

# **MONTEZUMA COUNTY**

## **COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN**

### **2021 UPDATE**

#### **PURPOSE**

- **Review the existing Montezuma County CWPP to ensure conformance with Colorado Senate Bill 09-001, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003, and to the 2009 Colorado State Forest Service Minimum Standards for Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP).**
- **Provide a comprehensive review and update of the existing community risk analysis using the best available data, and an approved methodology (HRVA Mapping) to validate and or correct identified risk areas.**
- **To recognize the action items that have been accomplished through the 2011 CWPP and to clarify and refine the goals, strategies, and objectives of this 2021 plan.**
- **To share information from the updated community risk analysis with private and public - land managers, the Sheriff and Fire Protection Districts to and reduce damage to values identified through the collaborative planning process.**

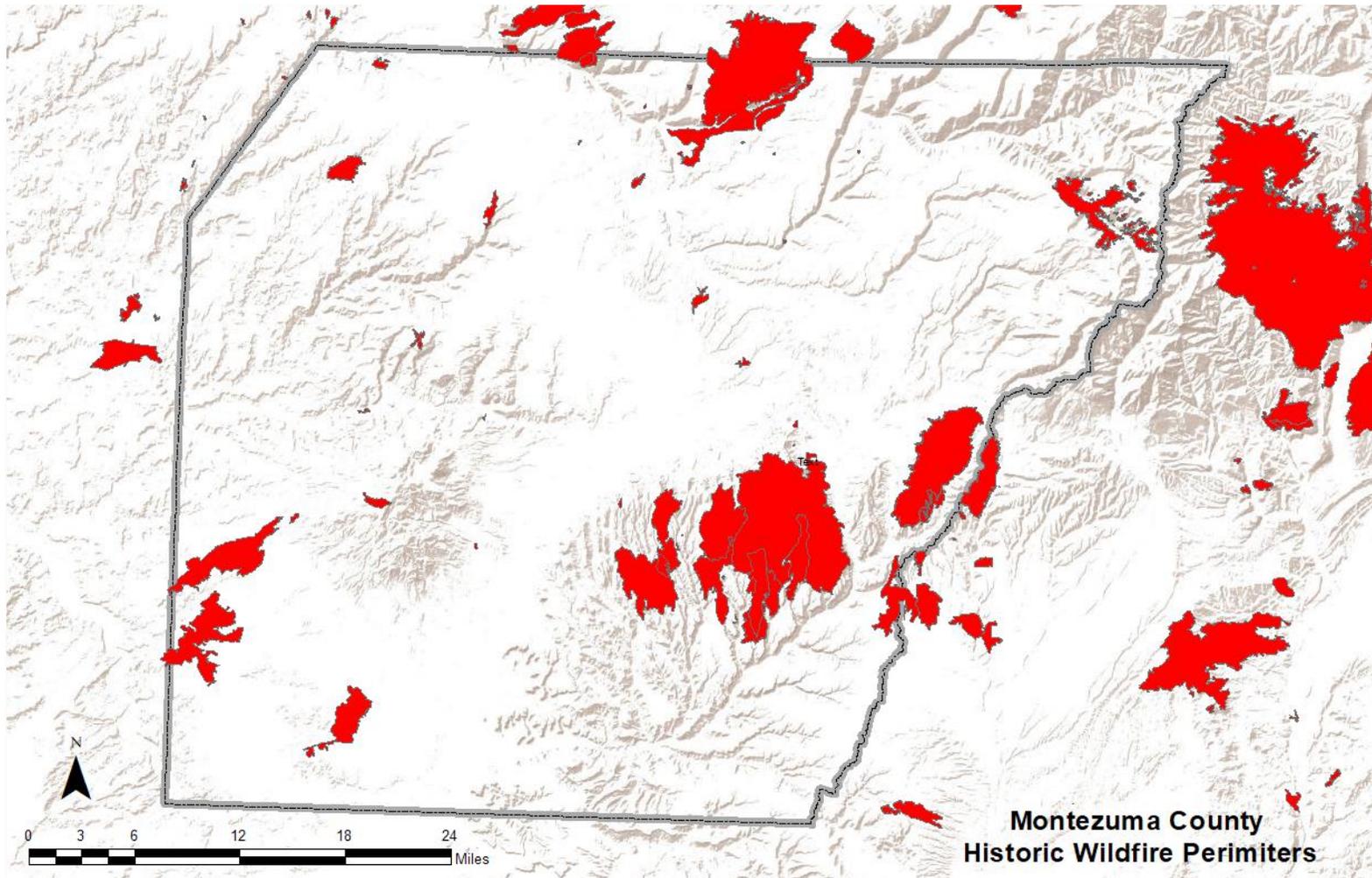
## PLANNING PROCESS

- Met with the Board of County Commissioners to secure authorization and support for the for the current (CWPP) update.
- Held over 25 virtual meetings with local agency stakeholders, under COVD restrictions, to review the existing CWPP and solicit input on updates.
- Evaluated new mapping resources including the Wildfire Risk Viewer.
- Reviewed current County wildfire regulations with the Planning Department and Emergency Manger.
- Post notification in the Local Newspaper regarding the proposed CWPP update and allowed a 45 day public comment period

