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Laguna Vista VFD increases wildland firefighting capacity

June 5, 2017 — LAGUNA VISTA, Texas — Laguna Vista Volunteer Fire Department converted an excess military vehicle into a machine capable of meeting the demands of wildland firefighting. The department volunteers completed the conversion and prepped it for a new paint color.

The Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program, overseen by the USDA Forest Service, provides excess military equipment to fire departments and emergency service providers. Launched in Texas in 2005, this program has released over 400 retired military trucks to Volunteer Fire Department's across the state to help them better protect lives and property. Texas A&M Forest Service transports the vehicle from a military installation, performs necessary repairs and delivers it to the volunteer fire department at no cost to them.

The converted truck has 6-wheel-drive and automatic transmission. Thanks to a \$19,300 grant from the Texas A&M Forest Service's Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program it is also equipped with a slip-on unit that has a 750-gallon water tank and a 20-gallon foam tank.

The slip-on is a self-contained apparatus used as an initial-attack unit to fight wildland fires. The foam is especially beneficial when fighting wildland fires because it coats the fuel and deprives the flames of oxygen, minimizing the possibility of the fire rekindling.

“Our department didn't have an off-road vehicle that could maneuver in the sandy soil while carrying a large amount of water and be effective when fighting wildland fires,” said Laguna Vista VFD Fire Chief Marcus Smith. “It is an added resource not only for our city but also for the whole region. We were thankful to have it available to assist when the 200-acre Olmito Fire happened. The flames were fanned by the gulf breeze and spread quickly. Region wide resources were required including participation from Texas A&M Forest Service.”

The truck's primary purpose will be for wildland firefighting but it could also be used for high-water rescue or to transport water.

According to Smith the department has been serving their community and surrounding area since 1959. The 15 volunteers are continually looking for avenues to better serve and appreciate Texas A&M Forest Service having the grant programs available. The grants not only help small Volunteer Fire Department's meet firefighting needs by expanding their fleet but also by adding firefighting equipment and training.

Texas A&M Forest Service is committed to protecting lives and property through its various fire department assistance programs. For more information on programs offered by Texas A&M Forest Service, please visit <http://texasfd.com>.

