

Adaptive capacity for wildfire: local level case studies in FL and MT

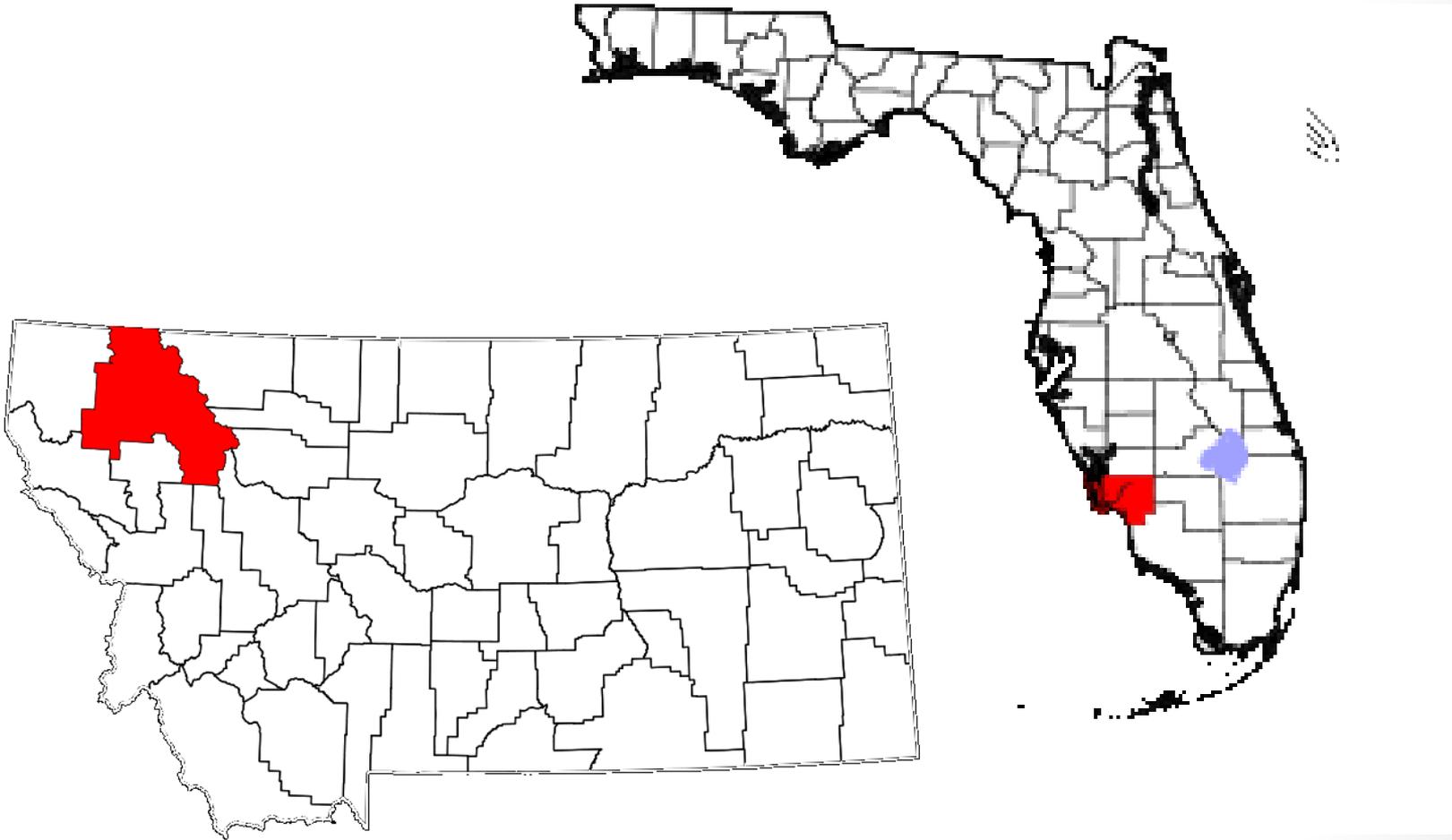
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Two connected studies: FL & MT



Focus groups with emergency manager/other professionals in FL...



