

November 17-18, 2022

**ITEM 203-1015-R1122**

**Authorization for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Wildlife Biology on Dr. Michael Mitchell – University of Montana-Missoula**

---

**THAT**

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Dr. Mitchell from the faculty of the University of Montana, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for his 16 years of dedicated and valued service to the University and the State of Montana by recommending that the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon him by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

---

**EXPLANATION**

Prior to his career in academia, Dr. Mitchell served the United States in the U.S. Marine Corps as a commissioned officer and naval aviator. He served as a helicopter pilot in the Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 367 and the Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 163. After serving our country, he earned a MS degree in Wildlife Biology and a PhD in Zoology from North Carolina State University. Upon completion of his PhD, Dr. Mitchell was hired as an assistant professor in Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University and served as the assistant unit leader of the Alabama Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. Fortunately for the State of Montana, University of Montana successfully recruited Dr. Mitchell to UM in 2005, where he spent the remainder of his career as a professor and leader of Montana's Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit.

Professor Mitchell's accomplishments are many and varied. Mike published 100 peer-reviewed scientific journal publications focused primarily on large mammal ecology. His work was instrumental in supporting wolf recovery and management in the northern Rockies. Mike also conducted numerous studies on bears, including both black and grizzly bears. Dr. Mitchell is perhaps best known nationally, and even internationally, for his work to advance the field of Structured Decision Making (SDM) in context of wildlife conservation. Notably, Dr. Mitchell worked closely and collaboratively with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks throughout his time at UM, fostering a partnership that enhanced science-based management of Montana's wildlife resources while preparing students for professional careers. Dr. Mitchell's contributions to wildlife management in the State of Montana cannot be adequately captured in a short statement. Suffice it to say that Montanans' enjoyment of wildlife would not be as strong as it is today without the dedicated efforts of Dr. Mitchell.

Professor Mitchell approached student mentoring and teaching with a passion and commitment that few others do. First and foremost, he was focused on teaching his students how to conduct rigorous science. Toward the end of his career, he and six of his graduate students published a paper on scientific rigor that was selected by the publisher to be on the cover of the journal. He has left an impressive legacy in the wildlife profession as a student educator. Many of his former students are presently in key positions within academia, government, and non-governmental organizations. They are directly influencing the future of wildlife conservation and management in North America.

Dr. Mitchell also contributed immensely to service within the Wildlife Biology Program. He consistently served on at least one committee at all times throughout his tenure at UM, often serving on two committees at a time. He was instrumental in crafting the program's graduate student policies and procedures. He was also instrumental in the creation of Wildlife Biology's Diversity and Inclusion Committee and served as the inaugural chair. Dr. Mitchell contributed broadly to UM as well. For

example, he served as a member and chair of UM's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. He taught classes beyond his regular teaching commitments when asked to do so. Simply put, if there was a need, Dr. Mitchell could be relied upon to step in and fill the need even when he had less time available than others. He also played a critical role as advisor to our military veterans within the Wildlife Biology Program. He helped students struggling with PTSD, financial hardships, and other personal challenges find ways to move forward and be successful at UM. There is no doubt he saved a life or two in this role. His service orientation was ever-present and is what makes him a special human being worthy of emeritus status at UM.

Wildlife Biology is pleased to nominate Professor Mitchell for emeritus status.

---

**ATTACHMENTS**

None