



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-073

Proposal Title: Statewide Environmental Education via PBS Outdoor Series

Project Manager Information

Name: Cindy Dorn

Organization: Pioneer PBS

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Email: cdorn@pioneer.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Pioneer PBS will produce 26 new episodes of a statewide television series designed to inspire Minnesotans to connect with the outdoors and to restore and protect our valuable natural resources.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$415,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Environmental Education (C)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Statewide

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

This project addresses the long-term need for environmental education, engagement and tools that Minnesotans can use to restore and protect our valuable natural resources. High-quality video programming is an enjoyable way to educate Minnesotans about research and advancements in natural resource management and agricultural practices such as tracking and capturing invasive carp and powering robotic weed terminators with solar energy. Stories show how we can all improve water quality, protect wildlife habitat, promote pollinators, restore our natural world and avoid practices that can be detrimental to the environment. For example, a recent survey revealed that about 20% of Minnesota anglers who use live bait have released unused baitfish into waters, which can introduce pathogens and invasive species. Most of those anglers do not know the practice is illegal and harmful to the environment. Also, to counteract the trend of spending more time on screens and less time outdoors, stories present ways to connect kids to nature and show the health benefits of spending time outdoors. The program's opportunity is to reach out to a statewide audience and inspire viewers to connect with the natural world, increase their environmental science knowledge and adopt conservation practices.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

Engaging, high-quality stories that show the environmental harm of certain practices, along with opportunities to protect and restore nature, can inspire people to make changes in their purchases and behaviors. The award-winning Pioneer PBS production *Prairie Sportsman* features at least one story each episode on research and natural resource management and agricultural practices that benefit the environment. Each episode also includes a sports and recreation stories that presents fun ways to connect with the outdoors, which is the path to environmental stewardship. Pioneer PBS proposes to produce two new seasons of *Prairie Sportsman* to be broadcast in 2026 and 2027 from late January to mid-May. Two 13-episode seasons will be filmed at locations throughout the state and feature a wide range of topics that appeal to a diverse audience. The project will also include easy online access to stories featuring ENRTF-supported projects. All Minnesota PBS stations are airing *Prairie Sportsman*. In addition, the state's conservation accomplishments are showcased on PBS stations airing *Prairie Sportsman* in Wisconsin, South Dakota, Iowa, Wyoming and western Illinois. *Prairie Sportsman* conservation and wildlife research stories have received three Upper Midwest Emmy awards and Bret Amundson has received an Emmy for his hosting talent.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

This project provides a statewide television and online audience with inspirational and educational environmental science and conservation content. Individual segments contained within this project's 26 episodes will be produced as stand-alone videos, distributed online and made available to public and private organizations involved in the segments' production. The *Prairie Sportsman* website will also provide a branded link to stories on ENRTF-funded projects. This extends each segment's "evergreen" public education and outreach value for years to come. Past segments have been included in educational programs of the Minnesota DNR, research centers, wildlife associations, schools and colleges, lake associations and others.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Produce, promote and distribute 26 episodes, with at least 26 environmental education segments, to air on all Minnesota PBS stations.

Activity Budget: \$394,250

Activity Description:

The two 13-episode seasons will include a minimum of 26 environmental education segments on research, natural resource management and agricultural practices that benefit the environment. Episodes will also include outdoor sports and recreation stories that inspire Minnesotans to connect with the outdoors, and special features on citizen scientists, artists, chefs and others connecting with nature in innovative ways. Broadcast in 2026 and 2027 from late January to mid-May, the two seasons will be filmed at locations throughout the state and feature a wide range of topics that appeal to diverse, changing demographics as well as traditional viewers. The programs will air on Minnesota PBS stations including Pioneer PBS (transmitted from Appleton/Fergus Falls/Worthington), KSMQ (Austin), Lakeland PBS (Bemidji/Brainerd), tptLife (Twin Cities), WDSE (Duluth) and the MN Channel, carried by all Minnesota PBS stations and Prairie Public TV in Fargo.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Produce 13 episodes with 13 environmental education segments for the 2026 season	May 31, 2026
Create descriptions and images for 2026 stories linked to online viewing platforms	May 31, 2026
Produce 13 episodes with 13 environmental education segments for the 2027 season	May 31, 2027
Create descriptions and images for 2027 stories linked to online viewing platforms	May 31, 2027

Activity 2: Segment, distribute and promote individual stories from each episode, and include a branded link to ENRTF stories.

