

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING, HOUSING,
AND URBAN AFFAIRS
BUDGET
ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC WORKS

October 22, 2014

Doug Hollett, Office Director
U.S. Department of Energy
Geothermal Technologies Office
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Room BH-039
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Director Hollett,

We are writing to express our support for AltaRock Energy Inc.'s proposal to develop a new national energy field lab focused on Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS) in the Newberry Volcano area in Deschutes County, Oregon. The Frontier Observatory for Research in Geothermal Energy (FORGE) program offers an excellent opportunity to evaluate and prioritize sites for, and to ultimately develop, a new national geothermal energy lab and we are excited to see this new research and development asset developed to benefit the nation.

Geothermal energy has an important role to play in our nation's energy portfolio, providing climate-friendly base load electricity to power our economy. Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS) research and development is needed to help us harness the full potential of this resource and to develop EGS in a way that is commercially viable, safe, and environmentally friendly. EGS energy facilities can also create skilled, living wage green jobs within the communities where they are located.

The Newberry site is an excellent location for the new FORGE field lab because there is abundant hot rock at relatively shallow depths and significant EGS development work, supported by US DOE, has already occurred at the site. Because of the experience, infrastructure, and plans developed during this prior work, Newberry is poised to deliver EGS discoveries and solutions that can lead to wide spread green energy development. The Newberry site and AltaRock also have good access to transportation networks, transmission lines, needed water supplies, a skilled local workforce, and students and faculty at OSU Cascades Energy Engineering and Management program.

AltaRock has already conducted substantial community outreach to identify and address community concerns about the safety and environmental impacts of EGS development. While this diligent effort has won the support of many community leaders, there are still members of the community who have concerns about this complex new technology. Since Phase 1 of FORGE entails analysis of site suitability and site planning, it would also provide an excellent opportunity for AltaRock to broaden and deepen community outreach efforts and explore and address any remaining safety or environmental concerns. Improving public understanding of EGS can provide great value in development of this technology to complement the research innovations at the site.

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING, HOUSING,
AND URBAN AFFAIRS
BUDGET
ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC WORKS

Thank you for your full and fair review of AltaRock's request for designation of the Newberry site as a Phase 1 FORGE location. Should you have any further questions, please contact Phil Chang in my Bend field office at 541-318-1298 or phil_chang@merkley.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senator