**Will be done when final draft is completed.**



# BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

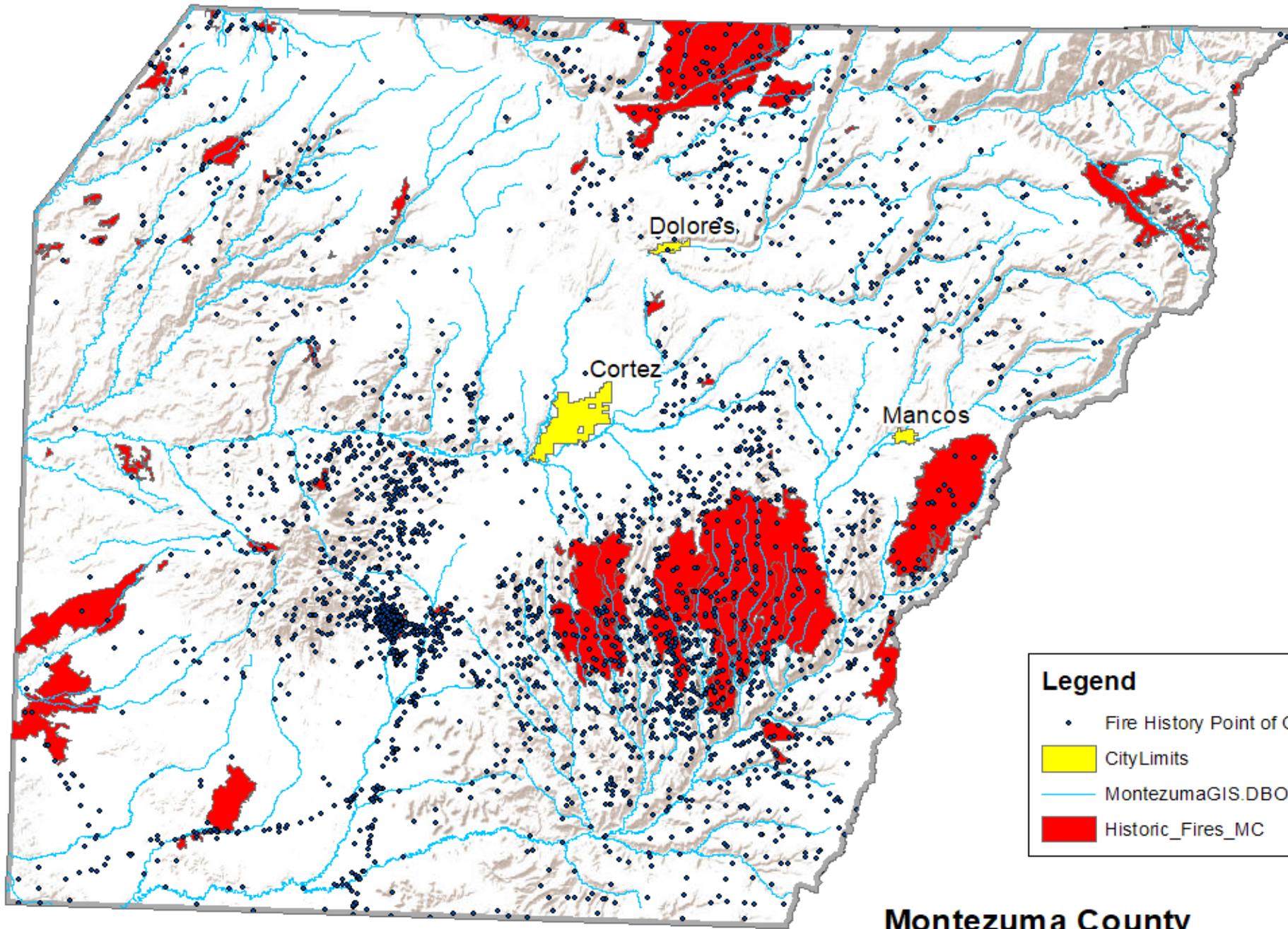


Montezuma County recorded fire history goes back as far as the early 1900's.

There are 58 total records for fires in Montezuma County, 43 of the events have happened since 2000.

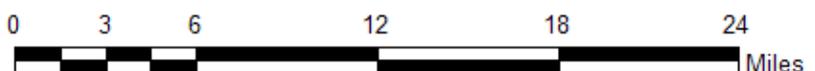
The three largest wildfires in County history have been over the last 20 years.

All three occurred primarily on public lands and were over 10,000 acres.



**Legend**

- Fire History Point of Origin
- CityLimits
- MontezumaGIS.DBO.CountyRivers
- Historic\_Fires\_MC



