

New truck to help combat litter

BY WILLIAM JOHNSON • WJOHNSON@DAILYWORLD.COM • AUGUST 5, 2008

A new, \$120,000 grappling truck will soon be on the roads of St. Landry Parish to clean up litter and address flooding concerns.

"This is something we have been needing but couldn't afford," said Parish President Don Menard. "This will allow us to address litter problems around our bridges. Trash piles up and hurts the drainage. This will help tremendously."

The truck is part of \$900,000 in litter abatement funding that is going to the parish and its 12 municipalities thanks to the St. Landry Parish Solid Waste Disposal District.

"Each public entity has its own unique solid waste needs. This is a way for us to address those needs that we don't provide through our regular services," said Katry Martin, the Solid Waste Disposal District's executive director.

District board member Cyrus Auzenne said his agency is always looking for ways to help. "This truck will also be very helpful if the parish experiences another hurricane or a tornado," Auzenne said.

This is not the first time the district has helped out local communities. In 2004, for instance, it distributed \$1.9 million to the parish and its 12 municipalities to help with road and bridge repair and maintenance. Last year it provided another million for the same purpose.

In its more than 20-years of existence, the district has returned almost \$10 million to the people.

That money has come from revenue generated at the district's landfill for accepting trash from neighboring parishes, primarily from Evangeline Parish.

This year the district is doing it a little differently, with the \$900,000 coming from the 8/10ths of a cent parishwide sales tax that funds the district directly.

That tax allowed the district to generate a surplus last year and its board voted to share the wealth. But since that tax is dedicated to trash collection, this year's donations can only be used for that purpose.

The parish is using its share not only for the grappling truck but to fund two trash-collection crews in cooperation with the St. Landry Parish Sheriff's Office. Those crews are on the road almost every day, removing tons of litter from beside the parish's 900 miles of roads.

Other approved uses could include purchasing trash containers, payment of container rentals, recycling expenses or the purchase of equipment to load, transport or dispose of solid waste.

"I don't think most towns will have a problem finding a project that meets the requirements," Martin said.

Menard said the truck should be in service in the next week or two.

"We have a number of areas of concern that we need to address," Menard said. "It will help us clean out the debris, old mattresses and such, that accumulate under bridges. It will allow us to clean up trash that piles up on back country roads."

When the truck is not in use on parish projects, Menard says he plans to make it available to the parish's various municipalities and drainage districts to help with their projects as well.



Parish officials take delivery of a \$120,000 grapple truck designed to help keep bridges and parish waterways clear of litter. The truck is a gift to parish government from the St. Landry Parish Solid Waste Disposal District. (Photo by William Johnson)