Development patterns:

- Important structural conditions
- Underlie subsequent wildfire exposure and adaptations



Lee County development and wildfire exposure

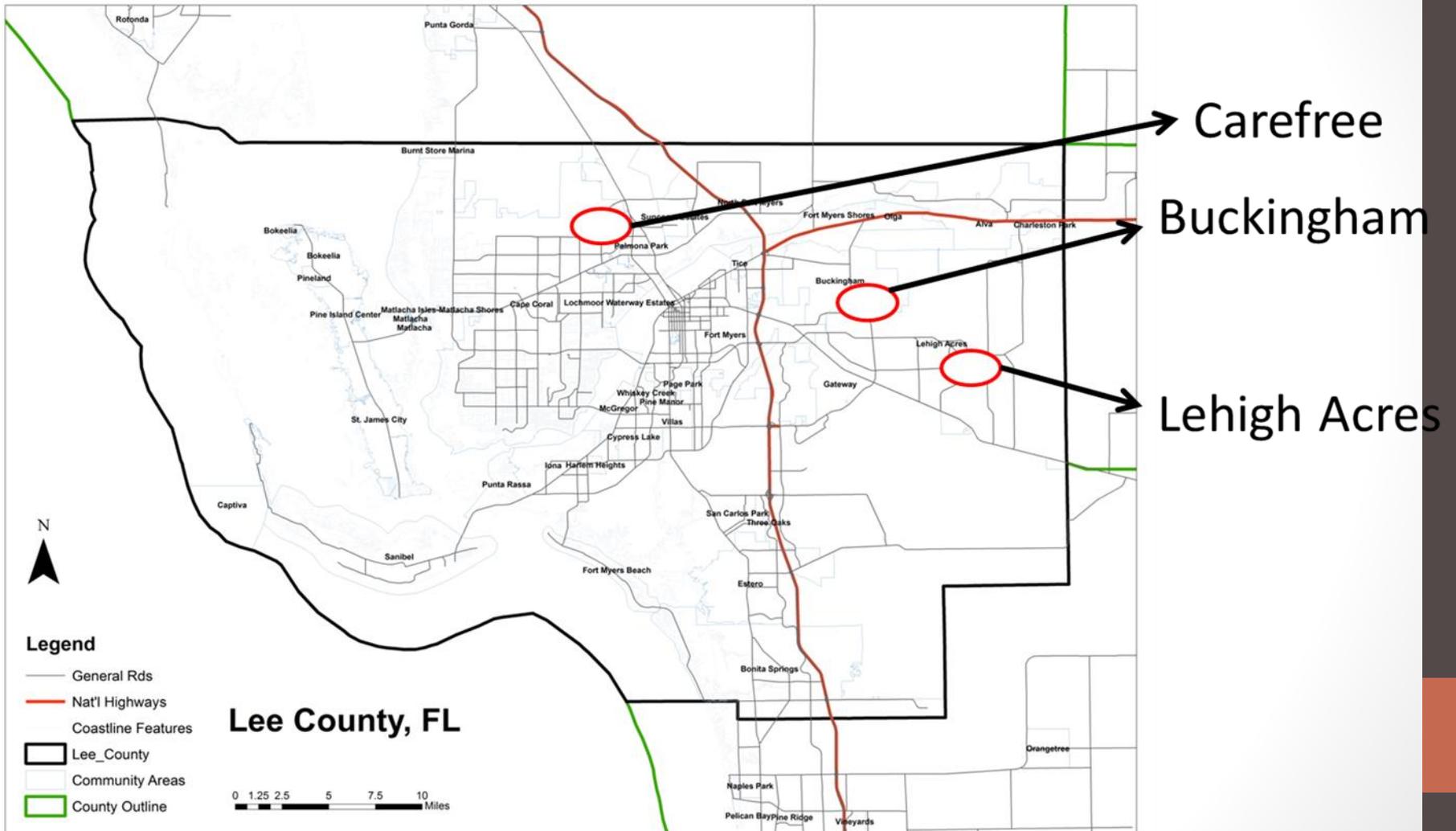
Patterns

- Gated communities
- Rural Land Reserves (and other agricultural areas)
- Pre-platted subdivisions



