

Contact:

Teresa McCallion – Northwest Automotive Press Association
Phone: 206-335-1118
teresa@mccallion.biz

NWAPA ANNOUNCES 2008 MUDFEST AWARD WINNERS

*- New award for Best Green SUV decided at the 15th Annual Sport Utility Vehicle Competition
Presented by the Northwest Automotive Press Association -*

Seattle, Wash. (Oct. 6, 2008) – The Northwest Automotive Press Association (NWAPA) today announced the winners of its 15th annual Northwest Sport Utility Vehicle of the Year Competition, commonly known as “Mudfest”™. The event was held October 2-3, 2008 at Pacific Raceways in Kent, Wash. Twenty automotive journalists from throughout the region (Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia) drove and evaluated 22 different 2008 and 2009 model year sport-utility and crossover-utility vehicles (SUVs and CUVs) during the two-day competition.

Every SUV and CUV at Mudfest is tested by each journalist using the same process in three separate venues, including off-road, on-pavement and on a specially-designed track to assess stability and handling.

Off-road testing includes hill-climbing and descent abilities, as well as ride comfort and low-range handling. On-pavement evaluations assess acceleration, emergency braking maneuvers and stability. 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. Class winners are then selected based on a compilation of the scores earned from all the journalists in attendance.

In addition to the on and off-road tests, each SUV is evaluated against similar vehicles. Value SUVs are those priced under \$30,000, designed for younger and cost-conscious buyers. These vehicles win points for standard comfort and safety features.

Family SUVs are those designed for families with children. Family SUVs are rated higher for “kid-friendly” features and enhanced safety. Luxury SUVs priced at more than \$50,000, are evaluated for their advanced comfort and technology features.

The 2008 Mudfest category winners are:

- Best Value SUV: **2009 Subaru Forester 2.5XT AWD**
- Best Family SUV: **2009 Dodge Durango Limited HEV 4X4**
- Best Luxury SUV: **2009 Mercedes-Benz ML320 BlueTEC**

Additionally, a new award for the best “Green” SUV was created this year. Green SUVs include hybrids and those that use alternative fuels or offer advanced fuel economy or emissions features. Green and Off-Road SUVs also compete in the standard Mudfest categories. The special category winners are:

- Best Green SUV: **2009 Ford Escape Hybrid Limited 4WD**
- Best Off-Road SUV: **2009 Land Rover Range Rover Sport**

“It’s interesting to note that “Green” SUVs also won the Family and Luxury SUV categories. These Green vehicles can really compete head-to-head with conventional SUVs and win,” said Mudfest Chairman Jerry Smith.

Finally, all SUVs at Mudfest are compared and the Northwest SUV of the Year is determined by compiling the journalists’ overall scores. The winner is the SUV, regardless of price, that most impresses the assembled judges:

- 2008 Northwest SUV of the Year: **2009 Land Rover Range Rover Sport**

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. This annual event allows member journalists to test the performance, handling and braking, as well as the on-road and off-road demeanor, of each competing SUV. Vehicles invited to participate include all-new and recently updated models. Last year’s winners are also invited to defend their title.

#

NWAPA (www.nwapa.org) is a professional trade organization of automotive journalists from throughout the Pacific Northwest and Canada. Founded in 1991, NWAPA includes 38 voting members, representing more than 100 newspapers, magazines, radio stations, media groups and the Internet. Non-voting members are comprised of representatives from automotive manufacturers and related industry professionals.