Berkeley Lab Involved in Cross-Border Cooperation on Geothermal Energy

Berkeley Lab was actively involved in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the exploration of geothermal energy potential in Mexico through technical support provided for the development of the Cerro Prieto geothermal field in Baja California, one of the largest hot water geothermal systems in North America. Currently, the Cerro Prieto geothermal field has an installed capacity of 570 MW and, according to Mexico's Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), its operations represent a reduction of GHG emissions in the order of 1.5MT every year.

Following up on that history of collaboration and with the support of a Fulbright Specialist Grant, Patrick Dobson, scientist at the Berkeley Lab's Earth and Environmental Science Area (EESA), spent two weeks last January at the Center for Scientific Research and Higher Education at Ensenada (CICESE) to interact with Mexican researchers and discuss potential opportunities to reignite cross-border cooperation on geothermal energy, which is one of EESA's research focus areas within the Energy Geosciences Division.

Dobson's activities at CICESE, a well-regarded scientific institution that belongs to the network of research centers of the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT), included interactions with graduate students and researchers, lectures, a meeting with officials from the Geothermal Group of the Federal Electricity Commission at the Cerro Prieto plant and a visit to the Mexican Center for Innovation and Geothermal Energy.

Dobson's stay at CICESE sets the stage to a renewed partnership between Berkeley Lab and Mexican institutions to harness the potential of geothermal energy in Mexico. He plans to host two graduate students from CICESE later this year to continue this collaboration.

A report by the Fulbright program on this collaboration can be read here.

Berkeley Lab scientist Pat Dobson [center] with a group of CICESE graduate students at the Uruapan hot springs in Baja California