

Hawai'i's First Utility Scale Solar-Plus-Battery Storage System
Is Energized on Kaua'i

Līhu'e, Kaua'i, HI – 03/08/2017 – Dignitaries from throughout the state were on-hand today for the blessing of the state's first dispatchable solar energy plant; marking the first time a utility has contracted for a system of this scale that stores and delivers solar energy after sunset.

The project, commissioned by Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative and owned by Tesla, Inc., is located on 50 acres of land in Kapaia owned by Grove Farm. The plant will feed up to 13 megawatts of electricity into Kaua'i's grid to meet peak demand in the evening hours, utilizing the 52 MWh Tesla Powerpack lithium-ion battery storage system.

“The importance of this project for the member-owners of KIUC can't be overstated,” said the cooperative's President and Chief Executive Officer David Bissell. “By using solar energy stored in the battery after the sun goes down, we will reduce our use of imported fuels and our greenhouse gas emissions significantly.”

Tesla's Chief Technical Officer and co-founder, J.B. Straubel, attended today's event. He remarked that this is a “future” project that enables communities to reach 100 percent renewable. “For the first time, solar power can deliver 24 hours a day and follow the load when it is needed by the utility,” he said.

Bissell estimates that the project will displace the use of 1.6 million gallons of diesel annually for KIUC, and will bring the cooperative to more than 40 percent renewable generation. Bissell noted that the project also makes financial sense for KIUC: under the terms of the 20-year contract, KIUC will pay Tesla 13.9 cents per kilowatt hour, which is less than the current cost of oil.

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Attending today's ceremony were Governor David Ige, Senate President Ron Kouchi, State Representative James Tokioka, Mayor Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr., Commissioners Lorraine Akiba and Thomas Gorak from the Public Utilities Commission, and representatives for U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono, Senator Brian Schatz and Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard.

The solar array and battery storage facility is located on 50 acres of land owned by Grove Farm Company, Inc. adjacent to KIUC's Kapaia power station off Mā'alo Road, just north of Līhu'e. An open house will be held on Saturday, March 11 from 9-11 a.m., for members of the community who would like to tour the facility and view the latest Tesla models.

About KIUC

KIUC is a member-owned cooperative serving 33,000 customers on the island of Kaua'i. Formed in 2002 and governed by a nine-member, elected board of directors, KIUC is one of 930 electric co-ops serving more than 36 million members in 47 states. KIUC's Board of Directors has set a strategic goal of reaching 70 percent renewable generation by the year 2030. Currently, KIUC derives more than 40 percent of its power from renewable sources.

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L-R: Sabra Kauka, J.B. Straubel, Jan TenBruggencate (KIUC Board Chair), David Bissell, Mayor Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr., Governor David Ige, Representative James Tokioka, Senate President Ron Kouchi

Photo credit: Reyton Siliado



Aerial photo of Tesla Solar Plant, Kapaia, Kaua'i

Photo credit: Tesla