



United States Department of Agriculture

## Forest Service

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# News Release

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## U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree to Visit Twin Cities During 2014 Tour

*“People’s Tree” to visit 30 communities between Minnesota and Washington, D.C.*

**Saint Paul, Minn. (Oct. 22, 2014)** – For the past 50 years, a beautiful tree has appeared on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. during the holiday season. The U.S. Forest Service, in partnership with Choose Outdoors and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, will bring this special gift from the Chippewa National Forest in north central Minnesota to Washington, D.C. for the 2014 season. The Tree will make more than 30 stops on its way across the country, including three events in the Twin Cities Nov. 6 and 8.

The Tree will be cut during a public ceremony Oct. 29 and will then be moved to Bemidji State University, where it will be prepared for the nearly 2,000-mile cross-country expedition. With great fanfare, the Tree – an 88-foot white spruce– will leave the Chippewa National Forest followed by a caravan of caretakers for the journey to the U.S. Capitol, where the official tree lighting will take place in early December.

Festivities in the Twin Cities begin with a stop at Garlough Elementary School in West Saint Paul Nov. 6 from 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Students and teachers at this environmental magnet school, which includes a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) School Forest, have been busy preparing for the visit, with special curriculum and relevant learning based activities, along with decorating ornaments to send along with the Tree to the U.S. Capitol. A short program will begin at 1 p.m. kicked off by a song written especially for the Tree and performed by the entire Garlough student body, followed by short remarks from Mayor of West Saint Paul John Zanmiller along with U.S. Forest Service and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) representatives.

The second stop also takes place Nov. 6 from 4– 6 p.m. at Lifetouch Photography in Eden Prairie. Employees and their families, along with local, state and federal officials, Eden Prairie business community leaders, and administrators and educators from Eden Prairie Schools will attend. Lifetouch Photography is a major supporter of the 2014 tour.

The third event is open to the public and will take place at Northern Star Council’s Boy Scout Base Camp at Fort Snelling Nov. 8 from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. Joining the U.S. Forest Service and Choose Outdoors are representatives from the DNR, Minnesota Christmas Tree Growers Association, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, City of Lakes Rotary Club, Salvation Army and special appearances by Smokey Bear and Santa Claus. In addition to the Tree being on display outdoors, indoor festivities will include ornament decorating, wreath making demonstrations, cookie decorating, archery and rock

climbing (for a small fee), tour merchandise, tree cutting permits, balsam bough harvesting information and more. Food donations will be collected to benefit the Neighborhood Food Shelf. A short program will take place at 4:30 p.m. The event is free to attend, with a small charge only for adventure activities hosted by the Northern Star Council.

Seventy companion trees will be provided by the Minnesota Christmas Tree Growers Association to decorate the inside of the U.S. Capitol building and other sites throughout Washington, D.C., along with 10,000 ornaments created by children and others from Minnesota communities as a gift from the "Land of 10,000 Lakes."

Costs associated with the Tree's transportation and special events are made possible by contributions by individuals, corporations and local communities, including major supporters Lifetouch Photography and Kenworth Truck Company.

For news, updates, and tour information and to track the Tree cross-country, visit [www.capitolchristmastree.com](http://www.capitolchristmastree.com), along with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

### **About Chippewa National Forest**

The Chippewa National Forest is the first national forest established east of the Mississippi River, with nearly 1.6 million acres at the River's headwaters in north-central Minnesota. The Forest shares boundaries with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and contains outstanding cultural resources; premier habitat for aquatic, riparian and terrestrial wildlife and plants, including nesting habitat for the largest breeding population of bald eagles in the lower 48 states; and vast wetland resources. Visit the Chippewa National Forest's website at [www.fs.usda.gov/chippewa](http://www.fs.usda.gov/chippewa) for more information.

### **About the U.S. Forest Service**

The mission of the U.S. Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land; provides assistance to state and private landowners; and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. Public lands the Forest Service manages contribute more than \$13 billion to the economy each year through visitor spending alone. Those same lands provide 20 percent of the nation's clean water supply, a value estimated at \$7.2 billion per year. The agency has either a direct or indirect role in stewardship of about 80 percent of the 850 million forested acres within the U.S., of which 100 million acres are urban forests where most Americans live. For more information, see [www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us).

### **About Choose Outdoors:**

Choose Outdoors is a coalition for outdoor recreation comprised of people and organizations who are passionate about outdoor recreation, support public lands, waters, and the agencies charged with their care. [www.chooseoutdoors.org](http://www.chooseoutdoors.org).

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