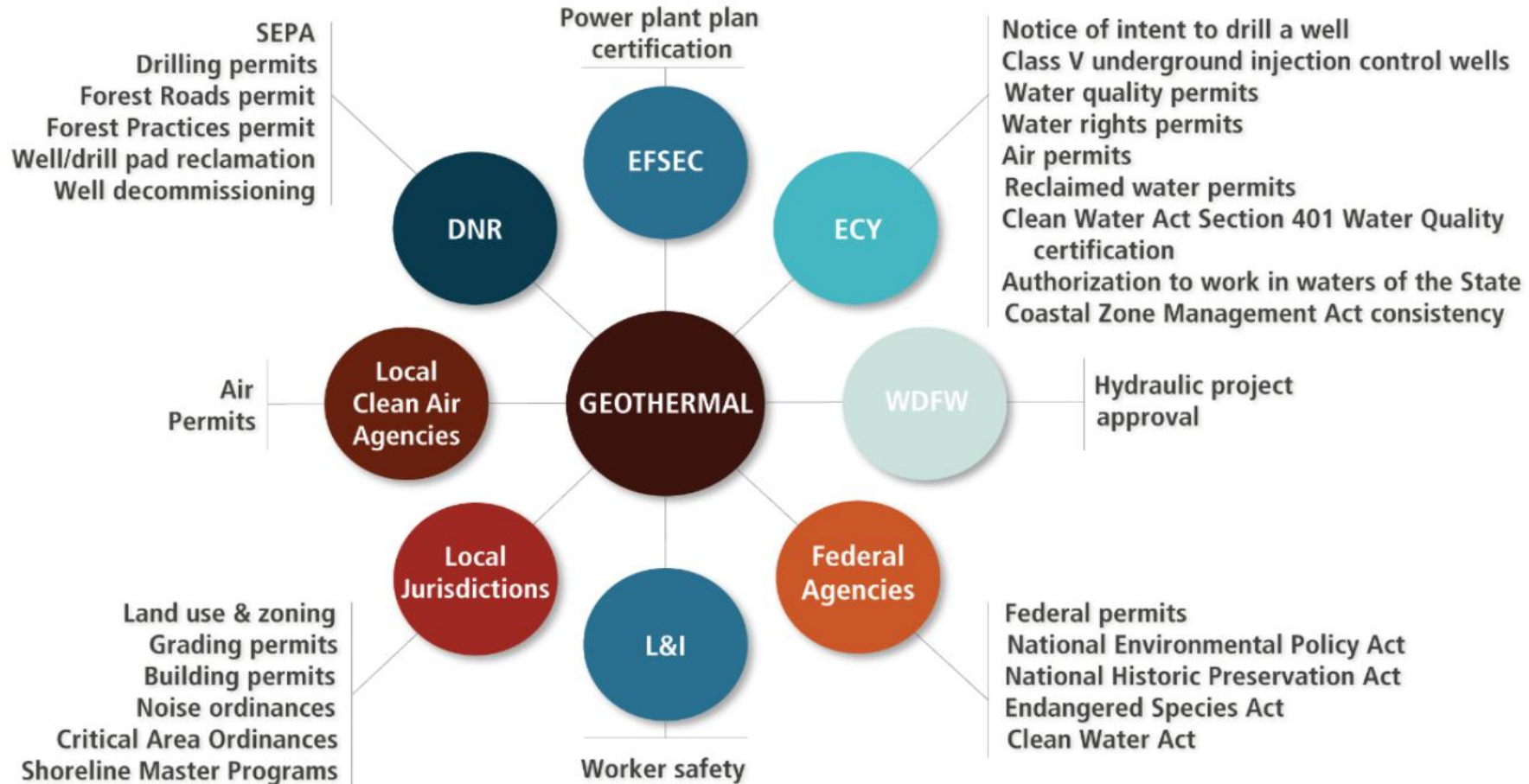




Washington Geothermal Regulatory Structure From Exploration to Production

Rian Skov -Lead Regulatory Geologist,
Washington Department of Natural Resources
Washington Geological Survey

Multi-agency framework



Geothermal Collaborative Process

- **Collaboration with Washington Departments of Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, Commerce and the Clean Energy Facility Siting Evaluation Committee (EFSEC)**
- **Ongoing Process – Public Meetings began November 2025, reports due to Washington Legislature by June 30, 2026 and a final report by June 30, 2027.**
- **Help garner industry interest in geothermal exploration and production through streamlining permitting process and highlighting areas of highest potential.**
- **Look at other regulations nationwide and compare with Washington to ensure any holes are addressed and consistent with other jurisdictions where production is occurring.**
- **Washington Geological Survey contracting a study of how to limit potential impacts from hydraulic stimulation for three focus areas.**



Geothermal Resources Act RCW 78.60

- Establishes DNR as the regulatory agency for drilling and reclamation of drill pads for geothermal drilling.
- Provides guidance for two types of geothermal permits, production and “core hole” or exploration permit
- Permits cover drilling, redrilling or deepening, as well as reclamation of the site once drilling is complete.
- Production well applications forwarded to Ecology for comment during review period
- Water well transfer to ecology (if no power production occurs)

