

# Union Calendar No. 678

118TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 6482

**[Report No. 118–831]**

To amend the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 to promote timely exploration for geothermal resources under geothermal leases, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 28, 2023

Mr. FULCHER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

DECEMBER 10, 2024

Additional sponsor: Mr. NEWHOUSE

DECEMBER 10, 2024

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italie*]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on November 28, 2023]

# **A BILL**

To amend the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 to promote timely exploration for geothermal resources under geothermal leases, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
 2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       *This Act may be cited as the “Enhancing Geothermal*  
 5       *Production on Federal Lands Act”.*

6       **SEC. 2. GEOTHERMAL PRODUCTION ON FEDERAL LANDS.**

7       *The Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1001*  
 8       *et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:*

9       **“SEC. 30. GEOTHERMAL EXPLORATION PROJECTS.**

10       “(a) *DEFINITIONS.—In this section:*

11               “(1) *GEOTHERMAL EXPLORATION PROJECT.—*

12       *The term ‘geothermal exploration project’ means the*  
 13       *drilling of a temperature gradient well, monitoring*  
 14       *well, calibration well, or another geothermal explor-*  
 15       *atory well, including construction or making im-*  
 16       *provements for such activities, on lands for which the*  
 17       *Secretary has issued a geothermal lease—*

18               “(A) *that is carried out by the holder of the*  
 19       *lease;*

20               “(B) *for which—*

21                       “(i) *the last cemented casing string has*  
 22                       *an outer diameter of less than 13 inches;*  
 23                       *and*

24                       “(ii) *the total unreclaimed surface dis-*  
 25                       *turbance at any one time within the project*

1            *area is less than 5 acres, not including the*  
2            *area of a permanent or temporary access*  
3            *road;*

4            *“(C) that is completed in less than 120*  
5            *days, including the removal of any surface infra-*  
6            *structure from the project area; and*

7            *“(D) that requires the restoration of the*  
8            *project area within 3 years of the date of first*  
9            *exploration drilling to approximately the condi-*  
10           *tion that existed at the time the project began,*  
11           *unless the project area is subsequently used as*  
12           *part of energy development under the lease.*

13           *“(2) COVERED ACTIVITY.—The term ‘covered ac-*  
14           *tivity’ includes, with respect to exploration, develop-*  
15           *ment, or production (including direct use) of geo-*  
16           *thermal resources—*

17           *“(A) a geotechnical investigation;*

18           *“(B) off-road travel in a right-of-way estab-*  
19           *lished by Congress, granted by a Federal agency,*  
20           *or included in a land use plan; and*

21           *“(C) construction, maintenance, realign-*  
22           *ment, and repair of an existing permanent or*  
23           *temporary access road within a right-of-way es-*  
24           *tablished by Congress, granted by a Federal*  
25           *agency, or included in a land use plan.*

1       “(b) *NON-MAJOR FEDERAL ACTION.*—Geothermal ex-  
 2   ploration projects and covered activities shall not be consid-  
 3   ered major Federal actions under section 102(2)(C) of the  
 4   National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C.  
 5   4332(2)(C)).

6       “(c) *REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE NOTICE.*—The holder  
 7   of a geothermal lease shall provide to the Secretary notice  
 8   of their intent to carry out a geothermal exploration project  
 9   at least 30 days before the start of drilling under the  
 10  project.”.

11   **SEC. 3. GEOTHERMAL LEASING PRIORITY AREAS.**

12       *The Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1001*  
 13   *et seq.) is further amended by adding at the end the fol-*  
 14   *lowing:*

15   **“SEC. 31. GEOTHERMAL LEASING PRIORITY AREAS.**

16       “(a) *DEFINITION OF COVERED LAND.*—In this section,  
 17   the term ‘covered land’ means land that is—

18               “(1) *Federal land; and*

19               “(2) *not excluded from the development of geo-*  
 20   *thermal energy under—*

21                       “(A) *a land use plan established under the*  
 22                       *Federal Land Policy and Management Act of*  
 23                       *1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.); or*

