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Peter S. Hoff
University of Maine

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Remarks of Peter S. Hoff

President, University of Maine

The Dedication Ceremony for the Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Environmental and Watershed Research

Friday October 6, 2000

Hutchins Concert Hall, Maine Center for the Arts

The University of Maine

Good morning. I am President Peter Hoff. On behalf of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni, I welcome you to the University of Maine.

I am particularly pleased that today's ceremony is being viewed and heard across Maine and in parts of New Hampshire and Canada. Our guest of honor, Senator George J. Mitchell, is a person who has distinguished himself within Maine and the rest of the country, as well as internationally. We are pleased that Maine Public Broadcasting is helping us share this event with Senator Mitchell's many admirers in Maine and beyond.

In addition to having Governor Angus King with us here today, we have many special guests in our audience:

We are pleased to be joined by several members of the Maine State Legislature. I'd ask them to stand and accept our greetings.

We also are joined by University System Chancellor Terrence MacTaggart and members of the Board of Trustees. I'd ask them to stand as well.

We are joined by members of the University of Maine's Board of Visitors. Would they please stand?

We are also joined today by a number of high school and middle school science classes and their teachers. They traveled to Orono this morning from all corners of the state. We welcome you and hope you enjoy today's program and your visit to our campus.

Because the US Congress is still in session, members of Maine's Congressional delegation were unable to join us as they originally had hoped. However, Senator Susan Collins, Senator Olympia Snowe, Congressman John Baldacci, and Congressman Tom Allen all sent letters of congratulations to Senator Mitchell and to the University upon this occasion; we thank them for their thoughtfulness. We also received a similar letter from Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, Senator Mitchell's long-time colleague in the Senate. We thank him as well for his best wishes.

Today is a special day in the 135-year history of this university. We are recognizing one of the nation's most prominent leaders in environmental awareness and protection, doing so by naming our world-class Water Research Institute in his honor: The Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Environmental and Watershed Research. Don't try to make a smooth-sounding acronym out of its initials, though; we tried it and so far have

had no luck! Its nickname ñ on campus, at least -- seems destined to be simply “The Mitchell Center.” It has a nice ring to it!

As its mission, The Mitchell Center focuses on research, education, and public services activities concerning water resources policies and issues of both state and national significance. Faculty and students who work as part of the Mitchell center come from a wide variety of academic fields and interests, sharing a common concern for protection of our environment -- particularly the world's water supply.

Under its former name, the Mitchell Center received top ranking from the federal agencies with which it works. Recently the federal Environmental Protection Agency cited it as -- quote -- “one of the nation's premier programs.” It's that kind of reputation that has enabled the Center to be so successful in attracting research grants; it's that kind of performance that has enabled the Center to serve so effectively the needs of our state and nation.

The work performed by The Senator George J. Mitchell Center for environmental and watershed Research should be viewed in the context of the University of Maine's role as the state's land-grant university, a role that stresses the application of high-quality teaching, basic and applied research, and public service and engagement. We've prepared a short video to give you a better sense of the University's research function. I invite you to watch it with me:

Under its new name, The Senator George J. Mitchell Center will continue to play a prominent and preeminent role in UMaine's Teaching, research, and engagement missions. All three missions are fundamental to the fulfillment of our 21st-century land-grant responsibilities. Put simply, the objectives of the University of Maine are twofold: to provide our students with a world-class education; and, through research and engagement, to help the kind of state that is so appealing that citizens of all ages will feel no need or desire to leave the state for their careers or a better quality of life.

Ladies and gentleman, at this time I am proud to invite two distinguished Maine leaders to join me on the state: the Governor of the State of Maine, the Honorable Angus S. King; and, of course, our guest of honor, the Honorable George J. Mitchell. Please join me in giving them a warm Maine welcome.

We are extremely pleased that Governor King is able to join us today to introduce Senator Mitchell. The Governor King is a long-time friend of the Senator's. In addition, Governor King himself has been a dedicated promoter of environmental protection and sensitivity. Perhaps his best known advocacy came in the 1980's, as leader of the so-called Land For Maine's Future” effort. In his six years in office, Governor King also has been a supporter of university-based research, recognizing its many contributions to the environmental and economic health of our state. As you will hear, he has a deep appreciation and respect for the leadership Senator Mitchell has played in enhancing both concerns. Ladies and gentleman, I give you the Governor of the State of Maine, the Honorable Angus S. King.

Thank you, Senator Mitchell, for those eloquent remarks. And thank you, Governor King, for your introduction and comments.

At this time I'd ask the director of the Mitchell Center, Dr. Steve Kahl, to join us on stage for a presentation to Senator Mitchell.

The plaque Dr. Kahl is presenting to Senator Mitchell is similar to the one that will hang in the Sawyer Building on campus, which is where the Mitchell Center is located. The plaque reads as follows:

The Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Environmental and Watershed Research

Dedicated October 6, 2000

To commemorate Senator Mitchell's lasting contributions to Maine and to the environment, and to advance research and education on global environmental issues.

And the plaque contains a quote from Senator Mitchell:

“We have an obligation to leave for future generations the very basics of healthy human life on Earth -- clean air, pure water, unpoisoned land.”

George J. Mitchell

U.S. Senator from Maine 1980-1995

Senate Majority Leader 1989-1995

On behalf of the entire University of Maine community, thank you, Senator Mitchell and Governor King. And to all of you in our audience here at the University, and watching or listening to today's ceremony on Maine Public Broadcasting, thank you for your interest. Enjoy your day.