

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 5576

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

SEPTEMBER 26, 2025

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

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## 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:

1           “(1) GEOTHERMAL EXPLORATION PROJECT.—

2           The term ‘geothermal exploration project’ means the  
3           drilling of a temperature gradient well, monitoring  
4           well, calibration well, or another geothermal explor-  
5           atory well, including construction or making im-  
6           provements for such activities, on lands for which  
7           the Secretary has issued a geothermal lease—

8                   “(A) that is carried out by the holder of  
9           the lease;

10                   “(B) for which—

11                           “(i) the last cemented casing string  
12                           has an outer diameter of less than 13<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>  
13                           inches; and

14                           “(ii) the total unreclaimed surface dis-  
15                           turbance at any one time within the  
16                           project area is less than 8 acres, not in-  
17                           cluding the area of a permanent or tem-  
18                           porary access road;

19                   “(C) that is completed in less than 180  
20           days, including the removal of any surface in-  
21           frastructure from the project area; and

22                   “(D) that requires the restoration of the  
23           project area within 3 years of the date of first  
24           exploration drilling to approximately the condi-  
25           tion that existed at the time the project began,

1           unless the project area is subsequently used as  
2           part of energy development under the lease.

3           “(2) COVERED ACTIVITY.—The term ‘covered  
4           activity’ includes, with respect to exploration, devel-  
5           opment, or production (including direct use) of geo-  
6           thermal resources—

7                   “(A) geotechnical investigations;

8                   “(B) off-road travel in a right-of-way es-  
9                   tablished by Congress, granted by a Federal  
10                   agency, or included in a land use plan; and

11                   “(C) construction, maintenance, realign-  
12                   ment, and repair of an existing permanent or  
13                   temporary access road within a right-of-way es-  
14                   tablished by Congress, granted by a Federal  
15                   agency, or included in a land use plan.

16           “(b) NON-MAJOR FEDERAL ACTION.—Geothermal  
17           exploration projects and covered activities shall not be con-  
18           sidered major Federal actions under section 102(2)(C) of  
19           the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C.  
20           4332(2)(C)).

21           “(c) REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE NOTICE.—The  
22           holder of a geothermal lease shall provide to the Secretary  
23           notice of their intent to carry out a geothermal exploration  
24           project at least 30 days before the start of drilling under  
25           the project.”.

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

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

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

6 “(a) DEFINITION OF COVERED LAND.—In this sec-  
7 tion, the term ‘covered land’ means land that is—

8 “(1) Federal land; and

9 “(2) not excluded from the development of geo-  
10 thermal energy under—

11 “(A) a land use plan established under the  
12 Federal Land Policy and Management Act of  
13 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.); or

14 “(B) any other Federal law.

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

21 “(c) CRITERIA FOR SELECTION.—In determining  
22 which covered lands to designate as geothermal leasing  
23 priority areas under subsection (b), the Secretary, in con-  
24 sultation with the Secretary of Energy, shall consider if—

25 “(1) the covered land is preferable for geo-  
26 thermal leasing;

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

4           “(3) the designation would be in compliance  
5 with section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and  
6 Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712), includ-  
7 ing subsection (c)(9) of such section.

8           “(d) REVIEW AND MODIFICATION.—Not less fre-  
9 quently than once every 5 years, the Secretary shall—

10           “(1) review covered land and, if appropriate,  
11 make additional designations of geothermal leasing  
12 priority areas; and

13           “(2) review each area designated as a geo-  
14 thermal leasing priority area under this section, and,  
15 if appropriate, remove such designation.

16           “(e) PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
17 STATEMENT.—

18           “(1) INITIAL DESIGNATIONS.—Not later than  
19 one year after the initial designation of a geothermal  
20 leasing priority area, the Secretary shall prepare a  
21 supplement to any final programmatic environmental  
22 impact statement for geothermal leasing that is the  
23 most recently finalized such statement with respect  
24 to covered land designated as a geothermal leasing  
25 priority area under subsection (b).

1           “(2) SUBSEQUENT DESIGNATIONS.—Each des-  
2           ignation of a geothermal leasing priority area under  
3           subsection (b) shall be included in a programmatic  
4           environmental impact statement for geothermal leas-  
5           ing or in a supplement to such a statement.

6           “(3) CONSULTATIONS.—In developing any pro-  
7           grammatic environmental impact statement for geo-  
8           thermal leasing or supplement to such a statement  
9           under this section, the Secretary shall consult, on an  
10          ongoing basis, with appropriate State, Tribal, and  
11          local governments, transmission infrastructure own-  
12          ers and operators, developers, and other appropriate  
13          entities.

14          “(4) PROCEDURE.—The Secretary may not  
15          delay issuing a permit or holding a lease sale under  
16          this Act because the supplement required under  
17          paragraph (1) has not been finalized by the Sec-  
18          retary.

19          “(f) COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA.—If the designation  
20          of a geothermal leasing priority area has been analyzed  
21          by a programmatic environmental document—

22                 “(1) during the period of 10 years that begins  
23                 on the date such programmatic environmental docu-  
24                 ment is issued, the Secretary shall not prepare any  
25                 additional analysis under the National Environ-

1       mental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.)  
2       with respect to geothermal lease sales for such geo-  
3       thermal leasing priority area unless the Secretary  
4       determines there are substantial new circumstances  
5       or information about the significance of adverse ef-  
6       fects that bear on the analysis; and

7               “(2) after such period of 10 years, the Sec-  
8       retary shall not prepare any additional analysis  
9       under the National Environmental Policy Act of  
10       1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) with respect to geo-  
11       thermal lease sales for such geothermal leasing pri-  
12       ority area if the Secretary reevaluates the analysis  
13       in the programmatic environmental document and  
14       any underlying assumption to ensure reliance on the  
15       analysis remains valid.”.

16 **SEC. 4. FINDINGS.**

17       Congress finds that—

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

1           (2) if appropriately used, these categorical ex-  
2           clusions are expected to expedite the review and ap-  
3           proval of geothermal exploration proposals on Bu-  
4           reau of Land Management lands.

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