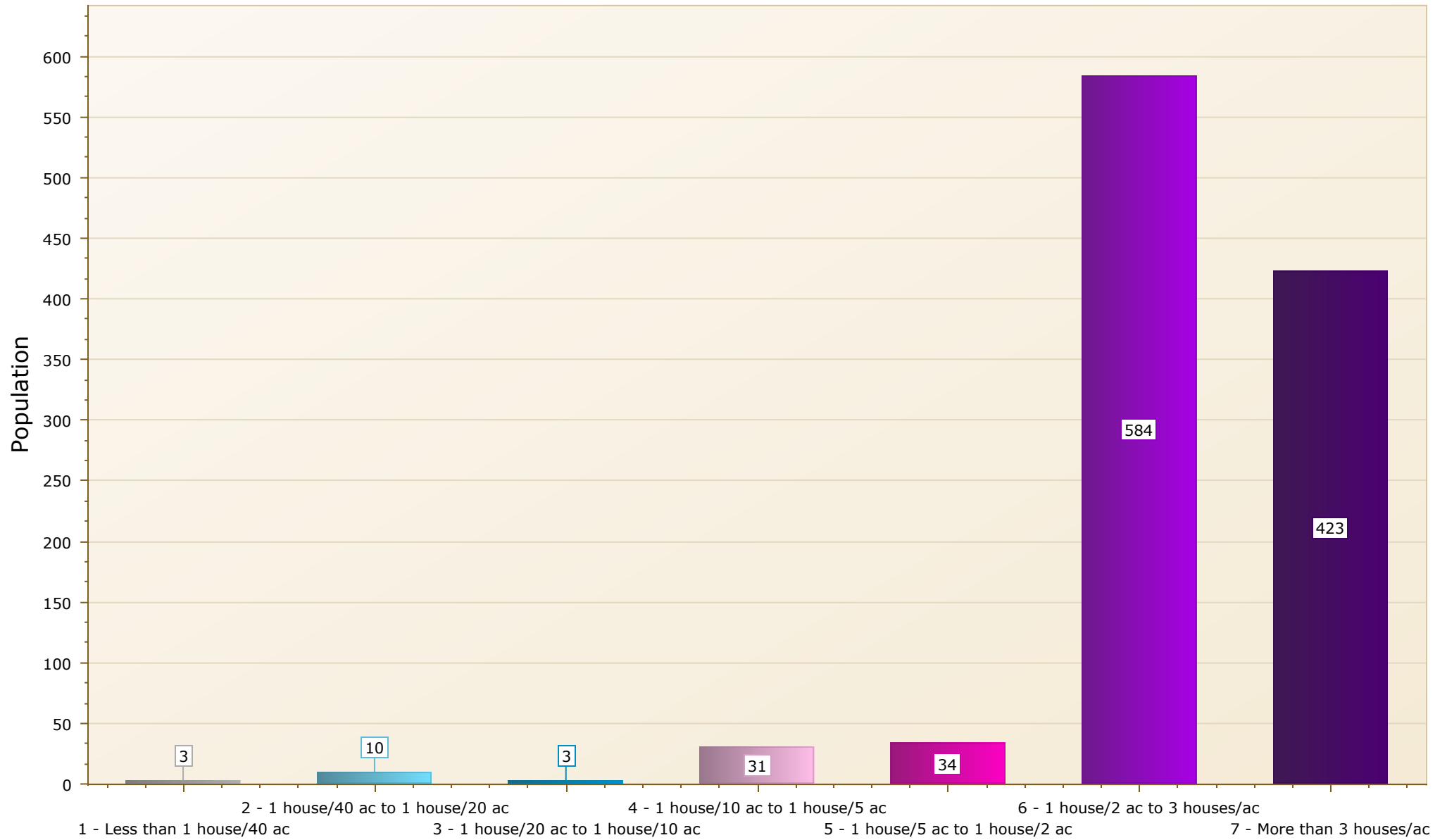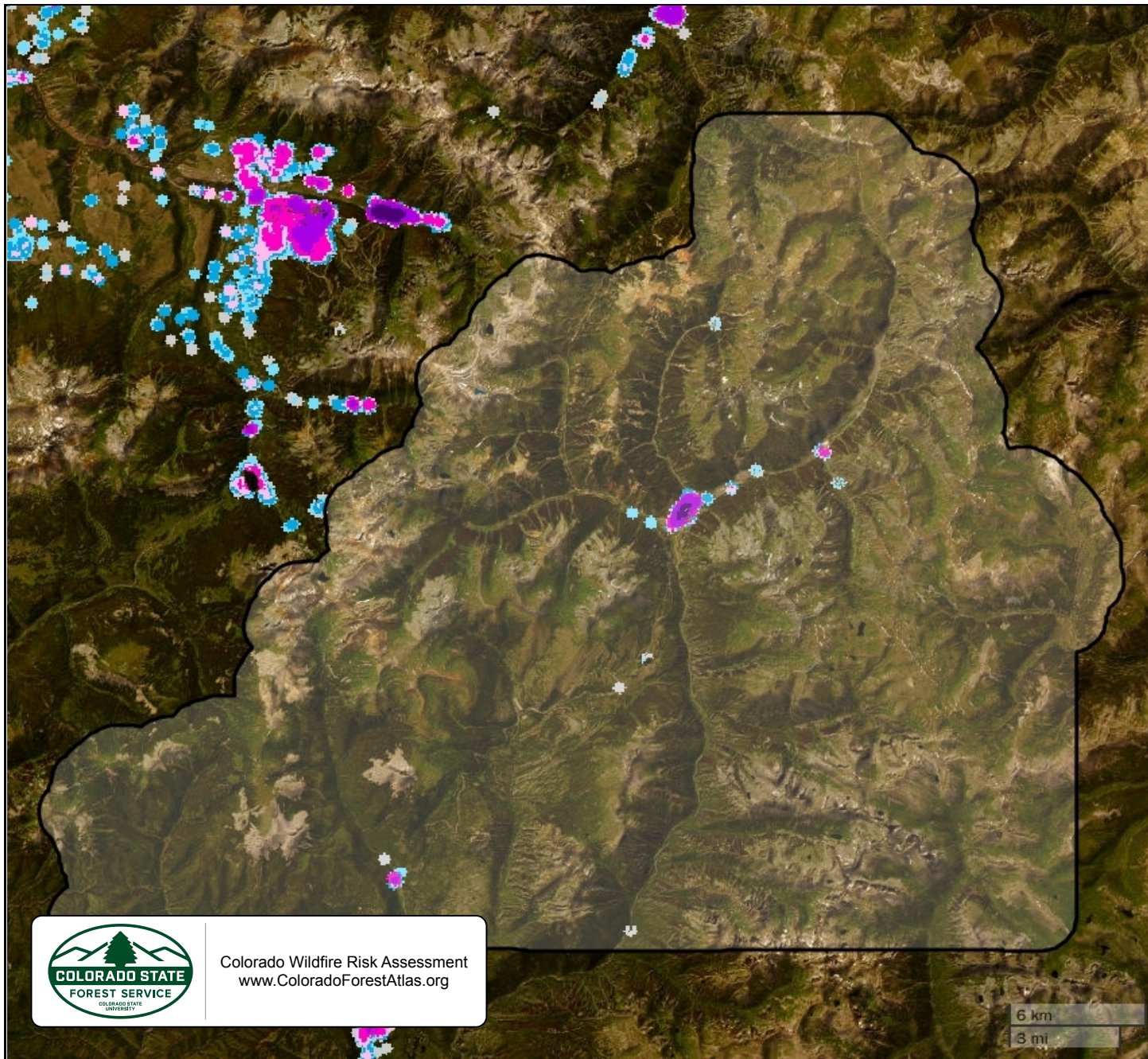
San Juan County

Wildland Urban Interface

1 - Less than 1 house/40 ac
2 - 1 house/40 ac to 1 house/20 ac
3 - 1 house/20 ac to 1 house/10 ac
4 - 1 house/10 ac to 1 house/5 ac
5 - 1 house/5 ac to 1 house/2 ac
6 - 1 house/2 ac to 3 houses/ac
7 - More than 3 houses/ac

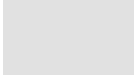Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment
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6 km
3 mi

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk

The Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Risk Index layer is a rating of the potential impact of a wildfire on people and their homes.
The key input, WUI, reflects housing density (houses per acre) consistent with Federal Register National standards. The location of people living in the wildland-urban interface and rural areas is essential for defining potential wildfire impacts to people and homes.

The WUI Risk Index is derived using a response function modeling approach. Response functions are a method of assigning a net change in the value to a resource or asset based on susceptibility to fire at different intensity levels, such as flame length.

To calculate the WUI Risk Index, the WUI housing density data were combined with flame length data and response functions were defined to represent potential impacts. The response functions were defined by a team of experts led by Colorado State Forest Service mitigation planning staff. By combining flame length with the WUI housing density data, it is possible to determine where the greatest potential impact to homes and people is likely to occur. Customized urban encroachment algorithms were used to ensure those fringe urban areas were included in the WUI Risk outputs. Encroachment distances into urban areas were based on the underlying fuel models and their fuel types and propensity for spotting and spreading.

The WUI Risk Index has been calculated consistently for all areas in Colorado, which allows for comparison and ordination of areas across the entire state. Data is modeled at a 20-meter cell resolution, which is consistent with other CO-WRA layers.

WUI Risk Class	Acres	Percent
Lowest Risk	34	2%
Low Risk	544	31.4%
Moderate Risk	370	21.4%
High Risk	284	16.4%
Highest Risk	497	28.8%
Total	**1,728**	**100%**

Wildland Urban Interface Risk

San Juan County
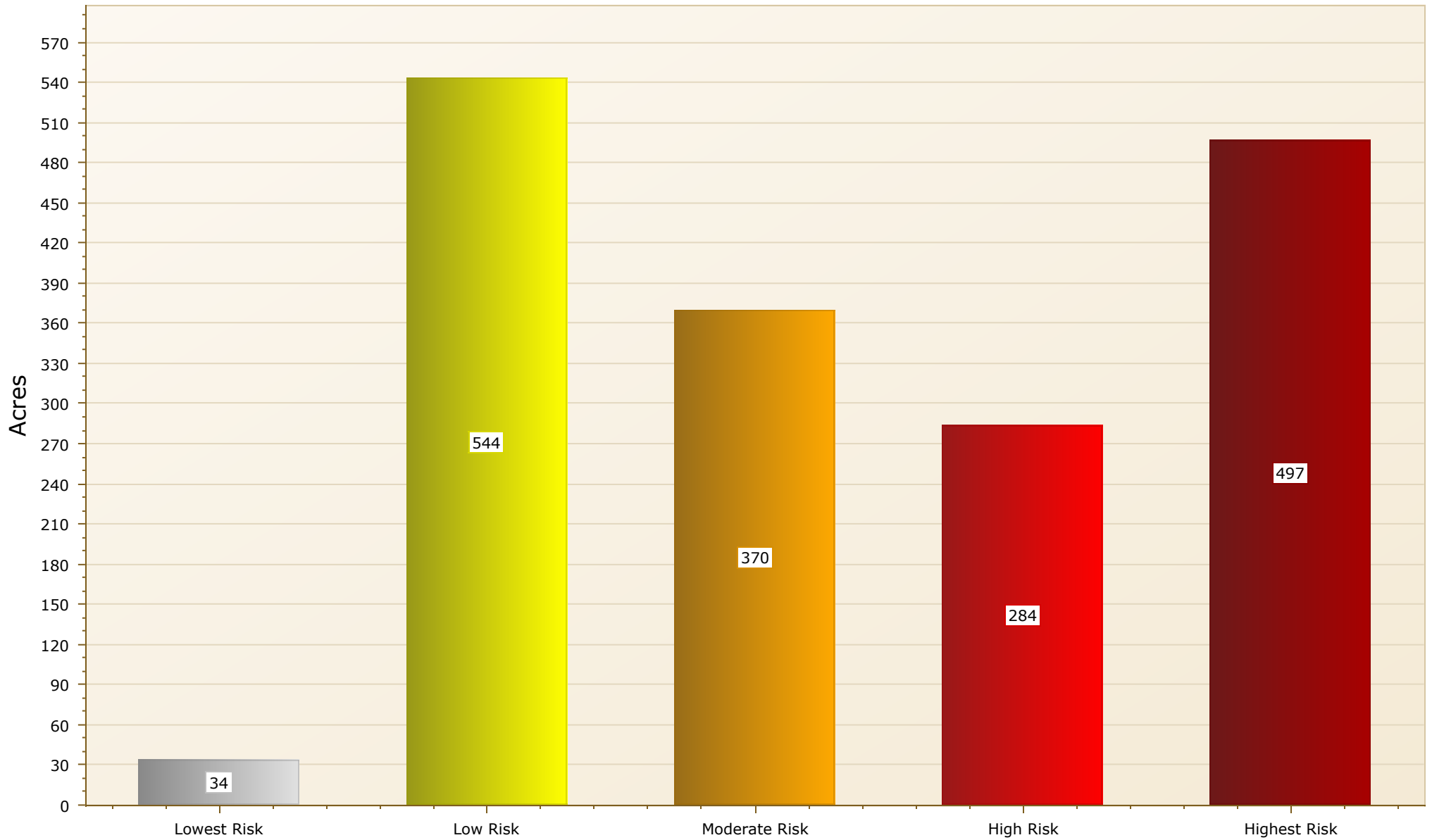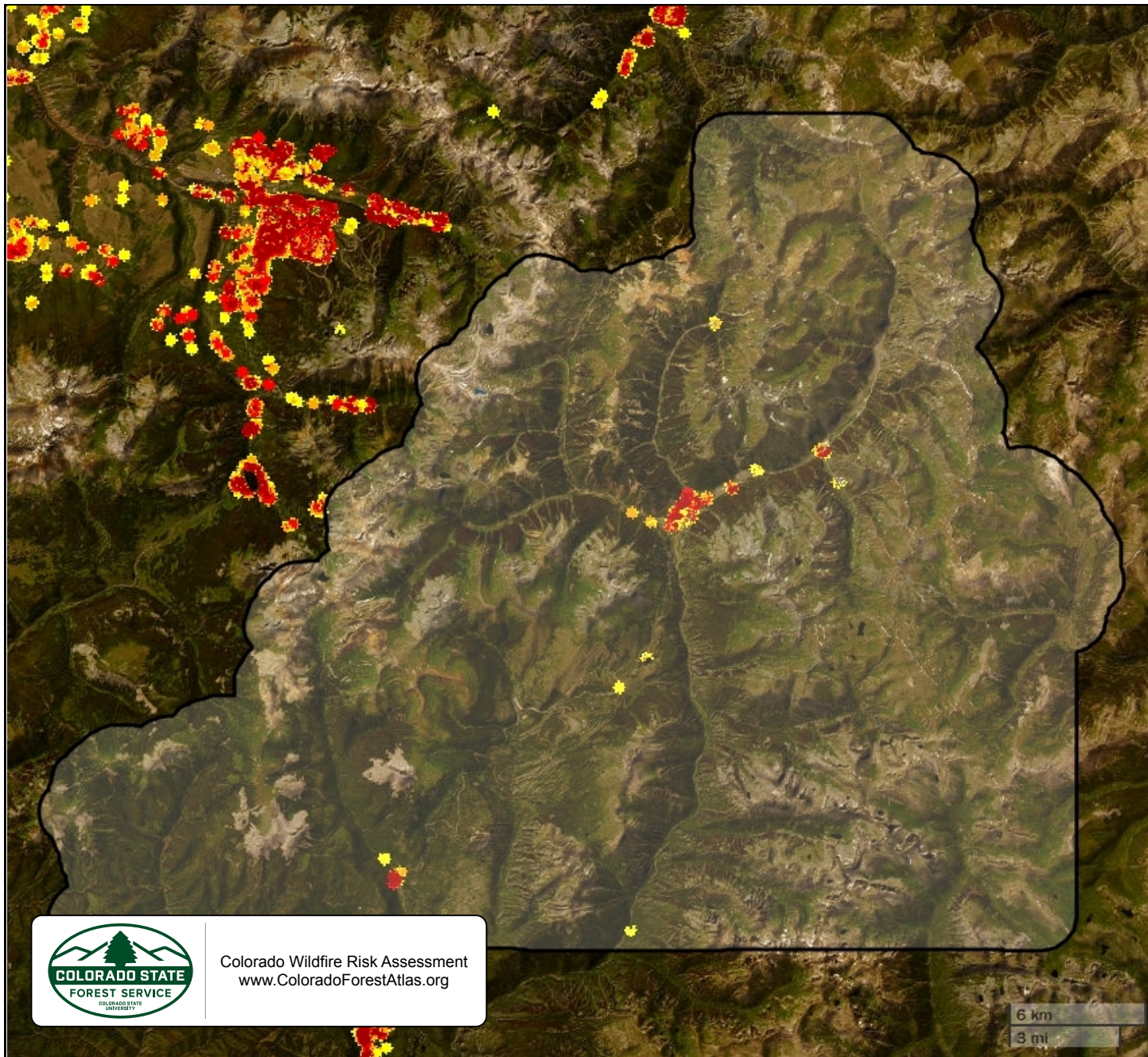
San Juan County

Wildland Urban Interface Risk

☐	Lowest Risk
☐	Low Risk
☐	Moderate Risk
☐	High Risk
☐	Highest Risk

Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment
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COLORADO STATE
FOREST SERVICE
COLORADO STATE
UNIVERSITY

6 km
3 mi

Firewise USA Recognized Sites

Description

Firewise USA® is a national recognition program that provides resources to inform communities how to adapt to living with wildfire and encourages neighbors to take action together to reduce their wildfire risk. Colorado communities that take the following five steps can be recognized as Firewise:

1. Form a Firewise board or committe
2. Obtain a wildfire risk assessment from the CSFS or local fire department, and create an action plan
3. Hold a Firewise event once per year
4. Invest a minimum of $24.14 per dwelling unit in local Firewise actions annually
5. Create a National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) profile and follow the application directions located at https://portal.firewise.org/user/login

The Firewise USA® dataset defines the boundaries of the recognized communities. Mapping Firewise USA® boundaries will generally be completed by CSFS staff.

Note: These are estimated boundaries using a variety of methods with varying degrees of accuracy. These are not legal boundaries and should not be construed as such. The boundaries may overlap with CWPP areas and are subject to change over time as the communities develop, change, and continue to implement wildfire mitigation efforts.
To learn more about the Firewise USA® recognition program or to fill out an application, visit https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Firewise-USA - OR
https://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/colorado-firewise-communities/

The designated area does not contain data for this section.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs)

Description

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a document developed and agreed upon by a community to identify how the community will reduce its wildfire risk. CWPPs identify areas where fuels reduction is needed to reduce wildfire threats to communities and critical infrastructure, address protection of homes and other structures, and plan for wildfire response capability. The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) supports the development and implementation of CWPPs and provides resources, educational materials and information to those interested in developing CWPPs.

The CWPP dataset represents the boundaries of those areas that have developed a CWPP. Note that CWPPs can be developed by different groups at varying scales, such as county, Fire Protection District (FPD), community/subdivision, HOA, etc., and as such, can overlap. In addition, the CWPPs can be from different dates. Often a county CWPP is completed first with subsequently more detailed CWPPs done for local communities within that county or FPD. CO-WRAP provides a tool that allows the user to select the CWPP area and retrieve the CWPP document for review (PDF).

