

Focus on: Geothermal energy collaborative process June 2026 legislative update

Collaborative process

To promote the development of geothermal energy resources, the Washington Legislature directed the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to initiate [a collaborative process](#)¹ to help identify opportunities and risks associated with developing utility-scale geothermal energy for generating clean electricity. Since 2025, we have been sharing information and engaging with communities, Tribal and local governments, state and federal agencies, utilities, industry, agencies and other interested parties across the state.

Geothermal energy in Washington

Geothermal energy refers to the heat stored beneath the Earth's surface that can be used for heating, cooling, generating electricity and other purposes. [Geothermal energy](#)² can potentially help Washington meet its clean energy goals under the state Climate Commitment and Clean Energy Transformation acts and provide reliable power.

The collaborative process is focused on three areas identified as having the greatest potential for geothermal energy resources: Mount Baker, Mount St. Helens and the Wind River valley south of Mount St. Helens. While interest in developing geothermal energy in Washington is high, there are currently no geothermal energy projects proposed or under consideration. The collaborative process is designed to provide an early, thoughtful look at key issues related to developing geothermal energy.

June 2026 legislative update

Ecology's [legislative update](#)³ provides an overview of the process and preliminary recommendations for lawmakers to consider. The update provides information gathered at public workshops, information sharing sessions, public and Tribal reviews of the draft report and other outreach efforts. Ecology will submit a final legislative report on June 30, 2027. The report will include additional information about geothermal technologies, siting factors, potential impacts and regulations. The goal of the reports is to provide a framework for developing utility-scale geothermal energy in Washington.

Common themes

There is broad interest in planning for and developing geothermal energy. Several common themes have emerged, including siting and permitting considerations, seismicity, effects on Tribal rights and cultural resources as well as impacts on overburdened communities, water supplies, water quality and endangered and sensitive species.

Ecology is researching and analyzing emerging geothermal technologies, including potential impacts, mitigation strategies and facility siting considerations. The state Department of Natural Resources is also conducting seismic hazard assessments for the three geothermal focus areas. We will share study results in fall 2026 and collect additional feedback.

¹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/regulations-permits/sepa/clean-energy/geothermal>

² <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6038a47202a04a5da71c2251ec11c2c1>

³ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/summarypages/2606013.html>

Preliminary recommendations

The June 2026 update includes several preliminary recommendations:

- Support Tribal capacity to meaningfully participate in geothermal studies and planning
 - Support Tribal participation in geothermal energy resource studies and planning.
- Expand agency coordination
 - Continue coordinating with state and federal agencies to identify opportunities for increased collaboration.
- Support geothermal exploration and development
 - Recommend funding the geothermal exploration grant program established by Senate Bill 6039.
 - Identify federal funding opportunities and strategic partnerships.
 - Review various state and federal funding mechanisms to streamline the opportunities available for geothermal development.
- Provide guidance and tools
 - Develop guidance on regulatory and environmental review requirements for developing geothermal energy projects in Washington, from exploration through operations and project decommissioning.
 - Develop geothermal energy guidance, policy objectives, and model ordinances for local governments to incorporate into their comprehensive plans and development regulations.
- Improve community and Tribal engagement and outreach
 - Develop guidance and best practices to help developers and local governments effectively engage communities and Tribes in geothermal energy resource planning and project development.
- Support use of community and Tribal benefit agreements
 - Develop guidance on community and Tribal benefit agreements.
- Promote Tribal geothermal energy exploration and development
 - Consider options to support Tribal geothermal energy projects, including projects owned by or jointly developed with Tribes and private or public developers.

Next steps

From now through June 2027, we will continue the collaborative engagement process through virtual and in-person workshops and forums with communities, Tribes and interested parties. The input will help shape recommendations for the final June 2027 legislative report.



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