



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

FRIENDS OF ARANSAS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
PUBLIC ART SCULPTURE

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT: 5:00PM, September 11, 2025

In partnership with: SAN ANTONIO RIVER **FOUND.**

CALL SUMMARY

The Friends of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (Friends of Aransas NWR) seeks to commission a unique public art sculpture for the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. This permanent artwork will welcome visitors and honor the refuge, renowned for its diverse wildlife including the endangered whooping crane.

The sculpture must be durable, constructed from environmentally resilient, low-maintenance materials suited to the coastal habitat. It should reflect the refuge's unique natural environment, conservation efforts, and serve as both an artistic landmark and educational experience for visitors. The artwork must include the likeness of at least one full-scale whooping crane. The final artwork will be prominently sited at the front of the Aransas NWR Visitors Center, enhancing public engagement with the landscape and its wildlife.

The Friends of Aransas NWR seeks qualifications from professional artists (individuals or teams) with experience in 3-D public art projects who can ensure the artwork's sustainability and harmony with the refuge's mission.

The Friends of Aransas NWR, relevant stakeholders, and subject-matter experts will evaluate artist qualifications and select four finalists to submit a proposal ensuring alignment with the site's ecological considerations. The final selection is subject to approval by the Friends of Aransas NWR.

More information about the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge can be found at:

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/aransas>.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Friends of Aransas NWR, in collaboration with the San Antonio River Foundation, seeks to commission a professional artist or artist team to create a new, permanent public art sculpture for the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center.

This is a commission opportunity for a new, original work of art that will serve as a meaningful landmark for visitors while honoring the refuge's mission and highlighting the iconic whooping crane. The selected artist will be responsible for the design, fabrication, and installation of the artwork in close coordination with the project stakeholders.

The final work must include at least one full-scale representation of a whooping crane, and should reflect themes of conservation, biodiversity, and the refuge's distinctive coastal environment. The artwork should be constructed using durable, environmentally resilient materials that are appropriate for an outdoor setting exposed to Gulf Coast conditions.

The selected artist will collaborate with the Friends of Aransas NWR and relevant stakeholders throughout the design development and approval process. The artist's responsibilities will include site visits, stakeholder meetings, final design development, stamped engineering drawings (as needed), fabrication, transportation, and installation of the artwork.

This call is not for existing work, and artists must propose new concepts that are site-specific and responsive to the goals of the project.

ELIGIBILITY

The opportunity is open to all art and design professionals, ages 18 and over, and residing in the United States, regardless of residence, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, military status, sexual orientation, marital status, or physical or mental disability.

BUDGET

The budget for this opportunity is \$50,000. The budget includes: artist's design and project management fees; materials and supplies; meetings with project team members; community outreach and site research; proposal for artwork that includes: project narrative, itemized budget, maintenance plan, renderings and/or other visuals, schedule, and roles and responsibilities for installation; stamped structural engineering drawings, if required, and all insurances needed; fabrication and installation; and travel accommodations.

Note: Some elements may be installed by a contractor for convenience depending on the final design of the artwork. However, all installation costs of the artwork will be paid by the artist's budget.

ARTWORK GOALS

The artwork must:

- Be a visually striking and meaningful addition to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and reflect the natural environment, wildlife, and conservation mission of the refuge
- Include the likeness of at least one full-scale whooping crane
- Encourage visitor interaction, education, and engagement with the refuge's landscape and generate excitement and interest among local communities and refuge visitors
- Be constructed from durable, low-maintenance materials that can withstand the coastal climate and environmental conditions and be designed with consideration for the refuge's unique ecosystem and adhere to any applicable environmental and conservation guidelines.

ARANSAS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE HISTORY

The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1937, has long been a sanctuary for wildlife and a testament to conservation efforts along the Texas Gulf Coast. Originally designated to protect the endangered whooping crane, the refuge now spans over 115,000 acres of coastal wetlands, prairies, and oak woodlands, serving as a vital habitat for diverse species and an important site for ecological research.