**Montezuma County**  
**Historic Wildfire Perimeters and Points of Origin**

Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA

# BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

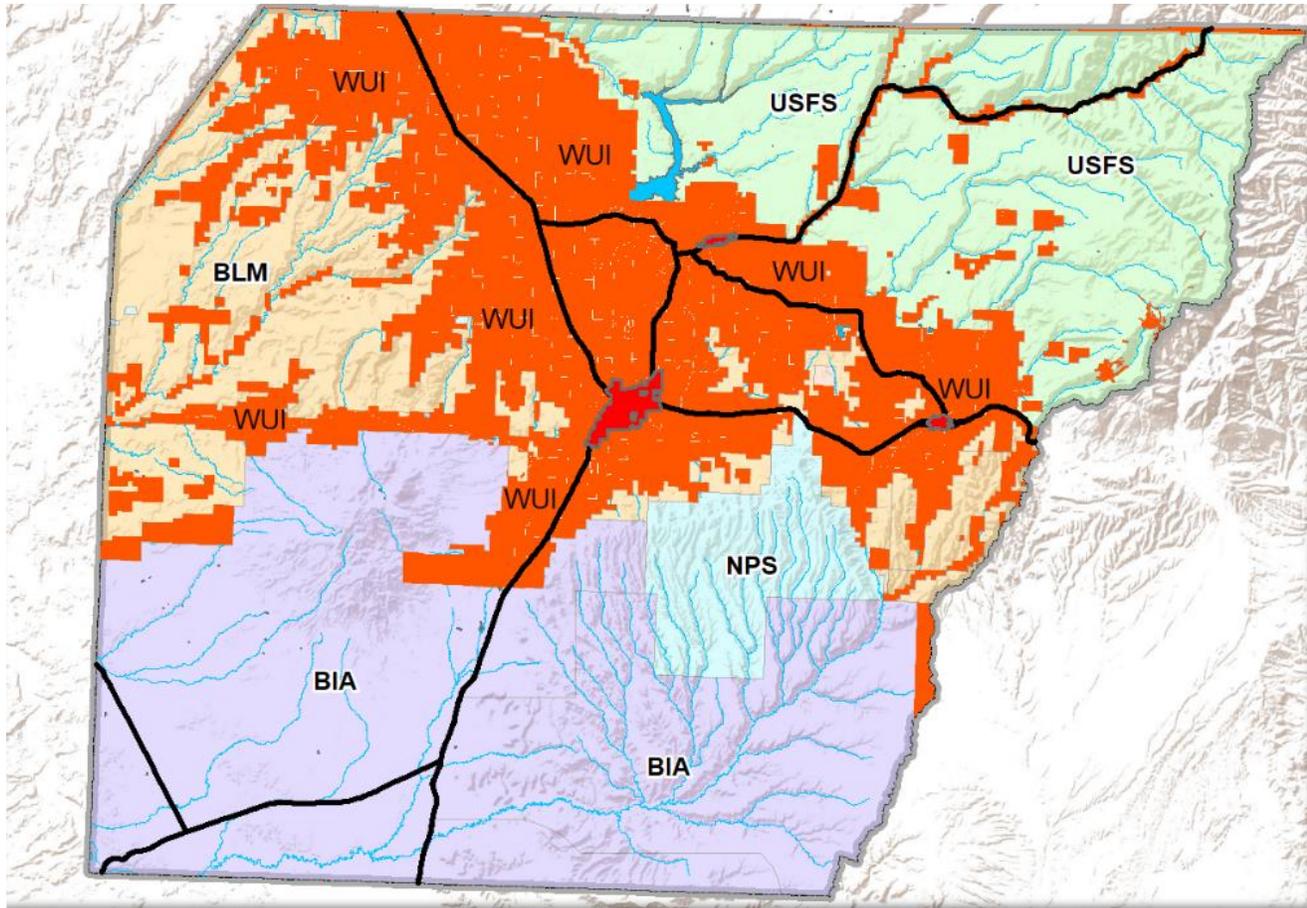
## Montezuma County WUI

All areas of rural Montezuma County are at some level of risk from wildfire.

Therefore the 2005 Montezuma County CWPP defined the WUI as;

*"all unincorporated lands within the County."*

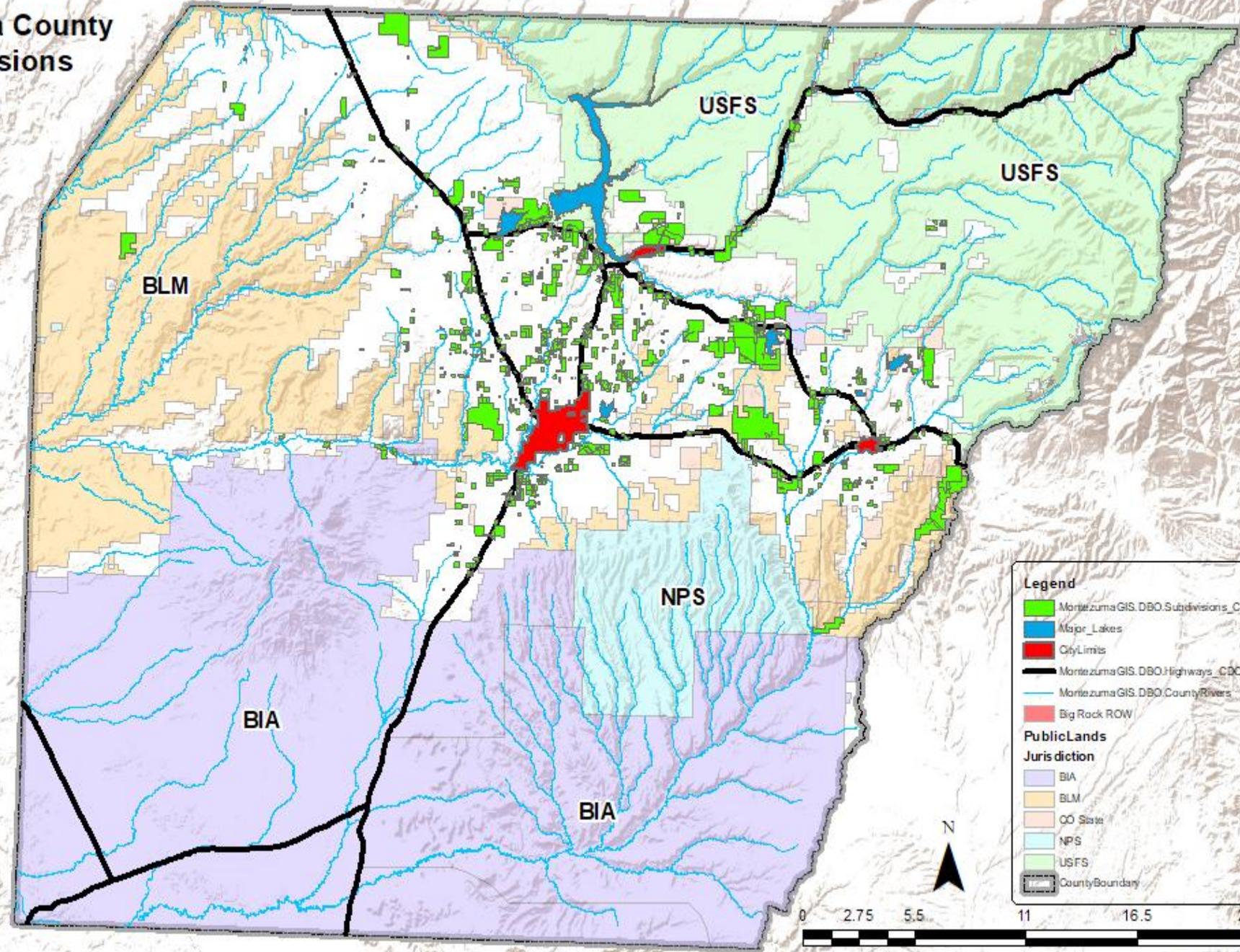
The 2011 Update found the situation to be unchanged and the 2021 Update also concurs.



