COVER STORY: The Wind River Canopy Crane is a 250-foot “tool” that takes scientists to the tops of old-growth trees, opening a whole new realm of research. High in the canopy, where forest meets sky, scientists study such things as how trees absorb carbon dioxide and how forests help cool the planet. Photo: Jerry F. Franklin. PAGE 16

VIRTUAL REALITY (VR): From a “virtual” archeological dig in the Seattle Art Museum to the manufacturing floor at Boeing, VR is poised to change the way we interact with information. The Pacific Northwest now is a “haven” for virtual reality research. Go along with NWS&T writer Holli Riebeek on a tour of some of the latest systems. Photo: Hunter Hoffman. PAGE 22

RED TIDES: Although red tides may not be a new phenomenon, many scientists believe that their frequency is on the rise. Northwest researchers tackle the causes in order to predict and mitigate the effects of harmful algal blooms. Photo: Laura Carsten. PAGE 32

MARVELOUS MUSTARD: Farmers looking for safer ways to control field pests may soon have help from an unlikely source: mustard plants. Some say Ida Gold makes the best hot-dog mustard in the world, to boot. Photo: Mark & Suzanne Planck Photography. PAGE 42

FISH CENTER CELEBRATES SEVENTY YEARS: In a city known as an international center for marine sciences, the Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle has never been a household name. Each day, tens of thousands of people drive past it on Highway 520 across Lake Washington, most of them oblivious to the world-class marine science being conducted mere steps from the street. This spring marks the 70th anniversary of a federal institution that has long been a leader in American fisheries research. PAGE 44