This Month’s Solar Tour of Homes Goes Far Beyond Last Year’s Event

By now, you probably know that I am thoroughly committed to using renewable energy and maximizing energy conservation and other sustainable practices. You also are probably aware that the Obama administration has committed huge amounts of Recovery Act funds to all aspects of renewable energy and sustainability as well as energy conservation. This has been a key factor in Jefferson County’s weathering of the national economic storm, given that we are the home of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

According to the Colorado Solar Energy Industries Association, the number of solar energy companies in Colorado has exploded from 40 to 400 companies over the last five years, and over 2,200 Colorado jobs have been created in the past few years by this growing industry.

The growth in both investment in and awareness of solar and other renewable energy sources is so dramatic that this year’s solar tour of homes (held every September for nearly two decades) is quite different from even last year’s tour.

There is a Denver tour on Saturday, Sept. 25th, and a Boulder County tour on Sunday the 26th, plus a commercial tour on Friday the 17th. There are also two seminars on the 21st and 28th to deepen your understanding of the technologies demonstrated on the Denver tour.

For the Boulder tour the following day, show up anytime after 10 a.m. at the Center for ReSource Conservation, 2639 Spruce Street, in Boulder. There are 13 homes on the Boulder tour.

The commercial tour on Friday, Sept. 17th is limited to 40 participants and you cannot just “show up” for it. It starts with a tour of NREL’s new net zero Research Support Facility, which is still under construction near the visitor’s center. It includes a one-hour lecture at the visitors center and is followed by a box lunch. After lunch, the group visits several commercial buildings (including Golden Real Estate) which are examples of solar and other sustainable technologies.

To make the tours more accessible to more people, the fee for participating has been slashed from last year’s $20 to only $5 this year. To participate, just show up at the National Renewable Energy Lab’s visitor center, 15013 Denver West Parkway, anytime after 9 a.m. on the 25th. There you will get a book and map detailing each of the homes on the tour.

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