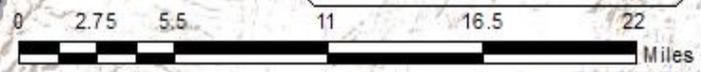
## Montezuma County Population Growth

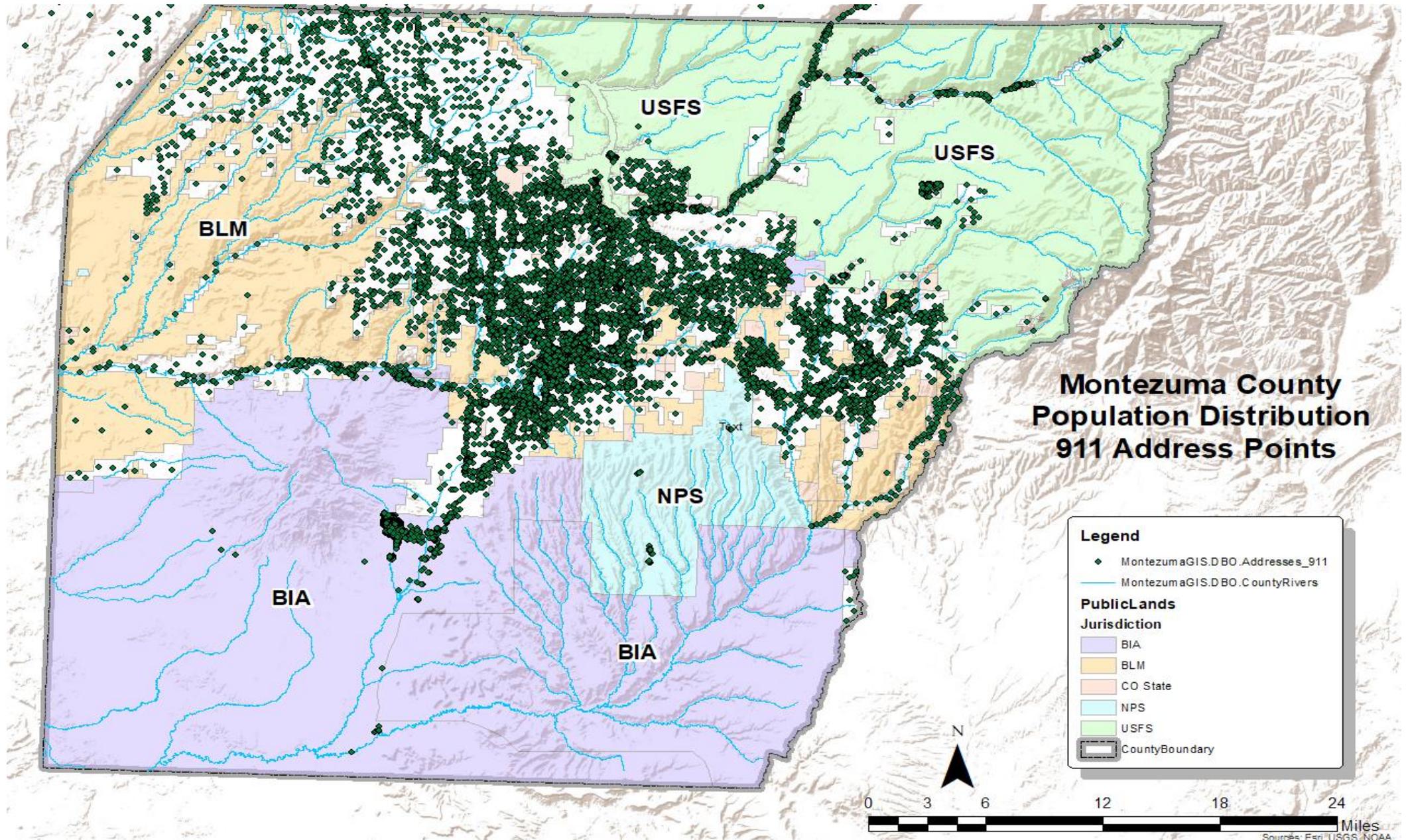
- Like much of Colorado over the last two decades, Montezuma County has experienced rapid growth, especially in the County's unincorporated areas.
- According to the Colorado State Demography Office, the Montezuma County Population has increased by 2.4% annually, going from 25,532 in 2010 to 26,160 in 2019.
- This growth rate accelerated during the COVID 19 Epidemic of 2020-2021.
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs population projections indicate that the population of the County will increase by approximately 8,000 people by 2050.
- The most growth in Montezuma County has occurred in the unincorporated area of the county. Population in the incorporated areas grew by 277 individuals, or 1.8% annually between 2010 and 2019. Montezuma County population is 47% urban and 53% rural.
- Over the past twenty years, much of the home building activity has occurred in naturally vegetated regions that newcomers hold in high regard.

