

Sarah Brownsberger

Dear Department of Ecology,

I want to register my enthusiastic support of using Washington's geothermal resources ON CONDITION that the exploration and exploitation will be for residents, businesses, and public entities of Washington state but NOT to serve the thirst of AI or Bitcoin. I would love to see the state make this declaration of intended purpose front and center and to see the usage restrictions enshrined in solid law.

Having lived in Iceland for many years, various talking points for persuading the public come to mind. From the ecological standpoint, the term "fracking" has become a bugaboo. And there is no denying the environmental costs of any large exploitation - which is why purpose and usage restrictions should be enshrined in law up front. But what people need to know is that Washington can learn from the experience of more than half a century of geothermal use in several countries (and U.S. experiments too, such as in Boise). They need to know that the natural methane emissions that accompany the process can be captured and used. They need to know that the aquaduct that brings hot water to communities contains....WATER, not natural gas or oil.

From the consumer standpoint, the positives are exciting. Geothermal heating can be almost silent. There is no motor, no fan, no clunk of the system kicking on (which can be very loud in a heat pump) - indeed, no furnace or machine in your basement or yard - and absolutely no toxic fumes. Provided that the plant is done right, one can enjoy a nice hot shower with the sense that nature is much less the worse for it than with conventional heating. Best of all, for those of us in Whatcom County, for example, the energy source could be local and free from worries about distant ruptures in supply.

There are downsides. It means, at the outset, a lot of plumbing. Do we have the contractors needed for that? A sulfur odor to your hot water is a minor complaint. No human technology is invulnerable, perfect, or maintenance free. Nonetheless geothermal of, by, and for the people - NOT AI or Bitcoin - would be a beautiful addition to our future of wind, solar, tidal, and hydro resources.

Best regards,

Sarah Brownsberger