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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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Oct. 10, 1996

U.S. FOREST SERVICE CHIEF STEPS DOWN TO TEACH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

MISSOULA --

U.S. Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas will retire from his post next month to become the Boone and Crockett Professor of Wildlife Conservation at The University of Montana—Missoula.

"I look forward to this opportunity, and returning to the West. That's where my heart is," Thomas said Thursday in announcing that he will leave the federal agency he has served for 30 years, most recently as its 13th chief.

As Boone and Crockett Professor of Wildlife Conservation, Thomas will teach, guide graduate student research and offer public service in the fields of wildlife conservation and ecosystem management for sustainable development. Thomas, an internationally known wildlife biology researcher, also will oversee the Theodore Roosevelt Wildlife Research Station and administer the work of the Boone and Crockett Club's Conservation Program.

The position is privately endowed, primarily through gifts from the Boone and Crockett Club, which has its national headquarters in Missoula.

"This opportunity to work with natural resource professionals in an academic setting and be part of one of the more progressive natural resource organizations in the world is exciting," Thomas said. "Now that I have fulfilled my personal and professional goals with the Forest Service, I am excited to take on this new challenge with Boone and Crockett and The University of Montana."

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UM President George Dennison said: "We are very excited about having a person of this stature join the faculty. It will enrich the academic program for students and enhance the service we provide to off-campus clientele."

UM Forestry Dean Perry Brown said the school's faculty are excited, too, about the forest service chief's arrival on campus.

"He's going to add to an extremely strong program and enrich that program with his experience and ideas," Brown said. "He's simply going to enhance our reputation and visibility.

"This is a significant forest region. There are a lot of experiments going on that have to do with private land approaches to conservation. That will be the primary focus of his activities as the Boone and Crockett Professor."

The club, founded in 1887 by former U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt, is one of the nation's oldest conservation organizations. In 1991 the club endowed a professor chair at UM to concentrate on conservation research, teaching and demonstration programs that aim at achieving better harmony between conservation of wildlife and wildland, and the public's use and development of land.

The program, Brown said, has been without a permanent professor since Hal Salwasser left in July 1995 to become regional forester. Forestry Professor Dan Pletscher has served as acting Boone and Crockett Professor since then.

Thomas began his U.S. Forest Service career as a research wildlife biologist in Morgantown, W. Va. In 1974 he became the chief research wildlife biologist and project leader at the Blue Mountains Research Laboratory in La Grande, Ore. His work there on elk and spotted owls led to his 1993 appointment by President Bill Clinton to head the Forest Ecosystem Management

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Assessment Team, an outgrowth of the president's forest conference in Portland, Ore.

Born in Fort Worth, Texas, Thomas earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife management from Texas A&M University, a master's in wildlife ecology from West Virginia University and a doctorate in forestry (natural resource planning) from the University of Massachusetts.

Thomas is recognized around the globe for his wildlife biology research. He has written more than 300 articles on topics ranging from elk and deer to turkey biology and northern spotted owl management. Thomas wrote and edited all or parts of several award-winning books including "The Elk of North America--Ecology and Management" and "A Conservation Strategy for the Northern Spotted Owl."

Throughout his career Thomas has taught as an adjunct professor at West Virginia University, the University of Massachusetts, Eastern Oregon State College, Oregon State University, Washington State University and the University of Idaho. His international experience includes participating in big game studies in Pakistan, presenting workshops on wildlife techniques in India and consulting in Canada.

Thomas has received numerous awards including the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Distinguished Service Award in 1985 and the National Wildlife Federation's Conservation Achievement Award for Science in 1991. He served as president of the Wildlife Society from 1976 to 1977, and received its Aldo Leopold Medal. An avid outdoorsman, Thomas enjoys wilderness horse trips, whitewater rafting, fishing and hunting.

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