# Montezuma County Subdivisions

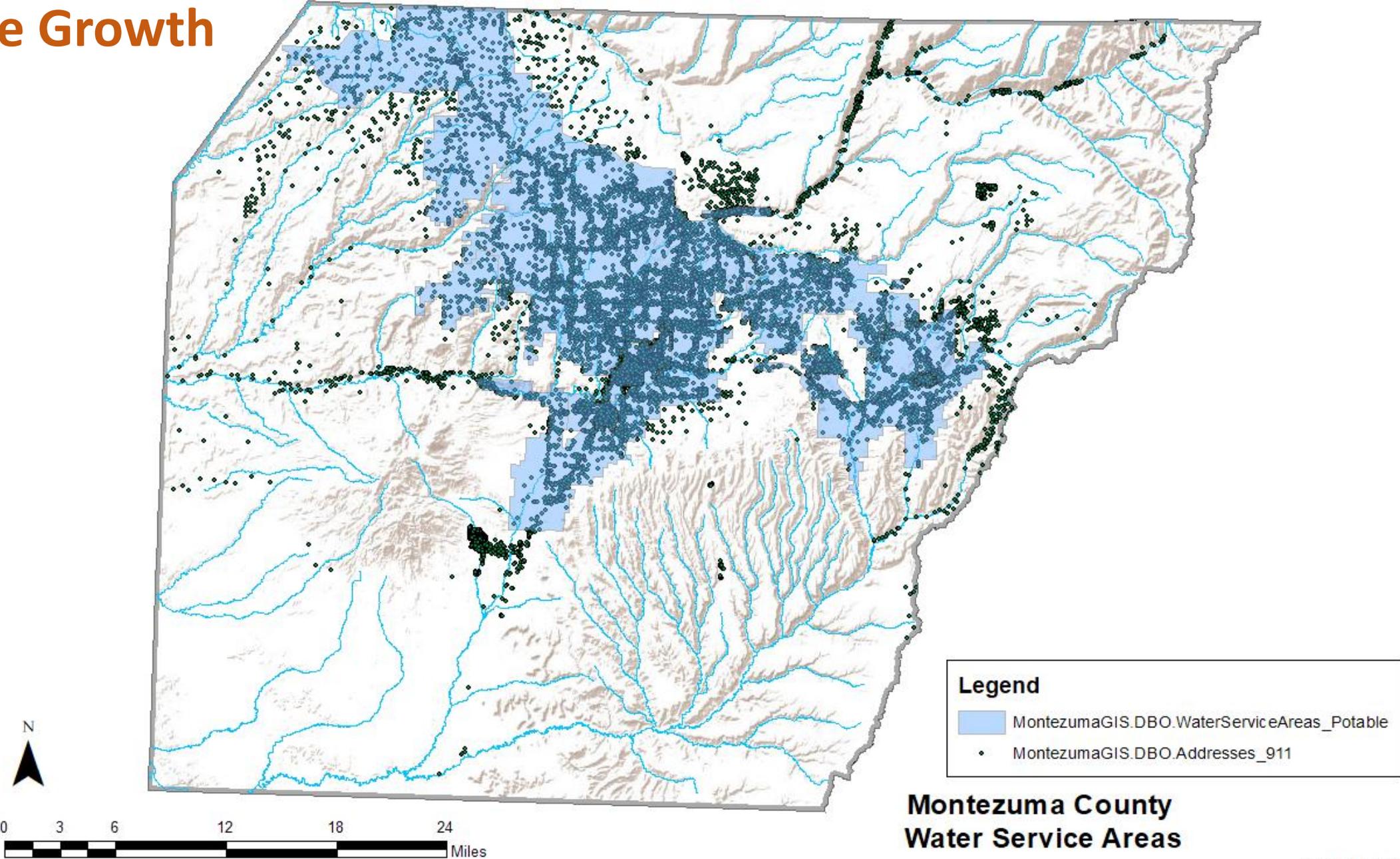


- Legend**
- Montezuma GIS.DBO.Subdivisions\_County
  - Major\_Lakes
  - City Limits
  - Montezuma GIS.DBO.Highways\_CDOT
  - Montezuma GIS.DBO.County Rivers
  - Big Rock ROW
- Public Lands Jurisdiction**
- BIA
  - BLM
  - CO State
  - NPS
  - USFS
  - County Boundary





# Future Growth



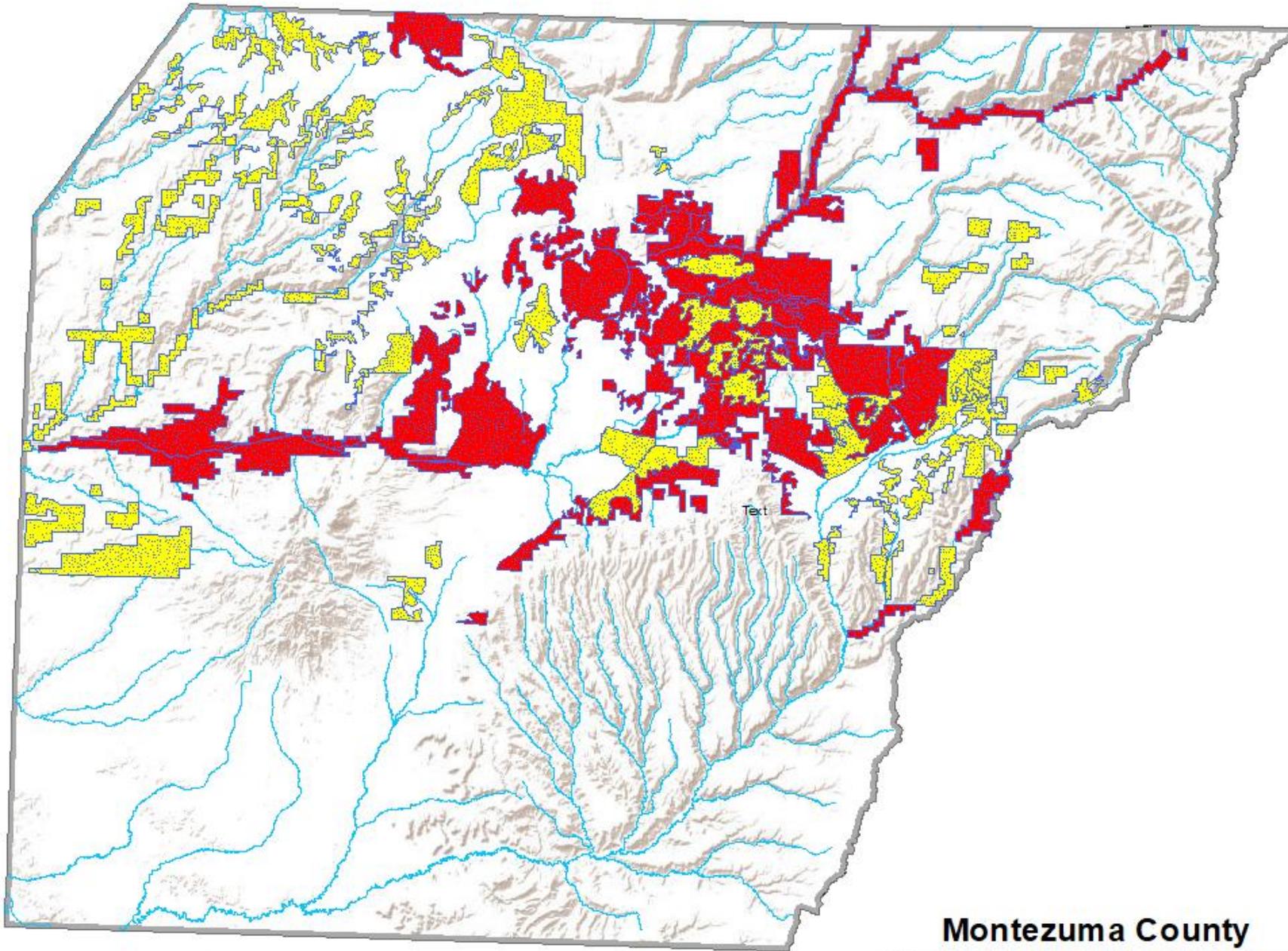
# WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Wildfire Risk assessments have been ongoing throughout Montezuma County since the early 2000's.**
- **The first Community Wildfire Protection Plan completed in 2002 was the product of a wildfire risk effort started in 1999 called the "Red-zone Project."**
- **Montezuma County created a series of district polygons using mappable landscape features. Polygons were analyzed for fire susceptibility, likelihood, intensity, fuel type, accessibility, and proximity to residential or other structures. Other values were also considered, including scenic value, and cultural considerations. Polygons were ranked into High, Medium, and Low Risk categories.**
- **The United States Forest Service maintains a website in which wildfire risk has been analyzed across the nation. This website is intended to help communities understand, explore and reduce wildfire risk. A nationwide data set is available and was used in this 2021 CWPP update.**

