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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5470**

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**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2017 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Energy, Environment & Telecommunications (originally sponsored by Senators Brown, Hobbs, Rivers, Becker, Takko, Ericksen, Honeyford, and Schoesler)

AN ACT Relating to advancing the development of renewable energy by improving the permitting process for geothermal resources exploration; and amending RCW 78.60.010, 78.60.070, and 78.60.120.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 78.60.010 and 1974 ex.s. c 43 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

The public has a direct interest in the safe, orderly, and nearly pollution-free development of the geothermal resources of the state, as ((~~hereinafter in RCW 79.76.030(1)~~)) defined in RCW 78.60.030. The legislature hereby declares that it is in the best interests of the state to further the development of geothermal resources for the benefit of all of the citizens of the state while at the same time fully providing for the protection of the environment. The development of geothermal resources shall be so conducted as to protect the rights of landowners, other owners of interests therein, and the general public. In providing for such development, it is the purpose of this chapter to provide for the orderly exploration, safe drilling, production, and proper abandonment of geothermal resources in the state of Washington.

**Sec.**  RCW 78.60.070 and 2007 c 338 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Any person proposing to drill a well or redrill an abandoned well for geothermal resources shall file with the department a written application for a permit to commence such drilling or redrilling on a form prescribed by the department accompanied by a permit fee of two hundred dollars. The department shall forward a duplicate copy to the department of ecology within ten days of filing.

(2) Upon receipt of a proper application relating to drilling ((~~or redrilling the department shall set a date, time, and place for a public hearing on the application, which hearing shall be in the county in which the drilling or redrilling is proposed to be made, and shall instruct the applicant to publish notices of such application and hearing by such means and within such time as the department shall prescribe. The department shall require that the notice so prescribed shall be published twice in a newspaper of general circulation within the county in which the drilling or redrilling is proposed to be made and in such other appropriate information media as the department may direct~~)) a well under this section, the department must review the application as the lead agency under the state environmental policy act, chapter 43.21C RCW, if applicable.

(3) Any person proposing to drill a core hole for the purpose of gathering geothermal data, including but not restricted to heat flow, temperature gradients, and rock conductivity, shall be required to obtain a single permit ((~~for each~~)) covering all core holes according to subsection (1) of this section, including a single permit fee ((~~for each core hole, but no notice need be published, and no hearing need be held. Such core holes that penetrate more than seven hundred and fifty feet into bedrock shall be deemed geothermal test wells and subject to the payment of a permit fee and to the requirement in subsection (2) of this section for public notices and hearing. In the event geothermal energy is discovered in a core hole, the hole shall be deemed a geothermal well and subject to the permit fee, notices, and hearing~~)). A proposal to drill a core hole under this subsection is not subject to the state environmental policy act under chapter 43.21C RCW. Such core holes as described by this subsection are subject to all other provisions of this chapter, including a bond or other security as specified in RCW 78.60.130.

(4) All moneys paid to the department under this section shall be deposited with the state treasurer for credit to the general fund.

**Sec.**  RCW 78.60.120 and 1974 ex.s. c 43 s 12 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Before any operation to plug and abandon or suspend the operation of any well is commenced, the owner or operator shall submit in writing a notification of abandonment or suspension of operations to the department for approval. No operation to abandon or suspend the operation of a well shall commence without approval by the department. The department shall respond to such notification in writing within ten working days following receipt of the notification.

(2) Failure to abandon or suspend operations in accordance with the method approved by the department shall constitute a violation of this chapter, and the department shall take appropriate action under the provisions of RCW ((~~79.76.270~~)) 78.60.270.

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