At a minimum, a CWPP should include:

- The wildland-urban interface (WUI) boundary, defined on a map, where people, structures and other community values are most likely to be negatively impacted by wildfire
- The CSFS, local fire authority and local government involvement and any additional stakeholders
- A narrative that identifies the community's values and fuel hazards
- The community's plan for when a wildfire occurs
- An implementation plan that identifies areas of high priority for fuels treatments

CWPPs are not shelf documents and should be reviewed, tracked and updated. A plan stays alive when it is periodically updated to address the accomplishments of the community. Community review of progress in meeting plan objectives and determining areas of new concern where actions must be taken to reduce wildfire risk helps the community stay current with changing environment and wildfire mitigation priorities.
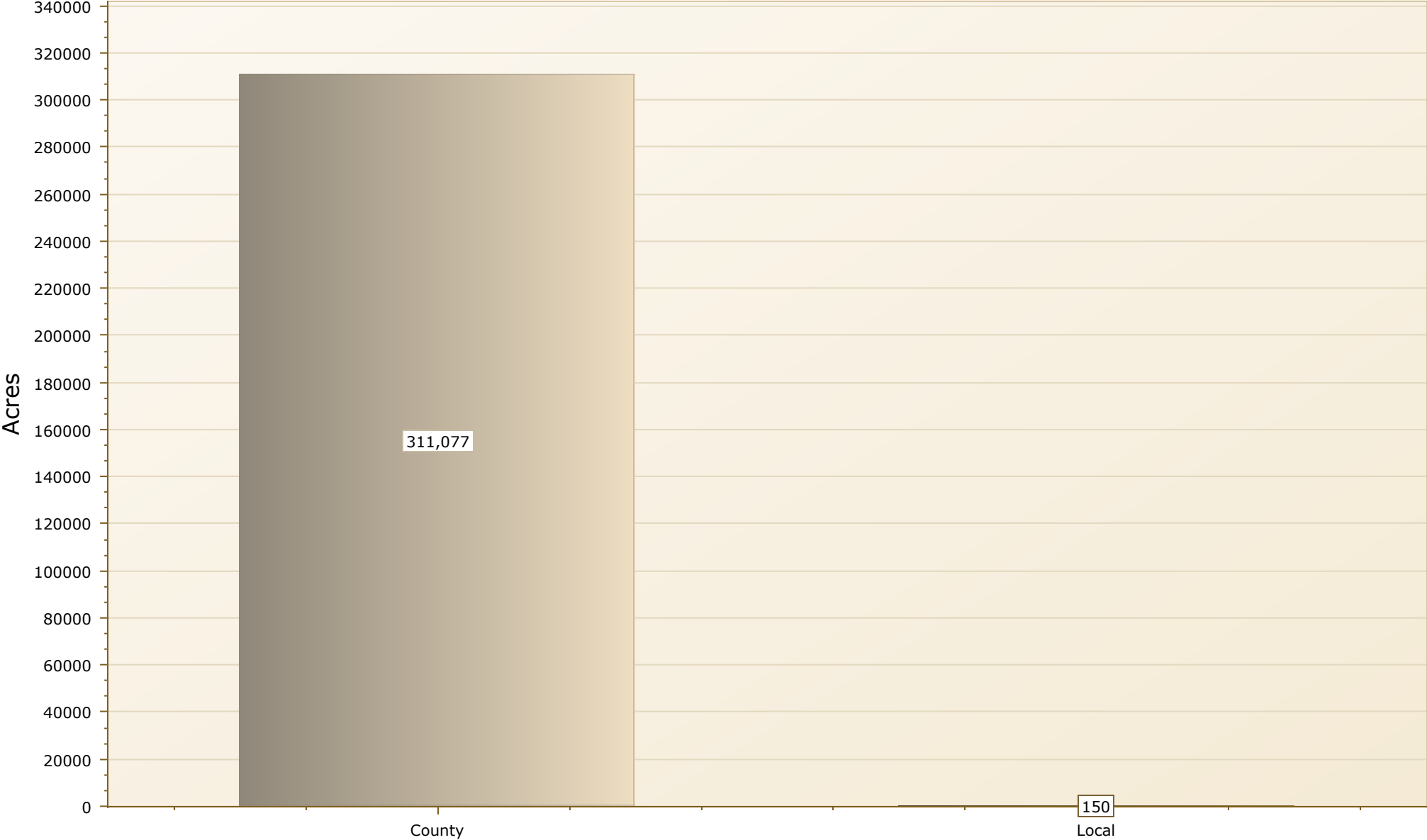
Community input is the foundation of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan that identfies community needs and garners community support.
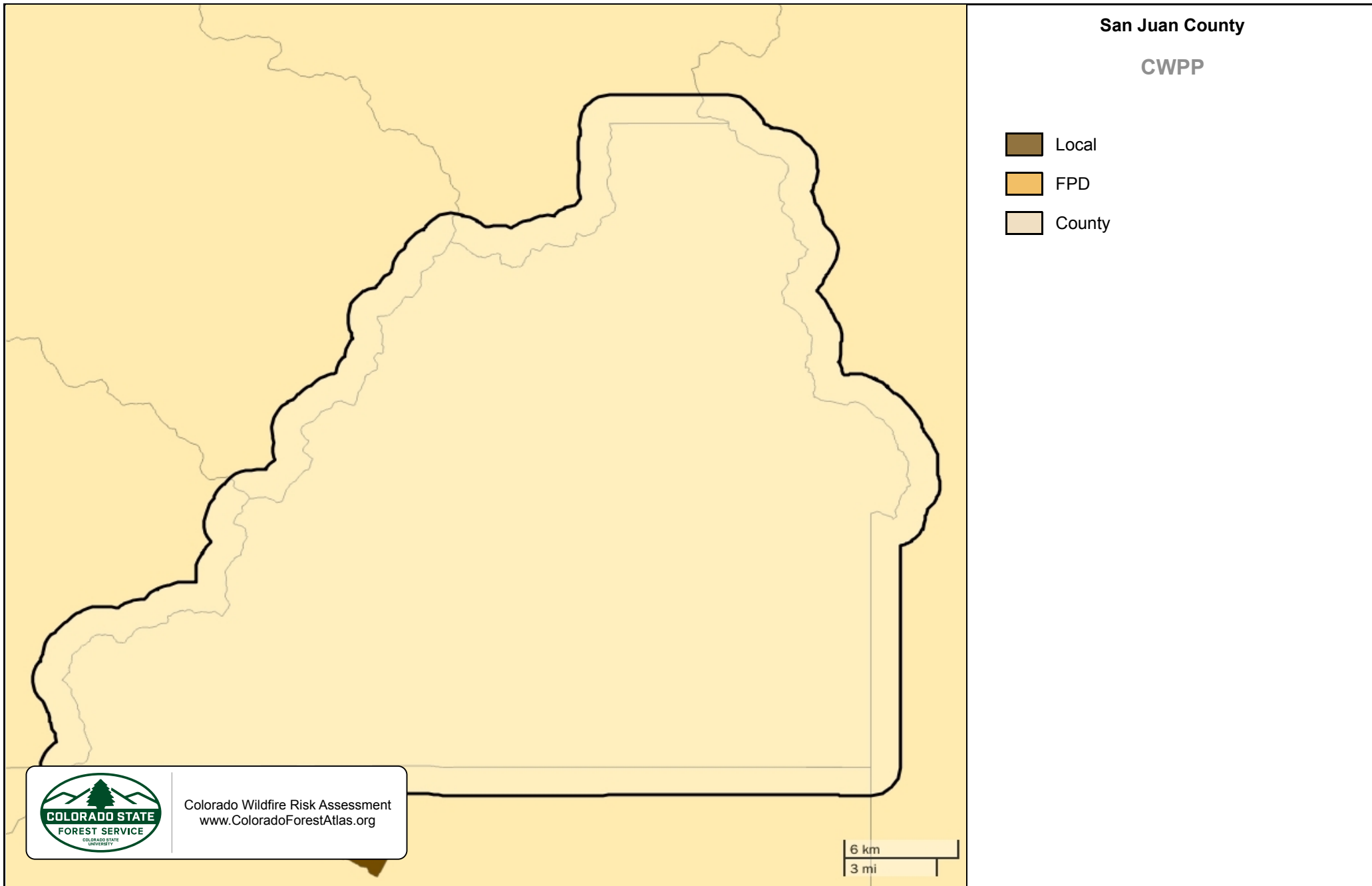
If your community is in an area at risk from wildfire, now is a good time to start working with neighbors on a CWPP and preparing forfuture wildfires. Contact your local CSFS district to learn how to start this process and create a CWPP for your community: http://csfs.colostate.edu/pages/your-local-forester.html
For the **San Juan County** test project area, there are 8 CWPPs areas that are totally or partially in the defined project area.

CWPP Name	CWPP Type	CSFS District	Acres inside project area	Total Acres
La Plata County	County	Durango	16,989	1,088,725
Montezuma County	County	Durango	300	1,307,671
Ouray County	County	Montrose	8,110	347,305
Hinsdale County	County	Salida	18,822	718,967
San Juan County	County	Durango	248,642	248,651
Dolores County	County	Durango	9,575	684,651
San Miguel County	County	Montrose	8,640	825,797
Lake Purgatory	Local	Durango	150	2,606
Total Acres			**311,227**	**5,224,371**

Community Wildfire Protection Plans

San Juan County

311,077

150

County

Local

San Juan County

CWPP

- Local
- FPD
- County

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6 km
3 mi

Wildfire Risk to Assets

Description

Wildfire Risk is a composite risk map created by combining the Values at Risk Rating and the Burn Probability layers.
It identifies areas with the greatest potential impacts from a wildfire – i.e., those areas most at risk when considering the four values layers.

The Values at Risk Rating is a key component of Wildfire Risk. It is comprised of several individual risk layers including Wildland Urban Interface (housing density), Forest Assets, Riparian Assets and Watershed Protection risk outputs. The WUI component is a key element of the composite risk since it represents where people live in the wildland and urban fringe areas that are susceptible to wildfires and damages. The found individual risk layers are weighted to derive the Values at Risk Rating layer.

The risk map is derived at a 20-meter resolution. This scale of data was chosen to be consistent with the accuracy of the primary surface fuels dataset used in the assessment. While not appropriate for site specific analysis, it is appropriate for regional, county, or local planning efforts.
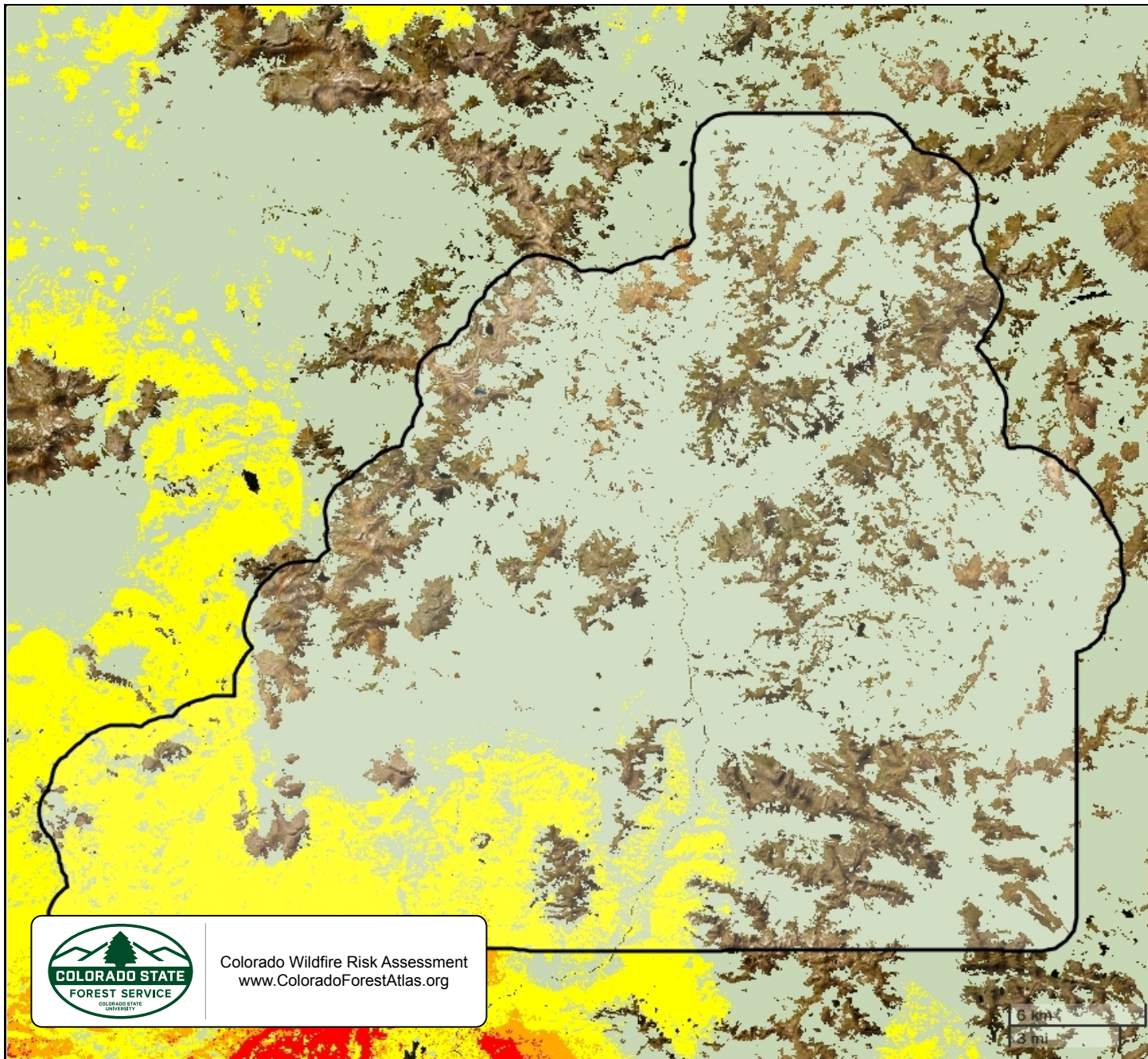

	Wildfire Risk	Acres	Percent
	Lowest Risk	195,779	82.5%
	Low Risk	41,390	17.4%
	Moderate Risk	74	0%
	High Risk	2	0%
	Highest Risk		0%
	Total	**237,246**	**100%**

Wildfire Risk to Assets

San Juan County
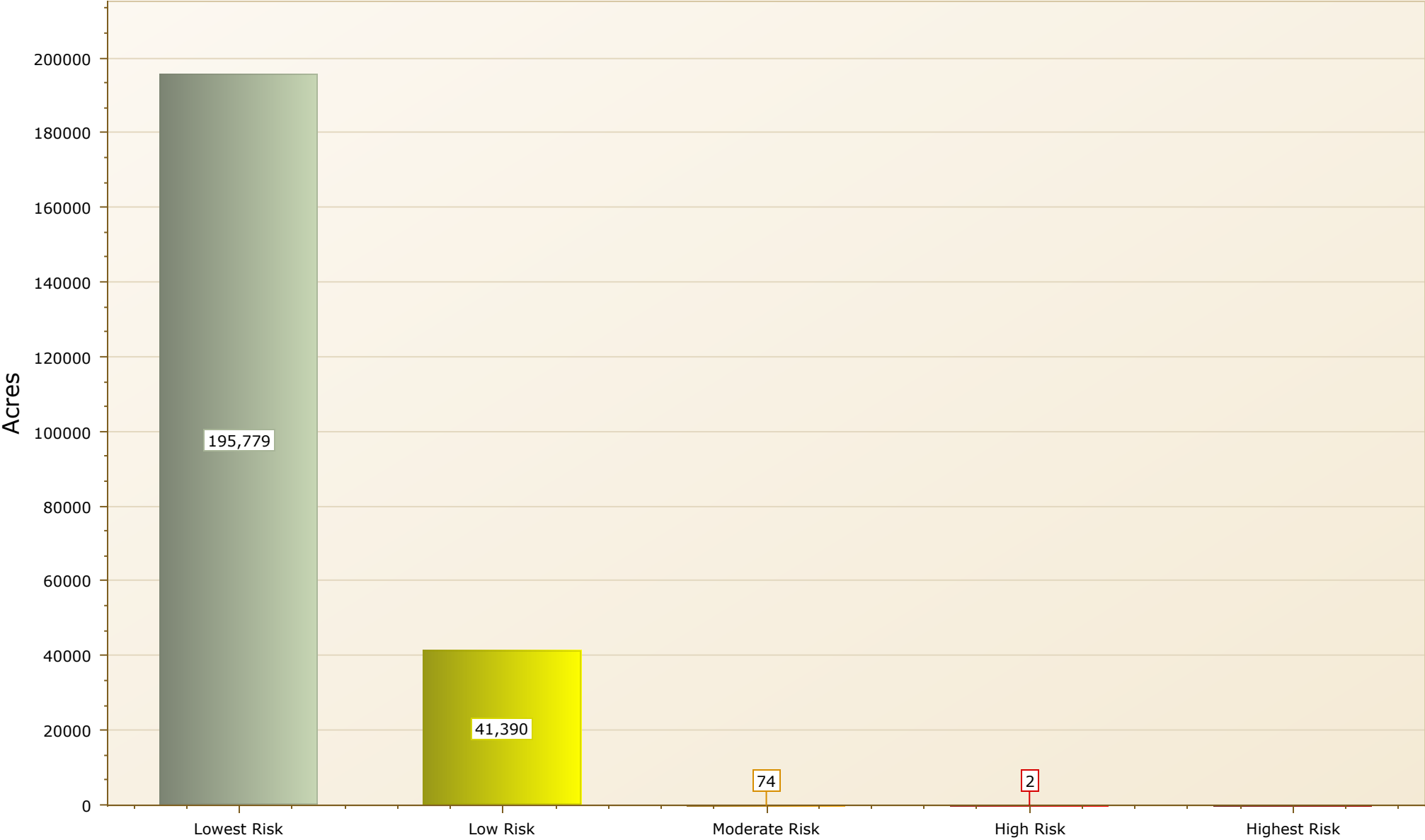
San Juan County

Wildfire Risk

- Lowest Risk
- Low Risk
- Moderate Risk
- High Risk
- Highest Risk

Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment
www.ColoradoForestAtlas.org

6 km
3 mi

Burn Probability

Description

Burn Probability (BP) is the annual probability of any location burning due to a wildfire.

The annual BP was calculated as the number of times that a cell was burned and the number of iterations used to run the models. The annual BP was estimated for Colorado by using a wildfire simulation approach with Technosylva's Wildfire Analyst software ([Wildfire Analyst](#)). A total number of 2,342,334 fires were simulated (3,200,000 if we consider those fires outside the Colorado border which were used in a buffer area around the study area to compute BP) with a mean ignition density of 8.68 fires/km2. The ignition points were spatially distributed evenly every 500 meters across the state. Only high and extreme weather conditions were used to run the single fires because they usually burn most of the annual burned area. All fires simulations had a duration of 8 h. After simulating all the fires, some cells were not burned by any simulated fire, resulting in a BP value of zero. Some cells were non-burnable due to the associated fuel type (i.e. water, roads, urban, agricultural areas, barren areas). However, the lowest BP value found in "burnable" cells was assigned to cells where the simulated fires did not reach.
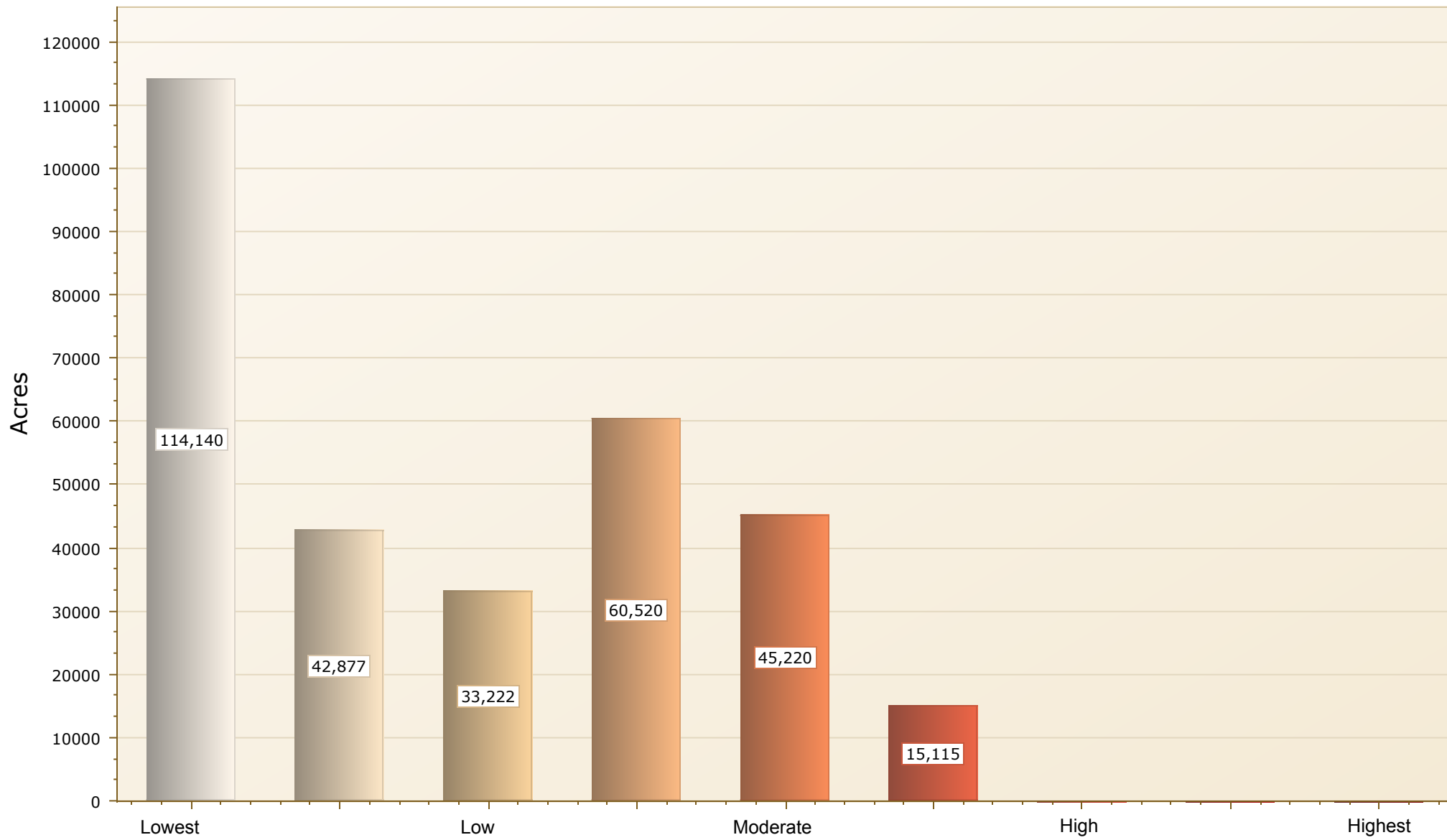
The Wildfire Analyst fire simulator considered the number of times that the simulated fires burned each cell. After that, results were weighted by considering the historical fire occurrence. The weighting was done by assessing the relation between the annual historical fire ignition density in Colorado and the total number of simulated fires with varying input data in high and moderate weather scenarios and the historical spatial distribution of the ignition points.
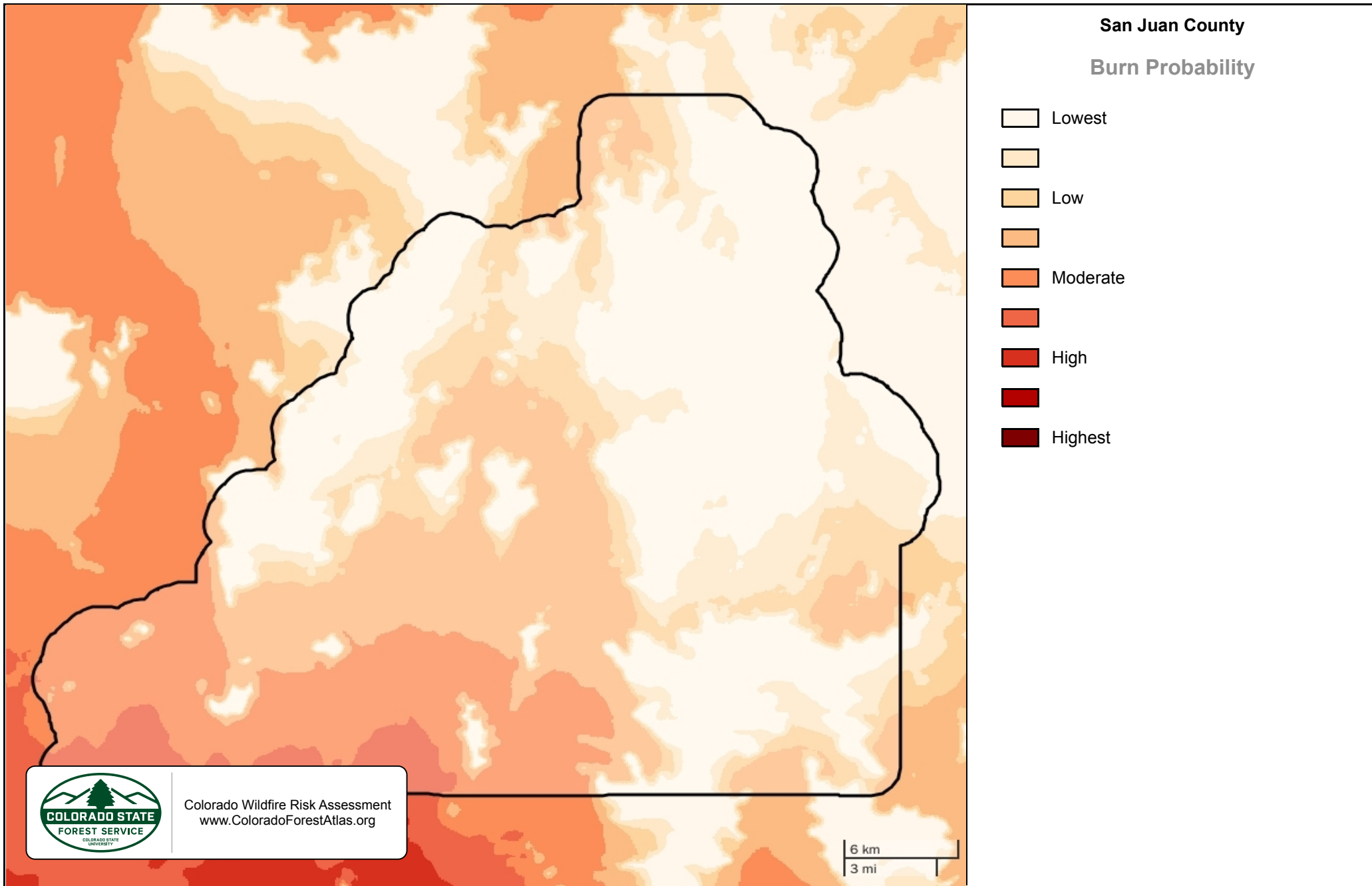
The probability map is derived at a 20-meter resolution. This scale of data was chosen to be consistent with the accuracy of the primary surface fuels dataset used in the assessment. While not appropriate for site specific analysis, it is appropriate for regional, county or local protection mitigation or prevention.