Aerial View of Lehigh Acres

Three Examples of Adaptive Capacity



Carefree Community

“the [HOA’s] Grounds Committee...began [planting flowers before we started taking on the fire issue]...The leaders sought help...That’s how we ended up [working with the DOF].... All of the new people that were coming from up north were out of ‘it’s all new.’ And so they kind of accepted it as something they were learning about.”
(community leader)



Buckingham

“...is an historic agricultural community and they have a high source of pride...there is more pasture. [They use] prescribed fire for grazing pastures for cattle and horses.... Then you have longer term families. Just longer term residents... There’s a community pride and a desire to keep it rural.”

Community Center



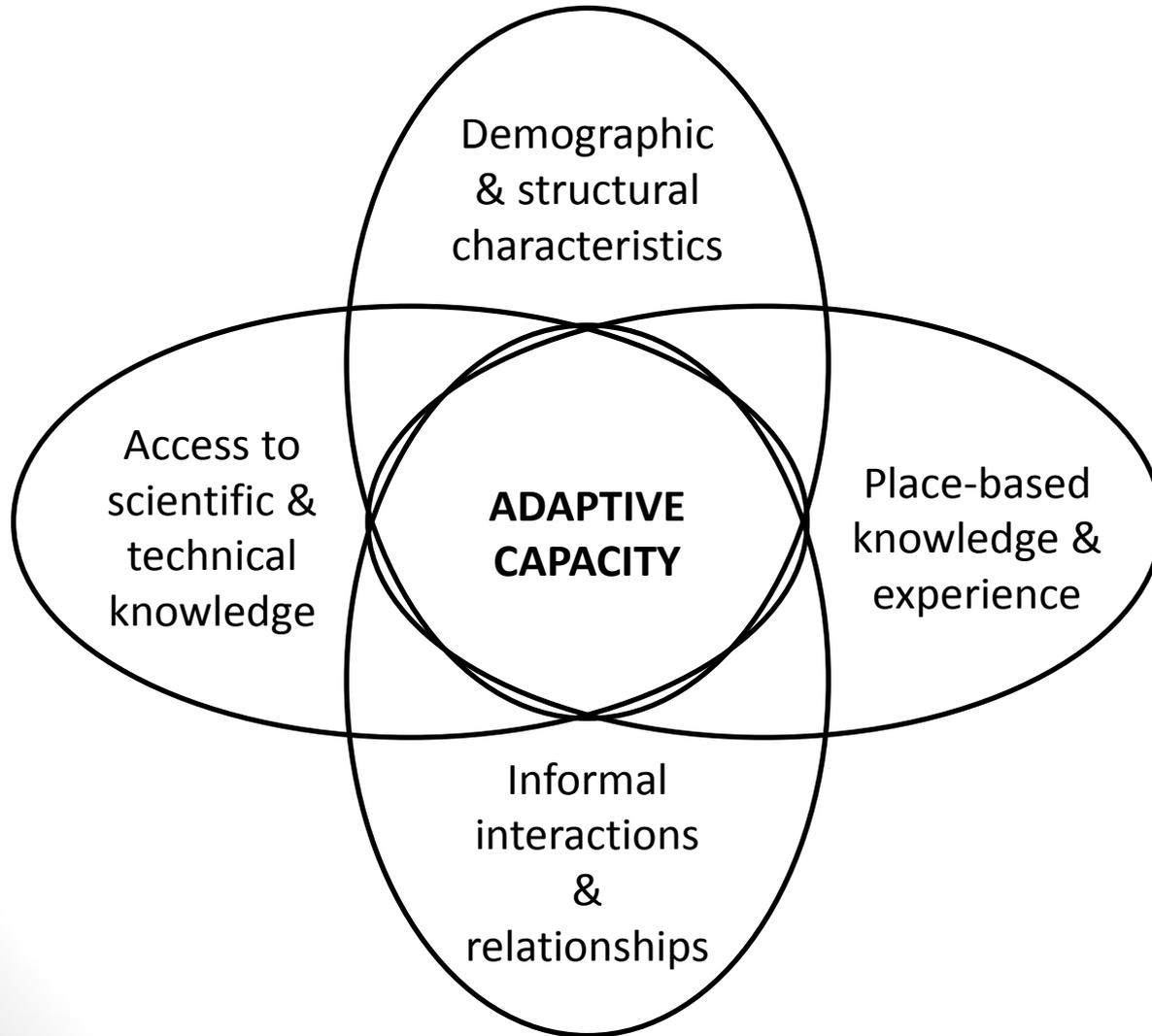
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buckingham_FL_school_pano01.jpg