Activity Budget: \$20,750

Activity Description:

Segment individual stories from each episode. Provide a branded link to stories featuring Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund projects on the Prairie Sportsman website. Promote all episodes and individual stories through social media, e-newsletters and other communications.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Provide a link to 2026 stories about ENRTF projects on Prairie Sportsman website	June 30, 2026
Promote 2026 episodes and individual segments through outreach and social media	December 31, 2026
Provide a link to 2027 stories about ENRTF projects on Prairie Sportsman website	June 30, 2027
Promote 2027 episodes and individual segments through outreach and social media	June 30, 2027

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

Prairie Sportsman stories are "evergreen" videos and can be broadcast and used in educational settings for years to come. The program's statewide focus and high-quality content has steadily increased our audience reach. Production and other related expenses above the ENRTF grant are covered by sponsorships and Pioneer PBS membership dollars. The matching funds cover travel, transcripts, closed-captioning, voice work, marketing, other production expenses and portions of salaries for Pioneer PBS staff personnel who contribute to Prairie Sportsman's marketing, communications, financial management and administration.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
New Prairie Sportsman Statewide Broadcast Video Project	M.L. 2016, Chp. 186, Sec. 2, Subd. 05d	\$300,000
Prairie Sportsman Statewide Environmental Broadcasts and Videos	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 05a	\$300,000
Statewide Environmental Education via PBS Outdoor Series	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 05b	\$391,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Cindy Dorn

Job Title: Writer/Producer

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

Cindy Dorn served as executive producer of Prairie Sportsman from August 2016 until her semi-retirement on June 30, 2022. During that time, Prairie Sportsman stories received three Upper Midwest Emmy awards for stories she produced on pollinator-friendly plantings under solar arrays, the career of wolf researcher Dave Mech who founded the International Wolf Center in Ely, and research into foxes moving into metro residential areas to escape coyotes. Under contract with Pioneer PBS, she is continuing to write and produce 13 Prairie Sportsman stories each season and provides workplan updates to LCCMR. Dorn holds degrees in Journalism/Mass Communications and American Studies from Minnesota State University Moorhead. In the 1980s, she served as Pioneer Public Television's Development Director and later wrote and produced the nationally distributed "Country Spires" documentary, which received two Upper Midwest Emmy nominations for writing and videography. She has served in communications positions at the Minnesota House of Representatives and Agricultural Utilization Research Institute and later served as the Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa Development Director.

Organization: Pioneer PBS

Organization Description:

The mission of Pioneer PBS is to facilitate educational growth, support cultural opportunities and promote economic development for the more than 2.5 million people who live in Pioneer's service area. The station provides a diverse audience with quality programming and has developed a robust social media platform. Pioneer has a history of producing a variety of award-winning, quality content. Locally produced programs have received 28 Upper Midwest Emmy awards. In 2018, Pioneer PBS administrative offices moved from Appleton to a state-of-the-art campus in Granite Falls, and the production staff moved to the facility after equipment installations and production studios were

completed in 2019. Pioneer has the talent and technological capacity and financial stability to produce an educational and entertaining outdoor program series that is “evergreen” and appeals to a diverse, statewide audience. Through this project, Pioneer PBS will inform, inspire, connect and create new opportunities for Minnesotans to protect and restore our valuable natural resources.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Executive Producer/Editor		Serve as primary program producer and editor, and manage all aspects of production, including story lineup, videography, interviews, scripting, editing, graphics, post-production and communications.			22%	2		\$132,051
Videographer/editor		Provide story development, videography, editing and other production and communication services.			22%	2		\$98,349
							Sub Total	\$230,400
Contracts and Services								
Host/Producer Bret Amundson	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Bret Amundson will continue to serve as on-air program host, providing on-camera interviews and narration. In addition, he produces sports, recreation and related conservation stories, advises on all segments and episodes, and promotes stories on social media.				1		\$78,000
Writer/Producer Cindy Dorn	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Cindy Dorn will continue to research story topics, primarily related to environmental science and education and non-traditional outdoor sports and recreation, schedule filming, conduct interviews, script segments, oversee editing and advise on all segments and full episodes.				1		\$65,000
Videographer/Editor Dan Amundson	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Dan Amundson will continue to assist the Host with videography and editing for outdoor sports, recreation and conservation stories.				0.66		\$41,600
							Sub Total	\$184,600
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								

							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$415,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	Underwriting sponsorships and Pioneer members	Covers production expenses including travel, transcripts, closed captioning, equipment, supplies, voice work, Pioneer financial management, communications, marketing and other costs.	Pending	\$160,569
			Non State Sub Total	\$160,569
			Funds Total	\$160,569

Total Project Cost: \$575,569

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [594453a1-f67.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Map of Minnesota PBS stations viewing areas...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
FY22 Pioneer PBS 990	cb857944-417.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Pioneer PBS resolution authorizing proposal submission	edec1732-755.docx

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

No

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

No

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:

Sherece Lamke, Pioneer PBS