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Stillaguamish Tribe Honored in Flood Relief Efforts

(Olympia, WA)— WFPA and the Rural America Foundation honored the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians yesterday at the Festival of the River in Arlington, Washington. The Tribe hosted chainsaw artist Dave Tremko at their 19th annual festival on August 9-10, 2008. Dave carved an eagle and fish out of the ten-foot tall cedar log that had washed up onto a farmer's field during the 500-year flood event in Lewis County, Washington last December.

The Rural America Foundation through the efforts of Collin King first donated hay to the White farm, after they lost all of their winter feedstock. This flood relief effort was expanded to donation of homes, when the Stillaguamish Tribe gave the first manufactured home to a family who lost everything. This kicked off a chain of giving that led to the delivery of 6 homes which helped more than 20 people recover after the devastation. "We found that many people were willing to give whatever they had to help families impacted by the flood. The generous gift of the first home by the tribe, led to more homes, and other donations. Now the farmer in Lewis County is giving back cedar to the tribe which is significant to their culture. We are truly coming full circle," said Collin King, President of the Rural America Foundation.

Chairman Shawn Yanity notes that "cedar has been one of our most valued resources. We are excited and honored to receive such a well thought gift."

The coalition of folks who gathered called this effort the Homeward Bound Coalition which attracted many others, who helped with the homes, for example private forest landowner Port Blakely Timber Company donated the next home, they and the Weyerhaseuser Company donated much needed gravel to prepare driveways and foundations, and many other timber companies gave financial support to help delivery of the next five homes. "The private timber companies jumped aboard to help flood impacted families because they knew it was just the right thing to do," said Cindy Mitchell of the Washington Forest Protection Association. "We are proud to be a part of the coalition to help others."

But tribal members state that this is just part of the culture. "In historic times our tribe lived abundantly, in harmony and balance as the "People of the River", known for our generosity, it has been an honor to work within our tribal leadership, who have consistently represented our people with a willingness and desire to help other neighboring communities in need. This has been great," said Tom Claxton Jr., a Stillaguamish Tribal member.

The effort attracted hundreds of volunteers and thousands of hours of work by folks from as far away as Idaho. As part of our tribal culture, the rivers are an essential part of our lives, as they are to the people in Lewis County. When something like the devastating flood takes people by surprise, "we are

grateful to have been in a position to help,” said Eddie Goodridge Jr., Executive Director of the Stillaguamish Tribe.

Each year the Festival of the River is held to help people who live and work in the Stillaguamish Watershed and surrounding regions understand how their actions can help make their environment cleaner for people, fish, and wildlife. This year’s Festival will be held at the **River Meadows County Park**, 20416 Jordan Rd., Arlington, WA 98223 www.festivaloftheriver.com

On December 3 and 4, 2007, Lewis County, Washington experienced the worst flooding on record during a 500-year storm. Particularly hard hit were the communities of Doty, Dryad and Meskill. During the flood, the Chehalis River at Doty rose over 30 feet creating a tsunami-like wave. In addition to hurricane-force winds, the wave wiped out many things in its path, such as family pets, and killing an estimated 1,600 head of livestock.

Project Homeward Bound Coalition was formed to replace homes for families displaced by the Lewis County flood. Lead partners include private forest landowners of the Washington Forest Protection Association, the Stillaguamish Tribe, faith-based organizations and the Lewis County Fire District #16. For more information on this project, visit www.ruralamericafoundation.org.

The Washington Forest Protection Association (WFPA) was established in 1908. WFPA represents a group of large and small private forest landowners who grow, harvest and re-grow trees on more than 4 million acres in Washington. WFPA also works for balanced public policy so that its members can continue to practice forestry that is economically sound and environmentally sensitive. www.wfpa.org



Chainsaw artist Dave Tremko, Sequim carves cedar donated by Lewis County farmer, Dave White.

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Tribal Chair, Shawn Yanity, Executive Director Eddie Goodridge, Jr. receive plaque from Collin King, President of Rural America Foundation.