

For Immediate Release
November 14, 2007

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New Report Concludes Improved Technology Key to Achieving Full Potential of Geothermal Energy

Washington -- The Geothermal Energy Association released a new report today that assesses the state of geothermal energy technology. It concludes that improved subsurface technologies are the key to developing the vast potential of the resource base. "To utilize most of the geothermal resource base subsurface technologies need to be improved, new exploration technologies developed, and costs for drilling significantly reduced," Mark Taylor, author of the report states.

The report, entitled *The State of Geothermal Technology, Part I: Subsurface Technology*, examines how companies today are trying to find and exploit geothermal heat under the ground. It follows and explains the series of steps that a geothermal project takes from exploration to resource confirmation. It was built upon interviews and site visits with companies actively developing projects, and portrays the state of geothermal technology from their perspective.

"There is significant, untapped geothermal potential that can be effectively developed with today's technology," comments Mark Taylor, "but to unlock the vast potential of the resource – involving hundreds of thousands of megawatts of energy – will require an investment in developing new technologies that allow us to find hidden resources and utilize unconventional sources of heat."

Among issues it identified, the report cites development of new exploration tools, better resource characterization, advances that reduce drilling costs, and better tools to predict reservoir behavior as critical near-term needs.

In the longer-run, the report points to some new and emerging geothermal technologies, such as Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS). The report states: "Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS) are those in which low or non-producing resources are engineered to become commercially viable. Although there have been several successful tests examining parts of EGS technology, what is needed is the significant commitment of funds to determine if EGS is technically feasible by building a facility that produces electricity over a period of time."

In addition, the potential of producing energy from hot water co-produced from oil and gas wells, deep volcanic or supercritical resources, and geopressured systems that hold both hot water and natural gas are highlighted as potentially significant future energy sources.

Interested parties can download a PDF version of either the full report or an executive summary free of charge at www.geo-energ.org.