

# Upcoming three Rivers Environmental Weekend, Oct. 3 & 4

by Mona Selph

The two day event will be October 3rd and 4th, at the Arts Center on Saturday, along with a green home tour on Sunday. Saturday's event will start at 9:00 with the CNPS annual fall plant sale outside, and inside exhibits and information, featuring a presentation by artist/scientist John Muir Laws at 1:00 p. m. He spent 7 years in the field sketching and doing research for his spectacular Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada, and gives an inspiring presentation, which the CNPS has sponsored for the afternoon. A morning presentation and exhibit will feature Max and Jane Eggman of Terra Bella. They produce the only comb honey in the area, and will have some to sample and for sale. By the way, they will not bring live bees. We will find out if bees are faring better than they have been in recent years. We hope to have at least one other author there, Scott Barker, who recently published a history of Yokohl Valley. His books may or may not be for sale, depending on a second edition getting printed in time. The first edition has already sold out.

The Sequoia Kings Natural History Association will be selling books as well, and the Park, in the person of Annie Esperanza will have rolling videos about the environment. We will have a variety of information tables and booths, including TCCRG, Family Farm Fresh, area builders and designers to retrofit your home, or build new. Mike Cannarozzi will show how the application of a white or very light roofing product can help counteract the effect of melting glaciers on global warming. Lori Werner, Spotted Owl researcher, will have an exhibit table "All About Owls", which the kids and adults should find very interesting. We also are working on a home and garden art and decoration booth or two outside under the trees or canopies. We will feature some of our fine local talent. There's lots more in progress, and of course Bill Becker and his famous solar cooking demonstration will again be right up front!

## **The Sunday green home tour will feature 5 Three Rivers homes. We can call it "Mud Bricks, Straw Bales, and Whatever Works"**

It is estimated that about half of the world's population still lives in some sort of earth home. The material is accessible and cheap, such homes provide good insulation from the elements, and they don't burn. There are many ways to build with earth, but the most ancient dwellings were probably wattle and daub, or branches and sticks plastered with mud. Adobe is another very old method. It requires from 15 to 30 percent clay, sand or soil, and often straw is incorporated.

In the southwestern USA, building with adobe has long been practiced since it is the perfect climate. To have permanence, adobe requires a long hot and dry season to evaporate out the moisture it accumulates in the damper, wetter months. It traditionally also requires overhangs to protect it from rain, and/or yearly re-plastering with adobe.

The oldest continually occupied building in our country is the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. It is a multi cellular adobe structure with many individual rooms built side by side up to five stories high. Large timbers called vigas support floors and roofs. In the old days, entry was from the roof using ladders. People have lived there for over a thousand years.

Three Rivers has some beautiful old adobes, although they are new in comparison to Taos Pueblo. There are also many other varieties of buildings friendly to the environment here, and interested residents will soon have the opportunity to visit five of them.

It all began over three years ago with a small study group on global warming, and as they say, the rest is history. It was so worthwhile and so much fun that we are still doing it! I am writing about the Green Home Tour put on by the TREW crew as we now call ourselves, that is the Three Rivers Environmental Weekend crew. The first year we toured six wonderful homes in Three Rivers, donating proceeds to Habitat for Humanity's green building fund. Last year we car-pooled down to the valley where we toured five structures in Visalia and one in Elderwood, donating proceeds to Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth. That group will also be the recipient this year, when we will come home again to Three Rivers with five homes on the list. The donation is \$15 per person, or \$25 per couple. The tours are slated for October 4th, and registration starts immediately. To register for the tour that starts at twelve o'clock, phone 561-4676. For the one o'clock tour, phone 561-4149. Participants should bring snacks and water. We will meet to form car pools at the Valley Oak Credit Union.

The first home is a new construction, nearly completed as I write this. The dwelling is small and efficient, with well insulated walls, ceilings and windows. The heated floor is plumbed for future conversion to solar heated water. Solar panels are also planned to heat household water. Built on acreage with an incredible view of the mountains and sky, the owner, Bill Becker, has set aside a prime spot for his telescope, as well as a spot for his famous highly efficient solar cooker.

The second home is the straw bale house we toured two years ago when it was under construction. At that stage, it was roofed but unfinished, so that we could see the details of construction, even things such as the lovely faded blue color of the recycled jeans used for attic insulation. Besides the extremely thick insulating walls, a large number of green ideas were being incorporated wherever possible, from passive solar components to light tubes. This year, tour guests will get to see how the house works as a finished dwelling for owners Hillary Dustin and Kay Woods.

In the Cherokee Oaks community, Tom and Lisa McGinnes will show their owner built Insulated Concrete Form home. It uses exterior solar panels to heat the floor, and for other purposes. They incorporated as many energy saving ideas into the home as possible from the ground up.

The last two homes are adobe. Rick Badgley and Martha Widmann's beautiful home is nestled in a cool and shady draw below the Catholic retreat complex. The house is actually two buildings, the older original one and a second structure Rick added as a master bedroom and bath. This one uses a different method of adobe construction, and Rick will show forms and explain how it is done. A short distance away, Rick built a studio for Martha, who is a wonderful painter and graphic designer. Rick is a skilled craftsman in the construction of fine furniture and cabinets. He built his shop into the hillside above, where the earth insulates it from weather. The domed roof is sod, and here again, Rick will explain construction methods.

The fifth house is the family home of Barbara Lahman, known for her lavender gardens. Her grandfather, Jim Livingston, finished the original adobe structure in 1938 using a guide put out by the Department of Agriculture. The walls are eighteen inches thick. An eight foot deep porch fronts the sixty foot south face of the house. The front door is hand hewn redwood, as are 4x4 beams and window frames. Windows and doors allow for cross breezes, and movable wood shutters cover the windows. The house was supplied with gravity flow water until 1999, and a well pump now pumps water into a rock walled covered reservoir. The old windmill still stands. She and her husband built a second home on the property where their daughter resides.

As it was last year, the tour is registered as part of the ASES National Solar tour, the largest grass roots solar energy event in America. You can compare it to other such tours in California (we are one of only sixteen) by going to [www.nationalsolartour.org](http://www.nationalsolartour.org) Click on "find tours", and then on California.