Burn Probability	Acres	Percent
Lowest	114,140	36.7%
	42,877	13.8%
Low	33,222	10.7%
	60,520	19.4%
Moderate	45,220	14.5%
	15,115	4.8%
High		0%
		0%
Highest		0%
Total	**311,094**	**100%**

Burn Probability

San Juan County

Acres

| Lowest | | Low | | Moderate | | High | Highest |

- 114,140
- 42,877
- 33,222
- 60,520
- 45,220
- 15,115

San Juan County

Burn Probability

Lowest

Low

Moderate

High

Highest

Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment
www.ColoradoForestAtlas.org

6 km
3 mi

Terrain Difficulty Index

Description

The 2012 and 2017 CO-WRA included a simple metric that described suppression difficulty based on fireline dozer rates. For 2022 CO-WRA, this standalone metric has been updated to reflect a more enhanced definition of areas where access to fires and suppression from ground resources is difficult. Although not a component of the standard risk assessment outputs, this metric is provided as it helps inform which areas may have limited suppression capabilities, especially for initial attack, across the State.

The Terrain Difficulty Index (TDI) is a metric that describes the characteristics of the landscape which evaluates the difficulty of extinction, especially in initial attack, although it can also be extrapolated to extended attacks. This static index quantifies the availability of access for the arrival of terrestrial means, the ability to penetrate the area where the fire originates, and the difficulty of extinguishing fuels.

Indicators such as the Accessibility Index, Penetrability Index and Fireline Opening Index (construction) have been used for the formulation of TDI. This index is based on other indices such as the Wildfire Suppression Difficulty Index (terrestrial) (SDIt) (Matthew P Thompson et al, 2018. Francisco Rodriguez and Silva et al, 2020.) which is a quantitative rating of the relative difficulty to perform fire control work. However, TDI is dynamic as it incorporates changes in surface fuels over time providing a less static perspective for a planning point of view.

Terrain Difficulty Index	Acres	Percent
Very Low	53,373	10.4%
Low	107,719	20.9%
Intermediate	73,162	14.2%
High	180,850	35.1%
Extreme	99,876	19.4%
Total	514,979	100%

Terrain Difficulty Index

San Juan County

Terrain Difficulty Index bar chart showing Acres by category:
- Very Low: 53,373
- Low: 107,719
- Intermediate: 73,162
- High: 180,850
- Extreme: 99,876
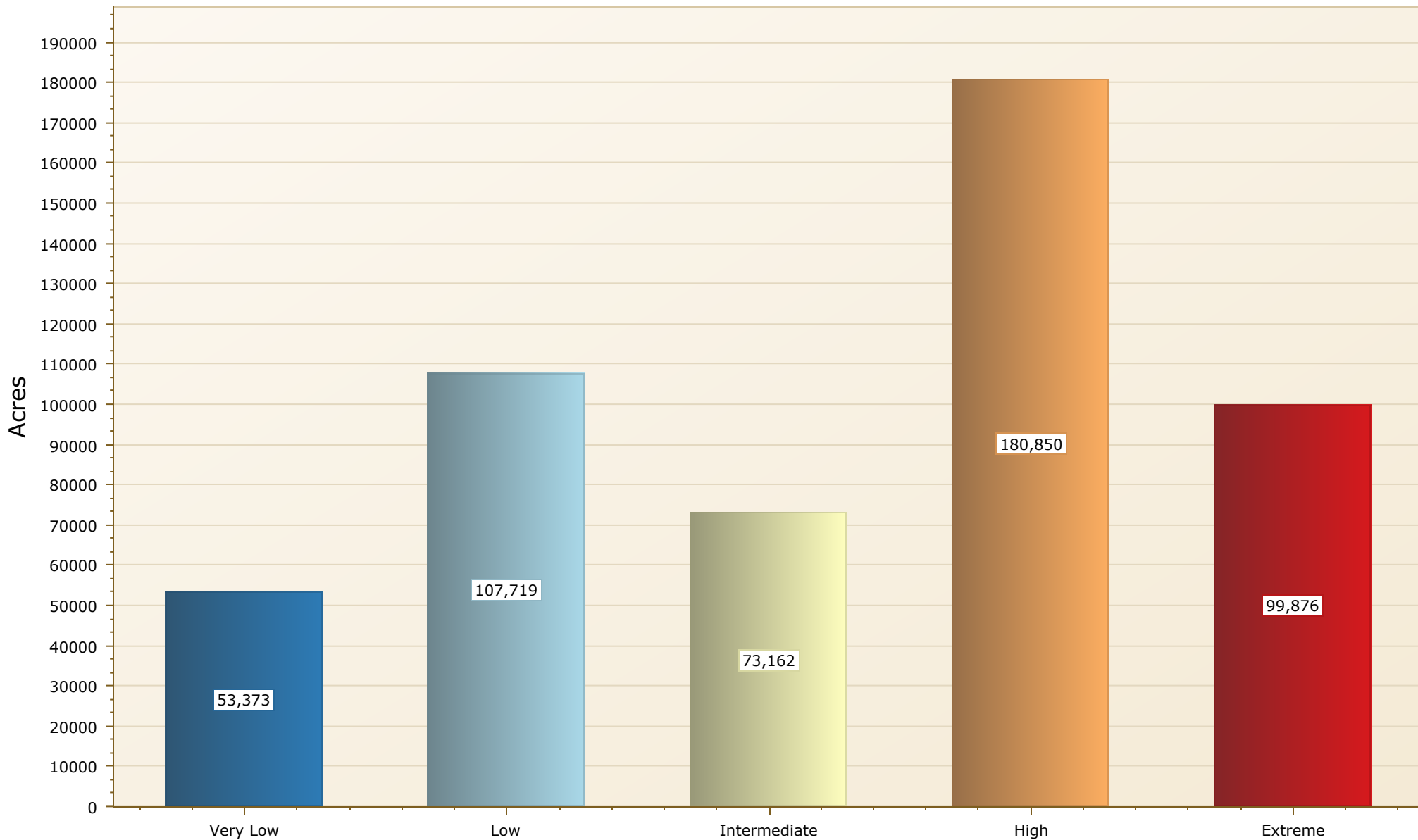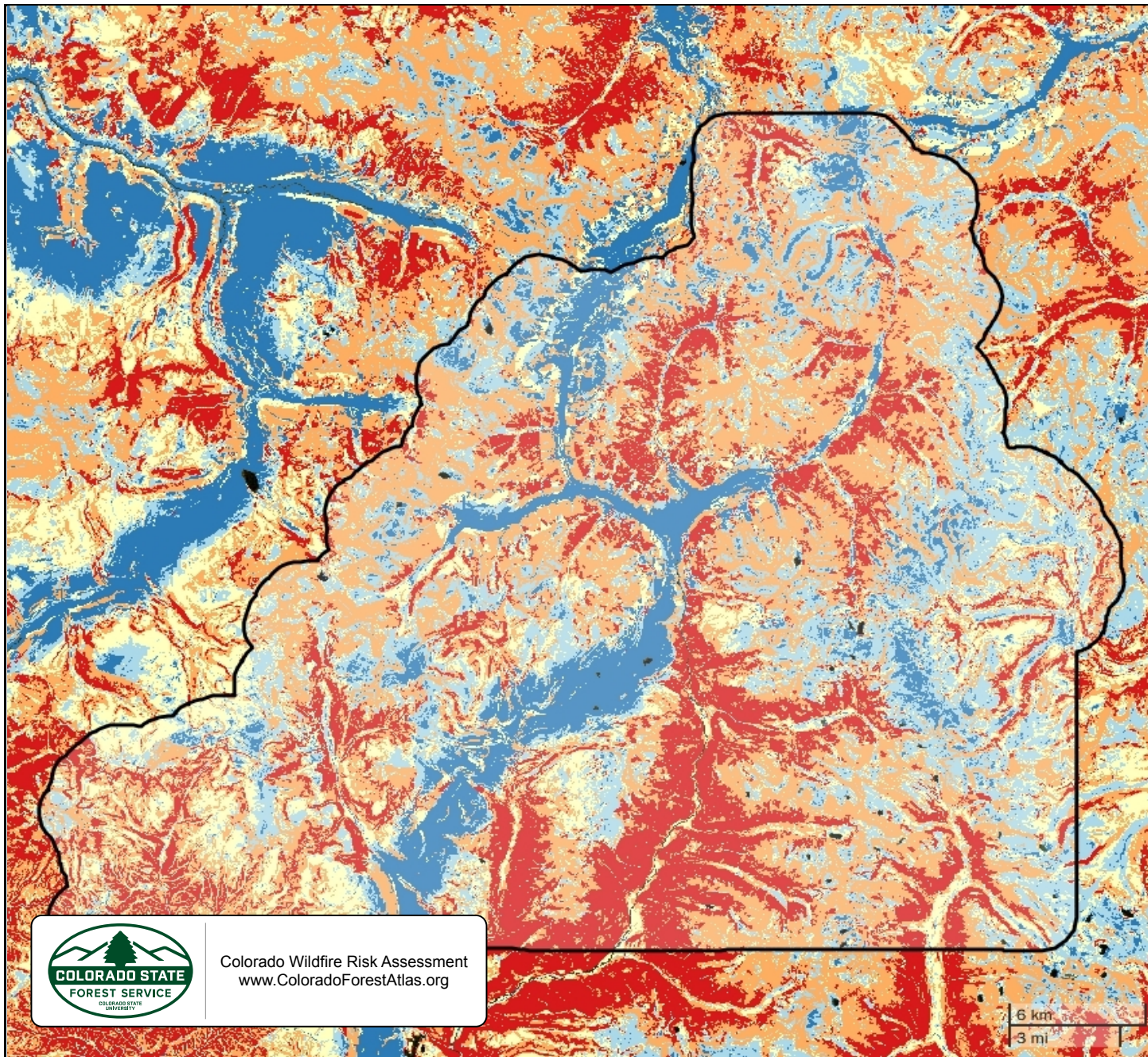
San Juan County

Terrain Difficulty

- ■ Very Low
- ■ Low
- ■ Intermediate
- ■ High
- ■ Extreme

Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment
www.ColoradoForestAtlas.org

6 km
3 mi

Wildfire Behavior Outputs

Description

Fire behavior is the way a fire reacts to the following environmental influences:

1. **Fuels**
2. **Weather**
3. **Topography**

Fire behavior characteristics are attributes of wildland fire that pertain to its spread, intensity, and growth. Fire behavior characteristics utilized in the Colorado WRA include fire type, rate of spread, flame length and fireline intensity (fire intensity scale). These metrics are used to determine the potential fire behavior under different weather scenarios. Areas that exhibit moderate to high fire behavior potential can be identified for mitigation treatments, especially if these areas are in close proximity to homes, business, or other assets.

<u>**Fuels**</u>

The Colorado WRA includes composition and characteristics for both surface fuels and canopy fuels. Assessing canopy fire potential and surface fire potential allows identification of areas where significant increases in fire behavior affects the potential of a fire to transition from a surface fire to a canopy fire.

Fuel datasets required to compute both surface and canopy fire potential include:

1.Surface Fuels are typically categorized into one of four primary fuel types based on the primary carrier of the surface fire: 1) grass, 2) shrub/brush, 3) timber litter, and 4) slash. They are generally referred to as fire behavior fuel models and provide the input parameters needed to compute surface fire behavior. The 2022 assessment uses the latest 2022 calibrated fuels for Colorado. The following custom fuels were included to improve the fire modeling in timber, WUI and agricultural areas:

- Timber: 2 new categories (171 and 191)

- Urban: 7 new categories (911,912,913,914,915,916 and 919)

- Roads: 5 new categories (941,942,943,944 and 949)

- Agriculture: 4 new categories (931,932,938 and 939)

- Water: 3 new categories (981,982 and 989)

2. Canopy Cover is the horizontal percentage of the ground surface that is covered by tree crowns. It is used to compute wind-reduction factors and shading.

3.Canopy Ceiling Height/Stand Height is the height above the ground of the highest canopy layer where the density of the crown mass within the layer is high enough to support vertical movement of a fire. A good estimate of canopy ceiling height is the average height of the dominant and co-dominant trees in a stand. It is used to compute wind reduction to mid-flame height, and spotting distances from torching trees.

4.Canopy Base Height is the lowest height above the ground above which sufficient canopy fuel exists to vertically propagate fire (Scott & Reinhardt, 2001). Canopy base height is a property of a plot, stand or group of trees, not an individual tree. For fire modeling, canopy base height is an effective value that incorporates ladder fuels, such as tall shrubs and small trees. Canopy base height is used to determine whether a surface fire will transition to a canopy fire.

5. Canopy Bulk Density is the mass of available canopy fuel per unit canopy volume (Scott & Reinhardt, 2001). Canopy bulk density is a bulk property of a stand, plot, or group of trees, not an individual tree. Canopy bulk density is used to predict whether an active crown fire is possible.

Weather

Weather data (1979-2022) from gridMET was used to analyze potential weather scenarios in which assessing fire behavior and spread. gridMET is a dataset of daily high-spatial resolution (~4-km, 1/24th degree) surface meteorological data covering the contiguous US. Air temperature data at 2m, relative humidity at 2m, and wind speed and direction at 10 m were all downloaded and used.

After computing the weather percentiles of the gridMET variables, data was interpolated using IDW algorithms (Inverse Distance Weighting) at 20-meter pixel resolution.

Dead fuel moisture content was estimated using the model of Rothermel and Rinehart (1983). Both temperature and air relative humidity at 2m from gridMET was used to define the fuel moisture model. The model also considered elevation and aspect to take into account the accumulated solar radiation at 14h (local time). 1% and 2% were added to the 1h-dead fuel moisture content to estimate 10h and 100h dead fuel moisture content, respectively.

For the first time in CO-WRA risk assessments, both herbaceous and woody live fuel moisture content was modelled using Technosylva's proprietary models based on optical imagery, drought indices and phenology. The models were trained with the WFAS National live fuel moisture content. Foliar moisture content in the canopies was considered as a constant value (80%) across the entire state.

Wind speed at 10 m was estimated at 20 ft applying a wind adjustment factor to use 20-ft wind speed in the fire spread and behavior equations. Afterward, wind speed percentiles were computed to use these data in the FB analysis at 20-meter pixel resolution. Wind direction for Colorado was analyzed for a 40-year period (1979-2022) considering the calculated wind speed percentiles from gridMET data. Predominant wind direction is from SW to NE, especially when wind speed is high or very high.
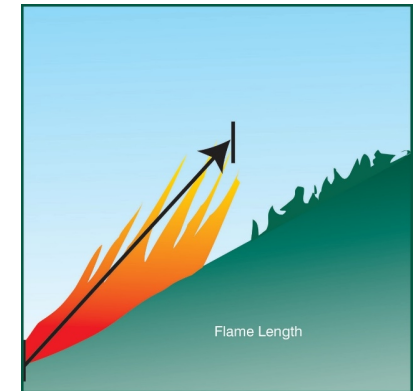
Characteristic Flame Length

The typical or representative flame length of a potential fire based on a weighted average of four percentile weather categories.

Flame Length is defined as the distance between the flame tip and the midpoint of the flame depth at the base of the flame, which is generally the ground surface. It is an indicator of fire intensity and is often used to estimate how much heat the fire is generating.

Flame length is typically measured in feet. Flame length is the measure of fire intensity used to generate the Fire Effects outputs for the CO-WRA and it is influenced by three environmental factors - fuels, weather, and topography. Weather is by far the most dynamic variable as it changes frequently. To account for this variability, four percentile weather categories were created from historical weather observations to represent low, moderate, high, and extreme weather days for each 20-meter grid cell in Colorado.

The Characteristic Flame Length represents the weighted average for all four weather percentiles. While not discussed in this report, the individual percentile weather Flame Length outputs are available in the CO-WRA data.