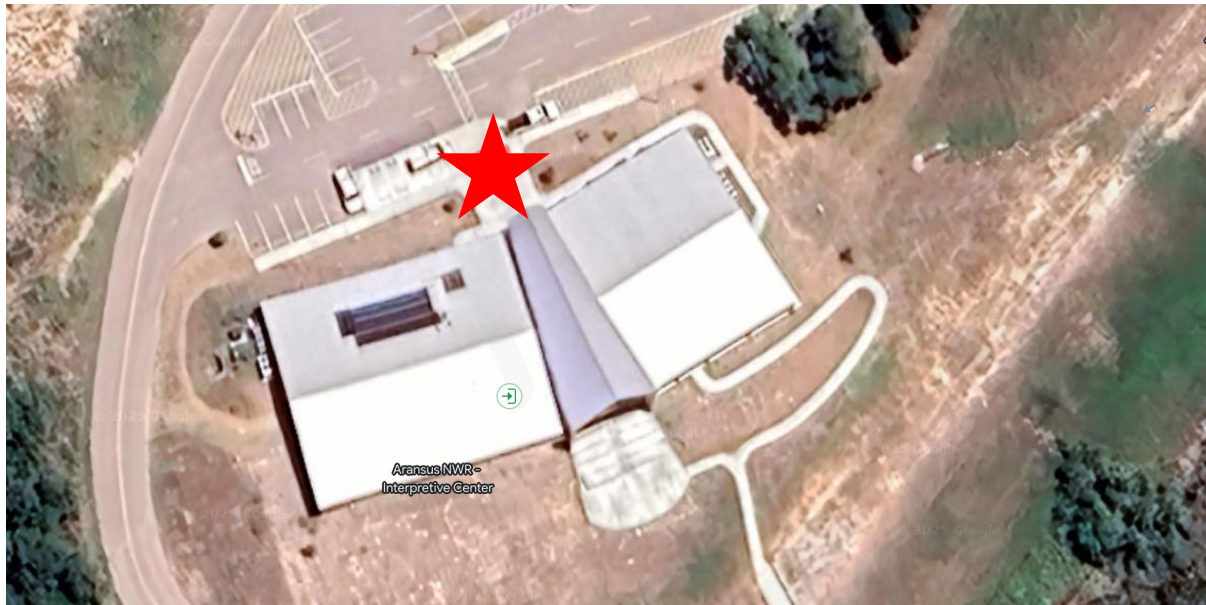
Today, the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge continues to play a crucial role in protecting biodiversity while offering visitors a place to connect with nature. Its legacy is one of resilience and renewal, ensuring that future generations can witness the awe-inspiring migration of the whooping crane and experience the beauty of Texas' coastal wilderness.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The refuge serves as a critical habitat for hundreds of species, and its coastal marshes, grasslands, and oak woodlands support a rich biodiversity, making it a destination for conservationists, bird watchers,

and nature enthusiasts. The landscape has long been a source of sustenance and inspiration, and today, it continues to be a place of discovery, reflection, and stewardship.

The designation for the artwork location is at the front of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center.



THEMES + CONTEXT

This public art opportunity seeks to honor the endangered whooping crane and the refuge's legacy while welcoming visitors to a meaningful dialogue about the environment, history, and the role of stewardship.

The commissioned artwork should reflect the rich biodiversity of the refuge, emphasizing themes of migration and conservation. The design may draw inspiration from native species and coastal landscape's changing dynamics. The artwork must include at least one true-to-scale representation of the iconic whooping crane.

Artists should consider how the artwork can foster a sense of connection between visitors and the natural world, encouraging awareness, reflection, and appreciation for the refuge's mission. The artwork will contribute to the legacy of the refuge, serving as both an artistic landmark and an educational tool that deepens public appreciation for the refuge's role in conservation and the interconnectedness of people and nature.

More information on the refuge's history, wildlife, and conservation efforts can be found at:

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/aransas>.

SELECTION PROCESS

The artist selection process is being administered by Interim Arts, under contract with the San Antonio River Foundation, in coordination with the Friends of Aransas NWR (Project Partners). The process will take place in two phases.

In the first phase, artists are invited to submit qualifications through this Request for Qualifications (RFQ). A selection panel made up of representatives from the Friends of Aransas NWR, relevant stakeholders, and subject-matter experts will review applications and select up to four finalists.

