

Earth Day to 'green' day

• Organizer of first Earth Day, Denis Hayes, visits Bend to tour sustainable home project

By Dylan J. Darling / *The Bulletin*

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Editor's note: Tom Elliott and Barbara Scott invited The Bulletin to follow their efforts to build the ultimate green home in Bend, to document the project from start to finish.

The national coordinator of the first Earth Day was in Bend on Friday, but Denis Hayes wasn't here to offer a message about the environment.

Instead he was in Central Oregon to see a unique, "green" home-in-the-making and garner ideas for a home he and his wife hope to build as they near retirement.

Hayes and Gail Boyer Hayes spent more than an hour walking through Desert Rain, the under-construction home of Tom Elliott and his wife, Barbara Scott.

Elliott and Scott are building something they hope will pass the stringent demands of the Living Building Challenge, which would make it possibly the greenest house on the globe.

The home is nestled atop a rock outcropping in old Bend and has views of the Deschutes River, Broken Top and South Sister.

"Every home has to fit its site and I think this one is just perfect for Bend," Hayes said.

But it is what is inside the home that Hayes and his wife came to see. Along the tour they saw reclaimed lumber from the two original homes on the site as well as a potato barn near Prineville, recycled glass formed into bathroom tile and triple-paned windows. The home has a solar system to heat water, to heat the home itself and to provide power. There is also a 35,000-gallon cistern to store rainwater tucked under the two-car garage.



Dean Guernsey / The Bulletin

From left, Tom Elliott and Barbara Scott, owners of Desert Rain, an eco-friendly home in Bend, examine their concrete countertop Friday with Denis Hayes, coordinator of the first Earth Day, and his wife, Gail Boyer Hayes.



"I want the city to be proud of this," Scott said.

The tour wasn't the first of the 2,300-square-foot home and the other buildings in the living compound, which also has a 550-square-foot apartment and a pair of garages. A third garage with an office above is also planned.

"We want this to be an educational project," Elliott said.

He said hundreds of people have toured the home.

Hayes is a notable visitor to the unfinished home. In 1970, at age 25, he helped organize the first Earth Day celebration. In the 43 years since, the event has spread to more than 175 countries.

Still involved with Earth Day planning, Hayes is the president and CEO of the Bullitt Foundation. The Seattle-based foundation provides grants for projects to protect and restore the environment in the Pacific Northwest, according to its website. Hayes has been president since 1992.

This Earth Day — April 22 — the Bullitt Foundation opened a new center in Seattle that it calls the greenest commercial building in the world — its own effort at meeting the Living Building Challenge guidelines. The International Living Future Institute, which has offices in Seattle and Portland, established the standards.

Hayes said he'd like to retire to a home that meets those standards. Although he and Gail talk about retirement, they have yet to decide on what state to retire to, so their home is in the roughest of planning stages.

Elliott and Scott have been designing their home since summer 2009. James Fagan, their general contractor at Timberline Construction of Bend, said the home could be finished in August, although the landscaping and one other building would remain incomplete.

As it comes into shape, the home will draw more visitors, all interested in what Elliott and Scott have had built.

"You are pioneers..." Boyer Hayes said. "Someone had to go first and break the ground."

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