Flame Length

Characteristic Flame Length	Acres	Percent
0 - 1 ft	95,044	30.5%
1 - 4 ft	44,804	14.4%
4 - 8 ft	40,306	12.9%
8 - 12 ft	26,498	8.5%
12 - 25 ft	104,441	33.5%
Total	**311,094**	**100%**

Characteristic Flame Length

San Juan County

95,044

44,804

40,306

26,498

104,441

0 - 1 ft | 1 - 4 ft | 4 - 8 ft | 8 - 12 ft | 12 - 25 ft

Acres

San Juan County

Characteristic Flame Length

- 0 - 1 ft
- 1 - 4 ft
- 4 - 8 ft
- 8 - 12 ft
- 12 - 25 ft

Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment
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COLORADO STATE
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6 km
3 mi
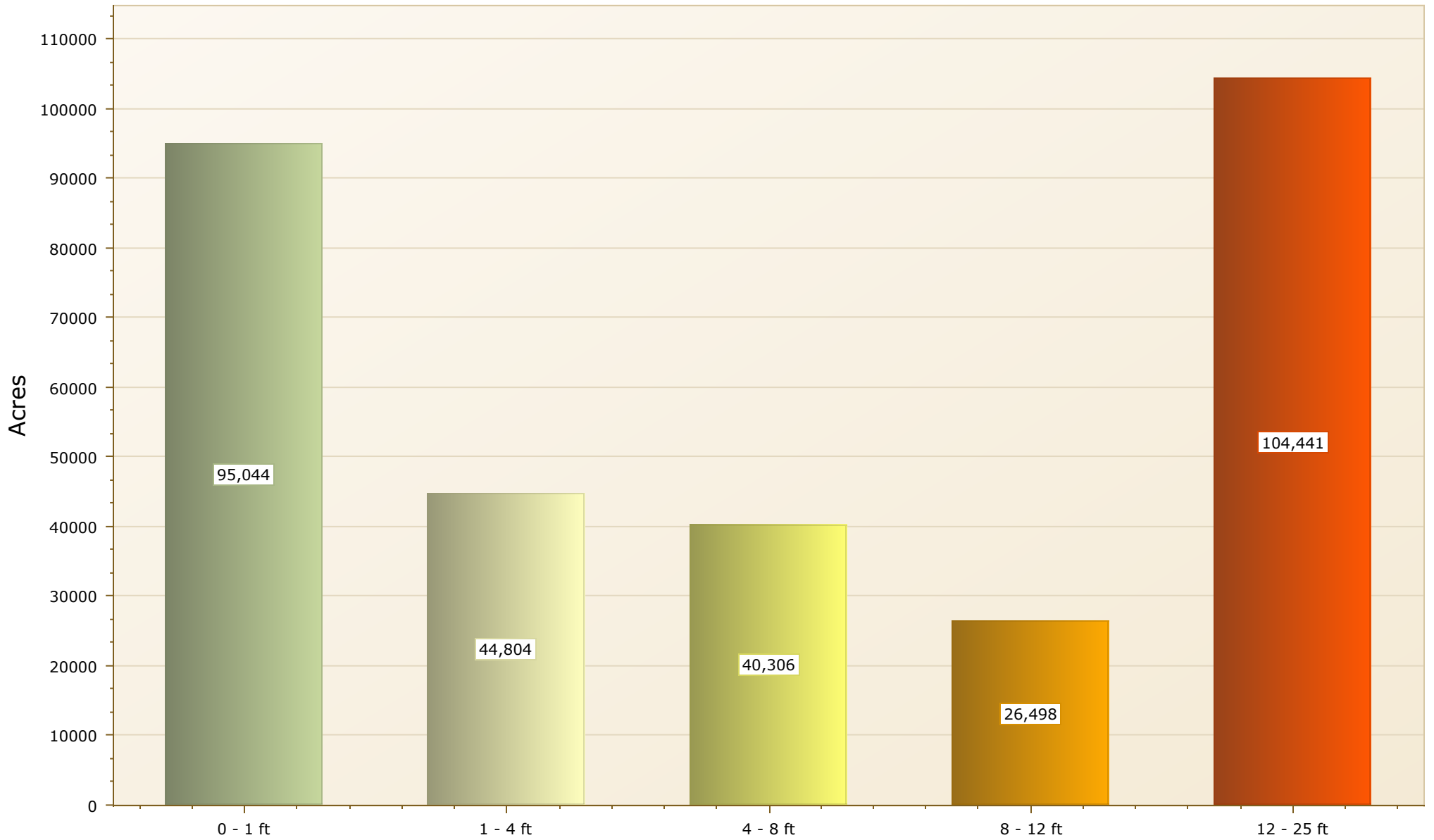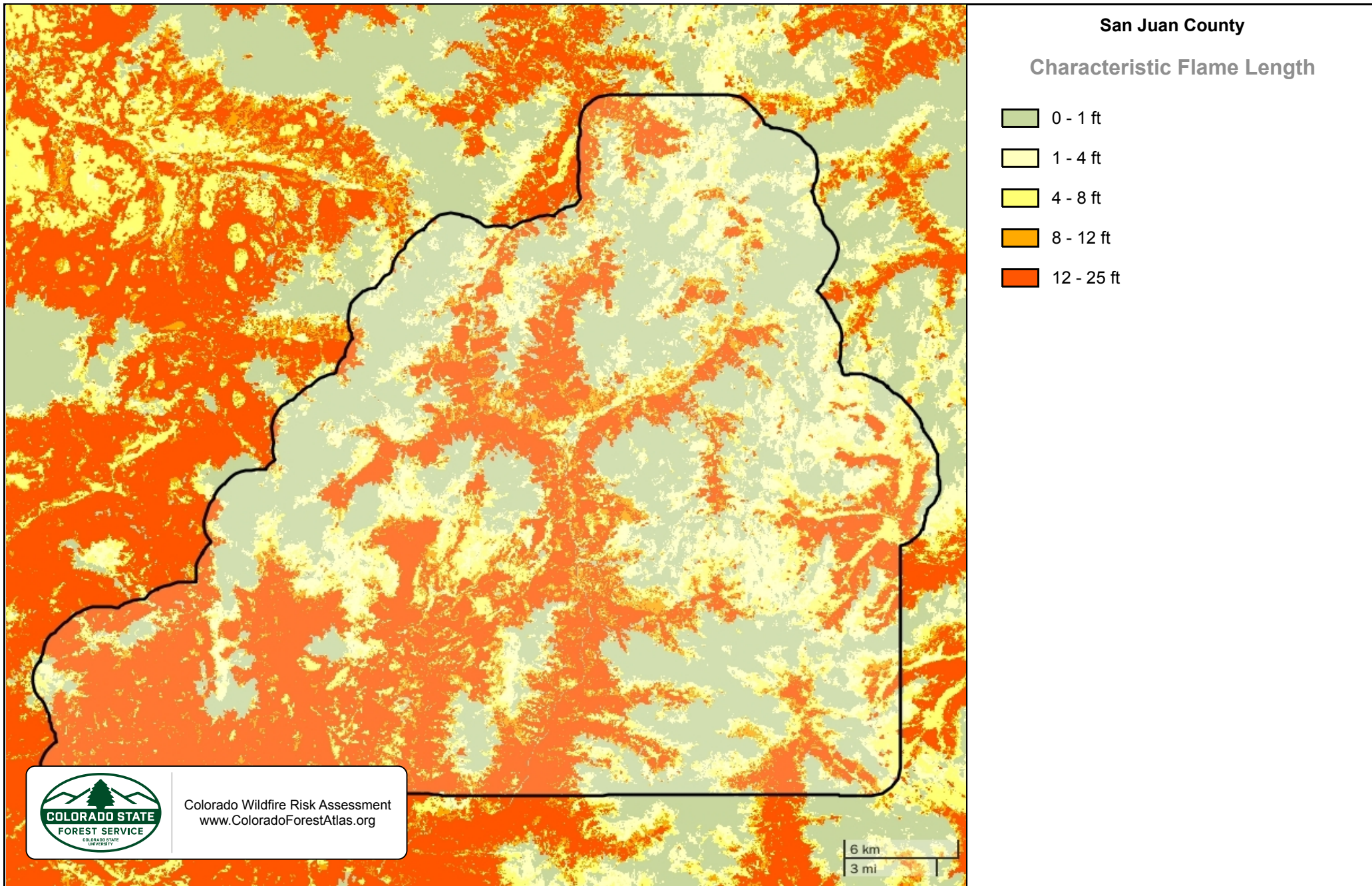
Fire Intensity Scale

Description

Quantifies the potential fire intensity by orders of magnitude.
Fire Intensity Scale (FIS) specifically identifies areas where significant fuel hazards and associated dangerous fire behavior potential exist. Similar to the Richter scale for earthquakes, FIS provides a standard scale to measure potential wildfire intensity. FIS consist of five (5) classes where the order of magnitude between classes is ten-fold. The minimum class, Class 1, represents very low wildfire intensities and the maximum class, Class 5, represents very high wildfire intensities.

1. Class 1, Lowest Intensity:
Very small, discontinuous flames, usually less than 1 foot in length; very low rate of spread; no spotting. Fires are typically easy to suppress by firefighters with basic training and non-specialized equipment.

2. Class 2, Low:
Small flames, usually less than two feet long; small amount of very short-range spotting possible. Fires are easy to suppress by trained firefighters with protective equipment and specialized tools.

3. Class 3, Moderate:
Flames up to 8 feet in length; short-range spotting is possible. Trained firefighters will find these fires difficult to suppress without support from aircraft or engines, but dozer and plows are generally effective. Increasing potential for harm or damage to life and property.

4. Class 4, High:
Large Flames, up to 30 feet in length; short-range spotting common; medium range spotting possible. Direct attack by trained firefighters, engines, and dozers is generally ineffective, indirect attack may be effective. Significant potential for harm or damage to life and property.

5. Class 5, Highest Intensity:
Very large flames up to 150 feet in length; profuse short-range spotting, frequent long-range spotting; strong fire-induced winds. Indirect attack marginally effective at the head of the fire. Great potential for harm or damage to life and property.

Burn Probability and Fire Intensity Scale are designed to complement each other. Unlike Wildfire Threat, the Fire Intensity Scale does not incorporate historical occurrence information. It only evaluates the potential fire behavior for an area, regardless if any fires have occurred there in the past. This additional information allows mitigation planners to quickly identify areas where dangerous fire behavior potential exists in relationship to nearby homes or other valued assets.

Since all areas in Colorado have fire intensity scale calculated consistently, it allows for comparison and ordination of areas across the entire state. For example, a high fire intensity area in Eastern Colorado is equivalent to a high fire intensity area in Western Colorado.

Fire intensity scale is a fire behavior output, which is influenced by three environmental factors - fuels, weather, and topography – and the spread itself (back, flank or head fire influences fire behavior for a given pixel for a specific fire simulation). Weather is by far the most dynamic variable as it changes frequently. Thus, each pixel may burn many times with different fire spread patterns based on the aforementioned factors. The fire intensity scale maps represent an average fire intensity map.

The fire intensity scale map is derived at a 20-meter resolution. This scale of data was chosen to be consistent with the accuracy of the primary surface fuels dataset used in the assessment. While not appropriate for site specific analysis, it is appropriate for regional, county, or local planning efforts.

FIS Class	Acres	Percent
Lowest Intensity	20,182	8.7%
Low Intensity	38,258	16.4%
Moderate Intensity	58,863	25.3%
High Intensity	115,588	49.6%
Total	**232,891**	**100%**

Fire Intensity Scale

San Juan County

Acres

- Lowest Intensity: 20,182
- Low Intensity: 38,258
- Moderate Intensity: 58,863
- High Intensity: 115,588
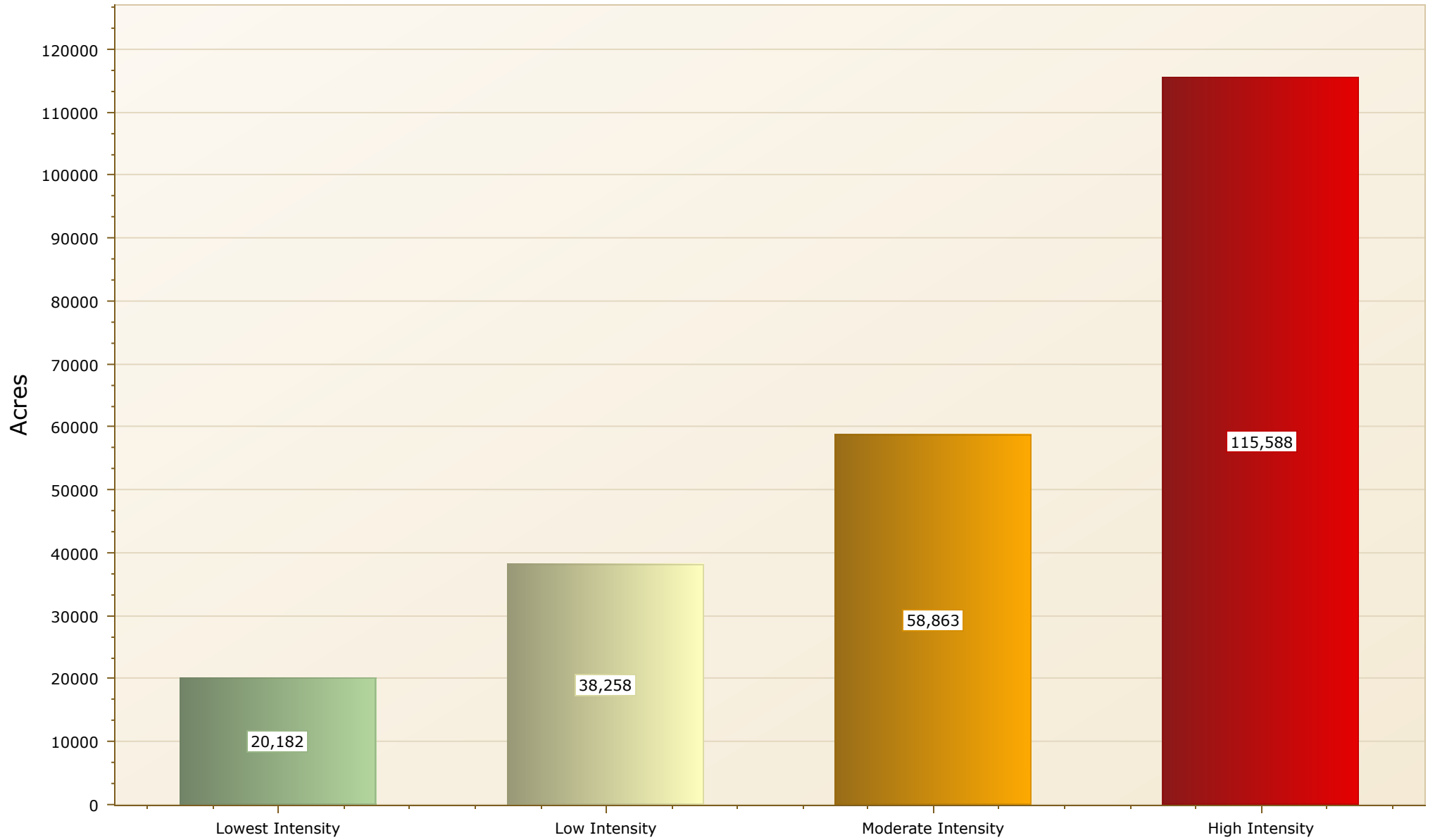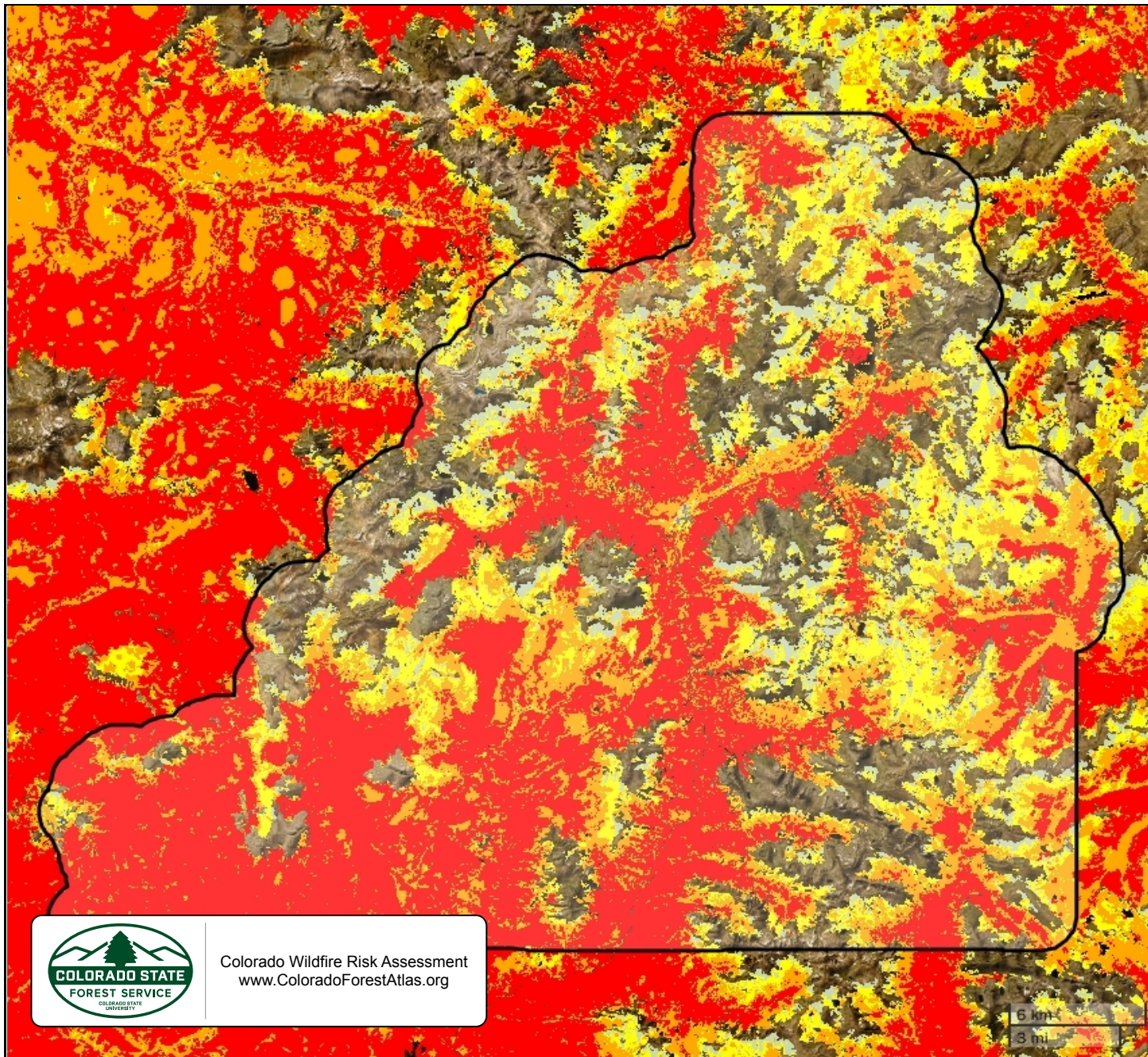
San Juan County

Fire Intensity Scale

Lowest Intensity

Low Intensity

Moderate Intensity

High Intensity

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6 km
3 mi

Fire Type

Represents the potential fire type under the extreme percentile weather category.

Canopy fires are very dangerous, destructive and difficult to control due to their increased fire intensity. From a planning perspective, it is important to identify where these conditions are likely to occur on the landscape so that special preparedness measure can be taken if necessary. The Fire Type layer shows the footprint of where these areas are most likely to occur. However, it is important to note that canopy fires are not restricted to these areas. Under the right conditions, it can occur in other canopied areas.

There are two primary fire types – surface fire and canopy fire. Canopy fire can be further subdivided into passive canopy fire and active canopy fire. A short description of each of these is provided below.

• Surface Fire - A fire that spreads through surface fuel without consuming any overlying canopy fuel. Surface fuels include grass, timber litter, shrub/brush, slash and other dead or live vegetation within about 6 feet of the ground.

• Passive Canopy Fire – A type of crown fire in which the crowns of individual trees or small groups of trees burn, but solid flaming in the canopy cannot be maintained except for short periods (Scott & Reinhardt, 2001).

• Conditional Crown Fire – A type of crown fire in which an active crown fire is possible but one would not be predicted to initiate. Two outcomes are possible in that situation: surface fire if the fire starts in the stand as a surface fire, or active crown fire if fire enters the stand as an active crown fire.

• Active Canopy Fire - A crown fire in which the entire fuel complex (canopy) is involved in flame, but the crowning phase remains dependent on heat released from surface fuel for continued spread (Scott & Reinhardt, 2001).