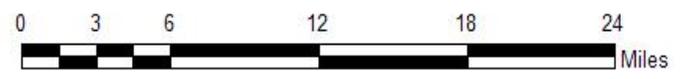
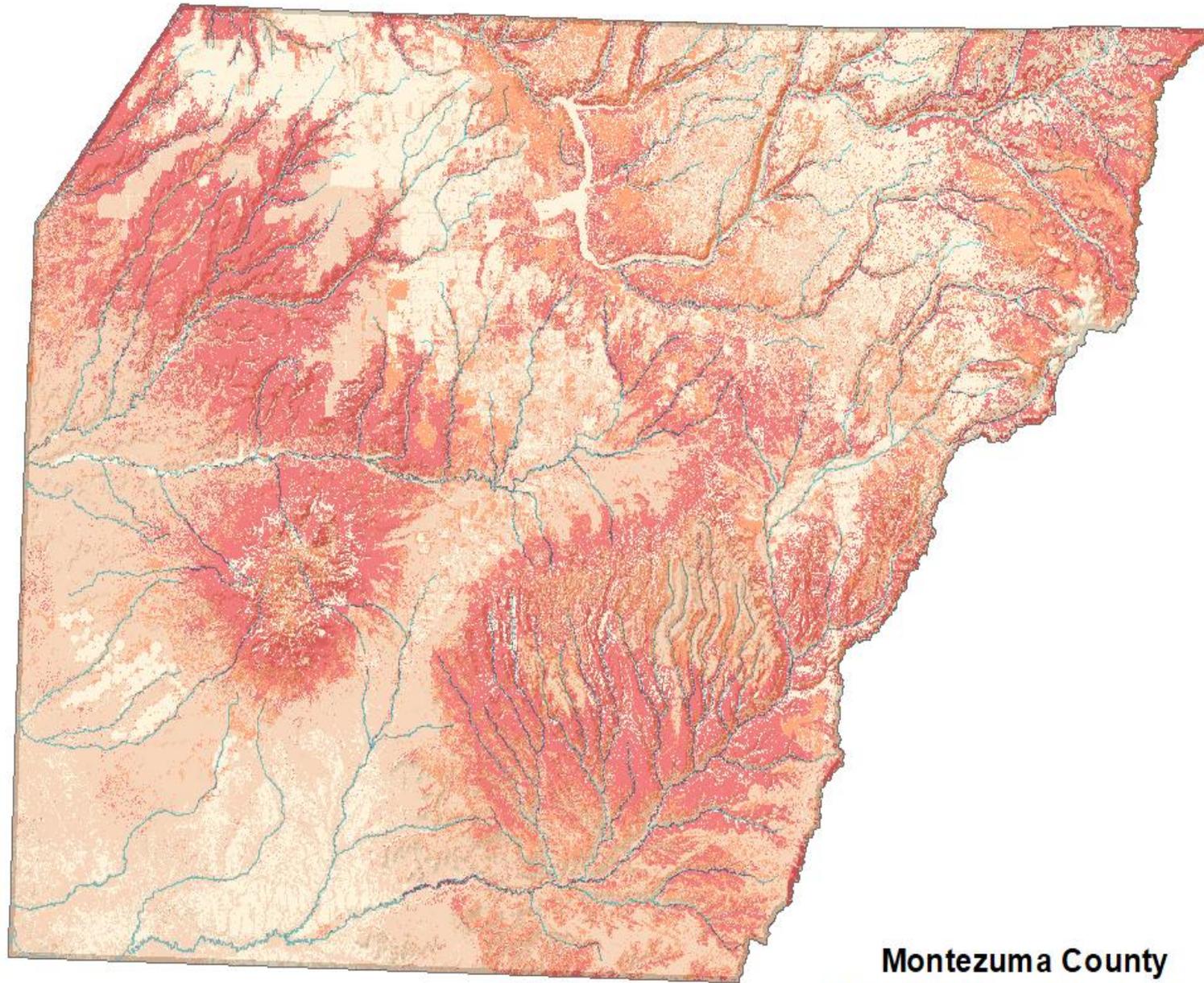
## VALUES AT RISK

Through stakeholder input, the following values were identified as being at risk in Montezuma County;

- **Lives:** firefighters and the public but also livestock and pets
- **Private & Public Property:** homes, businesses, public buildings
- **Public Health:** air quality, water quality
- **Critical Infrastructure:** emergency services, hospitals, electric transmission, pipelines, irrigation ditches, compressor stations, well pads, roads etc.
- **Ecosystem:** McPhee Reservoir and watershed protection, wildlife, stable plant communities
- **Local and Regional Economies:** tourism, timber, and grazing, mineral production, hunting and fishing
- **Natural and Cultural Amenities:** views, historic structures, pre-historic structures and artifacts
- **Local Tax Base & Basic Services:** risk to property values, prohibitive costs associated with fighting wildfires, drain on community resource

