

NORTH COAST OTTERS

PUBLIC ARTS INITIATIVE



INVITATION TO ARTISTS

North Coast Otters – public arts initiative will commission and place 100 Otter Art sculptures in galleries, hotels, restaurants, stores, visitor centers, and other public spaces in the five northern California counties where Humboldt State University (HSU) is conducting a long-term river otter study. All 100 Otters will be displayed together in a high-profile launch event prior to being exhibited at sites across the region in June – September 2020. This project is a collaboration between HSU Wildlife Dept. and the Ink People.

Thousands of community members and visitors will fall in love with these Otter Art sculptures in a grand treasure hunt, complete with raffle prizes and *Junior Otter Naturalist* activities. At the end of the summer, Otter Art sculptures will be auctioned to provide valuable funds for otter studies and student internships with community-based watershed projects. For more background about the initiative, see this [North Coast Journal article](#) by Iridian Casarez.

By merging citizen art and science, the project will increase awareness and value in our natural world with the otter as the visual “spokesperson.”

“Promoting clean water and healthy habitats where we live and play!”

North Coast Otters – public arts initiative was conceived when considering the rivers, wetlands, lagoons, and coastlines where wild river otters live with fish and other creatures in our region’s rich habitats, which were originally tended by local indigenous communities. All natural beings have their own story and/or song, as is expressed by the names for river otter in some of the region’s original languages, including:

Hupa: **fo:q’-yiditile**, *salmon-it relishes, craves*

Karuk: **pay sáruk**, *down by river one*

Tolowa Dee-ni': **naa-ghaa-t’uu-ne**, *they are swimmers together*

Wiyot: **sukseswilh**, *takes an ugly mouthful*

Yurok: **ne-pe’-weesh-neg**, *fish eater*

Wild Otters: Since 1999, students at HSU record citizens’ observations of wild river otters in coastal areas of Humboldt and Del Norte counties, as well as inland watersheds extending into Mendocino, Trinity, and Siskiyou counties and partway into Oregon. You may send records of wild otters to: otters@humboldt.edu

Apart from naming your Otter Art sculpture, there is really only one question to ponder:

What would you like your North Coast Otter to say to the world?

Key dates for artists

August 1, 2019: Application submissions are due for the proposed Otter design

August 15, 2019: *North Coast Otters* Selection Panel will finalize review of design concepts

September 2 – 7, 2019: Selected artists will pick up Otters and a \$150 honorarium at HSU

September 2 – December 7, 2019: Artists will have three months to “transform” their Otters

December 2 – 7, 2019: Artists will return completed Otters to HSU

Design application instructions

1. Send a sketch to illustrate your design idea (hard copy or digital image).
2. Describe the inspiration and motivation behind your design (100-150 words).
3. Consider supplying images of your past work to help convey design ideas.
4. Share details about your art background (100-150 words, with link to website, if applicable).
5. Send to **Otter Art Curator:** Monica Topping, otterartmonica@gmail.com

Themes—Artists will design their Otters around one or more of the following themes:

1. **Celebrating clean water and healthy habitats**
2. **Enjoying wild places and outdoor spaces**
3. **Embracing local vibe, culture, and tradition**
4. **Connecting art, science, and ways of knowing**

Please note: Designs must be ‘family friendly.’ Vulgarities will not make it past the evaluators. Use of logos or any other branding must be ‘owner’ approved.

You may submit more than one concept, but each artist will be limited to one *North Coast Otter* in the final selection. In addition to the initial honorarium, artists will be offered an optional 10% commission on the final price received for your *North Coast Otter*.



The sculpture—The life-size standing Otter is a unique canvas to work on. These same sculptures were featured in a sister project supporting Dartmoor National Park in England. View Otter Art examples by downloading the pdf: [MoorOtter catalog](#).

Height: 3 feet from base to tip of ears. Width: 1 foot at the widest part. Weight: 10 lbs.

4-foot tall redwood cabinets (plinths) will display the proud *North Coast Otters*. Each Otter will be secured to the plinth via two hidden internal bolts. A plaque with your name, your Otter’s title, and relevant sponsor and host information will be attached to the plinth.

Otter Hosts & Sponsors—In addition to 100 artists, we are reaching out to 100 sponsors and 100 host locations that will display the *North Coast Otters* in the five-county region. Contact **Project Director:** Jeff Black, HSU Wildlife Department, 707.826.3439; otterart@humboldt.edu Webpage: otterart.humboldt.edu

Please join us in celebrating life, water, and otters in this wonderful community event!