



ENHANCING GEOTHERMAL PRODUCTION ON FEDERAL LANDS ACT (H.R. 6482)

The Enhancing Geothermal Production on Federal Lands Act would amend the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 to promote timely exploration for geothermal resources under geothermal leases on federal land.

SUMMARY

H.R. 6482 streamlines the permitting process for geothermal energy production on federal lands by exempting geothermal exploration projects from review under NEPA. The bill also directs the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to designate geothermal leasing priority areas on federal lands that are economically viable for geothermal energy production while in compliance with the [Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976](#).

Limiting the permitting and review process for geothermal projects accelerates the demonstration and deployment of enhanced geothermal systems (EGS), enabling the United States to unlock its geothermal potential. The U.S. National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) [estimates](#) an EGS resource potential in the U.S. alone of over 5,000 gigawatts, more than 400 percent of total U.S. electricity generation. A recent [DOE analysis](#) found that by 2050, the total amount of installed geothermal could reach 90 GW in the U.S., providing over 10 percent of all US electricity generation.

Cutting unnecessary red tape for geothermal projects with small environmental footprints and well-understood technology is a responsible way to expand geothermal energy resources without reducing environmental standards. H.R. 6482 is a crucial step in unleashing the full potential of geothermal energy by unlocking economically viable federal lands for wells.

HISTORY:

Under the current NEPA structure, federal agencies are required to determine the environmental impact of proposed actions. Across energy types, the NEPA review process takes an average of 4.5 years to complete, but due to litigation and lack of coordination, some reviews can take [10 or more years](#). Under the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the oil and gas industry is exempt from NEPA reviews depending on the size of the project. EGS projects often use the same technology as the oil and gas industry, making them well-suited to benefit from an expedited review process.

Geothermal energy projects are well suited for an expedited permitting review. As a zero-carbon resource, geothermal offers 24/7 clean power and/or heating generation that can be used in the power and industrial sectors. Geothermal has a much smaller geographic footprint than other renewable energy projects. Geothermal energy uses [70 percent less land per KWh than wind and 88 percent less than solar](#).

Moreover EGS projects use [existing drilling technology from the oil and gas industry](#) to access geothermal resources not suitable for conventional geothermal energy production means. This drilling technology is

covered under a [categorical exclusion for oil & gas development under the Energy Policy Act of 2005](#), but does not currently include applications of this same technology for geothermal energy projects.

[H.R. 6482](#) would allow for the permitting process for geothermal energy production on federal lands to be streamlined by exempting geothermal exploration projects from NEPA. This allows for the drilling of temperature gradient wells, monitoring wells, calibration wells or other geothermal exploratory wells which includes construction or making improvements for those activities. Such projects will be streamlined on federal lands through priority leases deemed economically viable by the Secretary of the Department of Interior.

SPECIFICS:

H.R. 6482 amends the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 where the amendment streamlines the permitting process for geothermal energy production on federal lands. The permitting process is further streamlined by the exemption of geothermal exploration projects from NEPA. The bill also directs the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to designate geothermal leasing priority areas on federal lands that are economically viable for geothermal energy production.

ORIGINAL SPONSORS:

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COSPONSORS:

Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA)

SUPPORT: ClearPath Action

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[H.R. 6482](#)