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Sport-utility Vehicle competition announces winners

Seattle, WA – The Northwest Automotive Press Association (NWAPA) announced the winners of its 12th annual Northwest Sport-Utility Vehicle of the Year Competition today at the Seattle International Auto Show.

The competition – affectionately known as “Mudfest” – was held in October at the Portland International Raceway (PIR). Twenty-five NWAPA journalists tested twenty-two 2006 SUVs at the two-day event.

The category winners include Kia Sportage (Under \$25,000), Nissan Xterra (\$25,000 - \$34,999), Volvo XC70 (\$35,000 - \$45,000) and Land Rover Range Rover (Over \$45,000).

Special awards were presented to Land Rover and Nissan executives at a luncheon held in conjunction with the opening day of the auto show. The Xterra was honored for Best Value and the Range Rover received the first-ever Best Off-Road award. The Xterra also took the top honor. It was named the SUV of the Year.

Each of the 22 vehicles was tested on-track and off-road testing at the Portland International Raceway with additional on-road testing on area roads and highways. The venue allowed member journalists an opportunity to test the performance, handling and braking, as well as the on-road and off-road capabilities of each competing sport-ute. Packaging, versatility and overall value for money were also evaluated in a comprehensive scoring procedure. The winners are selected based on the scoring of all the journalists in attendance.

Entries in Mudfest 2005 included the Ford Explorer, Hummer H3, Hyundai Tucson, Jeep Commander, Jeep Grand Cherokee, Jeep Liberty Diesel, Kia Sorento, Kia Sportage, Land Rover LR3, Land Rover Range Rover, Range Rover Sport HSE, Lexus LX 470, Mercedes-Benz ML500, Mercury Mountaineer, Nissan Xterra, Subaru Forester, Subaru Outback, Subaru Tribeca, Suzuki Grand Vitara, Toyota 4-Runner, Volvo XC70 and Volvo XC90.

Since NWAPA founded the annual Sport-Utility Vehicle of the Year competition in 1994, it has become the largest and most widely recognized SUV event in the nation.

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NWAPA is a professional trade organization of automotive journalists from throughout the Pacific Northwest and Canada. Founded in 1991, NWAPA includes 33 voting members, representing more than 30 newspapers, magazines, radio stations, media groups and the Internet. Outlets include Auto Week, the New York Times, Chicago Tribune and MSN Autos. Non-voting members are comprised of representatives from automotive manufacturers and related industry professionals. Meetings are held four times a year at various locations in Washington and Oregon.