



March 24, 2006

CNR's Dean Thomas appointed to Secretary of Interior's national advisory board

Christine Thomas, dean of the College of Natural Resources (CNR) at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP), founder of Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW), and a gubernatorial appointee to the Department of Natural Resources Board, has been named to the 11-member Sporting Conservation Advisory Committee by the U.S. Interior Secretary, Gail Norton.

“We wanted to find a way of institutionalizing the role of sportsmen and women in the decision-making process at Interior,” Norton said. “Now, for the first time, sportsmen and women will have an officially sanctioned committee to advise Interior on issues important to them and the country.”

Thomas succeeded Victor Phillips as interim dean in 2004 and became the full-time CNR dean in May 2005. She had served as associate dean of the CNR since 1999 and professor of human dimensions of natural resource management since 1989. From 1980 to 1988 she served as assistant to CNR Dean Emeritus Dan Trainer.

“I am honored to bring a Wisconsin perspective to the Secretary and Interior’s leadership team,” said Thomas. “It is a good thing for Wisconsin sportsmen and sportswomen, our college, the campus, and indeed the state and I look forward to this responsibility.”

The first female tenured professor in the CNR, Thomas has taught “Resource Policy and Law,” “Natural Resources and Public Relations” and “Integrated Resource Management.” She has been active in issues related to women and minorities in natural resources, having co-chaired two Midwestern regional conferences related to work force diversity. In addition to her teaching and outreach efforts, Thomas has interests that center on resource agency administration, involvement of women in the outdoors and Wisconsin conservation history.

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Thomas is a past member of the board and past vice chair of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and serves on two committees of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. She has won numerous national and state honors, including the National Wildlife Federation Conservation Achievement Award and Budweiser Outdoorsman of the Year.

The Great Lakes Outdoor Writers Association presented her with the Golden Glow Award, its highest award for individual achievement. She was given an Award of Merit from the Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited and was named 1998 Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Conservation Educator of the Year. The Wisconsin Outdoor Journal named her one of the 10 most influential people in conservation in Wisconsin in the 20th century and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel inducted her into its Sports Show Hall of Fame.

An active wildlife researcher, Thomas and CNR colleague Tim Ginnett have projects near Clam Lake that involve elk reintroduction and black bears. She holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Central Michigan University, master's degree in water resources from UWSP and a Ph.D. in land resources from UW-Madison.

Formally established in 1970, the CNR has three field stations, 1,200 undergraduate majors, 150 undergraduate minors, and 120 graduate students. More than 80 faculty and staff teach courses in forestry, resource management, soil and waste resources, water resources, wildlife, and paper science majors, plus 13 minors. The CNR also has an international component with study programs in Africa, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Mexico, Europe, and the South Pacific. In addition, the college has an operational paper machine providing hands-on training for paper science students. More than 21 student professional organizations are located within the CNR with over 1,000 active student members.