Sourcing, Cutting, & Transporting The U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree

Source: www.TurfMagazine.com



Each year, a different national park provides the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. (Photo by Tanya Flores, USDA Office of Communications.)

The annual lighting of the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree, known affectionately as the “People’s Tree,” is an honored tradition of more than 50 years. In fact, the “People’s Tree” dates back to 1964 when Architect of the Capitol J. George Stewart, at the suggestion of the Speaker of the House John W.

McCormack, established the yearly tradition of decorating a tree on the West Front Lawn.

So where does the tree come from? Since 1970, the USDA Forest Service has provided the trees. Each year a different national forest is invited to provide “The People’s Tree” to celebrate the holidays. The Forest Service also works with state forests to provide smaller companion trees for offices in Washington, D.C.

This year, the tree was a gift from the Questa Ranger District on the Carson National Forest in New Mexico. This is the fourth U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree to come from the Southwestern Region of USDA Forest Service. Two were from New Mexico – an Engelmann Spruce from the Santa Fe NF in 2005 and a Blue Spruce from Carson NF in 1991. In 2009 an Engelmann Spruce came from the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs in Arizona.



Husqvarna is a sponsor of the 2019 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. (Photo Credit: Husqvarna Twitter feed.)

Harvested on November 6, the massive 60-foot blue spruce was cut down with chainsaws from Husqvarna, a sponsor of the 2019 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree, and hoisted into the air by cranes provided by Wilbanks Trucking Services, LLC. The tree was then placed and secured onto a Kenworth W900 transport trailer provided by Hale Trailer and removed from the Carson National Forest to embark on a nationwide tour. The tree traveled over 2,000 miles and stopped for celebrations in 25 communities before arriving at the U.S.

Capitol in late November. Today, the tree stands on the West Front Lawn of the U.S. Capitol Building and is decorated with thousands of handcrafted ornaments made by school children from the state of New Mexico.

The tree was lit December 4th by the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi during a public tree lighting ceremony on the West Front Lawn. “This tree embodies the spirit of unity. It reminds us that even in a nation as diverse as the United States, we are one people,” said USDA Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen.

Not only is this year’s tree a beautiful Christmas gift to the nation, it is also a 75th birthday present to the world’s most recognized fire prevention hero, Smokey Bear. The real Smokey Bear, the badly burned cub who helped inform Americans on the importance of forest fire prevention, was found in the Capitan Mountains of New Mexico after a forest fire in the late 1940s.

The tree will be lit from nightfall until 11 p.m. each evening through Jan. 1, 2020.