

RCW 78.60.030 Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "By-product" means any mineral or minerals, not including oil, hydrocarbon gas, or helium, which are found in solution or in association with geothermal steam and that have a value of less than seventy-five percent of the value of the geothermal resource or are not, because of quantity, quality, or technical difficulties in extraction and production, of sufficient value to warrant extraction and production by themselves.

(2) A "completed well" is a well that has been drilled to its total depth, has been adequately cased, and is ready to be either plugged and abandoned, shut-in, or put into production.

(3) "Core holes" are holes drilled or excavations made expressly for the acquisition of geological or geophysical data for the purpose of finding and delineating a favorable geothermal area prior to the drilling of a well.

(4) "Department" means the department of natural resources.

(5) "Energy transfer system" means the structures and enclosed fluids which facilitate the utilization of geothermal energy. The system includes the geothermal wells, cooling towers, reinjection wells, equipment directly involved in converting the heat energy associated with geothermal resources to mechanical or electrical energy or in transferring it to another fluid, the closed piping between such equipment, wells and towers and that portion of the earth which facilitates the transfer of a fluid from reinjection wells to geothermal wells: PROVIDED, That the system shall not include any geothermal resources which have escaped into or have been released into the nongeothermal ground or surface waters from either man-made containers or through leaks in the structure of the earth caused by or to which access was made possible by any drilling, re-drilling, reworking or operating of a geothermal or reinjection well.

(6) "Geothermal area" means any land that is, or reasonably appears to be, underlain by geothermal resources.

(7) (a) "Geothermal resources" includes the natural heat of the earth, the energy, in whatever form, below the surface of the earth present in, resulting from, or created by, or that may be extracted from, the natural heat, and all minerals in solution or other products obtained from naturally heated fluids, brines, associated gases and steam, in whatever form, found below the surface of the earth, exclusive of helium or oil, hydrocarbon gas or other hydrocarbon substances, but including, specifically:

(i) All products of geothermal processes, including indigenous steam, and hot water and hot brines;

(ii) Steam and other bases, hot water and hot brines resulting from water, gas, or other fluids artificially introduced into geothermal formations;

(iii) Heat or other associated energy found in geothermal formations; and

(iv) Any by-product derived from them.

(b) "Geothermal resources" does not include heat energy used in ground source heat exchange systems for ground source heat pumps.

(8) "Operator" means the person supervising or in control of the operation of a geothermal resource well, whether or not such person is the owner of the well.

(9) "Owner" means the person who possesses the legal right to drill, convert or operate any well or other facility subject to the provisions of this chapter.

(10) "Person" means any individual, corporation, company, association of individuals, joint venture, partnership, receiver, trustee, guardian, executor, administrator, personal representative, or public agency that is the subject of legal rights and duties.

(11) "Plug and abandon" means to place permanent plugs in the well in such a way and at such intervals as are necessary to prevent future leakage of fluid from the well to the surface or from one zone in the well to the other, and to remove all drilling and production equipment from the site, and to restore the surface of the site to its natural condition or contour or to such condition as may be prescribed by the department.

(12) "Pollution" means any damage or injury to ground or surface waters, soil or air resulting from the unauthorized loss, escape, or disposal of any substances at any well subject to the provisions of this chapter.

(13) "Shut-in" means to adequately cap or seal a well to control the contained geothermal resources for an interim period.

(14) "Waste," in addition to its ordinary meaning, shall mean "physical waste" as that term is generally understood and shall include:

(a) The inefficient, excessive, or improper use of, or unnecessary dissipation of, reservoir energy; or the locating, spacing, drilling, equipping, operating or producing of any geothermal energy well in a manner which results, or tends to result, in reducing the quantity of geothermal energy to be recovered from any geothermal area in this state;

(b) The inefficient above-ground transporting or storage of geothermal energy; or the locating, spacing, drilling, equipping, operating, or producing of any geothermal well in a manner causing, or tending to cause, unnecessary excessive surface loss or destruction of geothermal energy;

(c) The escape into the open air, from a well of steam or hot water, in excess of what is reasonably necessary in the efficient development or production of a geothermal well.

(15) "Well" means any excavation made for the discovery or production of geothermal resources, or any special facility, converted producing facility, or reactivated or converted abandoned facility used for the reinjection of geothermal resources, or the residue thereof underground. [2013 c 274 § 2; 1974 ex.s. c 43 § 3. Formerly RCW 79.76.030.]

Reviser's note: The definitions in this section have been alphabetized pursuant to RCW 1.08.015(2)(k).

Findings—Intent—2013 c 274: "The legislature finds that:

(1) Because related geothermal resources may be present on contiguous private, state, and federal lands within the state, there is a need to provide greater conformity with the state's geothermal resources statutes and the federal statutes defining geothermal resources and clarify that ownership of geothermal resources resides with the surface owner unless the interest is otherwise reserved or conveyed.

(2) It is in the public interest to encourage and foster the development of geothermal resources in the state, and the legislature

intends to align the state statutes defining geothermal resources with current federal law with which developers are familiar, and clarify the respective regulatory roles of state agencies.

(3) Geothermal resources suitable for energy development are located at much greater depths than the aquifers relied upon for other beneficial uses, but in the event that a geothermal well draws from the same source as other uses, a coordinated and streamlined permitting of geothermal development can better ensure that any interference with existing water uses will be addressed and eliminated. It is the intent of this act that no water uses associated with a geothermal well impair any water use authorized through appropriation under Title 90 RCW.

(4) Changes to federal law in 2005 require a distribution of a portion of geothermal energy revenues from leases on federal land directly to the county in which the lease activity occurs, and therefore it is appropriate that the additional distribution to the state be provided for statewide uses relating to geothermal energy assessment, exploration, and production." [2013 c 274 § 1.]