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Plan for Promoting Efficient Responsible Geothermal Energy Development on Federal Lands Open for Comment

In the next step toward efficient development of geothermal energy resources on Federal lands, the Bureau of Land Management and the USDA Forest Service have initiated a public comment period on a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for leasing geothermal resources in the Western States and Alaska.

Publication of a Notice of Availability for the Draft PEIS in today's *Federal Register* begins a 90-day public comment period on the alternatives and impact analysis presented in the draft document. The preferred Alternative considers approximately 117 million acres of public lands and 75 million acres of National Forest lands for potential geothermal leasing. The BLM administers geothermal leasing on the public lands it manages and on lands in the National Forest System, where the Forest Service is the surface management agency.

"Federal lands in the West and Alaska contain the largest potential geothermal resources in this country," said BLM Director Jim Caswell. "With the strong interest and support of state and local governments and clear direction from Congress, we are taking the next step in an aggressive program to make these resources available for responsible development to help meet the Nation's energy needs."

For lease applications pending as of January 1, 2005, the Record of Decision (ROD) on the Final PEIS will identify whether geothermal leasing is appropriate on lands identified in the applications and complete processing of these applications, as required by the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The ROD will also amend BLM resource management plans to allocate lands with geothermal potential as being closed or open to leasing with minor or major constraints, and will provide information to the Forest Service to facilitate the agency's consent decisions for geothermal leasing on National Forest System lands. Additionally, to protect special resource values, the BLM and Forest Service are proposing a comprehensive list of stipulations, conditions of approval (COAs), and best management practices (BMPs) to be incorporated into future leases.

The preferred Alternative in the Draft PEIS considers all public lands and National Forest System lands with potential for geothermal development available for leasing except those that are withdrawn or administratively closed to geothermal leasing. The Draft PEIS also evaluates another alternative based on public input gained during scoping that would limit geothermal leasing for electrical generation to areas near transmission lines.

Written comments on the Draft PEIS may be submitted by any of three methods:

- *e-mail* – geothermal_EIS@blm.gov
- *fax* – 1-866-625-0707
- *US Mail* – Geothermal Programmatic EIS, c/o EMPSi, 182 Howard Street, S
  California 94105

In addition, comments may be submitted at public meetings scheduled for 13 cities in July. Dates and locations for the meetings are as follows:

July 8, 2008 – Anchorage, Alaska; Alaska Energy Authority, 813 W. Northern Lights Boulevard

July 9, 2008 – Fairbanks, Alaska; Fairbanks North Star Borough Library, 1215 Cowles Street

July 14, 2008 – Reno, Nevada; Washoe County Library - Spanish Springs Branch, 7100 Pyramid Highway

July 15, 2008 – Salt Lake City, Utah; Salt Lake City Library, 210 East 400 South

July 16, 2008 – Tucson, Arizona; Pima County Public Library, Dusenberry River Branch, 5605 E. River Road

July 17, 2008 – Cheyenne, Wyoming; Laramie County Library, Willow Room, 200 Pioneer Avenue

July 21, 2008 – Boise, Idaho; Boise Public Library, 715 South Capitol Boulevard

July 22, 2008 – Albuquerque, New Mexico; University of New Mexico, Conference Center, Room C, 1634 University N.E.

July 23, 2008 – Helena, Montana; Lewis and Clark Main Library, 120 S. Last Chance Gulch

July 24, 2008 – Denver, Colorado; PPA Event Center, 2105 Decatur Street

July 28, 2008 – Seattle, Washington; Seattle Public Library, University Branch, 5009 Roosevelt Way, N.E.

July 29, 2008 – Portland, Oregon; Multnomah County Library, Central Branch, 801 SW 10th Avenue

July 30, 2008 – Sacramento, California; California Energy Commission, 1516 Ninth Street

The hours for all meetings are 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., local time.

Geothermal energy production uses heat located naturally beneath the surface of the earth to generate electricity with little or no need to burn fuel. Geothermal energy currently accounts for 8.5 percent of renewable energy generation in the U.S. Though it generates a small portion of the Nation's electricity, the U.S. continues to be the world leader in generating electricity using geothermal energy. In 2005, geothermal energy generated over 14,800 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity, which is enough power to supply the annual needs of 1.3 million homes.

Almost half of the nation's geothermal energy production and about 90 percent of U.S. geothermal resources occur on Federal lands. Currently, 29 geothermal power plants are operating under BLM authorization on Federal lands in California, Nevada and Utah. They have a total capacity of 1250 MW and supply the needs of 1.2 million homes.

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/energy/geothermal/geothermal_nationwide.html

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About the BLM

The BLM manages more land – 258 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western States, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about $1.8 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, and cultural resources on the public lands.