

Clinch-Powell RC&D Improves Emergency Services in Five County Area

Volunteer fire departments now have adequate safety gear and fire equipment in the Clinch-Powell Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) area. It began with an extensive public input process involving 1,300 citizens in the region. That process was used to develop a 10 year Strategic Plan to gain Enterprise Community (EC) designation.



A significant need expressed in that process was emergency services. The RC&D/EC focused on that need and worked with local volunteer fire departments to help them increase their capacity in terms of equipment, capability and morale, thus benefiting the community as a whole.

At first the Clinch-Powell RC&D wrote grants for the volunteer fire departments, and in some cases, administered the grants. Then the RC&D trained the fire departments on how to write grants, and they now review and revise. In some cases, small grants of about \$50,000 were awarded through the Clinch-Powell Enterprise Community.

“The RC&D and EC roles go hand-in-hand and would serve no purpose in trying to separate – the credit doesn’t matter, only the impact does. Bringing over \$3.5 million in new dollars to these tiny volunteer fire departments is a highlight of my career. In fact, it shocked me when I began to add it all up...these departments had typically depended on hot dog sales and road blocks to fund their departments,” said Lindy Turner, Clinch-Powell RC&D Coordinator.

The past three years have been a dream come true for local volunteer fire departments and most of it has been due to the RC&D “know how” of connecting needs to funding.

In July, a local volunteer firefighter sent this message to the Clinch-Powell RC&D: “I just want to thank you and the Enterprise Community for all of the help you have given to volunteer fire departments in the area. We had a house fire this morning, and as I was waiting to enter the house I watched the first team go in and got to thinking. They are wearing turnout gear from a grant (EC), air packs from a grant (EC), and holding a flashlight from a grant (Tennessee Division of Forestry), as well as a hose line and nozzle (FEMA) being pumped from a flatbed truck (Rural Development) with a water tank and pump (FEMA). All purchased in the last three years thanks to the work of the RC&D and EC. You cannot imagine how you have helped.”



Jointly the RC&D and EC efforts have resulted in over \$3.5 million in new dollars for 25 volunteer fire departments over the past three years. The funding has come from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), USDA Rural Development, Enterprise Community, Tennessee Division of Forestry and local contributions.

Volunteerism is up, local government funding is up, United Way contributions have increased, but more importantly, capability to fight fires while protecting volunteer firefighters is greatly enhanced.

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