

Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries

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NEWS OF INTEREST

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An online version of this release can be found at:

<http://www.oregongeology.com/news&events/NewsReleases.htm>

OREGON'S GEOTHERMAL ENERGY POTENTIAL IN SPOTLIGHT

As the Bush administration gears up for new initiatives to speed geothermal energy development in Western states, the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries has chronicled over 40 years of geothermal studies in *Oregon Geology* magazine.

Portland, Oregon: "Geothermal energy is 'back on the radar screen' as a viable energy source," says Dr. Vicki McConnell, Acting State Geologist for the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI). "To help raise awareness of geothermal energy in our state, the latest issue of *Oregon Geology* provides a compilation of nearly fifty reports that DOGAMI and others have prepared documenting Oregon's geothermal potential."

McConnell continues, "Oregon has the desirable distinction of being a state where geothermal resources are available in many areas. These resources are suitable for many different types of uses and in fact are being used in several locations for small applications across the state. Because we have 40 years worth of geothermal studies in Oregon, DOGAMI is ready to act quickly when the opportunity arises."

A new Bush Administration geothermal policy directs the Secretaries of Interior and Energy to consider opening added national forest and other federal land to use of renewable energy such as geothermal, solar and wind. It also urges faster approval of geothermal lease applications for public lands.

About 80 applications for geothermal leases are pending on national forests in Oregon, according to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which manages federal energy reserves. The bureau's budget for handling applications has doubled, and officials expect to double the number of geothermal drilling permits that they approve by fiscal 2004.

A report released by the U.S. Interior Department identifies seven sites in Oregon as among the 35 "highest potential" geothermal regions in the country.

The sites include Newberry Crater near Bend -- the location of past geothermal exploration - - and the Klamath Falls, Lakeview, Crump Lake, Summer Lake, Malheur River and Vale areas of southern and eastern Oregon.

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“Because DOGAMI is the state agency responsible for regulation of geothermal exploration and production, we’re ready to help in any way,” notes Robert Houston, Natural Resource Specialist who oversees the oil, gas and geothermal program for DOGAMI. “Our oversight includes supervision of drilling, abandonment and reclamation of geothermal wells. We make sure, from the state’s point of view, that geothermal development is done right.”

“At this time Oregon does not generate commercial electricity from geothermal energy, but the potential is there because of the geologic processes that formed the High Cascades,” says McConnell. “Geothermal potential also exists in southeastern Oregon and we know there are a number of excellent targets for geothermal exploration in locations around the state outside of wilderness areas or the national parks.”

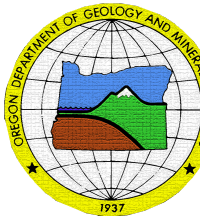
In the past, geothermal development has faced opposition when proposed near scenic sites with natural geothermal features such as Yellowstone and Crater Lake national parks and areas sacred to Native American tribes.

McConnell notes that geothermal energy has a number of positive features making it competitive with conventional energy sources and some renewable sources. These features include:

- As a local energy source, it can reduce demand for imported fossil fuels.
- It has a large positive impact on the environment by displacing combustion of CO₂ and fossil fuels.
- It is efficient and competitive with conventional commercial power generation, in part by population distribution and because of recent energy price trends.
- Geothermal plants can operate continuously, without constraints imposed by weather conditions, unlike other renewable sources.
- It is a reliable and safe energy source, which does not require storage or transportation of fuels.

Geothermal energy development is part of the Administration's National Energy Policy, which has drawn attention mainly for encouraging increased domestic oil and gas drilling.

You can learn more about the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries’ geothermal program by going online at: <http://www.oregongeology.com>. Robert Houston can be reached at (541) 967-2039, ext. 28.



The Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries is an independent agency of the State, and has a broad responsibility in developing a geologic understanding of natural hazards. We then make this information available to communities and individuals to help reduce the risks from earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, floods and volcanic eruptions. The Department is also the lead state regulatory agency for mining, oil, gas and geothermal exploration, production and reclamation.

For more information on upcoming events and current projects, contact James Roddey at 800 NE Oregon St., Portland, OR 97232, (503) 731-4100, ext. 242 or DOGAMI field offices at: 1510 Campbell St., Baker City, (541) 523-3133; 5375 Monument Drive, Grants Pass, (541) 476-2496; and the Mined Land Regulation and Reclamation Program, 229 Broadalbin St. SW, Albany, (541) 967-2039.