

## Report rekindles Meager geothermal prospects

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Recent testing of the geothermal resource at a drilling site northwest of Pemberton has rekindled hope that it will become the location of Canada's first commercial geothermal energy plant.

Vancouver-based Western GeoPower Corp. has been working on the project since 2002 in the hopes that it will be able to produce between 100 and 200 megawatts of electricity over the span of approximately 30 years.

In 2003, company officials projected that the plant could be up and running by 2007. But proving the commercial viability of the super-heated underground water resource has proven more costly and time consuming than first thought.

Several wells have been drilled on the South Meager site on the shoulder of Pylon Peak, 70 kilometres northwest of Pemberton. So far, temperatures have been more than sufficient to support a geothermal energy project, but sufficient permeability — the ease with which fluid is transmitted through a rock's pore space — has so far proven elusive.

In a statement issued on Wednesday (April 22), company officials said California-based GeothermEx, an independent consultant, had recommended a drilling program to target a zone of high permeability "which has demonstrated commercial potential."

The vertical drilling of one well, known as MC-8, in 2005, resulted in the discovery of high enough temperatures and an underground reservoir of sufficient size, but insufficient permeability. However, drilling at an angle — what's known as a "deviated" well — from a different site on the valley floor has proven more promising, officials said.

"GeothermEx projected that a new deviated well starting from a lower wellhead elevation in the same permeable zone and a much shorter vertical depth than well MC-8 would flow at the equivalent of more than six megawatts of electrical energy," the statement said.

According to Dr. Subir Sanyal, president of GeothermEx, "While a deep water table (at South Meager) has limited the well's productivity, commercial productivity can still be achieved in a well drilled from the valley floor and targeted in the permeable zones in wells MC-6 and MC-8."

Western GeoPower officials said several easily accessible drilling sites exist on the valley floor and that they intend to seek drilling permits for those sites and begin drilling once the snow has cleared sufficiently.

"Our understanding of the geothermal reservoir at South Meager has increased substantially," said Kenneth Macleod, president and CEO of Western GeoPower. "We can now focus on securing the funding and permitting necessary to complete the drilling program and prepare a feasibility report on the project."



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