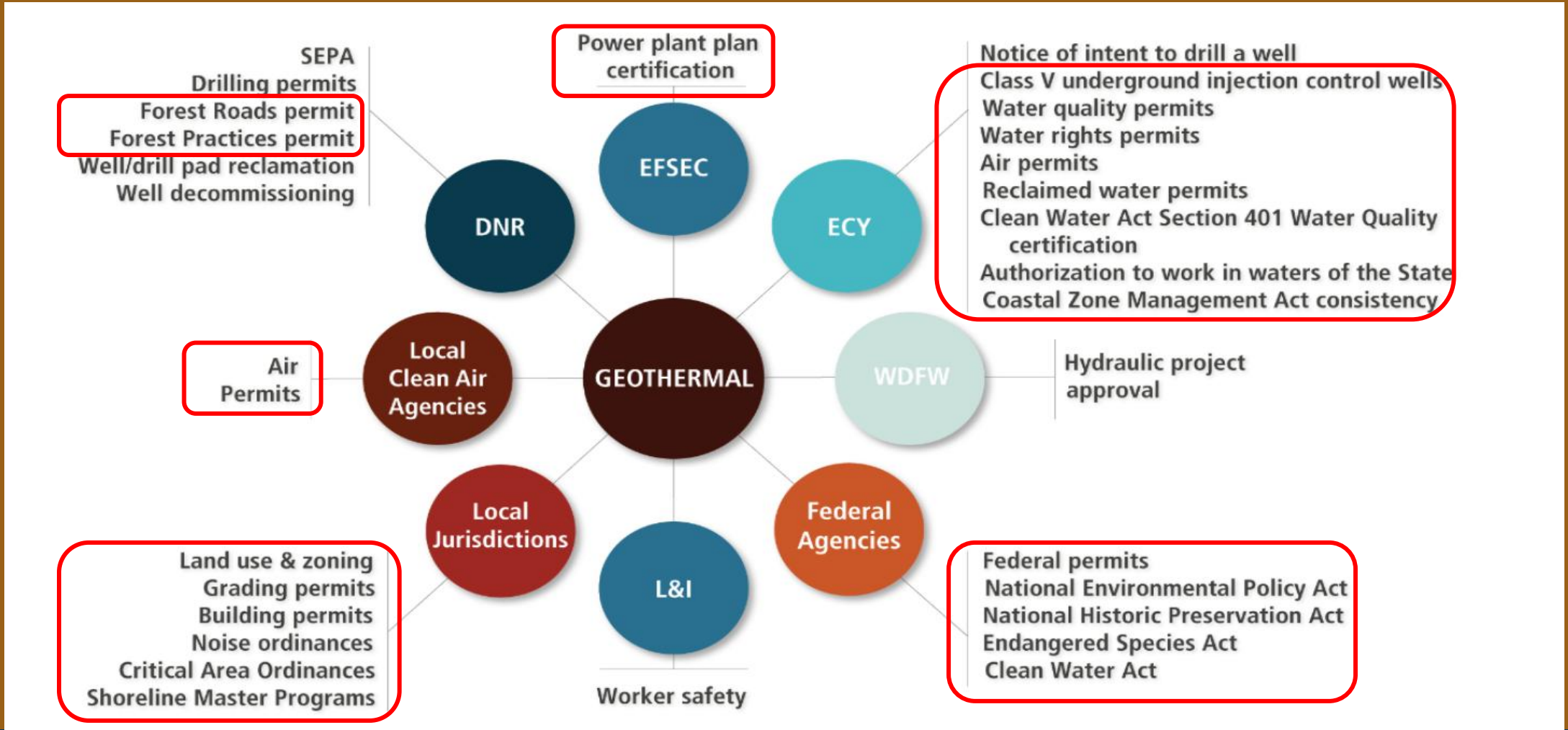


Department of Ecology – Injection wells

- **Administers statewide Underground Injection Control program (WAC 173-218) authorized by the Safe Drinking Water Act, administered under Title 40 CFR parts 144-147.**
- **Injection well authorization required for any geothermal well proposing to inject into the ground (EGS, Fracking).**
- **Jurisdiction over water wells, transfer from DNR to ecology allowed under geothermal resources act.**



Production – EFSEC & other permits



Difficulties with current system

- **Multi-stage projects difficult for environmental review (SEPA, NEPA)**
- **Multiple agencies = multiple timelines**
- **No clear pathway from exploration to production for companies to evaluate cost, timing and risk of projects.**



Regulatory gaps

- **New technologies not addressed in current law (EGS, AGS)**
- **Differing levels of project and environmental review**
- **Fracking for geothermal - Not currently addressed in law.**
- **Undefined arbitrary limits of exploratory holes – in Washington an exploratory “core hole” can be no deeper than 750’ into bedrock per the law. However, “bedrock” is not defined in law.**



Additional Resources

- [Detailed Regulatory Framework Spreadsheet](#)
- [Washington Geothermal Experience](#)
- [Senate Bill 6309 – promoting the development of geothermal resources](#)

