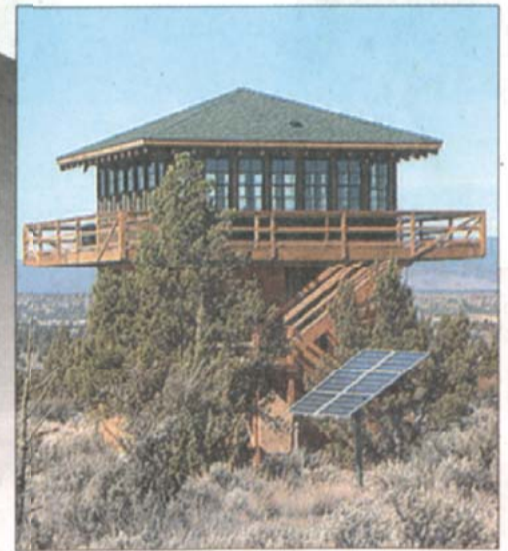


SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2000 • THE BULLETIN



A solar sight to see

Central Oregon takes part in national Tour of Solar Homes

By Scott Staats
For The Bulletin



A tour sample: Cheryl Heinrichs' Bend home, top, features natural vegetation placed to take advantage of sun and shading. The Glacier View Road home, above, shows off a solarium entry and installed radiant floor heat. Glenda Alm and Dick Kent's lookout tower design in Crooked River Ranch, right, takes advantage of the sun as an alternative energy source. Blown in rock wool insulation and recycled wood make it friendly to the environment.

There was a time when solar energy was too costly and complicated for the average homeowner. But, as many Central Oregonians are about to learn during the October 14 Tour of Solar Homes, now may be the time to reconsider the power of the sun.

Paul Israel, owner of Sunlight Solar in Redmond and director of the tour, said this is the first solar tour in Central Oregon since the early 1980s.

"That was in the tax credit days when solar water heating was very popular and the government was giving big incentives," said Israel.

The tour is slated between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and covers 14 homes in Bend, Redmond, Crooked River Ranch, Prineville and Alfalfa. The headquarters is the Central Oregon Environmental Center at 16 NW Kansas Avenue in Bend, where solar products will be on display and for sale.

There will be energy efficient, high quality products at discounted prices from at least eight businesses, Israel said. Products include solar electric and water heating panels, as well as many other items to get homeowners started.

"We are now hoping that more homeowners will be looking into, not just solar water heating, but solar electricity and we are here to reinvigorate the solar market in Central Oregon," Israel noted.

The National Tour of Solar Homes is held every October in more than 100 communities in 42 states, where solar homeowners open their doors to visitors and demonstrate the renewable energy and conservation features of their homes. The American Solar Energy Society organizes the national event (see www.ases.org).

The Central Oregon tour highlights the latest solar energy technologies that are working today. There will be examples of the three types of solar energy. The first is solar water heating, using the sun to make hot water. Next is active solar, which is using the sun's rays to make electricity. Third is passive solar architecture, which uses glass and thermal mass to heat and cool the home. The homes selected for the tour are the best examples of each type of solar technology.

At each of the 14 homes there will be a solar energy expert present, as well as the homeowners to answer questions. Lectures and workshops will be given at some of the homes during the day.

A 32-page tour guide will be available in The Bulletin Wednesday. You can also pick one up at Sunlight Solar Energy in Redmond (1436 S. Highway 97, the bright yellow building formerly home to Top Banana).

Copies can also be picked up at the environmental center the day of the tour.

Diane Kulpinski photos

"Increasing energy costs are making solar energy more attractive to many in Central Oregon," Israel said. He points to the fact that electric and gas prices have risen as much as 20 to 30 percent recently. The biggest drive behind going solar, according to Israel, is how it increases the quality of the home. With proper daylighting in a house, he said the area is that much more livable.

"As part of the tour, we understand issues such as energy conservation and pollution and that's why we are going to have three tour buses available," he said.

The buses will depart from the environmental center and head in three different directions, one covering the Highway 97 corridor, one for the Highway 20 corridor and the third going to the highlights of the tour.

"These people are opening their homes so others can understand how solar is being used," Israel explained.

One stop on the tour is the Bend home of Cheryl Heinrichs, where visitors can look at passive solar design and tree shading. Heinrichs is an architect who has been involved with solar design for several years and is a complete believer in solar energy.

"Central Oregon is an excellent location for passive and active solar," she said.

She recently added a solar addition to her older westside house, which now features radiant floor heat, window placement for optimal sun and shading, and selectively placed natural vegetation.

"Passive solar is the simplest way to take advantage of the sun," Heinrichs said, "and I want to show people how easy it can be to incorporate into existing homes."

She's giving a workshop at her home that shows how an existing home can be retrofitted to take maximum advantage of passive solar and landscaping measures, in order to optimize energy conservation and livability.

"We want to show people that their neighbors down the road are already using solar power and it really works," said Dick Kent, spokesman for the tour.

"With energy costs skyrocketing and Central Oregon receiving over 300 days of sunshine a year, there's no better time and place to go solar."

If You Go

► **TOUR TIMES:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, October 14.

► **WORKSHOPS:** For a complete list of seminars, refer to the 32-page tour guide appearing in Wednesday's Bulletin.

► **CARPPOOLING OPPORTUNITIES:** Organizers have scheduled bus and bike tours for the event. If you're interested, show up at the Central Oregon Environmental Center early Saturday morning. A complete schedule can also be found in Wednesday's tour guide.

► **COST:** To offset costs of the tour,

organizers are asking participants to make a \$3 to \$20 donation at the first home they visit. They will then receive a button and badge allowing them to view additional homes.

► **SOLAR PRODUCTS:** Homeowners can get started by purchasing solar products on display at COEC between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Products include solar water heating panels, solar garden path lights, SolaTubes and more. Demonstrations are also scheduled.

► **WHO TO CONTACT:** Sunlight Solar in Redmond, 923-9897