In the second phase, the selected finalists will each receive a \$500 honorarium to develop and submit a proposal for a new, unique work of art. This honorarium will cover all costs associated with preparing the proposal. Finalists must present a conceptual approach that includes the artwork's design, materials, scale, weight, installation and maintenance requirements, budget considerations, and potential for public engagement. Finalists will then participate in an interview process, after which one artist will be selected for the commission. The selected artist will contract with the Friends of Aransas NWR to execute the final artwork for the Wildlife Refuge.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Artists should demonstrate the following:

- 1) Experience completing a public art project of similar scope and scale (project type, budget, artistry) (45%)
- 2) Understanding of the project goals and mission of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (20%)
- 3) Knowledge of materials and fabrication methods, and sensitivity to the nature of an outdoor coastal environment (20%)
- 4) An interest in creating a signature work of art (15%)

TIMELINE (dates may be adjusted at any time)

2025

July 25	Release Request for Qualifications
August 4	Deadline for submitting questions
September 11	Applications due
September 15 - 25	Applications reviewed, and finalists notified
October 30	Proposals due
Week of November 10	Finalist proposal presentation, interview
November - December	Contract negotiation and execution

2026

February 6	Final design due
4 Months (est)	Artwork fabrication
TBD	Artwork installation
TBD	Dedication of artwork

HOW TO APPLY

Artists interested in being considered should submit the following materials no later than 5:00PM (Central Time) on September 11, 2025, to Ashley Mireles at ashley@sariverfound.org. The following application materials are required:

- 1) **Letter of interest.** The letter should be approximately one page in length and should explain your interest in creating a unique, signature work of art for the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. If applying as a team, please also include a description of your team and the qualities each person brings to the project.
- 2) **Resumes.** Indicate commissions, exhibitions, awards, publications, education, or other relevant information.
- 3) **Ten samples of past work** (which may include artworks, research, etc.) with annotated image description including title, date, size, medium, location, and if a commissioned project, the commission budget.
- 4) **References.** A list of three professional references that have a thorough knowledge of your work and working methods. The list must include current addresses and telephone numbers.

There is no application fee. Applications delivered by hand or mail to the Project Partners will be considered ineligible and will not be accepted.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding this request for qualifications, please contact Ashley Mireles, contracted RFQ administrator with Interim Arts on behalf of the San Antonio River Foundation, at ashley@sariverfound.org.

AMENDMENTS TO RFQ

Should an amendment to this RFQ become necessary, it will be provided to artists who have initiated applications and posted to our website with all answers to questions received about this RFQ. It is the sole responsibility of any artist interested in submitting qualifications to check their email for amendments. If the artist does not have access to the internet, they must inquire by contacting Ashley Mireles at ashley@sariverfound.org.

RESTRICTIONS ON COMMUNICATION

Once the RFQ has been released, artists are prohibited from communicating with the Project Partners with the following exceptions:

- 1) Questions concerning substantive RFQ issues shall be directed, electronically only, to ashley@sariverfound.org. Verbal questions and explanations are not permitted other than for general non-substantive issues or as may be described by this section and during interviews, if any. No inquiries or questions will be answered if received after 5:00PM (Central Time) on August 4, 2025, to allow ample time for distribution of answers and/or amendments to this RFQ. Artists wishing to receive copies of the questions and their responses must notify Ashley Mireles in writing prior to the date and time the questions are due.
- 2) Currently contracted vendors, in order to continue working on active matters, but such communication shall not include discussions regarding this RFQ.
- 3) The Project Partners reserve the right to contact artists for clarification after responses are opened and/or to further negotiate with any artist if such is deemed desirable.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

- 1) This public art commission is part of a regional partnership initiative supported by the River Foundation to expand public engagement and celebrate conservation through art. The project is led in partnership with the Friends of Aransas NWR.
- 2) The Project Partners have the discretion to disqualify applicants whose applications are late or incomplete, and whose applications do not comply with all stated requirements.
- 3) The Project Partners reserve the right to select one, more than one, or no applicants in response to this RFQ.
- 4) The Project Partners may accept any Proposal in whole or in part. If subsequent negotiations are conducted, they shall not constitute a rejection or alternate RFP on the part of the Project Partners.
- 5) The Project Partners reserve the right to accept or to reject any or all applications received in response to this RFQ, and to waive informalities and irregularities in the applications and

proposals received. The Project Partners also reserve the right to terminate this RFQ, and reissue a subsequent solicitation, and/or remedy technical errors in the selection process.

- 6) No work shall commence until a mutually acceptable contract document(s) is signed by the Friends of Aransas NWR, and the selected artist provides the necessary evidence of insurance as required. Contract documents are not binding on the Friends of Aransas NWR until reviewed by legal counsel. In the event the parties cannot negotiate and execute a contract within the time specified, the Friends of Aransas NWR reserves the right to terminate negotiations with the selected artist and commence negotiations with another artist.

END