The fire type map is derived at a 20-meter resolution and was estimated based on the extreme weather scenario (percentile 97th). This scale of data was chosen to be consistent with the accuracy of the primary surface fuels dataset used in the assessment. While not appropriate for site specific analysis, it is appropriate for regional, county or local planning efforts.
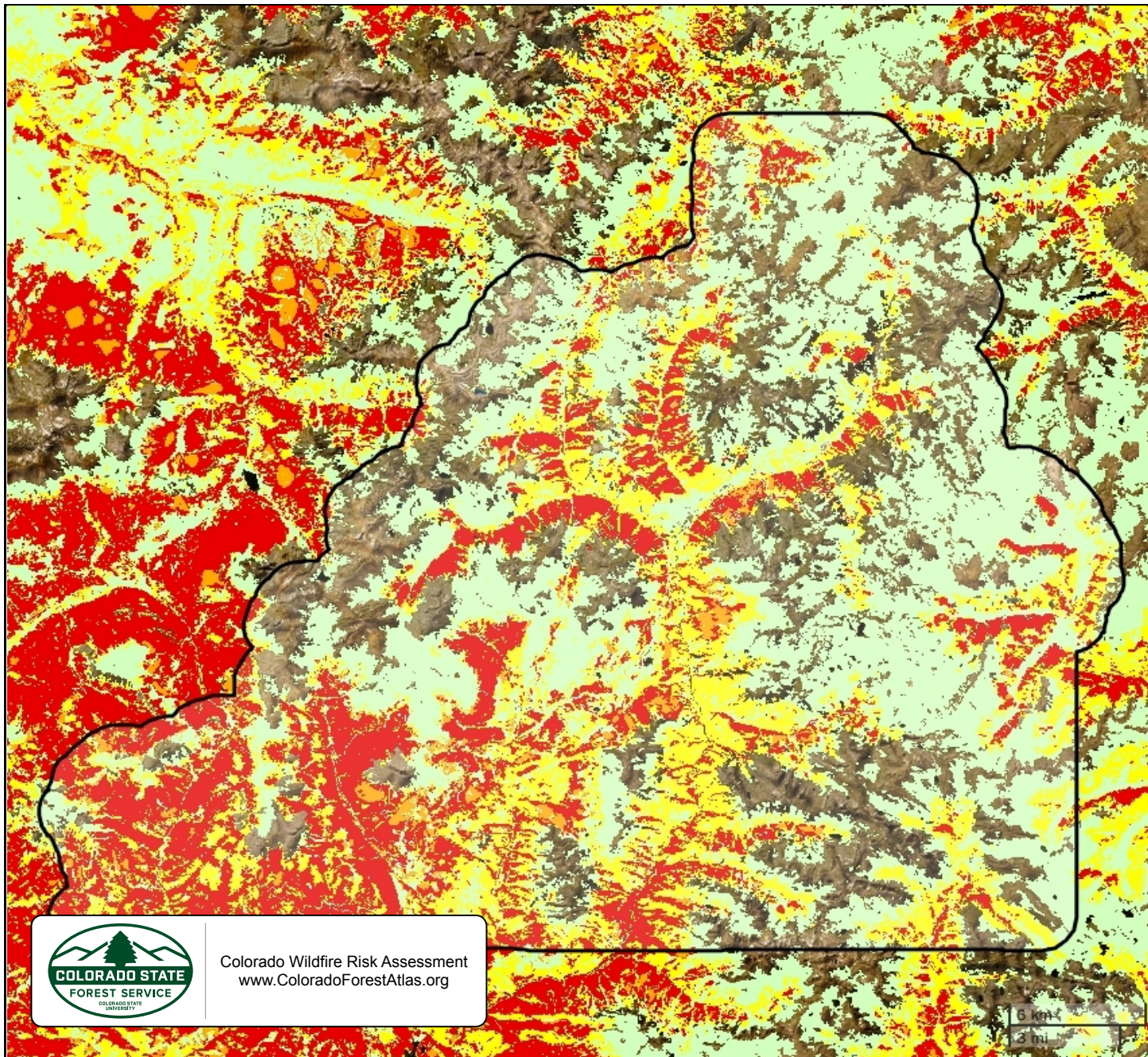
Fire Type	Acres	Percent
Surface	119,768	50.5%
Passive	52,426	22.1%
Conditional Crown	6,521	2.7%
Active	58,531	24.7%
Total	**237,246**	**100%**

Fire Type

San Juan County
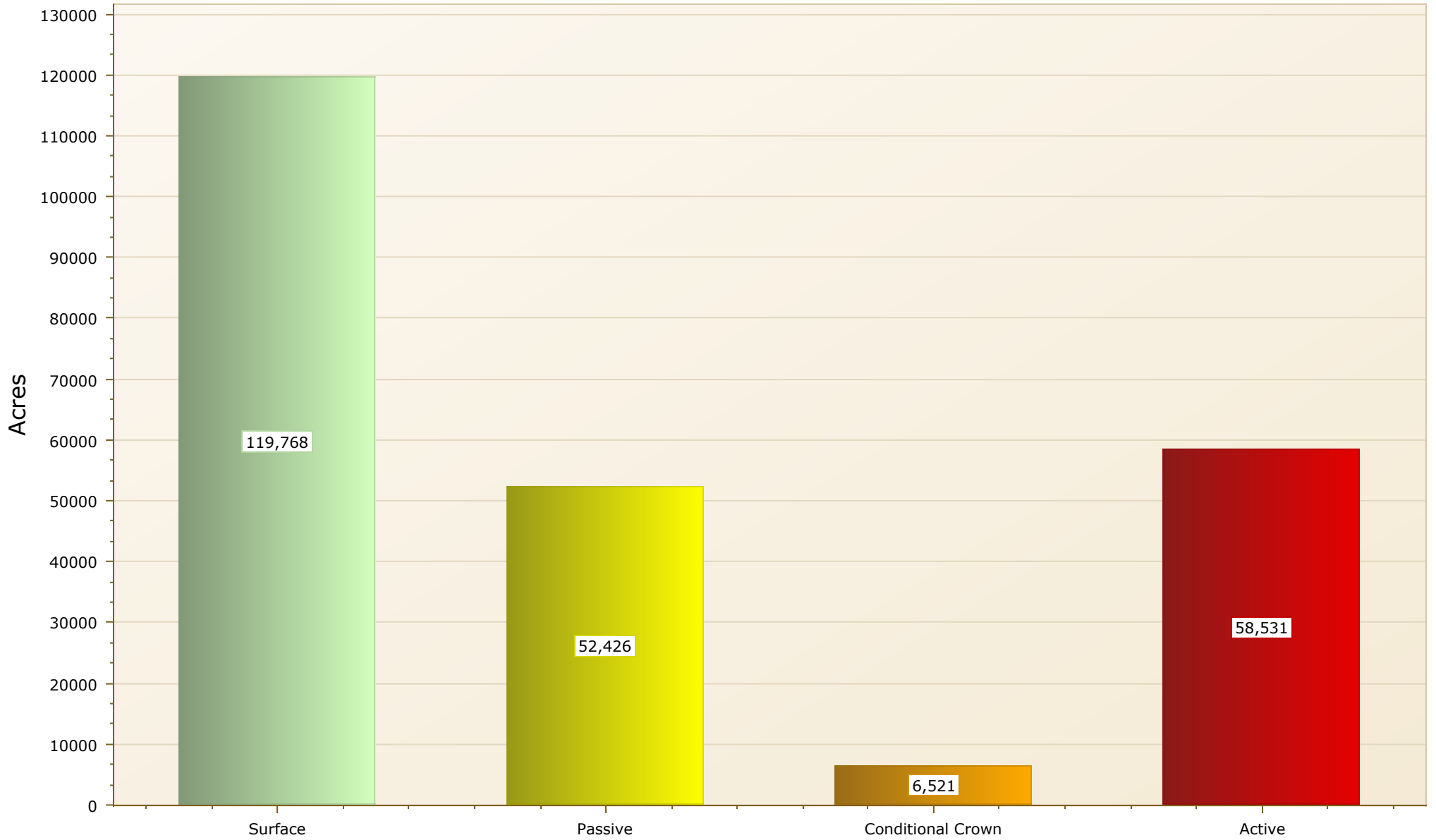
San Juan County

Fire Type

- Surface
- Passive
- Conditional Crown
- Active

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6 km
3 mi

Rate of Spread

The typical or representative rate of spread of a potential fire based on a weighted average of four percentile weather categories.

Rate of spread is the speed with which a fire moves in a horizontal direction across the landscape, usually expressed in chains per hour (ch/hr) or feet per minute (ft/min). For purposes of the CO-WRA, this measurement represents the maximum rate of spread of the fire front.

Rate of spread is a fire behavior output, which is influenced by three environmental factors - fuels, weather, and topography. Weather is by far the most dynamic variable as it changes frequently. To account for this variability, four percentile weather categories were created from historical weather observations to represent low, moderate, high, and extreme weather days for a 20-meter grid cell in Colorado.

	Rate of Spread	Acres	Percent
	0 - 2- chains/hr	1,099	0.5%
	2 - 4- chains/hr	7,477	3.2%
	4 - 12- chains/hr	18,967	8%
	12 - 40- chains/hr	68,322	28.8%
	40 - 60- chains/hr	34,503	14.5%
	> 60- chains/hr	106,879	45%
	Total	**237,246**	**100%**

Rate of Spread

San Juan County

Rate of Spread	Acres
0 - 2- chains/hr	1,099
2 - 4- chains/hr	7,477
4 - 12- chains/hr	18,967
12 - 40- chains/hr	68,322
40 - 60- chains/hr	34,503
> 60- chains/hr	106,879
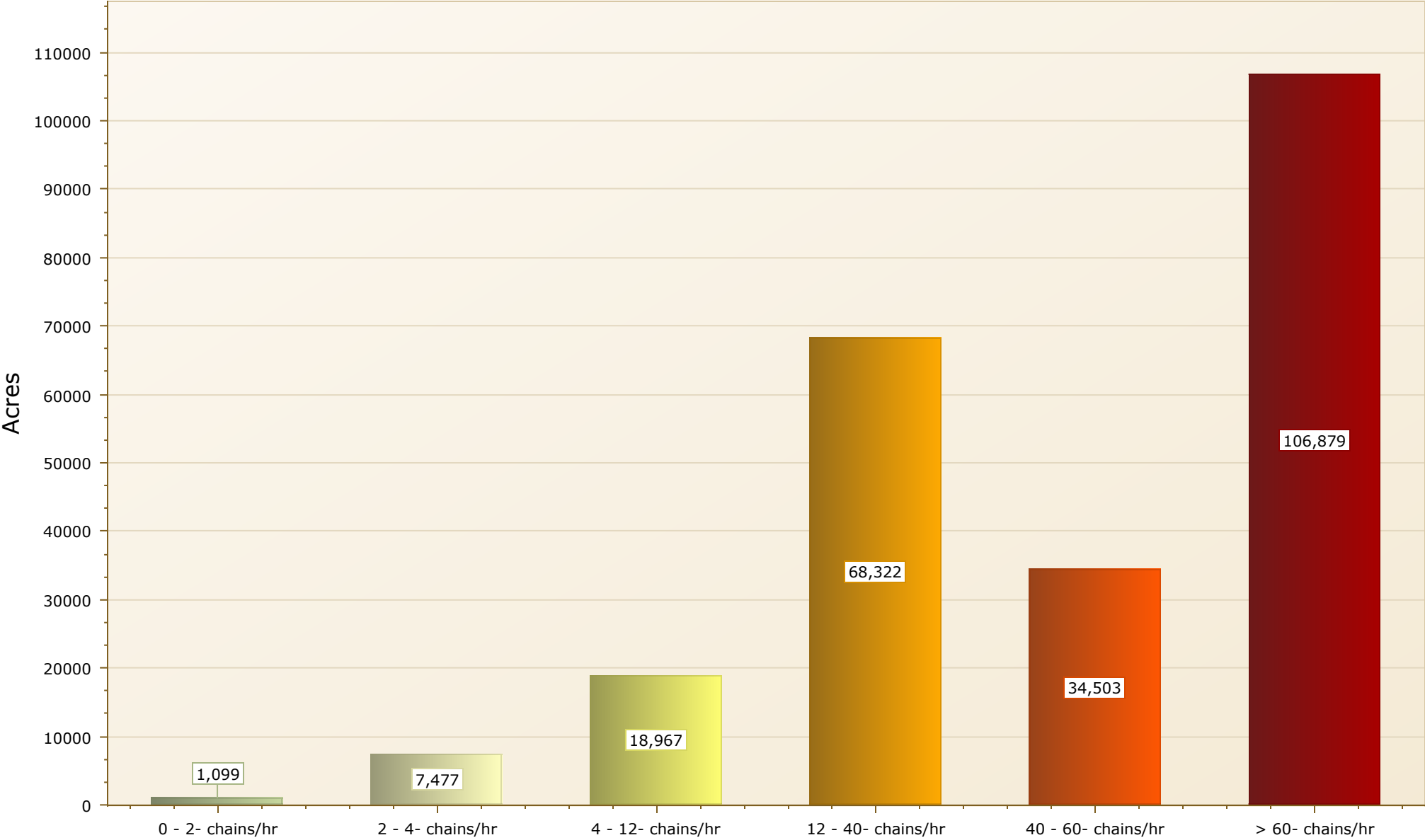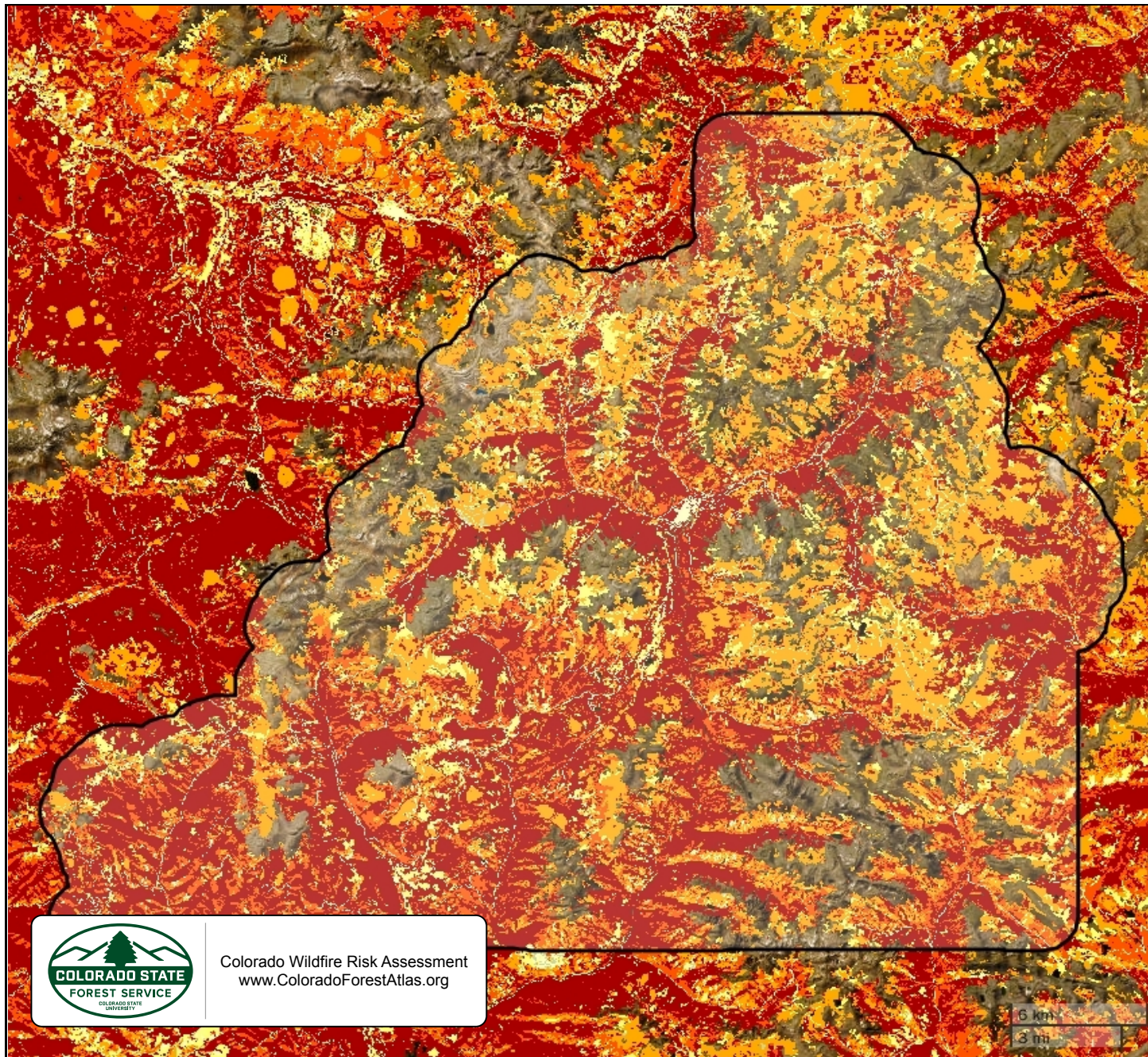
San Juan County

Rate of Spread

- 0 - 2- chains/hr
- 2 - 4- chains/hr
- 4 - 12- chains/hr
- 12 - 40- chains/hr
- 40 - 60- chains/hr
- > 60- chains/hr

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6 km
3 mi

Surface Fuels

Fire behavior fuel models that contain the parameters required to calculate fire behavior outputs.

Surface fuels, or fire behavior fuel models as they are technically referred to, contain the parameters needed by the Rothermel (1972) surface fire spread model to compute surface fire behavior characteristics, e.g. rate of spread, flame length, fireline intensity, and other fire behavior metrics. As the name might suggest, surface fuels account only for surface fire potential. Canopy fire potential is computed through a separate but linked process. The CO-WRA accounts for both surface and canopy fire potential in the fire behavior outputs.

An up-to-date surface fuel dataset at 20-meter (m) resolution was developed for this project, based on Scott and Burgan (2005) fuel models, enhanced with custom fuels created by Technosylva. The custom fuels distinguish this assessment from previous ones performed in Colorado as they allow a better characterization of fire behavior across the landscape. Additionally, the urban and road custom fuel models included in the assessment are key for better characterizing the exposure, vulnerability and risk of both buildings and population in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). This also allows for better modeling of fire encroachment in urban areas considering the building density, community structure and fuels surrounding the buildings and urban areas.

The following custom fuels were included in order to improve the fire modeling in timber, WUI and agricultural areas:

• Timber: 2 new categories (171 and 191)
• Urban: 7 new categories (911,912,913,914,915,916 and 919)
• Roads: 5 new categories (941,942,943,944 and 949)
• Agriculture: 4 new categories (931,932,938a and 939)
• Water: 3 new categories (981,982 and 989)
Additionally, we also considered canopy fuel data to better simulate crown fire behavior. This includes:
• canopy bulk density (CBD),
• canopy base height (CBH),
• canopy cover (CC) and
• canopy height (CH).

Unmanaged forest with dead amd dowmed trees and branches

Slash on the ground indicates that forest management treatments have occurred in this area

The updated fuel dataset also considered the effects of natural disturbances on vegetation (fires, insect and disease, and harvesting/fuel treatments) that occurred in Colorado from 2013 to 2022. More information about the methods used can be found in the Colorado 2022 Fuels Mapping Final Report.

Surface Fuels	Description	Acres	Percent
NB2 (92)	Snow/Ice		0%
NB3 (93)	Agricultural		0%
NB8 (98)	Open Water		0%
NB9 (99)	Bare Ground	72,096	23.2%
GR1 (101)	Short, Sparse Dry Climate Grass	16,581	5.3%
GR2 (102)	Low Load, Dry Climate Grass	6,959	2.2%
GR3 (103)	Low Load, Very Coarse, Humid Climate Grass		0%
GR4 (104)	Moderate Load, Dry Climate Grass	50	0%
GR1 (111)	Short, Sparse Dry Climate Grass - ALPINE	35,766	11.5%
GR2 (112)	Low Load, Dry Climate Grass - ALPINE	2,182	0.7%
GS1 (121)	Low Load, Dry Climate Grass-Shrub	1,746	0.6%
GS2 (122)	Moderate Load, Dry Climate Grass-Shrub	33,324	10.7%
GS3 (123)	Moderate Load, Humid Climate Grass-Shrub		0%
GS4 (124)	High Load, Humid Climate Grass-Shrub		0%
GS1 (131)	Low Load, Dry Climate Grass-Shrub - ALPINE	317	0.1%
SH1 (141)	Low Load Dry Climate Shrub	751	0.2%
SH2 (142)	Moderate Load Dry Climate Shrub	1,512	0.5%
SH4 (144)	Low Load, Humid Climate Timber-Shrub	3,365	1.1%
SH5 (145)	High Load, Dry Climate Shrub		0%
SH7 (147)	Very High Load, Dry Climate Shrub	22,784	7.3%
SH7 (157)	Very High Load, Dry Climate Shrub	1,551	0.5%
TU1 (161)	Low Load Dry Climate Timber-Grass-Shrub	4	0%
TU2 (162)	Moderate Load, Humid Climate Timber-Shrub		0%
TU3 (163)	Moderate Load, Humid Climate Timber-Grass-Shrub		0%
TUML1 (171)	Timber Understory Dynamic ML (TSYL 2022)	73,507	23.6%
TL1 (181)	Low Load Compact Conifer Litter		0%
TL2 (182)	Low Load Broadleaf Litter	61	0%
TL3 (183)	Moderate Load Conifer Litter	193	0.1%
TLML1 (191	Timber Litter ML (TSYL 2022)	22,371	7.2%

Surface Fuels	Description	Acres	Percent
SB3 (203)	High Load Activity Fuel or Moderate Load Blowdown	7,146	2.3%
SB4 (204)	High Load Blowdown	79	0%
UIL (911)	Isolated urban surrounded by Low FB fuel		0%
USL (912)	Scattered urban surrounded by Low FB fuel		0%
UCL (913)	Urban core surrounded by Low FB fuel	6	0%
UIH (914)	Isolated urban surrounded by High FB fuel		0%
USH (915)	Scattered urban surrounded by High FB fuel		0%
UCH (916)	Urban core surrounded by High FB fuel	61	0%
UNB (919)	Unburnable urban areas		0%
ASL (931)	Agricultural Low Load Fuels, with seasonal changes of its Burnable condition		0%
ASH (932)	Agricultural High Load Fuels, with seasonal changes of its Burnable condition	60	0%
AGC (938)	Golf courses - Non-Burnable (no encroachment)		0%
ANB (939)	Agricultural Fields, maintained in a Non-Burnable condition		0%
RNL (941)	Minor roads Low FB	2,235	0.7%
RNH (942)	Minor roads High FB	3,257	1%
RML (943)	Major roads Low FB	54	0%
RMH (944)	Major roads High FB	1,385	0.4%
RNB (949)	Roads surrounded by non-burnable fuels	549	0.2%
WNL(981)	Minor Water streams surrounded by Low Load Fuel (moderate encroachment)	1	0%
WNH(982)	Minor Water streams surrounded by High Load Fuel (high encroachment)	129	0%
WBD(989)	Water Bodies	1,012	0.3%
Total		**311,094**	**100%**