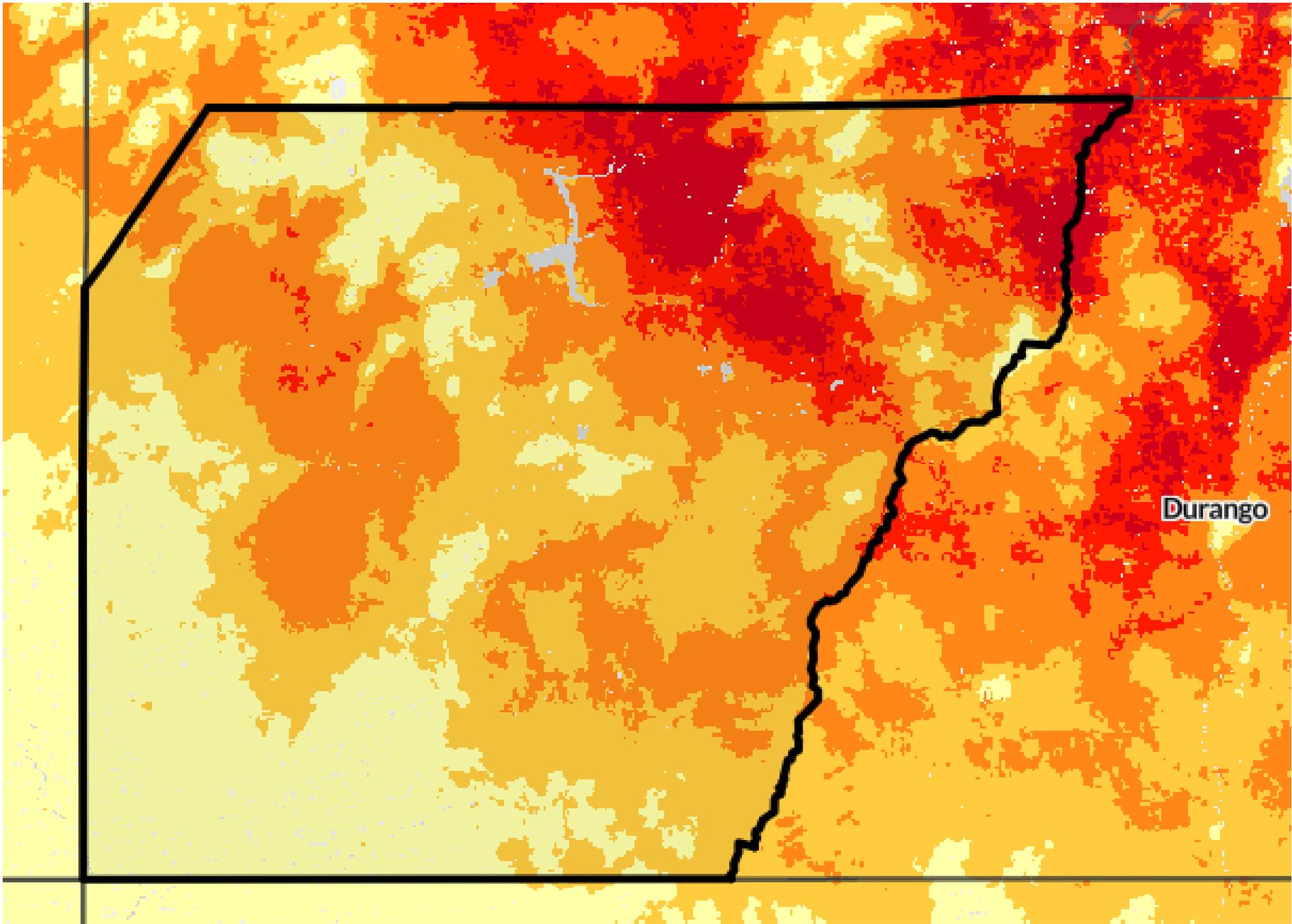


**Montezuma County  
2002 Wildfire Risk Analysis**



**Montezuma County  
2011 Wildfire Risk Analysis**

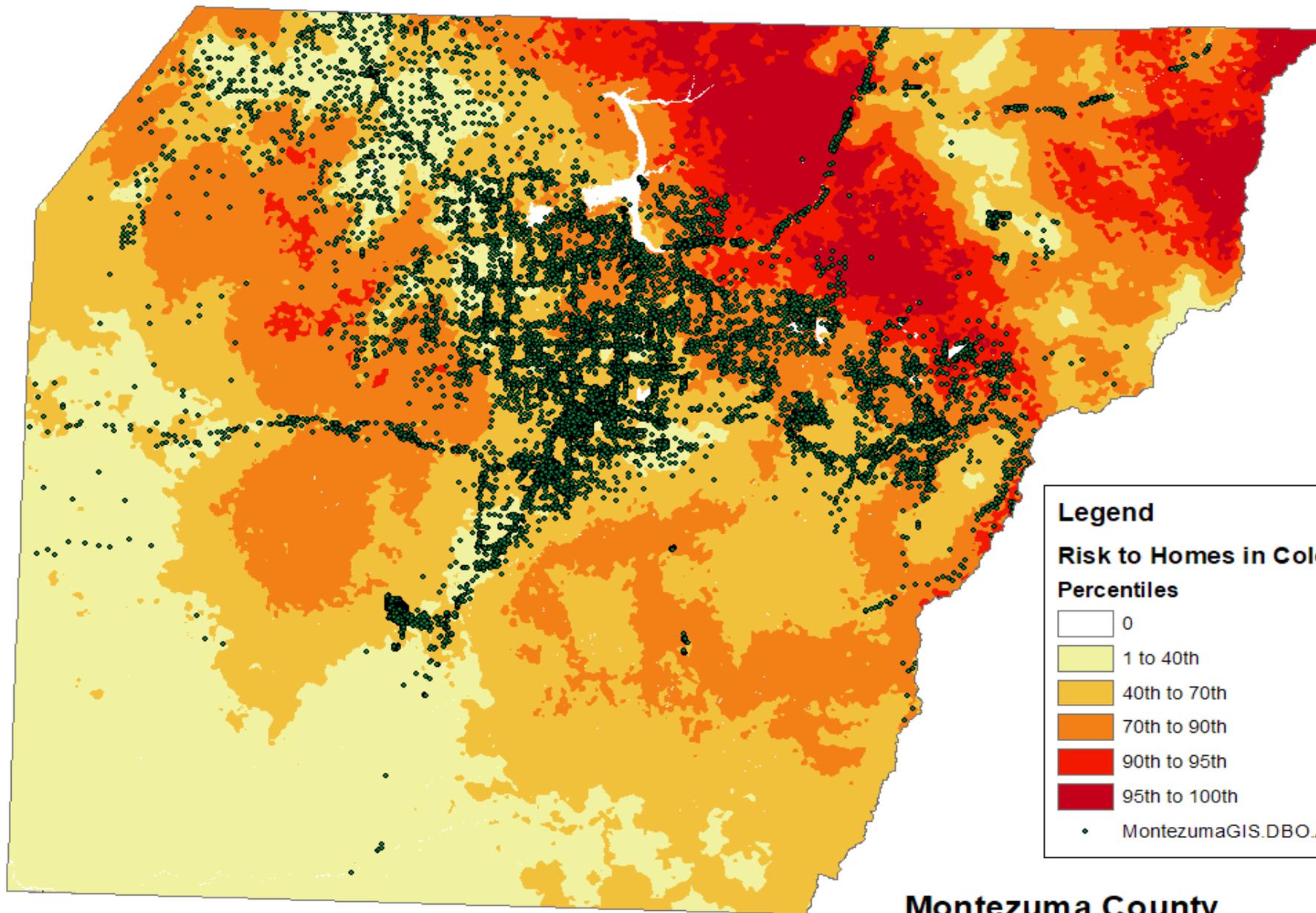
Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA



