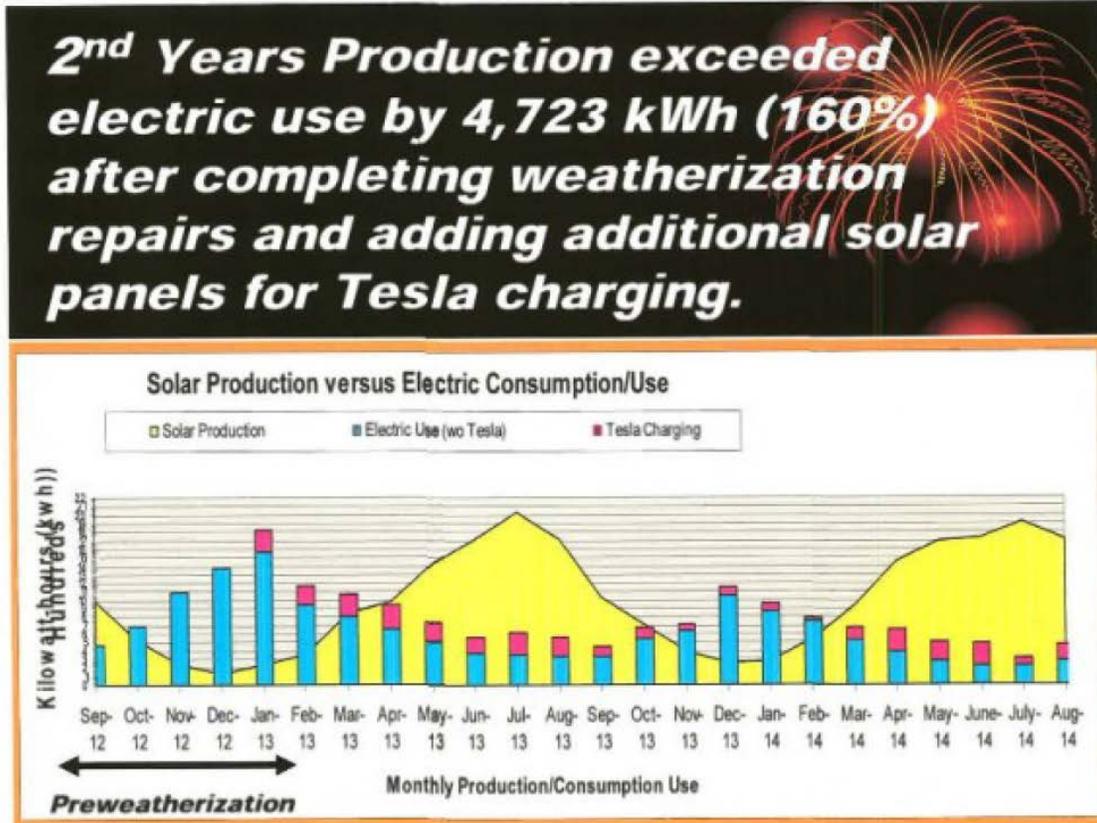


Edmonds Sustainability Heroes

David Kendall and Nobuko Mitsunaga



Graphic representation of energy production versus energy use at David and Nobuko's home.

(On October 30, 2014, Cynthia Pruitt, Mike Nelson, and Jim Stevens, three members of the Mayor's Climate Protection Committee of Edmonds interviewed David Kendall and Nobuko Mitsunaga, homeowners in the Lake Ballinger area, to learn their success story about increasing their energy efficiency, reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing the water-use efficiency at their home. The following article describes their motivations, efforts, and results.)

David Kendall is one who relishes walking the talk. Since his retirement from the Seattle District Corps of Engineers as a marine biologist responsible for protecting Puget Sound through responsible dredged material management, he has embraced a new vocation as an environmental activist. He and his wife, Nobuko Mitsunaga, are likely the only residents of Edmonds who can say they drove from here to the east coast without using a drop of gasoline. He readily admits that their purchase of a Tesla Model S electric sedan was a financial stretch, but it is completely apparent that he has no regrets, only satisfaction in making a vehicle choice that does not use gasoline.

The passion this couple shares is not just expressed on the road, but in so many ways through the lives they live and the changes they have made to their home since they purchased it a little more than two years ago. David suggests considering household weatherization repairs/upgrades as low hanging fruit, and it is undeniable they have had a major effect on improving the energy efficiency of their home. Even though the house came with a gas furnace and electric water heater that were just a year old when they purchased it, they opted to replace both with electric non-gas alternatives. The new heat pump system immediately meant that they no longer burned fossil fuel to heat their home, and they took the additional step to purchase and install a heat-pump domestic water heater. They also replaced existing lighting with LED lighting throughout their home, and taking little steps can gradually improve the energy efficiency of one's home over time.

With the purchase and installation of three banks of solar panels on the south, west and east facing roof, and the internal energy efficiency improvements they have accomplished, they have achieved their goal of being net producers of energy, including charging the batteries of the Tesla for daily transportation over the past two years. Even the current solar production from their electrical panels for the rainy month of October is about 190% of their total electric use. David admits he overshot his estimates for solar panel requirements because his initial evaluation of the electric use did not factor in the dramatic reductions from weatherization repairs that were instituted later. Their home has also been on the Northwest EcoBuilding Guild's "Green Homes Tour" and he indicated they had over 100 visitors last year despite being off of the primary tour venue track.

Another aspect of sustainability they are working to enhance is the use of water. They have installed large cisterns buried in the back yard and above ground cisterns at the north end of their home in order to capture and re-use the rainwater that would ordinarily drain from their roof into the nearby lake and, ultimately, into Puget Sound. David hopes that someday he will be able to filter and use this water to supply their drinking water, not just for irrigation and gray water use.

One of David's heroes as he was growing up was Jacques Cousteau, and he has been an avid scuba diver since his teenage years. He felt the calling to marine biology early on. He is most concerned with the changes he has seen demonstrated in the ocean environment and knows we cannot bury our collective heads to the impact mankind continues to have on our fragile planet and atmosphere. He is very happy he has not purchased any gasoline in the last two years and plans never to go back to internal-combustion vehicles ever again. There is an obvious sense of urgency in his manner and his attitude toward climate change, and this feeds his willingness to get the word out that we cannot continue business as usual in the face of these consequences, but individually we can act to reduce our carbon footprints and live more sustainably with our environment. If more people take these steps, maybe we can make a collective difference toward a sustainable planet for future generations.