

**NEW  
ZEALAND  
GEOTHERMAL  
ASSOCIATION  
INC**

*East Harbour Management Services Ltd  
PO Box 11-595, Wellington  
New Zealand  
Tel: 64-274-771 009  
Fax: 64-4-473 9930  
E-mail: [brian.white@eastharb.co.nz](mailto:brian.white@eastharb.co.nz)  
[www.nzgeothermal.org.nz](http://www.nzgeothermal.org.nz)*

---

8 September 2005  
**Media Statement**

**Contact Officially Opens Geothermal Plant Extension at Wairakei**

The New Zealand Geothermal Association congratulates Contact Energy on the official opening of their Wairakei binary cycle plant at their Wairakei geothermal power station.

This development adds another 15 MW of base-load electricity generation for New Zealand through making better use of Contact's existing Wairakei resources. This is equivalent to a further 10% efficiency improvement to the existing Wairakei geothermal development, as not a single drop of extra fluid is required from the Wairakei reservoir.

The plant uses hot water brought from the steam field for reinjection purposes. The binary cycle plant takes heat from the hot water and converts it into electricity using a secondary working fluid. Similar plant by the same company (Ormat) can be seen in geothermal developments at Kawerau, Mokai, Rotokawa and Ngawha (in Northland), as well as many places internationally.

Contact Energy has had the consents to build the binary plant for some years, but it is only now that the wholesale electricity market is establishing post-Maui prices that investors have had the confidence to invest in new generation. From that perspective, while 15 MW may not seem a great deal of energy, this development is at the forefront of a series of investments by geothermal energy developers expected over the next decade. The fact that Contact Energy is a private investor increases our confidence that there will be significant geothermal investment shortly.

There are many other geothermal fields in New Zealand that are currently untapped or underdeveloped, and that could potentially be developed assuming access and consenting is achieved. There is currently 450 MW of installed geothermal capacity in New Zealand, and geothermal stations supply 6 – 7% of our electricity demand. Geothermal energy is expected to make an even greater contribution to supplying New Zealand's increasing demand for electricity. Conservative estimates taking account of likely consent restrictions have indicated that more than 600 MW of new geothermal power stations could be installed. Some developers have spoken of 400 MW of geothermal power stations over the next 10 years.

**Contact:** Brian White (Executive Officer of the NZGA) phone 0274 771 009, email [brian.white@eastharb.co.nz](mailto:brian.white@eastharb.co.nz)

The **New Zealand Geothermal Association (NZGA)** is an independent, non-profit industry association with a wide membership covering developers, regulators, researchers, consultants, Maori interests, suppliers, etc. It provides information on geothermal phenomena and utilisation for industry, government and educational organisations. The NZGA supports appropriate sustainable development of geothermal resources, and works with industry and government to achieve this.