Lehigh Acres

“Pre-platted communities....have tremendous WUI problems....100 square miles of developed land, and people just do what they want. There’s nothing organizing them.”



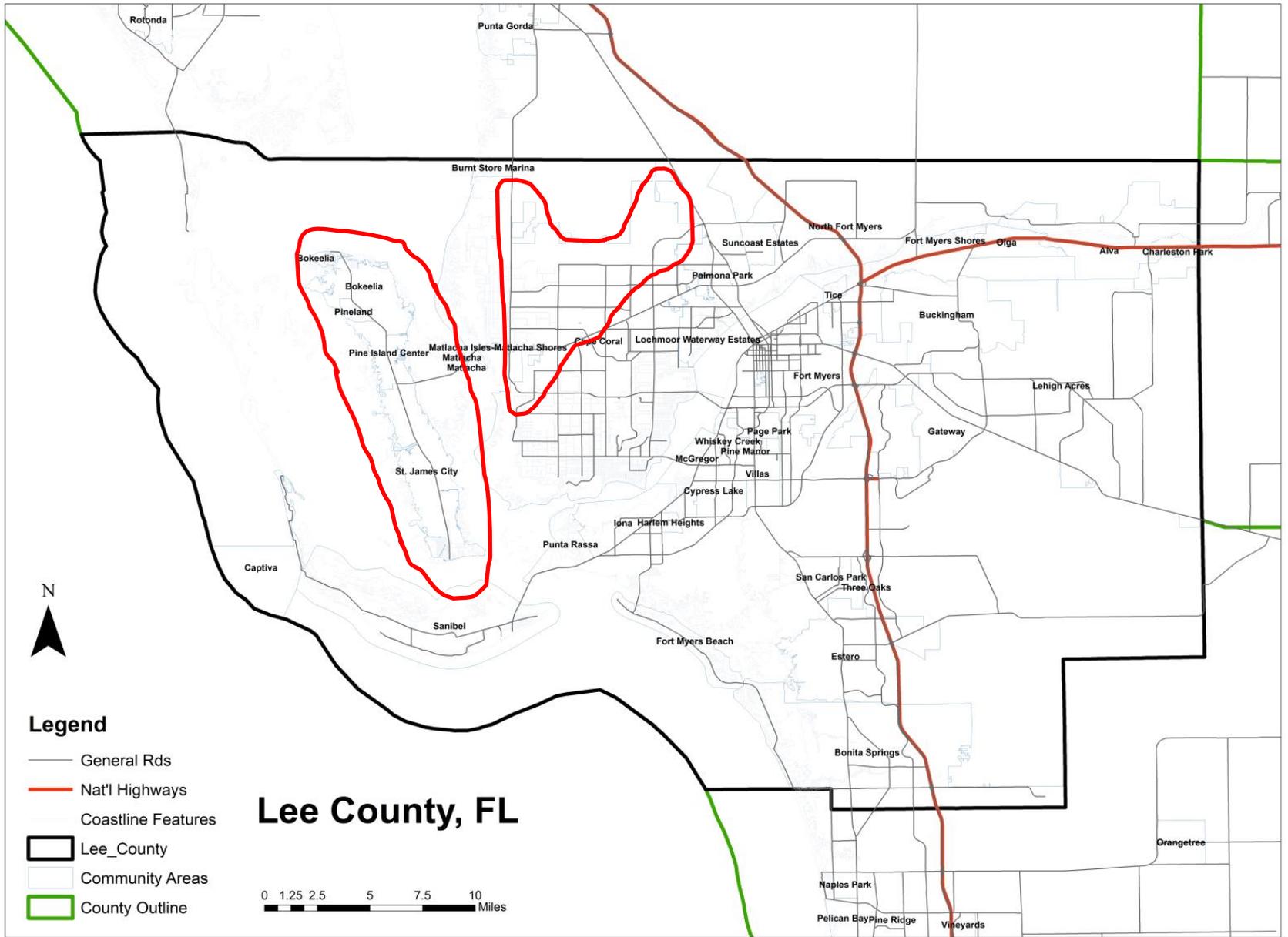
Some pre-existing organizational forms better able to deal with fire



