

# Project Abstract Summary

*This Project Abstract Summary form must be submitted or the application will be considered incomplete. Ensure the Project Abstract field succinctly describes the project in plain language that the public can understand and use without the full proposal. Use 4,000 characters or less. Do not include personally identifiable, sensitive or proprietary information. Refer to Agency instructions for any additional Project Abstract field requirements. If the application is funded, your project abstract information (as submitted) will be made available to public websites and/or databases including USAspending.gov.*

\* Funding Opportunity Number

F-FWS-WSFR-23-001

CFDA(s)

15.628

\* Applicant Name

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

\* Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project

Implementing Recommendations from the Wildlife Viewer Survey: Enhancing Relevancy and Engaging Support from a Broader Constituency

\* Project Abstract

While state fish and wildlife agencies have known wildlife viewing is a growing activity in the United States for decades, they have lacked the data to truly understand how to engage this audience in ways that create support for conservation initiatives, make agencies more relevant to new audiences, and employ proven approaches for creating revenue-generating initiatives for viewing. That data is now available from Phase 1 of this project - a national survey of Wildlife Viewers - conducted by Virginia Tech in collaboration with the Wildlife Viewing & Nature Tourism Working Group through the support of a 2021 Multistate Conservation Grant. Funding from the proposed 2023 Grant will support a Phase 2, enabling researchers from Virginia Tech to continue to work with state agencies to ensure successful implementation of the findings of the survey.

In consultation with more than 30 state agencies during Phase 1 of the Wildlife Viewer survey project, state agency staff stated that they would greatly benefit from dedicated, structured support for implementing new projects based on survey recommendations, efforts to build buy-in and support for wildlife viewing within their agencies, access to a central information source with inspiring case studies, and additional information on wildlife viewers from urban areas to support state agencies as they expand, or in some cases create for the first time, their state's wildlife viewing programs. Funding for Phase 2 from this grant will enable Virginia Tech researchers to provide presentations and/or trainings at a variety of Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency meetings and other conferences typically attended by state agency staff, provide more in-depth information on wildlife viewers, and guide states as they implement efforts to engage viewers/ Through a Community of Practice, researchers and state wildlife agency peers will work together to create effective state-based viewing efforts, striving to achieve these final recommendations from the Phase 1 survey report:

1. Respond to demand for agencies to develop programs and engage viewers
2. Broaden constituencies for agencies through viewing support with underserved groups
3. Develop financial support opportunities for viewers to contribute to state agencies

Through a web-based story map, researchers and states will share these new efforts by agencies to engage viewers, and provide examples for other states interested in doing the same in the future. Additionally, webinars and presentations introducing the story map and sharing lessons learned will further the reach of the work on this project, ensuring use by states after the

\* Project Abstract (Continued from previous page)

conclusion of Phase 2. All state agencies will be better positioned to be relevant to new audiences, increase participation in wildlife viewing recreation, and potentially create new funding mechanisms as a result of this grant. Success stories from states will highlight a way forward toward greater relevancy by using data on wildlife viewer preferences and activities.