



## PROJECT OF THE MONTH – February 2007

Client – Kathleen and Bob Moellenhoff  
Location – Sandy, Oregon

### SITUATION

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Kathleen and Bob contacted Trecology to give them a second opinion on a double trunked Douglas fir in their front yard. This enormous tree is forked at approximately 5 feet from the ground and towers 120 feet. It has seen numerous storms including this winter's holiday storm and the 1995 windstorm. They had contacted a local tree company to give an assessment of the tree and their immediate response was, "It needs to go because it has a double trunk."

### APPROACH

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We discussed the options, the relative risk, the tree's history and the level of risk that the Moellenhoff's were willing to assume. One potential solution was cabling, which on a tree as massive as this would have it's own set of potential problems and potential failure issues.

Another practice that was brought up was "wind sailing" the tree to make it more stable. We talked about the current research that indicates that this practice of thinning the tree to "let the wind flow through the tree" actually transmits more forces to the base of the tree, making it less stable. Douglas firs have evolved a survival strategy of shedding branches, thereby releasing enormous amounts of energy, which never gets transmitted to the base of the tree. In short, trees know what they are doing.

### SOLUTION

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Kathleen and Bob decided that the tree was too precious to lose and that the potential for imminent failure was not there. The tree had withstood numerous storms and it had engineered itself to survive many more. One neighbor was happy to hear that the tree would continue to stand because of the wonderful way the two stems danced together.

We removed the deadwood greater than one inch, cleaned out the broken and hanging branches (of which there were many) and raised the canopy over the street (the county road crews had been hacking on the branches over the years) and over their rhododendrons to get more light on them. We cleaned up the broken stubs and thinned out 10% of the interior foliage to make subsequent maintenance and inspections of the canopy easier and give the tree a neater look without changing the dynamics of the system much.

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