For the 2021 CWPP Update The Wildfire Risk to Communities Website provides a base layer for risk analysis.

The USDA Site provides an analysis of;

- Risk to homes
- Exposure Type
- Wildfire Likely hood
- And vulnerable populations.



### Legend

#### Risk to Homes in Colorado

#### Percentiles

- 0
- 1 to 40th
- 40th to 70th
- 70th to 90th
- 90th to 95th
- 95th to 100th

• MontezumaGIS.DBO.Addresses\_911

## Montezuma County Wildfire Risk to Homes

## **BROAD MITIGATION GOALS THE COUNTY SUPPORTS**

- 1.) Implement Landscape Level Fuels Treatment Projects on Public Land Adjacent to Private Land.**
- 2.) Implement Landscape Level Fuels Treatment Projects on Private Lands adjacent to Public Land.**
- 3.) Enhance the use of mitigation and forestry contractors.**
- 4.) Increase mitigation by rental and absentee home and property owners.**

## **SPECIFIC MITIGATION ACTIONS THE COUNTY SUPPORTS**

### **1.) Master Planning**

Pre-construction planning and design can often play a significant role in increasing a home or subdivision's resistance to wildfire. The County Planning Department and Road Department play a role here.

### **2.) Reducing Structural Ignitability Using Fire Safe Construction Materials and Techniques**

Montezuma County does not currently have a building department or building codes. Therefore it is up to the individual to educate themselves about Firewise construction.

### **3.) Reducing Structural Ignitability using Fire safe Landscaping**

**4.) Creating Defensible Space;** This is the number one thing everyone who lives in Montezuma County should do.

### **5.) Public Awareness**

Both public and private lands are at increased risk of wildfire partly due to changing climatic conditions, and partly due to increased visitation. It is important to maintain a campaign of public awareness surrounding the risk of wildfire on both private and public lands.

## CURRENT COUNTY POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

Montezuma County maintains a policy of personal responsibility for people who choose to live in the county's unincorporated areas. Rural living comes with various benefits and risks, but it is up to the landowner to advocate for their own personal safety.

The Montezuma County Land Use Code requires an evaluation of wildfire risk when subdivisions are proposed. Subdivisions within areas determined to be at high risk receive extra scrutiny. Proposed subdivisions deemed to be at an increased risk of wildfire are required to prepare a wildfire mitigation plan.

However, even if wildfire mitigation plans are implemented when a subdivision is created, ongoing maintenance must continue to follow the mitigation plan regularly. Only an HOA can provide regulatory oversight within existing subdivisions.

**LAND USE CODE 2020 Wildfire Mitigation.** All new subdivisions which are located completely or partially within areas identified as the A or B zone on the Community at Risk Map, or other areas that fall outside of the A or B zone of the Community at Risk Map that have native vegetative cover deemed to be a wildfire risk, will be reviewed for a recommendation of a Wildfire Mitigation Plan or a waiver. Wildfire Mitigation in the subdivision should take place upon development of each lot and overseen by the developer or established HOA, as recommended in Colorado State Forest Service, wildfire mitigation publications.

## SIX ACTION CATAGORIES

- PREVENTION*** The Montezuma County Fire Protection Districts, Sheriff's Department (Fire Warden), Federal Land Agencies, and the Board of County Commissioners coordinate very effectively to implement fire bans when conditions merit the extra precaution.
- EDUCATION*** The coordinated wildfire education program that has been developed in Montezuma County between the Land Managers, Fire Districts, and the Firewise Council of Southwest Colorado needs to be continued and strengthened.
- MITIGATION*** Land managers can modify fuel sources to maintain a healthy forest that is more resistant to fire, insects, and diseases. Actions include fuels reductions, defensible space and fire resistant planning and construction
- COORDINATION*** Close coordination of activities between the Fire Protection Districts and Fire-Wise Council of Southwest Colorado needs to continue.
- SUPRESSION*** The initial interagency attack and mutual aid provided are well-coordinated and supported by all agencies. The land management agencies and fire districts are well equipped with just a few additional equipment needs.
- APPROPRIATION*** All fire management entities and the FireWise Council should be active in identifying, pursuing, and managing grants that contribute toward the goals of this CWPP.