

Writer's Guidelines for Prairie Fire Newspaper

Editorial focus

PF concentrates on four areas—public policy, arts and humanities, the environment and social issues—with a focus on writing and information that appeals to and/or is related to readers in the Great Plains region. We do our best to provide our readers with intelligent, articulate and entertaining writing on issues that matter to them—or that *should* matter to them—and to introduce new ideas and fresh perspectives into our ongoing conversation with our readers. Especially in regards to public policy and environmental issues, we welcome views from all sides.

Editorial style

Our house editorial style is mainly Associated Press (AP) style, followed by Chicago Press style when AP is silent. We very much appreciate writers who also follow AP style. We reserve the right to edit all work submitted to us to conform to house style and to correct mechanical and objective errors in the writing—with the expectation that the author will recognize his or her writing once in print. Substantial editing normally will require approval by the author and the publisher.

Editorial policies

Our policy is to accept writing from acknowledged experts in their field—which, admittedly, can be subjective. An artist known for her sculpture may also be immersed in environmental literature, and we would accept her contributions on either subject—though the public would know her as an artist first. We do not accept ghostwritten works unless the public use of the author's name would cause physical or financial harm to the author and/or the author's family. We do not accept Q&A-style interviews except as advertorials or, more rarely, as a sidebar to an article.

Graphics

Any graphic element that will appropriately add to an article is welcome, including photos, tables, charts and illustrations. Please avoid submitting headshots or group photos.

Resolution and format

Please follow these specifications to ensure the highest print quality of your graphics.

Photos and grayscale or color images: 300 dpi resolution at 100 percent of the size you wish the image to be. An image that is 2 inches by 3 inches at 300 dpi will only print at 2 inches by 3 inches—we cannot make the image larger without compromising the print quality. Try to give us images that are physically as large as possible.

Black-and-white images (no grayscale): 600 dpi resolution at 100 percent of the size you wish the image to be. A higher resolution will not hurt and sometimes helps; we can accept up to 1200 dpi. Again, try to give us images that are physically as large as possible.

We prefer TIFF, PDF or EPS files. JPEG files are not preferred because the compression is “lossy,” meaning it loses information and, subsequently, quality. If you must use JPEG format, please make sure you save it at the highest quality with the lowest compression.

Cutlines

All graphics must be accompanied by cutlines (captions) or titles and/or other appropriate information. Cutlines should include information on the image's subject or situation and a credit line for the person or entity who created or owns the image and they should be no longer than two sentences, unless the additional information is

required for understanding. The best way to provide us cutlines is at the end of your article, labeled with the file name of the image so that we can correctly match up images and cutlines.

Photo cutlines should include names of subjects and, preferably, the date on which the photo was taken. The general time period will work in a pinch, as in the sample below. It is likely that any persons photographed will need to consent to the photo (celebrities are normally an exception), and it is the responsibility of the photographer to obtain this permission.

- *Sample photo cutline:* The Discovery Ride offers these summer 2008 visitors to Arbor Day Farm a chance to witness nature from a front-row seat. (Arbor Day Foundation)

Artwork cutlines, especially for images from museum and gallery collections, need to include special information regarding the artwork. Please see the sample below for guidance.

- *Sample artwork cutline:* Michael Duane (1958–), “David City Tornado,” 2008, pastel painting, 19.5 x 25 inches. (Collection of Bone Creek Museum of Agrarian Art)

Table titles require a special format. Briefly, the essential information includes

1. The number of the table: Table 1 or Fig. 1—no need for 1.1 or 1.2, unlike in a book, with numbering in sequence of use.
2. A brief description: “Table 1. Platte River instream flows in cubic feet per second appropriated by the Department of Natural Resources to the Central Platte Natural Resources District on Sept. 23, 1994 (effective priority date of July 25, 1990) by purpose, segment, time period and gage location” can be shortened to “Table 1. Platte River instream flows (in cubic feet per second)”. The remaining details should go into a note underneath the table).
3. The source of the information, similar to a credit line: “Source: Nebraska Game & Parks Commission”.

Table titles are written in noun form, i.e., “Families subscribing to monthly journals” rather than “Families that subscribe to monthly journals.”

Chart titles are treated like photo cutlines, except that they are numbered (Fig. 1, Fig. 2, etc.). Like a table title, a chart title must be brief, and it should not duplicate the labels within the chart.

If you have prepared a table or chart according to a style guide other than Chicago (MLA, for example), please be aware that we may make some changes to the format to conform to Chicago style.

Formatting guidelines

The following guidelines are intended to help us present your writing accurately and well.

Please include the following information in the article’s word-processing file (Microsoft Word is preferred):

1. Introductory note, as appropriate. This note most likely will be written by **PF** staff. Please discuss the content of your note with the publisher as necessary.
2. Title or headline of article.
3. Full author name.
4. Complete contact information, including mailing address, phone and/or fax number, e-mail address.
5. Author bio (2–4 sentences in length).

Please include the following in the file name:

1. Extremely brief (3–4 words) description of article’s subject or title/headline.
2. Author’s last name.
3. Separate these two items with a hyphen.

4. Please use no more than 31 characters and spaces in the file name, including the ending “.doc” file designation.
5. Example: “ConsumerismAndEnvironment-Smith.doc”.
6. Please use “safe” characters in your file name: letters, numbers, the hyphen (-) and the underscore (_). While our Mac systems can handle a wider variety of symbols in file names, some Windows systems forbid these symbols: * . “ ” / \ [] : ; | = , . Using these symbols can cause corruption of the file, as we’ve experienced; please avoid them.

Contact information

Please feel free to call or e-mail us with questions or concerns.

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