

# Semmes & Co. Builders

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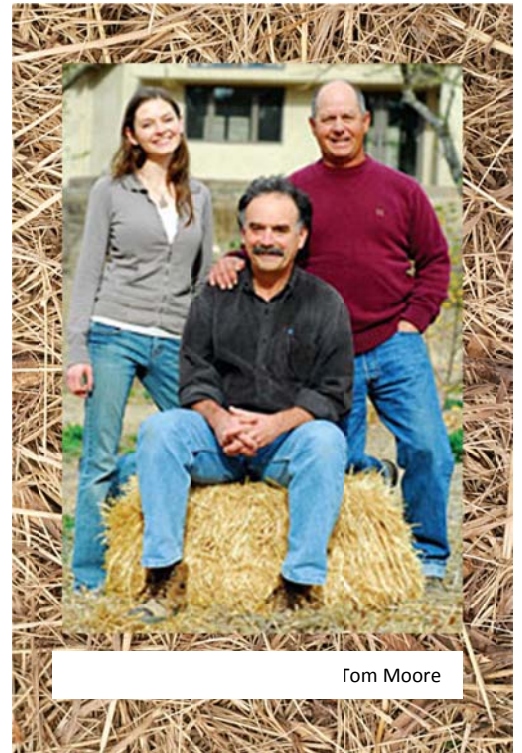
The first pig built his house out of straw ...”Though he gets a bad rap, the first pig was wiser than popular folktale would have us believe—and Semmes & Co. is living proof that, huff and puff though they may, the big bad “wolves” of global warming would never blow down their expertly eco-built straw bale homes.

Constructed with rice straw, a waste product of California agriculture, these homes are not only thick and sturdy, they are insulated, energy efficient, and use a renewable resource—qualities that made them a must for owner Turko Semmes who has devoted his career to self-sustaining homes. After working with local solar architect Ken Haggard in 1978, and later witnessing the devastation of timbering in Canada, Semmes turned to resource-conserving building methods, including passive solar and solar panels, and did not look back.

In the 20 years since, Semmes’ projects have grown as much as his repertoire of sustainable building practices due to the growing demand for efficient homes with lasting value. “People see that they can have the house of their dreams (within reason) and still save energy, conserve resources, and have a healthy living environment,” says Semmes. He now offers Pneumatically Impacted Stabilized Earth (PISE), a mixture of concrete and earth, and Insulated Concrete Forms (polystyrene block product filled with reinforced concrete), which provide structural integrity, energy efficiency, and insulation, among other options.

“The variety of green building expertise, combined with their renewable energy projects and efforts to share information put them at the top of the list for green builders on the Central Coast,” says judge Megan Birney, while readers pointed to their dedication to recycling and reducing waste.

[www.semmesco.com](http://www.semmesco.com)



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## Runner Up:

Judge Roy Prince commended EarthFlow Design Works for their practice of permaculture. “Today we build largely because we can,” Prince says. “Permaculture asks questions like ‘Shall we build at all, and if we choose to build, how do we integrate what we do with the land?’” A unique consortium of ecologists, educators, and design professionals, EarthFlow uses an ecosystems approach to community planning, business practices, and green developments. [www.earthflow.com](http://www.earthflow.com)