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**NWAPA ANNOUNCES 2006 MUDFEST AWARD WINNERS**

*- Results of the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Sport utility Vehicle Competition Presented by the Northwest Automotive Press Association -*

**Seattle, WA (Oct. 25, 2006)** – The Northwest Automotive Press Association (NWAPA) announced the winners of its 13<sup>th</sup> annual Northwest Sport utility Vehicle of the Year Competition today at the Seattle International Auto Show.

The event – known as Mudfest™ – was held October 12-13, 2006 at Portland International Raceway. Eighteen automotive journalists reviewed 24 new SUVs during the two-day competition.

Based on manufacturer's suggested retail price, the 2006 Mudfest category winners are:

- Under \$25,000: **Honda CR-V**
- \$25,000 - \$34,999: **Toyota FJ Cruiser**
- \$35,000 - \$45,000: **Volvo XC70**
- Over \$45,000: **Volvo XC90**

Overall category winners:

- Best Value: **Nissan Xterra**
- Best Off-Road: **Land Rover LR3**
- SUV of the Year: **Toyota FJ Cruiser**

Sport-utility vehicles are a mainstay of the Pacific Northwest automotive market, and journalists from this region are among the most knowledgeable critics of this segment. Mudfest is the most widely-recognized event of its kind in North America. Mudfest allows member journalists to test the performance, handling and braking, as well as the on-road and off-road demeanor of each competing SUV.

Off-road testing includes hill-climbing and descent abilities, as well as ride comfort and low-range handling. On-pavement tests include a slalom, acceleration, and emergency braking maneuvers. Journalists perform additional real-world tests over area roads and highways. Packaging, versatility and overall value for money are evaluated through a comprehensive scoring procedure. The winners are then selected based on the scores earned from all the journalists in attendance.

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NWAPA ([www.nwapa.org](http://www.nwapa.org)) 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.