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The University of
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NEWS RELEASE

Feb. 2, 2006

Contact: Don Potts, state climatologist and UM forestry professor, (406) 243-6622.

GOVERNOR DESIGNATES STATE CLIMATE OFFICE AT UM

MISSOULA —

Gov. Brian Schweitzer has officially endorsed an office of climatology at The University of Montana. This means the Montana Climate Office -- located in UM's College of Forestry and Conservation -- has become one of the state's premier conduits for weather and climate information.

In a letter to UM President George Dennison, Schweitzer also named forestry Professor Don Potts the official state climatologist.

"Montana's size, scope and diversity require that we make every attempt to reach across physical distances to serve the public by making climate data readily available to a wide variety of users," the governor wrote. "As a farmer and soil scientist, I look forward to seeing the work of the office in the near future."

Montana became one of three states without an office of climatology in the mid-'90s when Montana State University discontinued funding for its office. UM stepped in to fill this void with the Montana Climate Office in 2003.

A centerpiece of the Montana Climate Office is its Web site at <http://climate.ntsg.umt.edu/index.html>. The site provides a gateway to a vast array of

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information, including weather alerts, current satellite snapshots of Montana skies and instant links to weather conditions in communities across the state.

The Web site is maintained by UM's Numerical Terradynamic Simulations Group, which designs software for NASA environmental satellites. The group provides unique information for the site such as Montana-wide temperature and precipitation profiles.

"We want our site to be one-stop shopping for people looking for climate information," Potts said. "We are looking forward to working with other climate service providers in Montana. We hope soon to provide new analyses of Montana climate trends and the latest generation of satellite observations."

In his letter, Schweitzer said it was his understanding that the climate office would develop a cooperative agreement with Montana State University-Billings that would foster working relationships with other academic and nonprofit entities across the state.

"I also ask that the state climate office work in a collaborative manner with my Drought Advisory Committee," Schweitzer wrote, "and work with (Department of Environmental Quality) Director Richard Opper as he forms the new Climate Change Advisory Group."

For more information, call the climate office at (406) 243-6622.

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