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# State's book freed by Patti's tenacity

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Posted: Sunday, October 4, 2015 6:00 am

Nate Downey/For The New Mexican

In the decade since contracting to be the “principal author” of the state’s free e-book, *Roof-Reliant Landscaping: Rainwater Harvesting with Cistern Systems in New Mexico*, water harvesting — the collection, conveyance, storage, filtration, and redistribution of rain, snow, sleet, hail, dew, and fog — has been gaining in popularity.

### NEWS VIDEO



As humans wake to the challenging water situation we face, I'm happy to report that Roof-Reliant Landscaping has stood the test of time. Originally produced by the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) in 2008, the how-to is a guide for anyone embarking on a cistern project. With the recent announcement that Patti Bushee will be leaving her Santa Fe City Council post at the end of her fourth four-year term, it's time for this book to get its due.

Coincidentally, in August I started the orderly posting of Roof-Reliant Landscaping at [www.permadesign.com/blog](http://www.permadesign.com/blog). The whole book should be out by February 2016 — just in time for peak cistern-system-design season. (If you want to get started sooner, no sweat. You can always get the entire shebang at the OSE's link, [www.ose.state.nm.us/WUC/wuc\\_rainwater.php](http://www.ose.state.nm.us/WUC/wuc_rainwater.php). Or contact me directly.)

Starting with four chapters on the fundamentals of waterwise landscaping, cistern sizing, system design, and project planning, the Southwest-centric book provides assistance with the ever-nebulous worlds of cost estimating and water budgeting. Its core runs from page 46 through 80 — with specifics about the processes, components, and pitfalls of water-harvesting systems for a wide range of conditions.

The text — along with the bright-and-clear artistic presentation by editor Randy Schultz and designer Ken Wilson — wraps up with a helpful chapter about maintenance, a regulation-style glossary of terms, and eight informative appendices for the nerdy nerd in all of us.

The instigating and motivating forces at the OSE included the ever-brilliant John Longworth and the always-on-task Cheri Vogel. A grant from the Bureau of Reclamation also made the group effort possible, and finishing touches by the 11-member peer review committee were much appreciated.

One person deserves high praise for her strong commitment to elevating the general public's awareness with respect to what water harvesting really is. As a



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new employee of the OSE who happened to come on board during the book-writing process, Patti Bushee stepped up and singlehandedly freed passive water harvesting from some significant bureaucratic shackles.

At the project's outset, I was told to leave all of that "passive harvesting, let's-store-rainwater-in-the-soil business" (my words) out of it and write only about active harvesting (water stored in tanks called cisterns). Though frustrated by this gag order, I remembered that Bob Dylan tune, "Gotta Serve Somebody," and got back to it. Months later I was delighted to see a draft with passive water harvesting near the beginning of the manuscript. This was the direct result of Bushee's tenacity, wisdom, and experience both as a Northern New Mexican landscape designer and as a dedicated public servant.

These same qualities made for a decidedly successful career as a city councilor, too. On behalf of water lovers everywhere, thanks for your tenacity, Patti!

*Nate Downey, the author of Harvest the Rain, has been a local landscape consultant, designer, and contractor since 1992. He can be reached at 505-690-7939 or via [www.permadesign.com](http://www.permadesign.com).*

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