

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 5470

C 259 L 17

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Advancing the development of renewable energy by improving the permitting process for geothermal resources exploration.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Energy, Environment & Telecommunications (originally sponsored by Senators Brown, Hobbs, Rivers, Becker, Takko, Ericksen, Honeyford and Schoesler).

Senate Committee on Energy, Environment & Telecommunications **House Committee on Environment**

Background: Defining Well and Core Holes. A well means any excavation made to discover or produce geothermal resources. Core holes are drilled or excavated to acquire geological or geophysical data to find and delineate a favorable geothermal area prior to drilling a well.

Drilling a Geothermal Well. Under the Geothermal Resources Act, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has the authority to regulate the drilling and operation of wells for geothermal resources. Any person proposing to drill a well or re-drill an abandoned well for geothermal resources must: (1) file a written application with the DNR for a permit; (2) pay a \$200 permit fee; (3) provide public notice; and (4) participate in a public hearing. Public notice must include publishing notice of the application and hearing twice in a newspaper of general county circulation.

Drilling Core Holes. Any person proposing to drill a core hole for the purpose of gathering geothermal data must obtain a permit and pay a permit fee for each geothermal area.

If the core hole is drilled more than 750 feet into the bedrock, the core hole is deemed a geothermal test well. If geothermal energy is discovered in a core hole, the core hole is deemed a geothermal well. In both of these instances, the applicant must then pay a geothermal well permit fee, provide public notice, and participate in a public hearing.

Summary: Requiring a Single Permit for Drilling Core Holes. Any person proposing to drill a core hole must obtain a single permit and permit fee for all core holes. The depth of the core hole and whether or not geothermal energy is discovered no longer triggers additional fees and public notice and hearing requirements.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Hearing Requirements for Drilling Wells. When DNR receives an application for drilling a well or redrilling an abandoned well, it is clarified that a public hearing on the drilling application must be in the county where the drilling occurs.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	49	0	
House	98	0	(House amended)
Senate	48	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: July 23, 2017