

TREE from page 7A

Those in the nearby Coast Range may have to deal less with snowy conditions and more with rain, thorny undergrowth and wildlife.

The USDA website has a comprehensive list of “dos and don’ts” that they strongly suggest tree hunters check before they begin the search for the perfect Christmas tree.

Among the suggestions provided are some restrictions that may be unexpected. The tree chosen must be at least 200 feet from main roads, recreation sites and campgrounds, and tree hunters should stay away from areas along the sides of streams, rivers, lakes and wet areas. Select a tree with a trunk six inches or less in diameter and prepare to cut the tree no more than six inches above ground level. Never cut a tall tree just for the top.

There is one aspect of the Christmas Tree Program that is designed exclusively for young people, specifically fourth-graders, according to Baker.

“This is part of a national program called the ‘Every Kid in a Park’ initiative to get fourth-graders across the nation out to see their public lands and waters. Every fourth-grader is eligible for a pass which provides free access to federal public lands. Fourth-graders can also receive free permits for Christmas trees,” he said. “The program was designed specifically for fourth-graders because research shows that children at this age are at a unique developmental stage where they begin to understand how the world around them works in more concrete ways. Positive outdoor experiences at this age can be especially formative at building interest in the outdoors.”

One potential obstacle to people obtaining the necessary paperwork from the USDA is the lack of an online option to purchase the permit.

At this time, individuals on the coast interested in selecting their family tree must drive to one of four locations to pay for and receive their permit. The closest of these is the Cape Perpetua Visitor Center, 2400 Highway 101 in Yachats, and the Oregon Dunes Visitor Center, 855 Highway 101 in Reedport. More information is listed at www.fs.usda.gov/Siuslaw.

Baker added that there is the potential in the future for an online purchase option, and a

pilot program has begun to test the feasibility of a state-wide online program.

“Many national forests have agreements with local vendors where the public can get passes. The agency is also piloting online permit programs where people can purchase and print permits from home,” Baker said, “Currently, the Mt. Hood National Forest is using this program and we hope to expand this effort to more forests next year.” Baker also reminds tree hunters that they should attach purchased tree permits to harvested tree before placing them in a vehicle and should bring a rope and tarp to move the selected tree from the forest.

Most importantly, Baker cautioned tree hunters to always be careful when walking or working in the woods.

“Remember, you are respon-



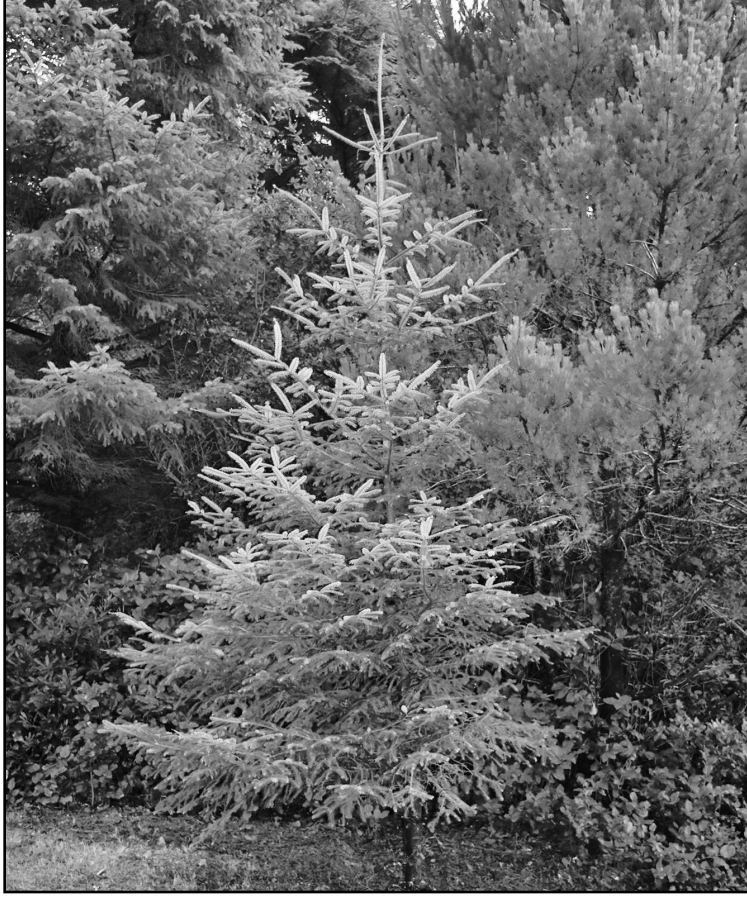
PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Siuslaw National Forest Centers have examples of trees that are eligible to be cut for the holidays. Permits cost \$5 and families may purchase up to 5 permits. Through the special Every Kid in a Park program, fourth-graders are eligible for a free tree permit.

sible for your own safety and those around you,” he said.

For more information on the USDA Christmas Tree Cutting

program, visit the USDA website and click on the Christmas Tree Permit link.



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