Surface Fuels

San Juan County
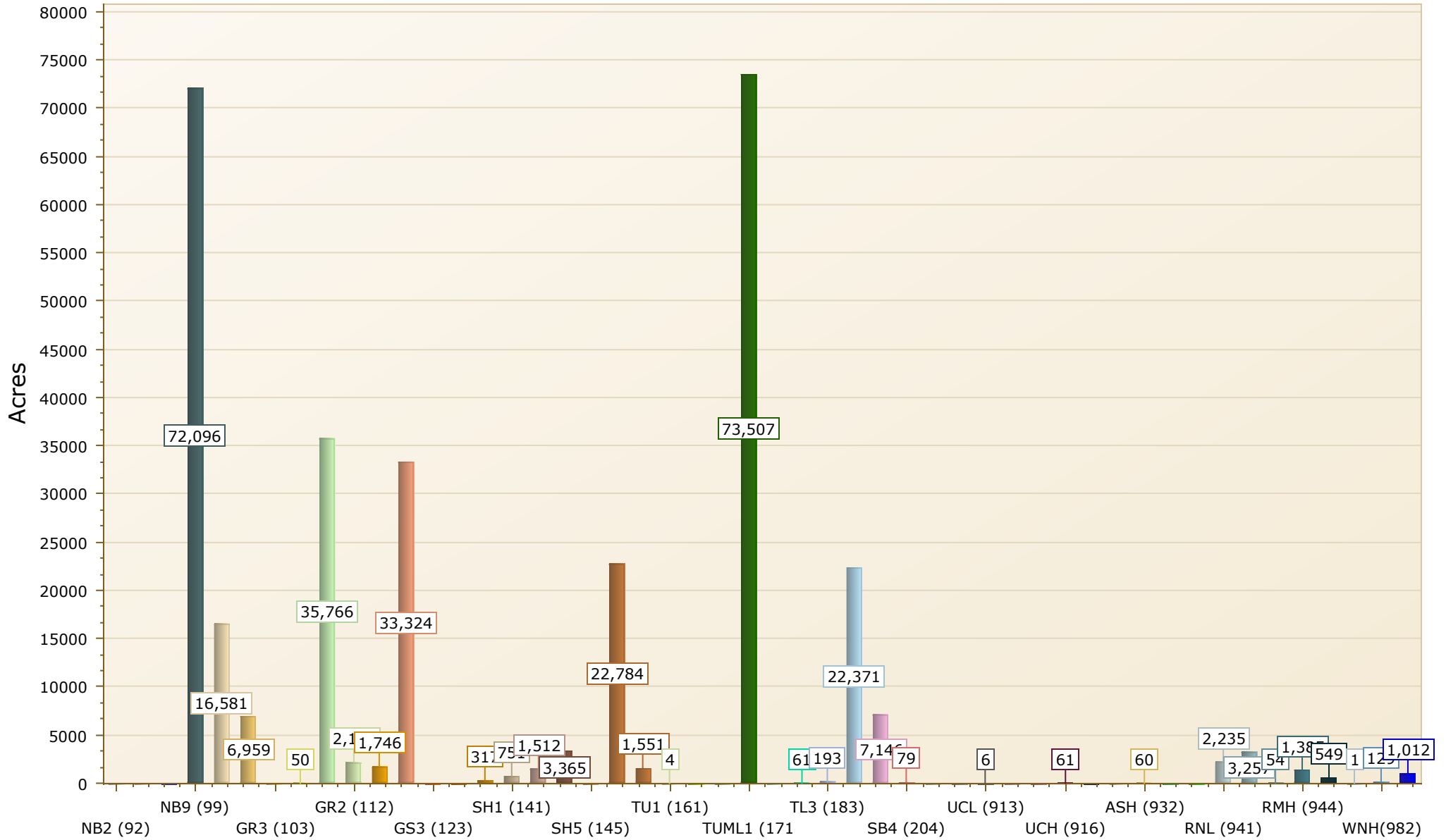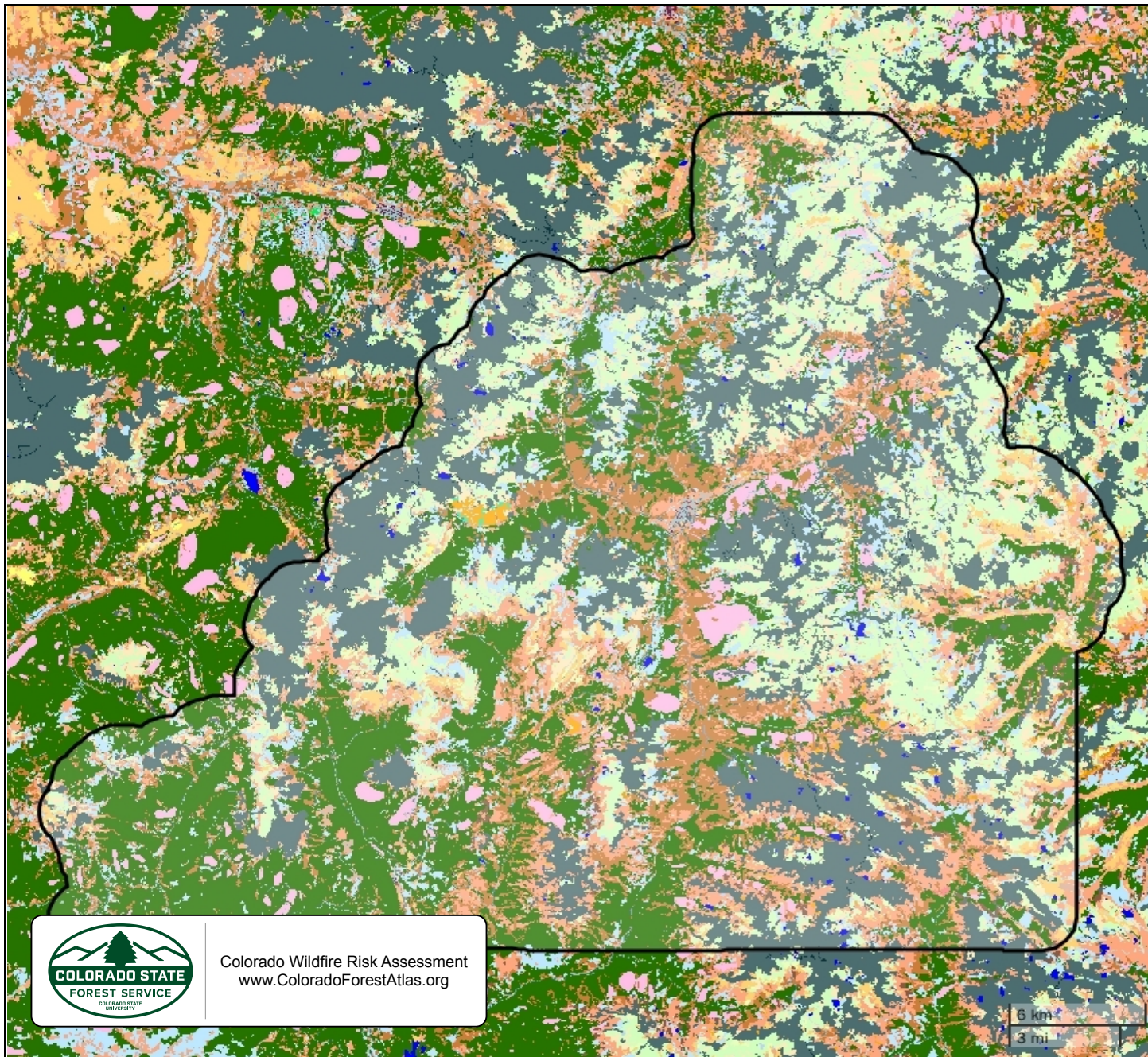
San Juan County

Surface Fuels

NB2 (92)		SB4 (204)	
NB3 (93)		UIL (911)	
NB8 (98)		USL (912)	
NB9 (99)		UCL (913)	
GR1 (101)		UIH (914)	
GR2 (102)		USH (915)	
GR3 (103)		UCH (916)	
GR4 (104)		UNB (919)	
GR1 (111)		ASL (931)	
GR2 (112)		ASH (932)	
GS1 (121)		AGC (938)	
GS2 (122)		ANB (939)	
GS3 (123)		RNL (941)	
GS4 (124)		RNH (942)	
GS1 (131)		RML (943)	
SH1 (141)		RMH (944)	
SH2 (142)		RNB (949)	
SH4 (144)		WNL(981)	
SH5 (145)		WNH(982)	
SH7 (147)		WBD(989)	
SH7 (157)			
TU1 (161)			
TU2 (162)			
TU3 (163)			
TUML1 (171			
TL1 (181)			
TL2 (182)			
TL3 (183)			
TLML1 (191			
SB3 (203)			

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6 km
3 mi

Vegetation

The Vegetation map describes the general vegetation and landcover types across the state of Colorado.

In the CO-WRA, the Vegetation dataset is used to support the development of the Surface Fuels, Canopy Cover, Canopy Stand Height, Canopy Base Height, and Canopy Bulk Density datasets.

The 2020 LANDFIRE program data product (Existing Vegetation Type) was used to compile the Vegetation data for the CO-WRA. This reflects data current to 2020. The LANDFIRE EVT data were classified to reflect general vegetation cover types for representation with CFA.

Oak shrublands are commonly found añlong dry foothills and lower mountain slopes, and are often situates above Piñyon-juniper.

Piñyon-juniper woodlands are common in southern and southwestern Colorado

Douglas-fir understory in a ponderosa pine forest

Grasslands occur both on Colorado's Eastern Plains and on the Western Slope.

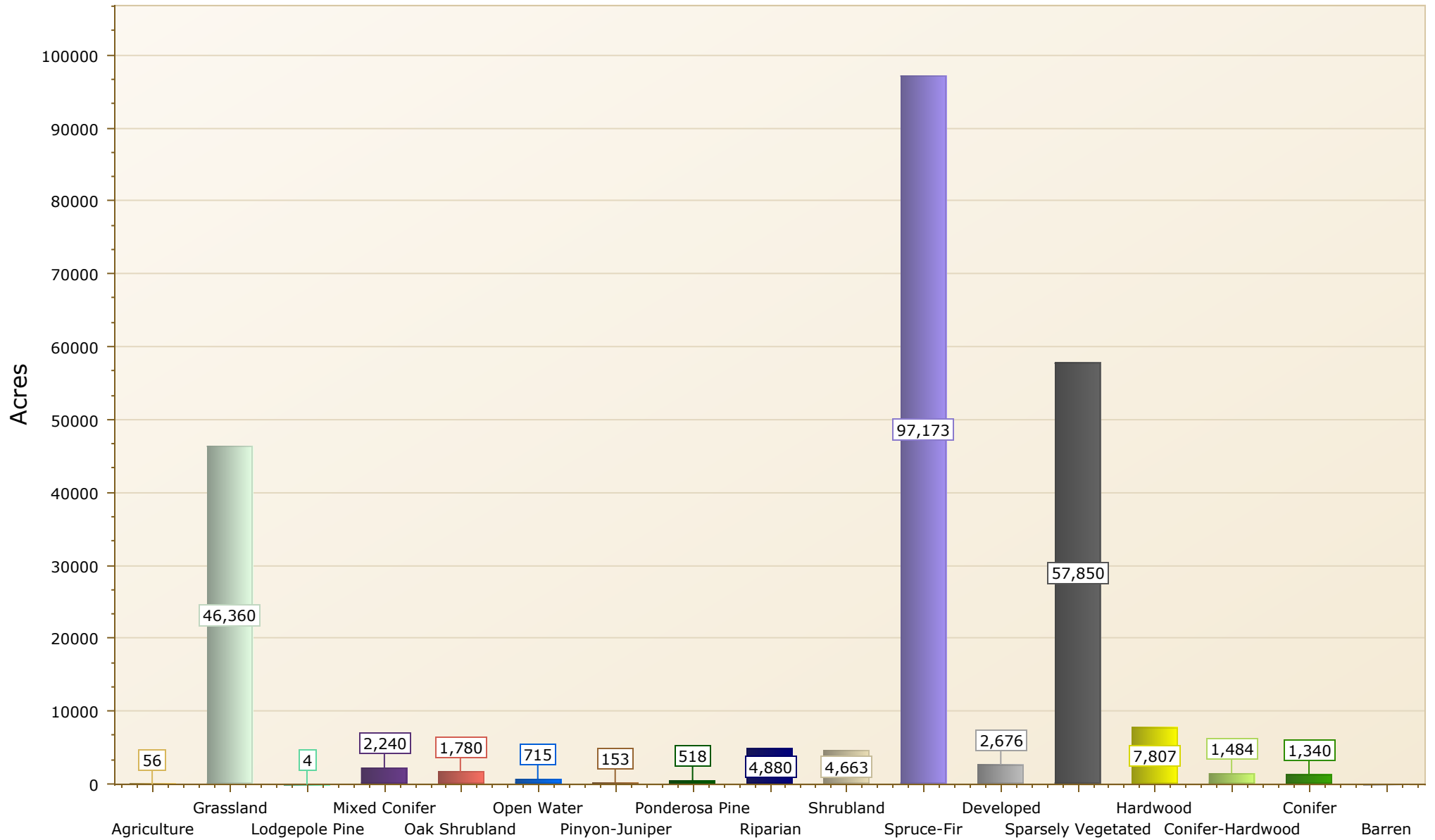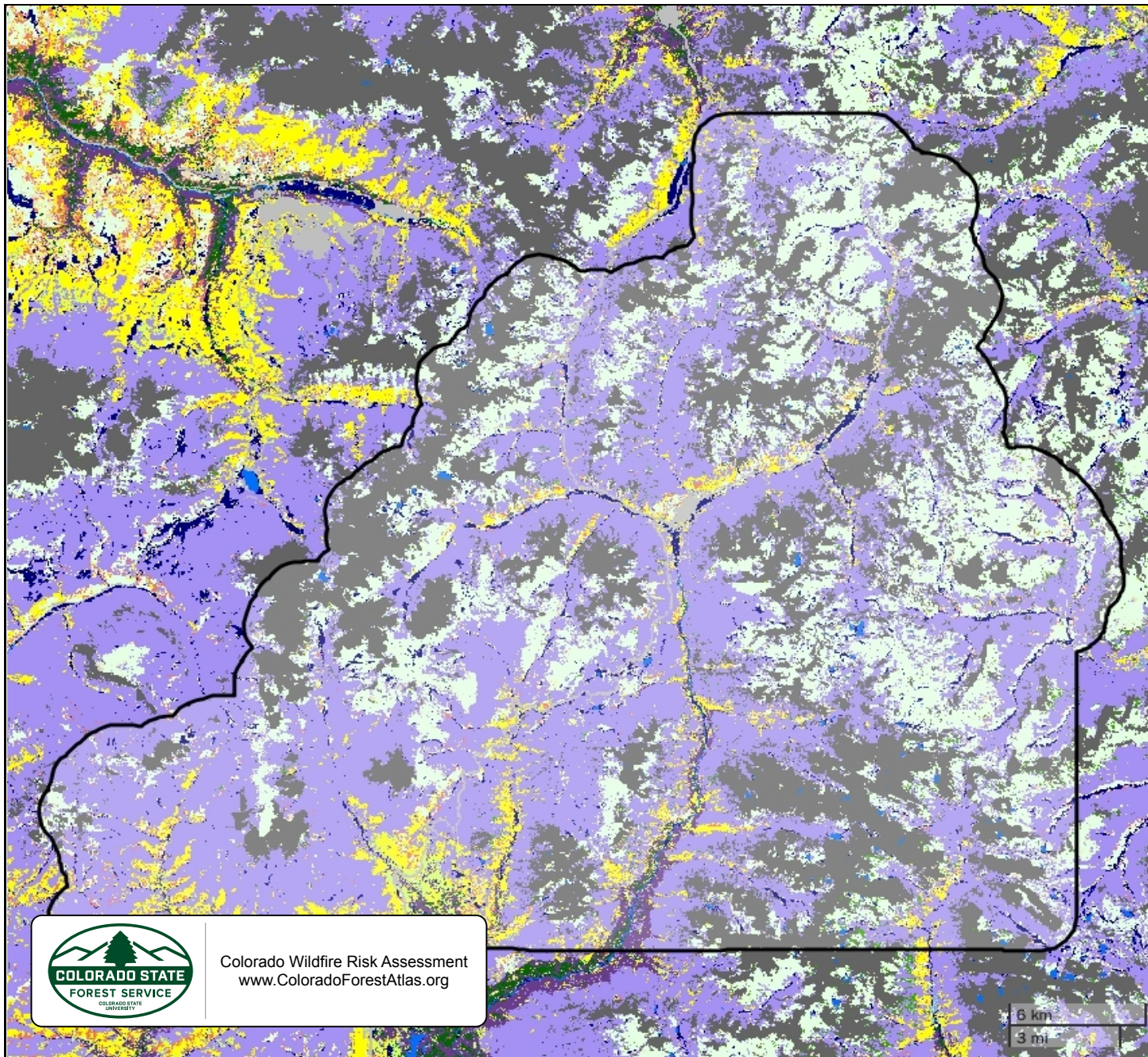Wildland fire threat increases in lodgepole pine as the dense forest grow old

Overly dense ponderosa pine, a dominant species of the montane zone

Vegetation Class	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	56	0%
Grassland	46,360	20.2%
Lodgepole Pine	4	0%
Mixed Conifer	2,240	1%
Oak Shrubland	1,780	0.8%
Open Water	715	0.3%
Pinyon-Juniper	153	0.1%
Ponderosa Pine	518	0.2%
Riparian	4,880	2.1%
Shrubland	4,663	2%
Spruce-Fir	97,173	42.3%
Developed	2,676	1.2%
Sparsely Vegetated	57,850	25.2%
Hardwood	7,807	3.4%
Conifer-Hardwood	1,484	0.6%
Conifer	1,340	0.6%
Barren		0%
Total	**229,698**	**100%**

Vegetation

San Juan County

Category	Acres
Agriculture	56
Grassland	46,360
Lodgepole Pine	4
Mixed Conifer	2,240
Oak Shrubland	1,780
Open Water	715
Pinyon-Juniper	153
Ponderosa Pine	518
Riparian	4,880
Shrubland	4,663
Spruce-Fir	97,173
Developed	2,676
Sparsely Vegetated	57,850
Hardwood	7,807
Conifer-Hardwood	1,484
Conifer	1,340

San Juan County

Vegetation

- Agriculture
- Grassland
- Lodgepole Pine
- Mixed Conifer
- Oak Shrubland
- Open Water
- Pinyon-Juniper
- Ponderosa Pine
- Riparian
- Shrubland
- Spruce-Fir
- Developed
- Sparsely Vegetated
- Hardwood
- Conifer-Hardwood
- Conifer
- Barren

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6 km
3 mi

Watershed Protection Risk

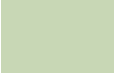**A measure of the risk to Watershed Protection Areas based on the potential negative impacts from wildfire.**

In areas that experience low-severity burns, fire events can serve to eliminate competition, rejuvenate growth and improve watershed conditions. But in landscapes subjected to high, or even moderate-burn severity, the post-fire threats to public safety and natural resources can be extreme.

High-severity wildfires remove virtually all forest vegetation – from trees, shrubs and grasses down to discarded needles, decomposed roots and other elements of ground cover or duff that protect forest soils. A severe wildfire also can cause certain types of soil to become hydrophobic by forming a waxy, water-repellent layer that keeps water from penetrating the soil, dramatically amplifying the rate of runoff.

