

Mammoth concerned as geothermal plant expands

By Matt Weiser, Water Deeply

The town of Mammoth Lakes is generally known for two things: epic skiing in winter, thanks to the very high elevation of its ski mountain; and volcanic activity, because the mountain is a simmering volcano. It's normal to hike or ski around Mammoth and smell the sulfurous gases venting from gurgling magma deep under the mountain.

That magma is also a rich source of geothermal power. Ormat Technologies based in Reno has been tapping that power source for three decades. Now it wants to double its energy output to 60 megawatts by drilling more geothermal wells.

Not so fast, says the Mammoth Community Water District. The agency is concerned that Ormat's proposal to drill as many as 16 new geothermal wells could cause boiling hot geothermal fluids to mix with the town's groundwater wells.

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