



## ELLEN MELOY FUND *for Desert Writers*

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## PRESS STATEMENT

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### REBECCA LAWTON AWARDED 2006 DESERT WRITERS AWARD

BLUFF, UT - The Ellen Meloy Fund announces the recipient of the first annual Desert Writers Award. Rebecca Lawton of Sonoma County, California, will receive a grant of \$1,000 to support her project, *Oil and Water*, a look at perceptions of Home in the Uintah Basin of Utah, a fierce landscape whose inhabitants include river runners, oilfield workers, cowhands, missionaries, and alfalfa farmers.

“Rebecca Lawton writes about the desert with wit, imagination and a deep particularity rooted in years of backcountry work as a geologist and river runner. Her intimate acquaintance with the land, and her talents as a writer, make Rebecca an excellent choice for this award,” says Ann Walka, chairman of the awards committee.

Lawton describes her project, *Oil and Water*: “Home for millennia to people with wildly different views, the Uintah basin still draws those of diverse descent and interests... Over time, everyone from the ancient Puebloan to the modern agriculturalist has lived on the banks of the Green River, affecting the adjacent land and its little-known literature. *Oil and Water* will contrast attitudes toward this harsh but compelling place while bearing witness to the various demands each lifestyle places on the basin’s limited resources. ... The land will give testimony to those who inhabit it”

Rebecca Lawton has worked in the Green River basin as a geologist, former whitewater guide and river ranger. She is the author of *Reading Water: Lessons from the River* and other books. As a geologist, Rebecca has studied diverse ancient environments, from the bone-bearing river sands at Dinosaur National Monument in Utah to the many-layered volcanic rocks of Sonoma County, California, where she lives.

A Pushcart Prize nominee and finalist for the *Foreword Magazine* 2003 Nature Book of the Year Award, Rebecca is currently writing *Oil and Water*. Her poetry, essays, and fiction have appeared or are forthcoming in anthologies such as *Walking the Twilight* and *The Gift of Rivers* and in magazines and journals such as *Orion*, *Shenandoah*, *Thema*, and *More*. Lawton’s website is <http://beccalawton.com>.

The Ellen Meloy Fund for Desert Writers provides support to writers whose work reflects the spirit and passions embodied in Meloy’s writing and her commitment to a “deep map of place.” Before her untimely death in 2004, Ellen wrote four books, numerous articles, radio commentaries, and other published works. She was born in California, lived for a time in England, made her way to Montana where she met and married Mark Meloy, then fell in love with the desert and made Utah her home. More information about Ellen Meloy, the Fund for Desert Writers, and the annual grant award is online at <http://www.ellenmeloy.com>.

... in the desert there  
is everything and there  
is nothing. Stay curious.  
Know where you are ---  
your biological address.  
Get to know your  
neighbors --- plants,  
creatures, who lives there,  
who died there, who is  
blessed, cursed, what is  
absent or in danger  
or in need of your help.  
Pay attention to the  
weather, to what breaks  
your heart, to what lifts  
your heart.

Write it down.

~ E.M. November 2004

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