The loss of critical surface vegetation leaves forested slopes extremely vulnerable to large-scale soil erosion and flooding during subsequent storm events. In turn, these threats can impact the health, safety and integrity of communities and natural resources downstream. The likelihood that such a post-fire event will occur in Colorado is increased by the prevalence of highly erodible soils in several parts of the state, and weather patterns that frequently bring heavy rains on the heels of fire season.
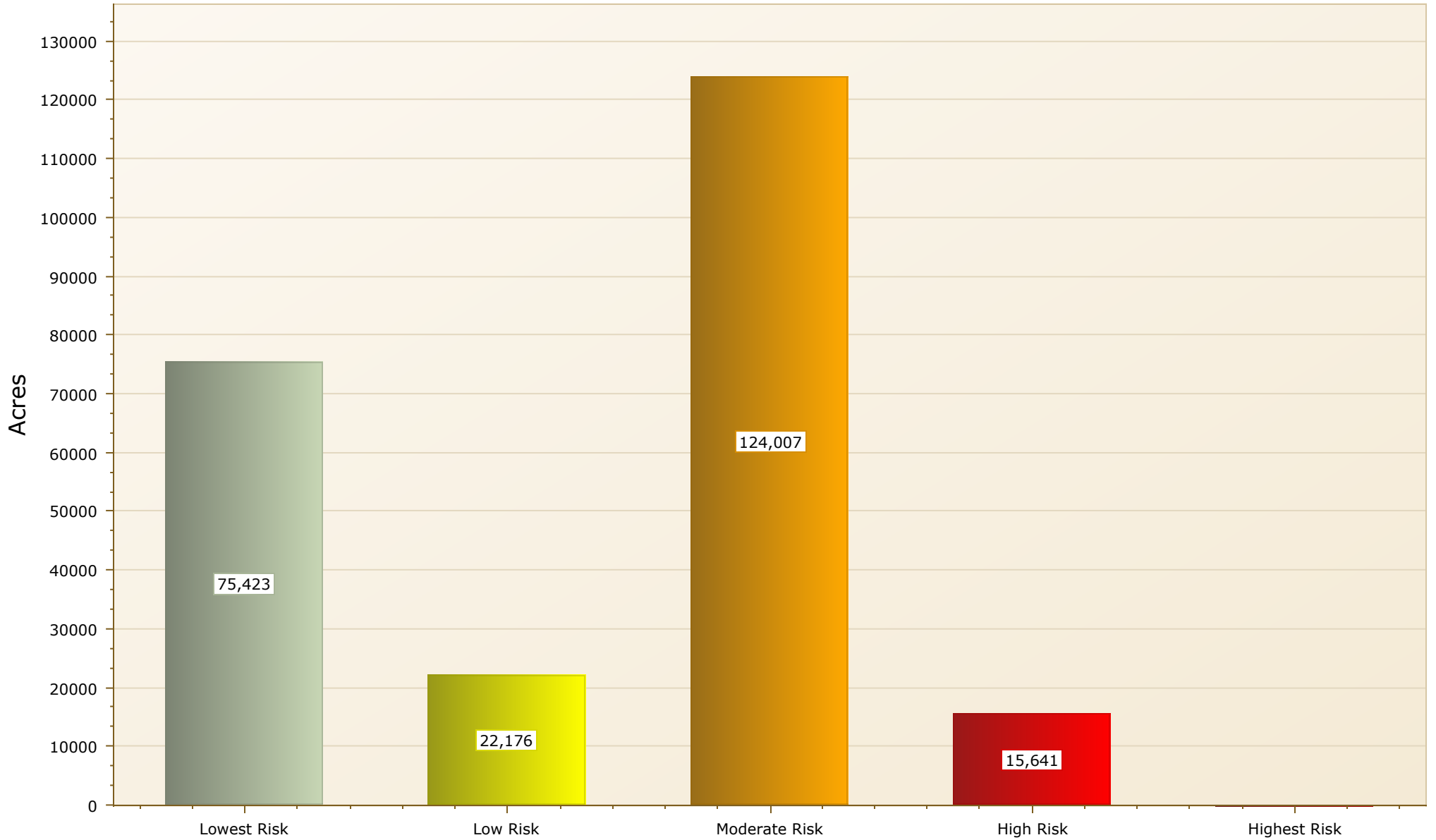
In the aftermath of the 2002 fire season, the Colorado Department of Health estimated that 26 municipal water storage facilities were shut down due to fire and post-fire impacts. The potential for severe soil erosion is a consequence of wildfire because as a fire burns, it destroys plant material and the litter layer. Shrubs, forbs, grasses, trees and the litter layer disperse water during severe rainstorms. Plant roots stabilize the soil, and stems and leaves slow the water to give it time to percolate into the soil profile. Fire can destroy this soil protection.

The risk index has been calculated by combining the Watershed Protection data with a measure of fire intensity using a Response Function approach. Those areas with the highest negative impact (-9) represent areas with high potential fire intensity and high importance for ecosystem services. Those areas with the lowest negative impact (-1) represent those areas with low potential fire intensity and a low importance for ecosystem services. The response function outputs were combined into 5 qualitative classes.
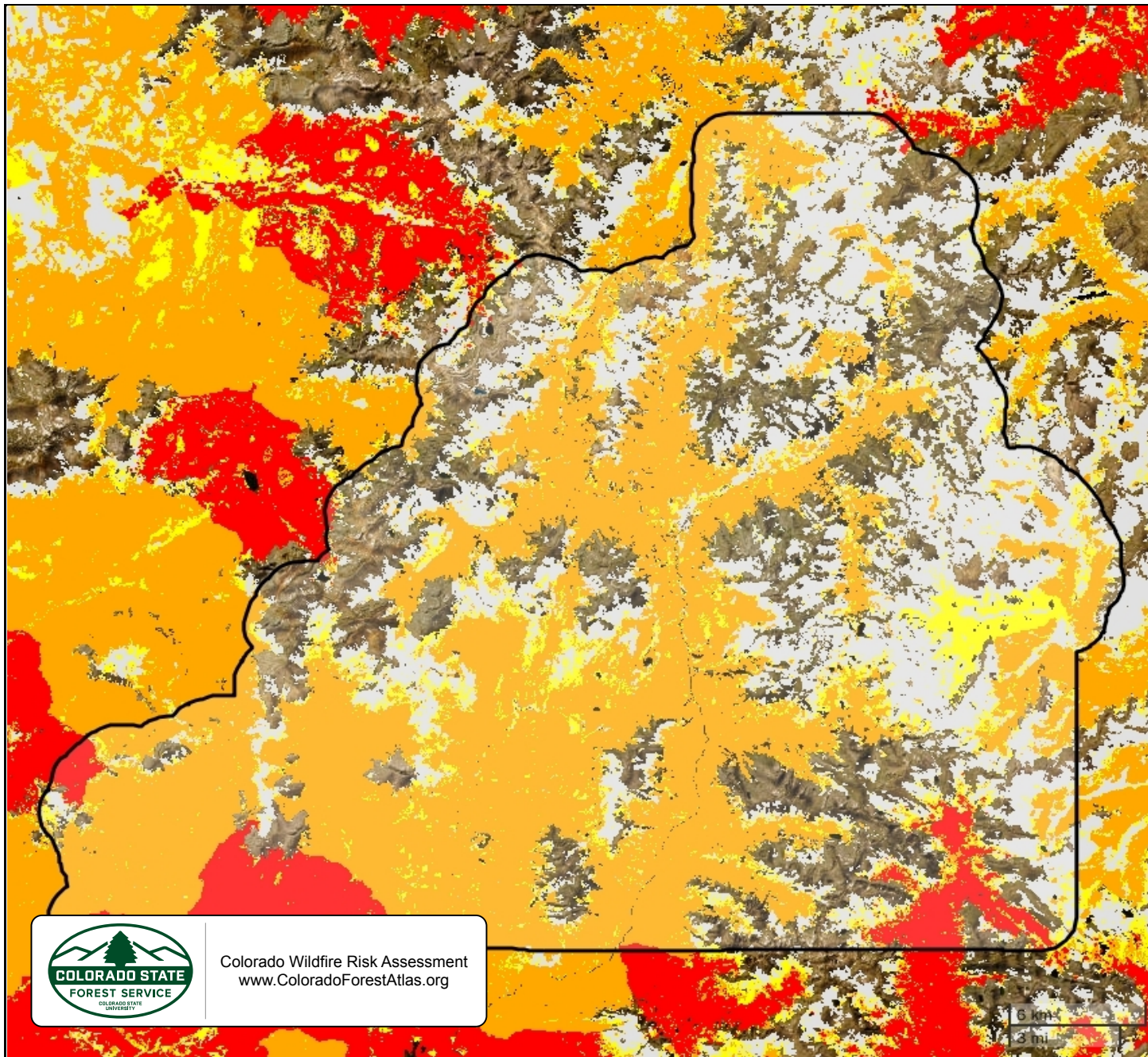
Watershed Protection Risk	Acres	Percent
Lowest Risk	75,423	31.8%
Low Risk	22,176	9.3%
Moderate Risk	124,007	52.3%
High Risk	15,641	6.6%
Highest Risk		0%
Total	**237,246**	**100%**

Watershed Protection Risk

San Juan County

Lowest Risk	75,423
Low Risk	22,176
Moderate Risk	124,007
High Risk	15,641
Highest Risk	

(Y-axis: Acres; X-axis categories: Lowest Risk, Low Risk, Moderate Risk, High Risk, Highest Risk)

San Juan County

Watershed Protection Risk

- Lowest Risk
- Low Risk
- Moderate Risk
- High Risk
- Highest Risk

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Riparian Assets Risk

A measure of the risk to riparian areas based on the potential negative impacts from wildfire.
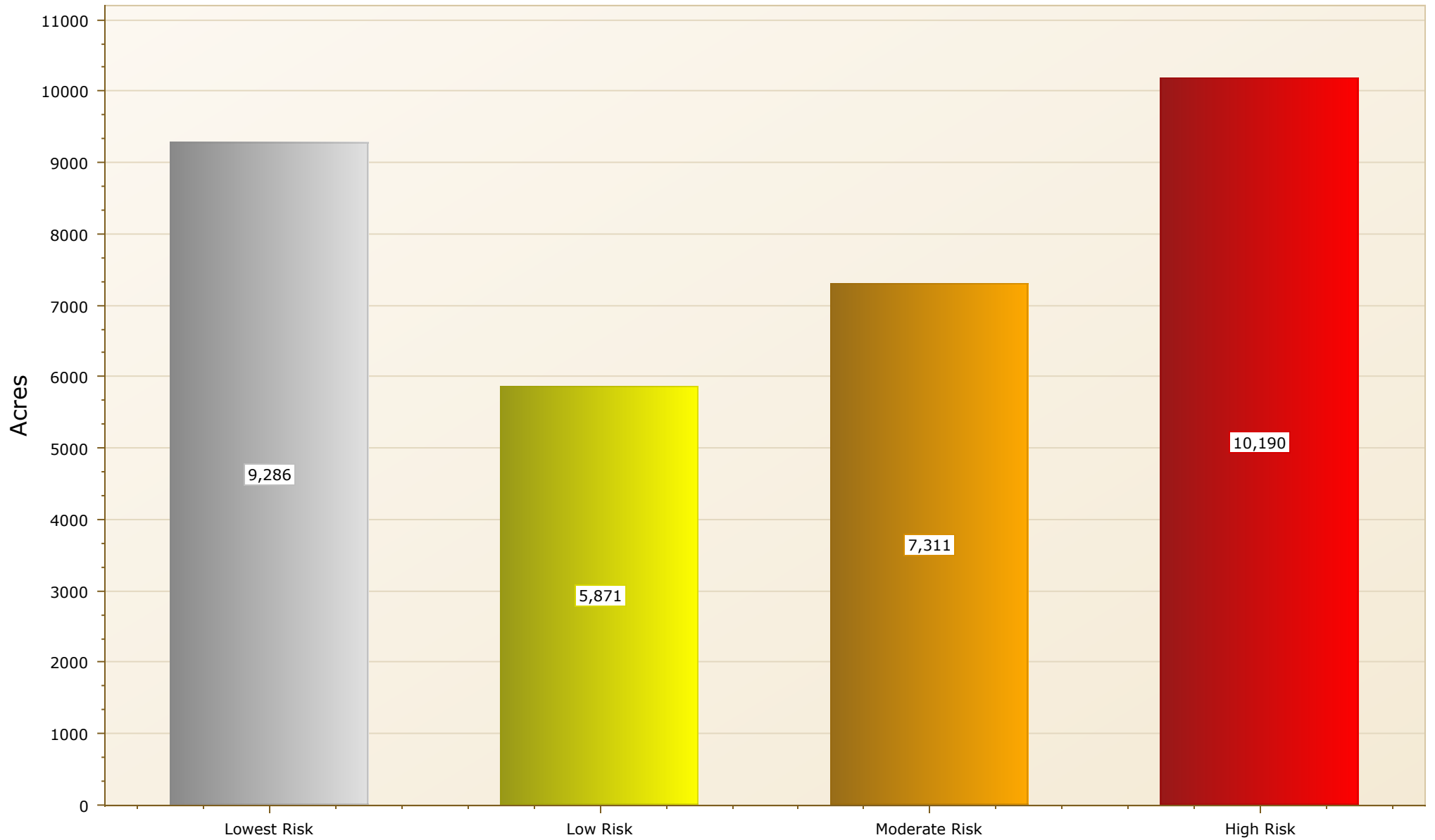

The risk index has been calculated by combining the Riparian Assets data with a measure of fire intensity using a Response Function approach. Those areas with the highest negative impact (-9) represent areas with high potential fire intensity and high importance for ecosystem services. Those areas with the lowest negative impact (-1) represent those areas with low potential fire intensity and a low importance for ecosystem services. The response function outputs were combined into 5 qualitative classes.

This risk output is intended to supplement the Watershed Protection Risk Index by identifying wildfire risk within the more detailed riparian areas.

Riparian Assets Risk	Acres	Percent
Lowest Risk	9,286	28.4%
Low Risk	5,871	18%
Moderate Risk	7,311	22.4%
High Risk	10,190	31.2%
Total	**32,658**	**100%**

Riparian Assets Risk

San Juan County

	Acres
Lowest Risk	9,286
Low Risk	5,871
Moderate Risk	7,311
High Risk	10,190
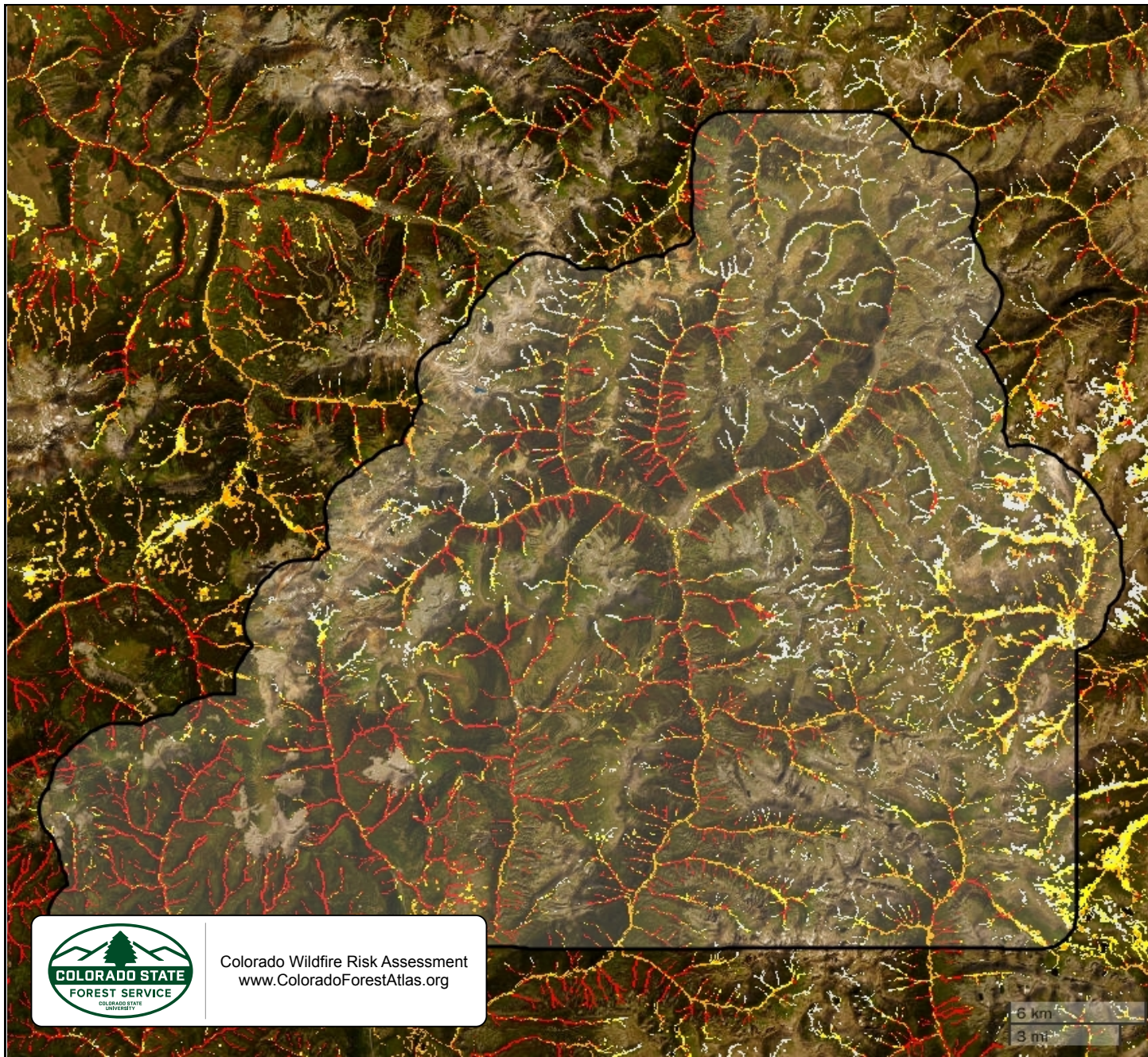
San Juan County

Riparian Assets Risk

Lowest Risk
Low Risk
Moderate Risk
High Risk

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6 km
3 mi

Forest Assets Risk

A measure of the risk to forested areas based on the potential negative impacts from wildfire.
This layer identifies those forested areas with the greatest potential for adverse effects from wildfire.This layer identifies those forested areas with the greatest potential for adverse effects from wildfire.

The risk index has been calculated by combining the Forest Assets data with a measure of fire intensity using a Response Function approach. Those areas with the highest negative impact (-9) represent areas with high potential fire intensity and low resilience or adaptability to fire. Those areas with the lowest negative impact (-1) represent those areas with low potential fire intensity and high resilience or adaptability to fire. The response function outputs were combined into 5 qualitative classes.

This risk output is intended to provide an overall forest index for potential impact from wildfire. This can be applied to consider aesthetic values, ecosystem services, or economic values of forested lands.

Forest Assets Risk	Acres	Percent
Lowest Risk	1,401	0.9%
Low Risk	19,406	13%
Moderate Risk	24,341	16.4%
High Risk	5,213	3.5%
Highest Risk	98,368	66.1%
Total	**148,728**	**100%**

Forest Assets Risk

San Juan County

Acres

Risk Category	Acres
Lowest Risk	1,401
Low Risk	19,406
Moderate Risk	24,341
High Risk	5,213
Highest Risk	98,368
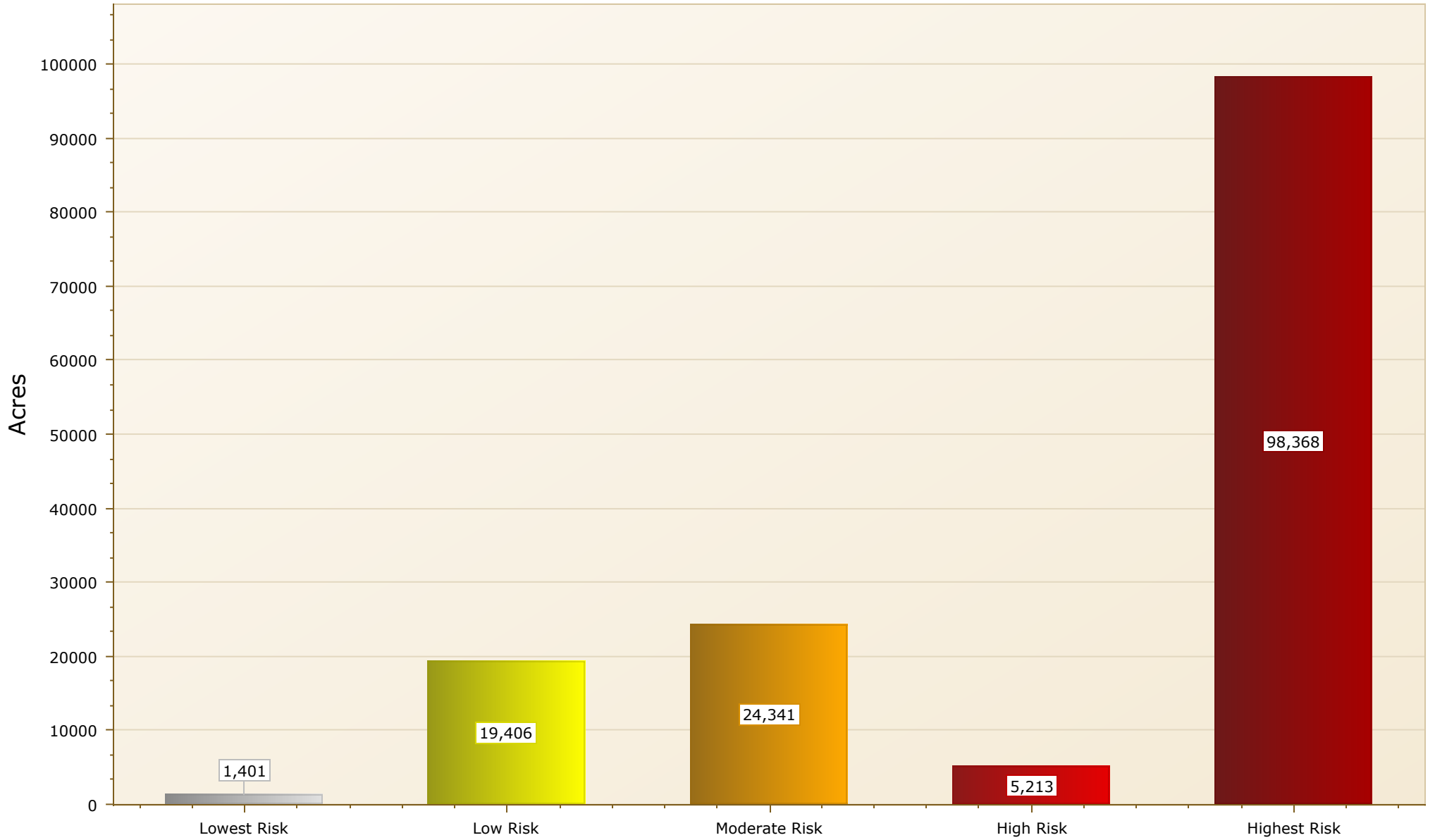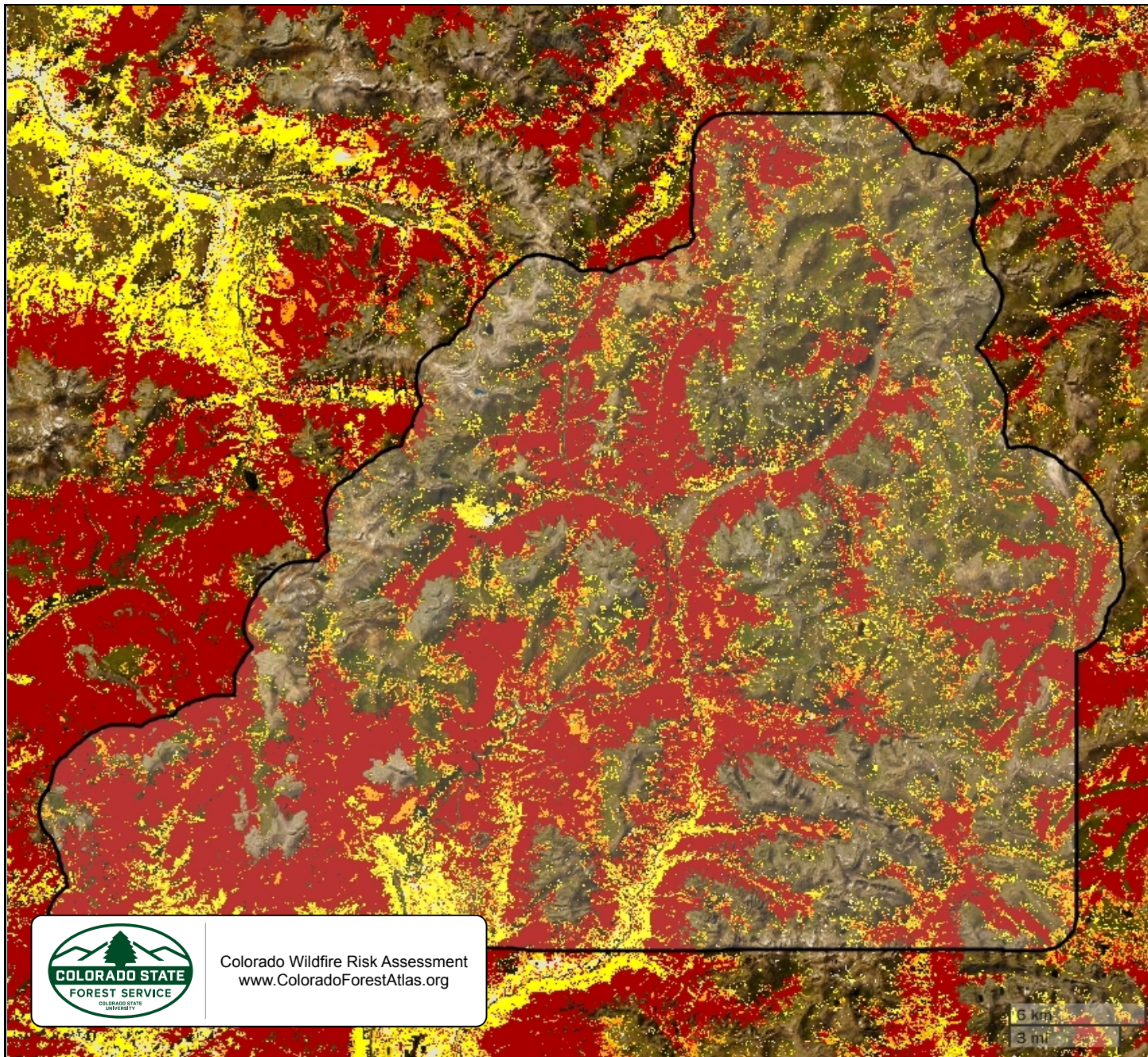
San Juan County

