

RCW 78.60.060 Scope of chapter. (1) This chapter is intended to preempt local regulation of the drilling and operation of wells for geothermal resources but shall not be construed to permit the locating of any well or drilling when such well or drilling is prohibited under state or local land use law or regulations promulgated thereunder. Geothermal resources, by-products, or waste products which have escaped or been released from the energy transfer system or a mineral recovery process shall be subject to provisions of state law relating to the pollution of ground or surface waters (Title 90 RCW), provisions of the state fisheries law and the state game laws (Title 77 RCW), and any other state environmental pollution control laws.

(2) Authorization for a consumptive or nonconsumptive use of water associated with a geothermal well, for purposes including but not limited to power production, greenhouse heating, warm water fish propagation, space heating plants, irrigation, swimming pools, and hot springs baths, shall be subject to the appropriation procedure as provided in Title 90 RCW, except for the following:

(a) Water that is removed from an aquifer or geothermal reservoir to develop and obtain geothermal resources if the water is returned to or reinjected into the same aquifer or reservoir; or

(b) The reasonable loss of water:

(i) During a test of a geothermal well; or

(ii) From the temporary failure of all or part of a system that removes water from an aquifer or geothermal reservoir, transfers the heat from that water, and reinjects that water into the same aquifer or reservoir.

(3) The department and the department of ecology shall cooperate to avoid duplication and to promote efficiency in issuing permits and other approvals for these uses.

(4) Nothing in chapter 274, Laws of 2013 shall affect or operate to impair any existing water rights. [2013 c 274 s 4; 2003 c 39 s 40; 1974 ex.s. c 43 s 6. Formerly RCW 79.76.060.]

Findings—Intent—2013 c 274: See note following RCW 78.60.030.