

Geothermal cluster growth in N. Nevada

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

When Ormat Technologies Inc. first set up shop in Northern Nevada in 1984, geothermal development activity was about as hot as a lukewarm glass of tap water.

“I think we maybe had one or two more geothermal developers back then,” said Paul Thomsen, Ormat’s director of policy and business development. “Today, the number is something like 11 operators and developers in the area. It’s the largest concentration in the nation by far.”

Incidentally, having a concentration of businesses in one location is the first prerequisite in the formation of the prized business cluster.

Advantages from clusters include faster sector growth due to the easier exchange of information, expertise and talent. Many geothermal companies in the area, for example, count former Ormat employees among their executive ranks and resource teams. Clusters also lead to the creation of a strong support system that includes suppliers, vendors, trade associations and even academia – further accelerating growth.

With international geothermal players such as Ormat and Geothermal Development Associates calling the area home – along with the arrival of aspiring up-and-comers such as Gradient Resources – Northern Nevada is now ground zero for arguably the most dynamic geothermal cluster in the nation. In addition to major developers, Northern Nevada also has a diverse supporting cast that includes equipment manufacturers, material suppliers, surveyors and researchers.

Northern Nevada’s geothermal cluster was highlighted by the

Geothermal Energy Association's (GEA) selection of Reno as the site for its first ever National Geothermal Summit, which occurs later this month.

Add the University of Nevada, Reno's selection as the host of the first-ever National Geothermal Academy program in the country this summer and Northern Nevada's steamy clout appears even more impressive.

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