Forest Assets Risk

☐	Lowest Risk
☐	Low Risk
☐	Moderate Risk
☐	High Risk
☐	Highest Risk

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6 km

3 mi

Building Damage Potential

This metric estimates the potential for building loss and was derived using proprietary data from Technosylva Inc. on building damages that was created by analyzing 13 years of building damage data from state agency inspections after large fires.

BDP is a spatially variable metric that is calculated on a building-by-building basis and aggregated to Uber H3 hexagons, providing a measure of the number of potential buildings lost based on the number of buildings threatened by fires in the specific area. BDP was calibrated using Machine Learning algorithms that identified the key factors that influenced building loss from historical damage inspection databases. The model has been calibrated using 13 years of damage inspection data and validated across multiple Western States with current wildfire data.

BDP is available as a static risk layer, although a key factor involved in the metric is conditional fire behavior. Conditional Flame Length derived in the fire behavior analysis conducted for the 2022 CO-WRA was used. However, the metric can also be used as a dynamic layer when modulated by the fire intensity of an active wildfire through conventional fire behavior analysis. Although applied as a static layer for the 2022 CO-WRA, the metric is used operationally in California by state agencies and private industry for risk forecasting

Building Damage Potential	Acres	Percent
Very Low	840	16.5%
Low	667	13.1%
Moderate	1,101	21.6%
High	869	17%
Very High	1,623	31.8%
Total	**5,099**	**100%**

Building Damage Potential
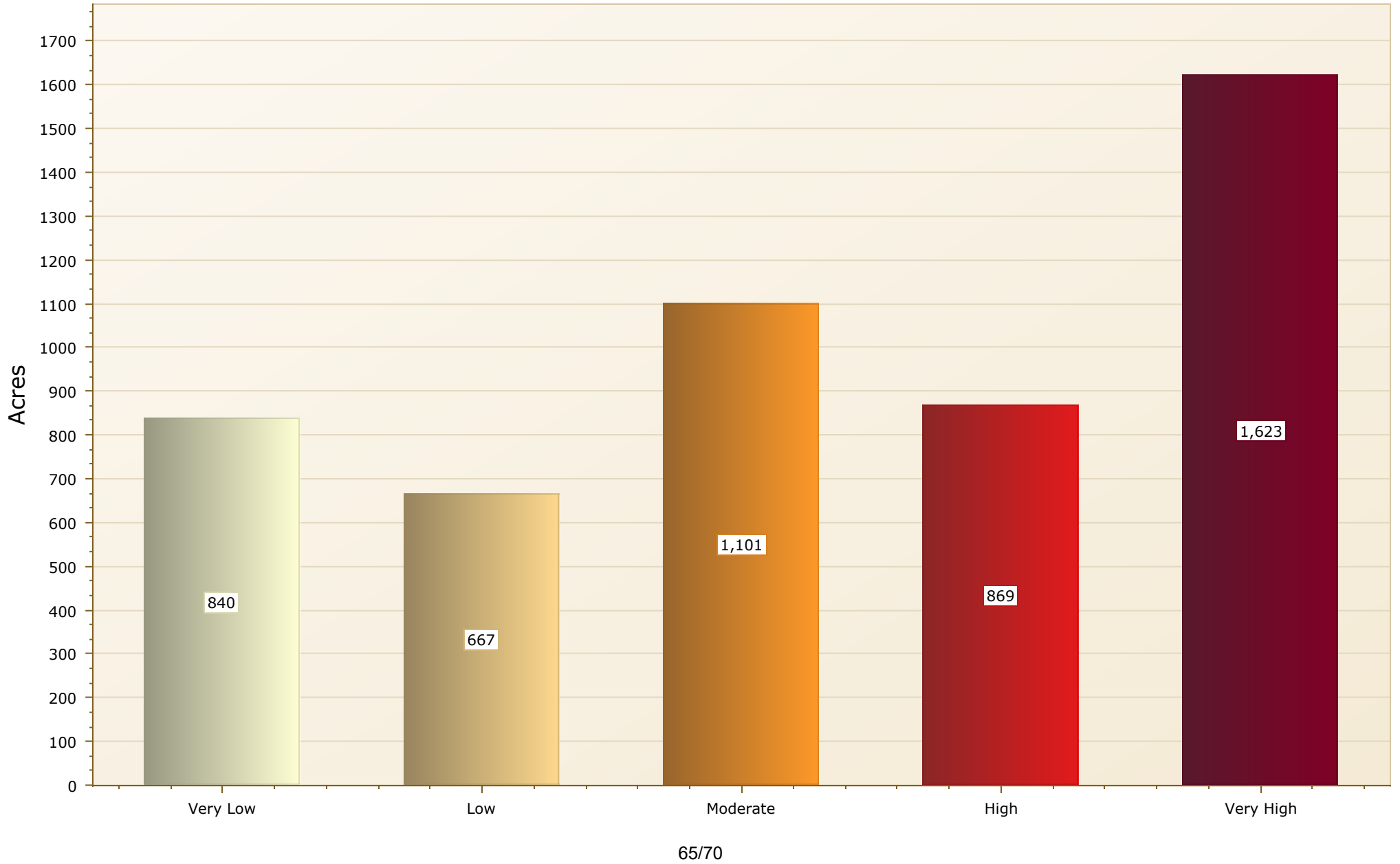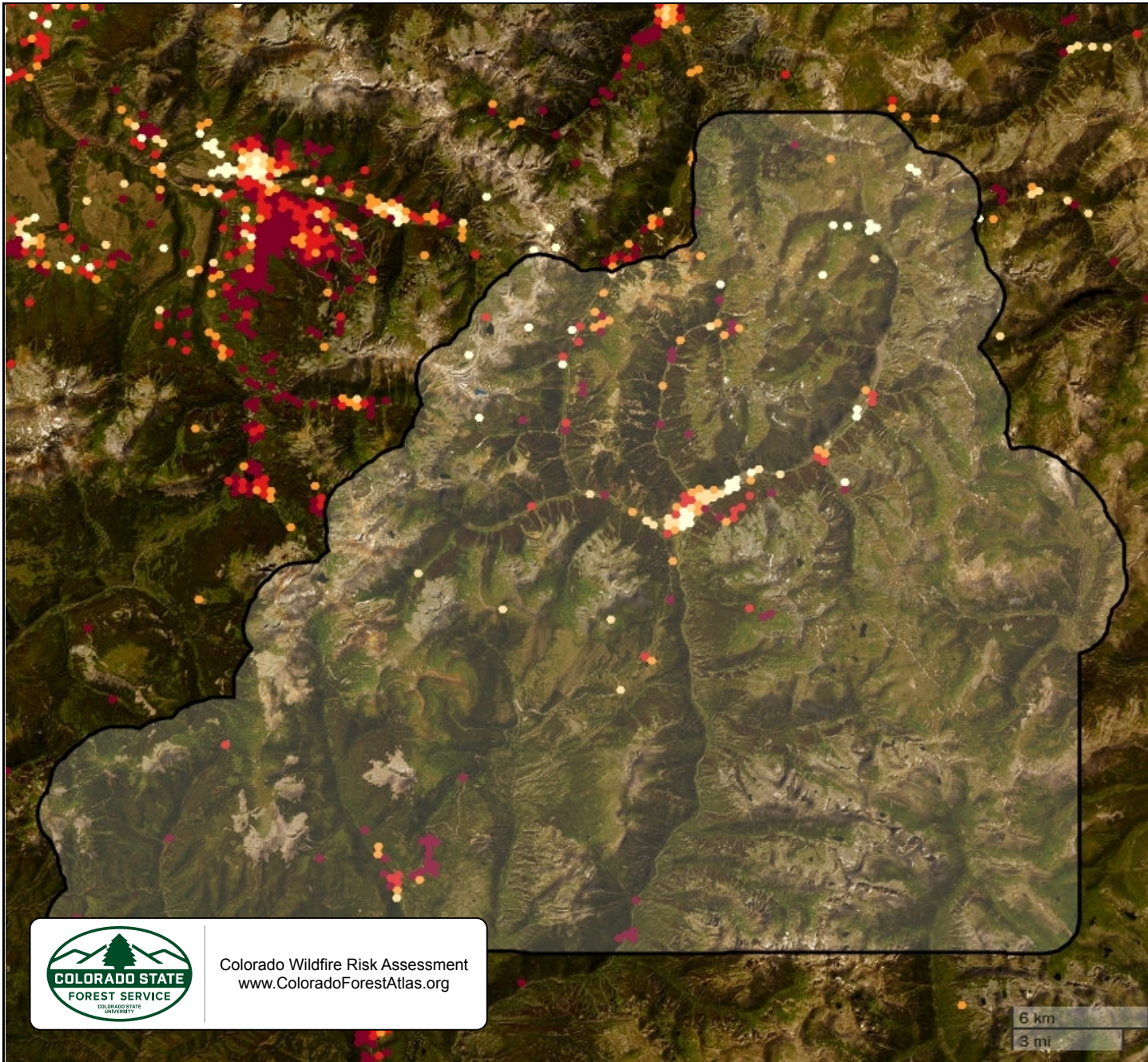
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San Juan County

Building Damage Potential

- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

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6 km
3 mi

Defensible Space Index

The defensible space in a Wildfire Urban Interface (WUI) analysis context refers to the space that surrounds a specific building and can be used to define the hazard, or the exposure, to a wildfire occurrence. In this area, natural and manmade fuels are treated, cleared or reduced to slow the spread of wildfire near structures.

Individual building footprints were used to identify structure locations. Buildings were then grouped using Uber's hexagonal hierarchical spatial index. Within each hexagon, the building values were averaged and applied to the hexagon to remove building specific metrics. This provides a detailed measure of defensible space characteristics for small areas consistent with the accuracy of the structure locations and wildfire fuels and risk analysis data.

Each hexagon in the defensible space risk has a relative value from 0 to 1 that represents the average building hazard in that hexagon. This defensible space value is based on three spatial components/variables: 1) canopy cover, 2) slope, and 3) fuel models present within the buffer around the buildings analyzed.

Defensible Space Index	Acres	Percent
Very Low	405	7.9%
Low	782	15.3%
Moderate	1,043	20.4%
High	1,159	22.7%
Very High	1,710	33.5%
Total	**5,099**	**100%**

Defensible Space Index

San Juan County
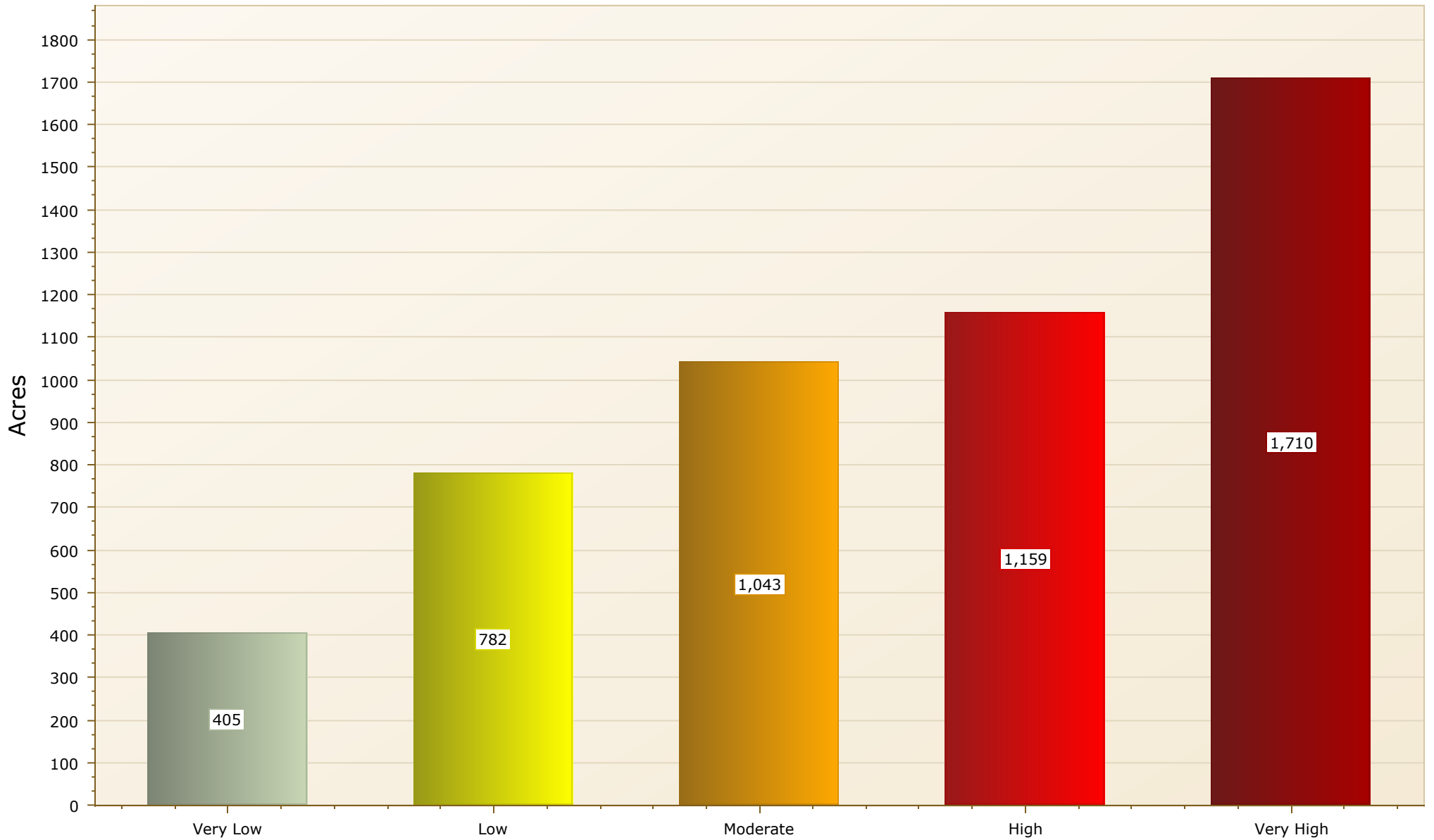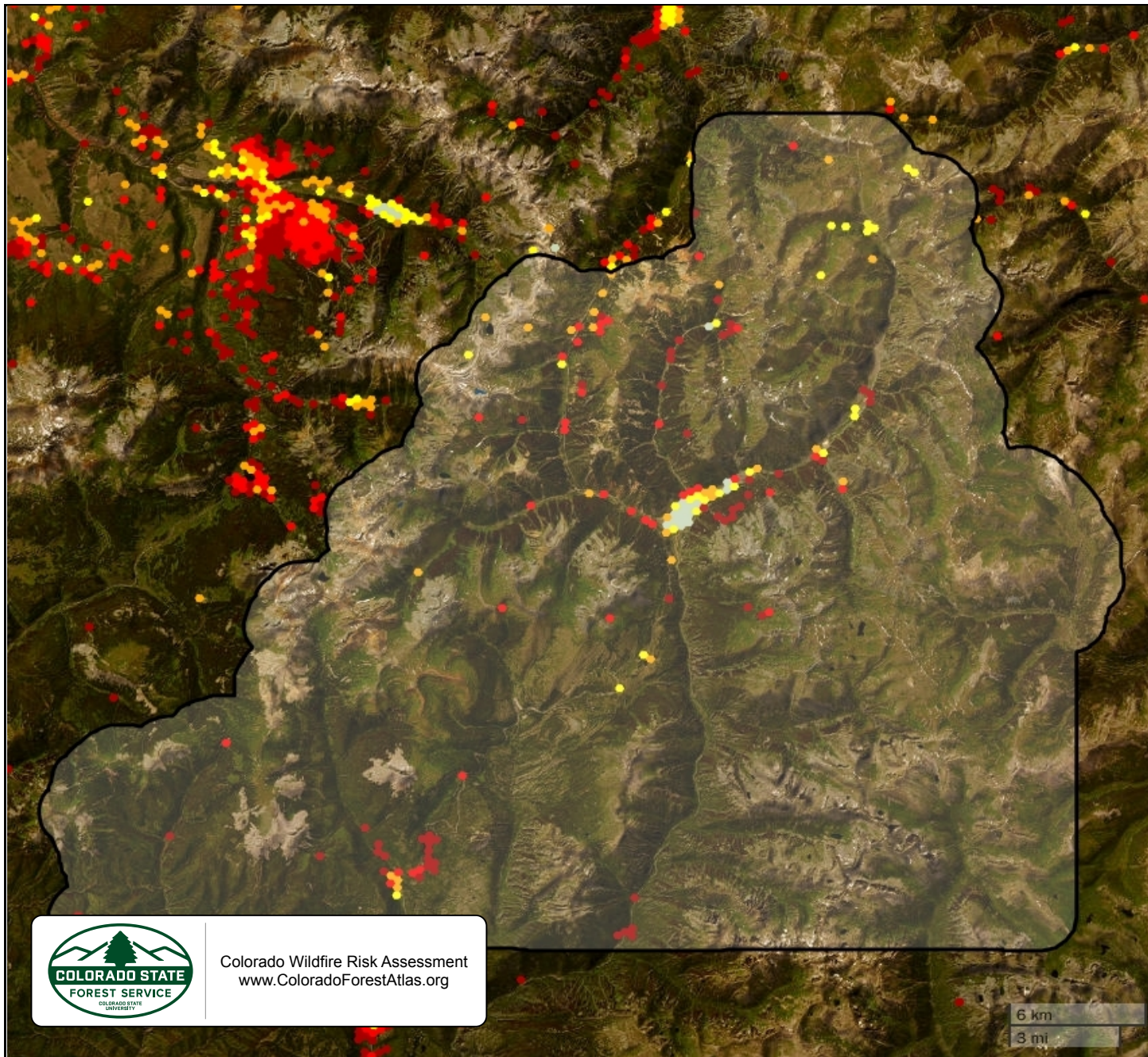
San Juan County

Defensible Space Index

- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

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6 km
3 mi

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