HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

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High Desert Museum Now Accepting Submissions for the 2021 Waterston Desert Writing Prize

BEND, OR — The High Desert Museum is now accepting submissions for the 2021 Waterston Desert Writing Prize. The Prize honors literary nonfiction that illustrates artistic excellence, sensitivity to place, and desert literacy with the desert as both subject and setting. Emerging, mid-career and established nonfiction writers are invited to apply.

To learn more about the Waterston Desert Writing Prize and how to submit an entry, visit highdesertmuseum.org/waterston-prize. Submissions will be accepted through May 1, 2021.

Inspired by author and poet Ellen Waterston’s love of the High Desert, a region that has been her muse for more than 30 years, the Prize launched in 2014 and annually recognizes the vital role deserts play worldwide in the ecosystem and human narrative. The Prize is named in honor of actor Sam Waterston, who provided the seed money for the endowment that helps fund the award.

“Every year we have the honor of experiencing new perspectives on desert landscapes,” said Ellen Waterston. “Writers participate from all over the country and our vision of what a desert is continues to grow.”

The mission of the High Desert Museum’s Waterston Desert Writing Prize is to strengthen and support the literary arts and humanities in the High Desert region through recognition of literary excellence in nonfiction writing about desert landscapes, community interaction with the winning authors of the Prize, and presentations and programs that take place in association with the Prize.

“The literary arts are an important avenue for discovering and appreciating the desert landscape,” said Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw, Ph.D. “One wonderful component of the Prize is how writers have expanded the borders of how we think about deserts and highlight deserts in a very broad sense.”

In August 2020, the High Desert Museum’s official adoption of the Waterston Desert Writing Prize was announced. Since its inception, the awards ceremony has been hosted by the Museum. The mission and goals of the Prize complement those of the High Desert Museum,
emphasizing the importance of protecting deserts and creating important conversations about the issues affecting them.

The winner of the 2020 Waterston Desert Writing Prize was Hannah Hindley for her submission “Thin Blue Line.” The piece is one in a collection of interconnected stories that explores the Sonoran Desert’s disappearing waterways, the fish that used to call them home, and the successes and complications that come with efforts to help restore depleted tributaries with city effluent. “It’s a strange story of ghost rivers, dead fish and resilience in the heart of urban spaces in the desert,” stated Hindley.

The Prize will recognize one writer with a $2,500 cash award and a reading and reception at the High Desert Museum in Bend.

The Museum is also taking submissions for the Waterston Student Essay Competition, now in its second year. Young writers from Crook, Deschutes, Harney, Jefferson and Lake counties are invited to submit nonfiction prose essays exploring desert landscapes. For details about the Student Essay Competition and how to submit an entry, visit highdesertmuseum.org/waterston-student-prize.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM:

THE HIGH DESERT MUSEUM opened in Bend, Oregon in 1982. It brings together wildlife, cultures, art, history and the natural world to convey the wonder of North America’s High Desert. The Museum uses indoor and outdoor exhibits, wildlife in natural habitats and living history demonstrations to help people discover and appreciate this diverse region. The Museum is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, is a Smithsonian Affiliate, was a 2018 finalist for the National Medal for Museum and Library Services and is the 2019 recipient of the Western Museums Association’s Charles Redd Award for Exhibition Excellence. highdesertmuseum.org

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