

HIGHLIGHT

Research on wheels monitors 2006 Capitol Christmas tree



(The Capitol Christmas tree was harvested in Mason County on November 1st and traveled around the state and across the country to the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. – all photos courtesy of Green Diamond Resource Company)

Every year, several unique Christmas trees make their way across the country to Washington D.C. Last November, the 65.5 foot tall Pacific Silver fir tree that went to the



Capitol Building was also a traveling experiment on wheels. Recognizing the expertise of research faculty at WSU Puyallup, Gary Chastagner and Kathy Riley were given an



opportunity to monitor post harvest moisture and needle retention characteristics. They attached a device to the tree and monitored the environmental conditions the tree was exposed to

over its 27 day cross-country travel period. "At the beginning, slightly over half the weight of the tree was water," said Chastagner. More foliage samples were collected and sent back to WSU Puyallup by Sara Savage, a US Forest Service employee who accompanied the tree on its cross-country tour. Upon arrival at the Capitol Building, moisture content was approximately the same as when it left the forest, indicating that the water periodically sprayed on the tree during its trip had been effective at minimizing moisture loss from the tree. The new data coming from the traveling Christmas tree yielded comparable results to Chastagner's moisture retention research done on much smaller, traditionally –sized retail Christmas trees. This will help the industry in the future, answering critical questions about how dry large trees get after cutting and the amount of needle loss in transport.

WSU Puyallup: Solutions for the Region; Programs for Its People

Highlights is provided by the people and programs of WSU Puyallup from February through December. For story ideas for upcoming Highlights, please contact either Tanyalee Erwin, terwin@wsu.edu, 253-445-4504, or Jon Newkirk, jnewkirk@wsu.edu, 253-445-4568. If your email is set to text messages only and you wish to see the graphical version of this Highlight, please email Tanyalee.