



## Staff Report - Item 04

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**To:** Sonoma Clean Power Authority Community Advisory Committee

**From:** Ryan Tracey, Director of Planning & Analytics  
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**Issue:** Receive Geothermal Opportunity Zone Update

**Date:** July 18, 2024

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### Background

The Geothermal Opportunity Zone (GeoZone) is SCP's initiative to secure reliable and affordable clean energy for customers by building 600 megawatts of geothermal power capacity in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. This will enable SCP to phase out its dependence on natural gas power plants for reliability. The Community Advisory Committee (Committee) meetings are a regularly scheduled public forum for the community to receive updates and provide input on the GeoZone. The updates provided to the Committee each month, and minutes from any discussion are posted on SCP's website at <https://sonomacleanpower.org/geozone-public-updates>. Staff incorporate any feedback received from the Committee presentation into the monthly updates to the Board of Directors. Additional background on the GeoZone can be found on the GeoZone webpage at <https://sonomacleanpower.org/geozone>.

### Community Awareness & Outreach

SCP is organizing a series of GeoZone Town Halls with the next event scheduled for Thursday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, from 6pm to 8pm at SCP's Customer Center at 741 Fourth Street in downtown Santa Rosa. The agenda will include a high-level overview of the GeoZone and the proposed pilot projects, followed by a panel discussion of experts on what impacts next-generation geothermal could potentially have on our climate goals, reliability, affordability, local jobs, and more. There will also be time allocated for Q&A with the audience. Live Spanish translation will be offered to attendees.

Food will be provided for in-person attendees, and the event will be available to watch virtually. Promotion of the event through social media, outreach, and email will begin the week after the Fourth of July holiday.

SCP's staff is currently updating the GeoZone webpage to improve its readability and accessibility. As SCP expands its community outreach and education efforts, the webpage will serve as an important resource for the public to find the most up-to-date information about the initiative's progress, answers to frequently asked questions, and opportunities for engagement. In addition to refreshing the language of the webpage, staff are also working on a general handout that will be incorporated into SCP's event collateral and a media strategy for getting the word out about the GeoZone.

### **GeoZone Project Updates**

Eavor has leveraged its feasibility study results, which included significant technical work to characterize regional geology, to narrow its area of interest for site acquisition. Eavor's highest priority is finalizing and executing its site acquisition strategy.

Chevron New Energies visited Sonoma County in June to begin briefing local elected officials on their plans for their GeoZone demonstration project and discuss plans for community engagement. Meanwhile, Chevron is progressing negotiations with the Department of Energy on a grant award and preparing the technical work necessary to initiate the exploration well permitting process.

Cyrq Energy participated in a joint meeting with SCP, a thermal storage energy system provider, and existing geothermal operator to coordinate on pursuing upcoming grant funding. A key issue for the geothermal operator is mitigating any operational risk associated with integrating the thermal storage system. Cyrq and SCP have identified several new grant funding opportunities to pursue that can fund early technical work.

### **Permitting**

[Assembly Bill 1359](#), the bill SCP is sponsoring to allow local counties to serve as lead agency for geothermal exploration well permitting, cleared its first and second committee hearings in the state senate on June 11<sup>th</sup> and July 3<sup>rd</sup> with unanimous support. The bill includes an urgency statute which will allow it to become effective

immediately if passed and signed by the Governor in September.

SCP met with Mendocino County staff in late June to discuss the GeoZone and expected permitting requirements. This interaction follows the engagement of SCP and GeoZone partners has already started with Permit Sonoma. SCP is also evaluating several grant opportunities to secure resources for local jurisdictions to support land use planning and permitting for geothermal development.

### **Enhanced Geothermal System (EGS) Awareness**

Staff collected a number of questions and concerns raised in the presentation on EGS in the last Committee and Board meetings. Staff has passed along this information to Chevron New Energies and is beginning to work on developing a frequently asked questions document that will be shared in a future meeting.