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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Peak Farms Named NCTA's 2012 Grand Champion Christmas Tree Growers Winner to Present 2012 White House Christmas Tree**

August 15, 2012 (Chesterfield, MO) – A Blue Spruce grown by Russell and Beau Estes, owners of Peak Farms in Jefferson, N.C., has been named Grand Champion of the National Christmas Tree Association's (NCTA) 2012 National Christmas Tree Contest. As growers of the Grand Champion tree, the Estes have earned the right to present the official 2012 White House Christmas Tree this Christmas season. Since 1966, NCTA members have presented the official Christmas Tree for display in the White House Blue Room.

Paul Smith, owner of Cool Springs Nursery of Banner Elk, N.C., was selected as the Reserve Champion with a Fraser fir. Traditionally, the Reserve Champion farmers have provided a Christmas Tree for the residence of the Vice President.

Trees entered in the NCTA contest must fit into one of five species categories: True Fir, Douglas-fir, Spruce, Pine or Other. A panel of judges, made up of long-time growers and past contest winners, select the first-, second- and third-place winners in each category, then convention attendees and a panel of consumer judges vote for their favorite among the species finalists. Those vote totals determined the Grand Champion and Reserve Champion trees, which were announced August 10 at the NCTA Annual Convention and Trade Show in Sacramento, Calif. All of the contest trees, including the winners, were chipped into mulch and recycled following the convention.

"The fact that an American farmer gets to provide a Christmas Tree from his family farm to be displayed in the White House indicates just how important a farm-grown Christmas tree is to the traditions of our country," said Cline Church, NCTA president and a Christmas Tree grower from Fleetwood, N.C. "Our whole industry is proud of Russell and Beau for showcasing our crop in the most famous house in America."

To enter NCTA's national contest, growers must first win their state/regional competitions in the previous 12 months. Russell Estes had won the national contest once before in 2008 as a co-winner along with Jessie Davis of River Ridge Tree Farms in Crumpler, N.C. This year he entered a tree from Peak Farms, the farm he co-owns with his son Beau. "Winning this year is a different kind of exciting because this is an 'all in the family' type of farm," said Russell Estes. "Both my son and daughter and all my grandkids live here at Peak Farms, and that makes this business and winning the contest this year extra special."

Russell Estes first planted Christmas trees in 1979 on a very small plot of land as a hobby endeavor and sold those trees on a small retail lot, while working as a golf course manager in the non-winter months. By 1993 he moved his family to Ashe County in North Carolina, bought a larger farm and moved into growing Christmas tree full time as a family farm business. Today Peak Farms grows about 300,000 trees total.

White House staff members typically travel to the Grand Champion's farm in October to select the tree that will serve as the centerpiece of the Blue Room holiday decorations. The Blue Room tree will need be about 18 ½ feet tall, much bigger than the 6- to 8-foot trees entered in the contest. The selected tree will be cut and presented to the White House shortly after Thanksgiving.

### **Species Category Finalists**

**Spruce** - Peak Farms, Jefferson, N.C.: Beau and Russell Estes – Grand Champion

**True Fir** - Cool Springs Nursery, Banner Elk, N.C.: Paul Smith – Reserve Champion

**Douglas-fir** – Hedlund Christmas Trees, Elma, Wash.: Ed and Cindy Hedlund

### **Winners of the National Wreath contest, also held during the NCTA convention were:**

**Undecorated Category:** Rene Scarcella, McMenemy's Highland Tree Farm in La Center, Wash.

**Decorated Category:** Gary Hague of Hagues's Trees in Hatfield, Penn.

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### **ABOUT NCTA**

The National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) is the national trade association representing the farm-grown Christmas tree industry. NCTA represents more than 700 active member farms, 29 state and regional associations, and more than 4,000 affiliated businesses that grow and sell Christmas trees or provide related supplies and services. It is estimated that those affiliated with the NCTA produce roughly three-quarters of the farm-raised Christmas trees in the United States. To learn more about the NCTA, visit [www.realchristmastrees.org](http://www.realchristmastrees.org), or call 636/449.5070.