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Arboretum Provides State Capitol Christmas Tree For 10th Year

PLACERVILLE, Calif. **November 17, 2008**—A Forest Service arboretum will provide the 77th annual state capitol Christmas tree, maintaining what has become a decade-long holiday tradition of gracing the building's west steps with a white fir tree grown for research purposes.

Since 1998, state employees have collected Christmas trees from a stand of about 3,000 trees Forest Service employees planted in the mid-1960s in the four-acre Camino Arboretum at the agency's Institute of Forest Genetics in Placerville.

On November 20, they will cut down this year's 60-foot tree, load it onto a trailer with a crane and haul it 50 miles on Highway 50 to the capitol. Last year's donated tree was decorated there with 6,500 lights and more than 1,500 ornaments crafted by children and adults with developmental disabilities.

"Gov. Schwarzenegger seems to be repeating his famous movie line, 'I'll be back,' when it comes to the capitol Christmas tree," said Roger Stutts, a retired Forest Service employee who planted many of the arboretum's trees.

Stutts worked for the Institute of Forest Genetics for more than 40 years and said state employees started eyeing the arboretum as a Christmas tree source about 12 years ago because it is relatively close to the state capitol grounds. Elevation was also a factor because it meant deep snow was unlikely to prevent a crane from reaching the site.

The Camino Arboretum was one of four sites Forest Service scientists established in 1965 to study the hardiness of trees grown from white fir seeds collected from as far away as Michigan. The research included studying the effectiveness of planting trees in different arrangements to increase productivity.

"Generations of scientists have learned much from the Camino Arboretum and those who follow will learn more," Stutts said.

An example was how entomologists found forest insects preferred feeding upon arboretum trees grown from seeds collected in California rather than other parts of the country, he said.

The Institute of Forest Genetics was founded in 1925 by James G. Eddy, a Northwest lumberman who financed the world's first institute dedicated to forest genetics. The Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station has operated it since 1935 and it has become the premier location for research in the areas of forestry and biology.

In 1987, the institute was listed on the National Register of Historic places.

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