

# LRFD receives Wildfire Relief Fund grant for tactical water tender

Roger Dey  
BVD Editor

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A grant from the Montana Community Foundation's Montana Wildfire Relief Fund will help the Lincoln Volunteer Fire Department fund the manufacture of a new 3000-gallon tactical water tender, which has been in the works for nearly two years.

The tender, being built on a 2006 Freightliner 6x6 chassis acquired through the Federal Excess property program in 2016, replaces the department's old water tender, which was limited in its ability to operate off road and difficult to drive.

The LRFD got the official word they'd received the \$13,000 grant Jan. 18, and Lincoln Fire chief Zach Muse said sometime this month they'll get the truck, dubbed "Big John," into the shop at Fire Apparatus Repair, the Missoula company building the tender. Muse said the LVFD already has the pump for the tender, and the tank for it arrived last month.

"Through fighting fire and donations and whatnot we got the money to purchase the tank and have it built," Muse told the Lewis & Clark County commissioners at the Feb. 2 Government Day meeting, "Now with this grant, we'll be able to put a few more bells and whistles on it and make it a little ... more user friendly."

The money also means the fire department can outfit the tender with new parts, rather than re-purposing older parts stripped off the department's old tender.

"We could be into it for a lot cheaper...and using old parts here and there, but if we've got the money with this grant, why would we use old pieces?" he asked. "Let's get new stuff so that it's done. Fix it right the first time rather than wait two, three years and tear the old stuff off and add (new parts) to it."

The grant will fund a few additional touches, such as an in-cab monitor to help optimize water usage, that will make the tender more effective in firefighting operations, said Muse, who thinks it will be a great community asset.

"It'll be nice. Really excited about it."

Although the new vehicle has been in the works for some time, Muse said tactical tenders proved their worth during last summer's Alice Creek fire, when similar vehicles were used to help save buildings near the Highway Department facility on Rogers pass.

The Montana Wildfire Relief Fund was established at the Montana Community Foundation in response to the 2017 wildfire season. In the course of two grant cycles, the foundation has distributed more than \$600,000 to 81 organizations in the state.

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