24                       “(B) *any other Federal law.*

1       “(b) *DESIGNATION OF GEOTHERMAL LEASING PRI-*  
 2 *ORITY AREAS.*—*The Secretary, in consultation with the*  
 3 *Secretary of Energy, shall designate portions of covered*  
 4 *land as geothermal leasing priority areas as soon as prac-*  
 5 *ticable, but not later than 5 years, after the date of enact-*  
 6 *ment of this section.*

7       “(c) *CRITERIA FOR SELECTION.*—*In determining*  
 8 *which covered lands to designate as geothermal leasing pri-*  
 9 *ority areas under subsection (b), the Secretary, in consulta-*  
 10 *tion with the Secretary of Energy, shall consider if—*

11               “(1) *the covered land is preferable for geothermal*  
 12 *leasing;*

13               “(2) *production of geothermal energy on such*  
 14 *land is economically viable, including if such land*  
 15 *has access to methods of energy transmission; and*

16               “(3) *the designation would be in compliance*  
 17 *with section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and*  
 18 *Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712), including*  
 19 *subsection (c)(9) of such section.*

20       “(d) *REVIEW AND MODIFICATION.*—*Not less frequently*  
 21 *than once every 5 years, the Secretary shall—*

22               “(1) *review covered land and, if appropriate,*  
 23 *make additional designations of geothermal leasing*  
 24 *priority areas; and*

1           “(2) review each area designated as a geothermal  
2       leasing priority area under this section, and, if ap-  
3       propriate, remove such designation.

4           “(e) *PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATE-*  
5 *MENT.*—

6           “(1) *INITIAL DESIGNATIONS.*—Not later than one  
7       year after the initial designation of a geothermal leas-  
8       ing priority area, the Secretary shall prepare a sup-  
9       plement to any final programmatic environmental  
10      impact statement for geothermal leasing that is the  
11      most recently finalized such statement with respect to  
12      covered land designated as a geothermal leasing pri-  
13      ority area under subsection (b).

14          “(2) *SUBSEQUENT DESIGNATIONS.*—Each des-  
15      ignation of a geothermal leasing priority area under  
16      subsection (b) shall be included in a programmatic  
17      environmental impact statement for geothermal leas-  
18      ing or in a supplement to such a statement.

19          “(3) *CONSULTATIONS.*—In developing any pro-  
20      grammatic environmental impact statement for geo-  
21      thermal leasing or supplement to such a statement  
22      under this section, the Secretary shall consult, on an  
23      ongoing basis, with appropriate State, Tribal, and  
24      local governments, transmission infrastructure owners

1       and operators, developers, and other appropriate enti-  
2       ties.

3               “(4) *PROCEDURE.*—*The Secretary may not delay*  
4       *issuing a permit or holding a lease sale under this*  
5       *Act because the supplement required under paragraph*  
6       *(1) has not been finalized by the Secretary.*

7               “(f) *COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA.*—*If the Secretary de-*  
8       *termines that the designation of a geothermal leasing pri-*  
9       *ority area has been sufficiently analyzed by a pro-*  
10       *grammatic environmental impact statement, the Secretary*  
11       *shall not prepare any additional analysis under the Na-*  
12       *tional Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321*  
13       *et seq.) with respect to geothermal lease sales for such geo-*  
14       *thermal leasing priority area.”.*

15   **SEC. 4. FINDINGS.**

16       *Congress finds that—*

17               (1) *pursuant to section 109 of the National En-*  
18       *vironmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4336c), as*  
19       *amended by section 321(b) of the Fiscal Responsi-*  
20       *bility Act of 2023 (Public Law 118–5), the Bureau of*  
21       *Land Management announced on April 15, 2024, it*  
22       *had adopted categorical exclusions from the Depart-*  
23       *ment of the Navy and the United States Forest Serv-*  
24       *ice for geothermal exploration; and*



1           (2) *if appropriately used, these categorical exclu-*  
2           *sions are expected to expedite the review and approval*  
3           *of geothermal exploration proposals on Bureau of*  
4           *Land Management lands.*

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