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2 Kaua'i renewable energy projects receive PUC approval

Līhu'e, Kaua'i, HI - 3/22/16 – The Hawai'i Public Utilities Commission has approved two projects that will enable Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) to use renewable resources to generate 50 percent of Kaua'i's electricity by the end of the decade.

The two projects represent the latest in technology – a unique solar plus energy storage system – as well as the time-tested value and reliability of hydroelectricity.

The power purchase agreements approved by the PUC are:

SolarCity solar array plus Tesla battery storage system. The project is believed to be the first utility-scale solar array and battery storage system in the U.S. to provide dispatchable solar energy for use hours after sunset. Under a 20-year contract between KIUC and SolarCity, the Tesla Powerpack lithium-ion battery storage system will feed up to 13 megawatts of electricity onto the grid to “shave” the amount of conventional power generation needed to meet peak demand in the evening from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Gay & Robinson hydroelectric project. Gay & Robinson, a 152-year-old kama'aina landowner on Kaua'i's westside, plans to build a 6-megawatt hydroelectric plant below its existing 1.3-megawatt plant on the Olokele Ditch and sell power to KIUC under a 25-year contract. The project is the first new utility-scale hydroelectric plant to be built on Kaua'i in more than 80 years. When completed in 2019, the project will reduce KIUC's oil consumption by 1.4 million gallons a year.

The SolarCity project and the G & R hydro project will each contribute about 5 percent of the electricity generated by renewable resources on Kaua'i.

“No one thinks oil will stay cheap forever, so we're not backing off on our strategy to diversify our portfolio of renewables as quickly and cost-effectively as possible,” said David Bissell, president and CEO of KIUC.

Renewable resources are now nearly 40 percent of KIUC's fuel mix for generating electricity, up from 8 percent in 2010.

KIUC's strategic plan calls for the cooperative to use renewable resources to generate at least 50 percent of its electricity by 2023. The cooperative is on track to reach that goal by 2019.

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