Wildfire has different salience

- In Montana main disturbance threat for communities and emergency management
- In Florida “competing” disturbance events:
 - Wildfires
 - Hurricanes
 - Tropical storms
 - Flooding



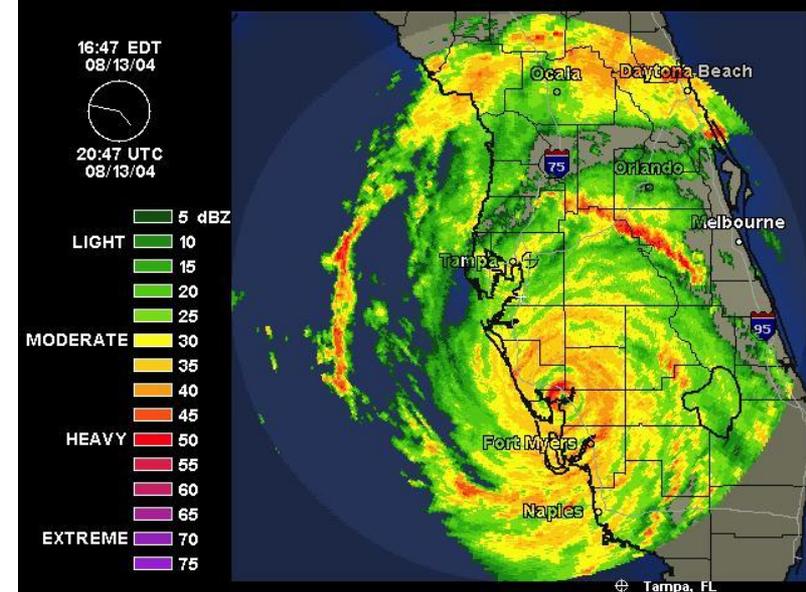


“Hurricanes and wildfire have equal weight and go from one season to the next.” (Wildfire mitigation specialist)

“Pine Island has both fire and hurricane risk. It’s exposed to both. There was a lot of damage from hurricane Charley and already there have been a couple fires out there this season.” (Lee County Environmental Planner)

“Hurricanes [are] pretty prevalent for anybody who was here during Charley....I don’t have any experience with wildfires...I know there’s been a few on the island since I’ve been here, but the fire department has always done a great job of taking care of them.... I haven’t noticed people being concerned about wildfire...maybe because we haven’t had any? ...Although I guess that could come back to haunt you because these same people didn’t worry about a hurricane either!” (Pine Island Resident)

“People are more aware of hurricanes than wildfire.



There are workshops for hurricane preparedness—a lot of outreach, education, media attention, etcetera....It’s a good comparison because same amount of damage potential, but less preparedness and attention given to wildfire—even though fires are a lot more frequent than hurricanes. Greater frequency of fires by far—the last big hurricane could be decades in the past....People don’t realize how vulnerable they are to wildfire.” (Lee County Environmental Planner)

Initial observations

- Different significance of development patterns for hurricanes and wildfire
- Different levels of concern for each disturbance type
- To what extent does adaptive capacity for wildfire also enable adaptation to other types of disturbance (e.g., hurricanes)?

Thank you!

- Suggestions?
- Comments?
- Questions?