Hawaiian Electric

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Hawaiian Electric selects 16 projects in largest quest for renewable energy, energy storage for 3 islands

Plan accelerates clean energy transition for O‘ahu, Maui, Hawai‘i Island

HONOLULU, MAY 11, 2020 – Sixteen solar-plus-storage or standalone storage projects on three islands have been selected in the latest phase of Hawaiian Electric's transition to using 100 percent renewable energy to generate electricity by 2045.

The projects, selected after a competitive evaluation that was part of the largest renewable energy procurement ever undertaken in Hawai‘i, could produce 460 megawatts of solar energy and nearly 3 gigawatt-hours of energy storage on O‘ahu, Maui and Hawai‘i Island. That would increase the total solar megawatts on the Hawaiian Electric system by more than 50 percent.

Hawaiian Electric will now enter contract negotiations with the developers, who will begin outreach to the communities where they plan to build. The sizes and locations of the projects will be made public in 30 days or sooner if some developers start their community engagement efforts immediately. All contracts must be approved by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

“We went big with the scope of this request for proposals to see what the renewable energy market would support and to ensure lots of competition,” said Jim Alberts, Hawaiian Electric senior vice president for business development and strategic planning. “The projects chosen provide the best opportunity for customer savings and realistic timelines for completion so we can keep our clean energy transition on track.”

The projects are:

- On O‘ahu, eight solar-plus-storage projects and one standalone storage project totaling approximately 287 MW of generation and 1.8 GWh of storage
- On Maui Island, three solar-plus-storage projects and one standalone storage project totaling approximately 100 MW of generation and 560 MWh of storage
- On Hawai‘i Island, two solar-plus-storage projects and one standalone storage project totaling approximately 72 MW of generation and 492 MWh of storage

Energy storage, whether charged from solar panels or the electric grid, captures electricity for use in the evening or other times when the sun isn't shining. This is essential to replace firm fossil-fuel generation that can generate electricity around the clock.

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Among the criteria for selection were price, location, technology and a plan for meaningful community engagement by the developer.

“Even though these are all solar or low-profile storage projects, we know there’s increasing concern about the location of renewable energy projects,” Alberts said. “That’s why we say we need everyone working together – developers, government, communities and Hawaiian Electric – if we’re going to meet our clean energy goals.”

Two projects proposed by Hawaiian Electric were among those selected: a 40-MW, 160-MWh standalone energy storage system on Maui and a 12-MW, 12-MWh storage system on Hawai‘i Island. Two projects proposed by Hawaiian Electric on O‘ahu and a separate project proposed for Hawai‘i Island were not selected.

Independent observers and a technical adviser were selected by the PUC to assure that all proposals – including "self-build" projects proposed by Hawaiian Electric – were reviewed fairly and objectively.

Depending on the length of the economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, delays in bringing the projects online are possible. The timeline for these projects assumes the first will become operational in 2022.

Approximately 900 megawatts of new renewables or renewables paired with storage were sought in the request for proposals issued by Hawaiian Electric in August 2019. All technologies were eligible. At the time, it was the largest single renewable energy procurement effort in Hawai‘i and among the largest by any U.S. utility.

In the earlier procurement phase, completed in 2018, regulators approved seven projects on O‘ahu, Maui and Hawai‘i Island that will add approximately 260 megawatts of solar energy with over 1 gigawatt-hour of storage.

Proposals for Moloka‘i and Lāna‘i have later deadlines than for the other islands. Information for those islands will be released this summer.

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