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Hawaii's Kapolei to get at least 1 solar farm

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What would be the state's largest stand-alone solar energy production farm is to be built by a subsidiary of Hoku Scientific Inc. on 12 acres of James Campbell Co. land next to Campbell Industrial Park.

An announcement was expected to be made today.

The production system at the Kapolei Sustainable Energy Park would be capable of generating approximately 1.5 megawatts of photovoltaic power. Officials at Hoku Solar Inc. estimate that over the 25-year life of the system, it would produce enough electricity for approximately 6,700 homes for one year.

The park would be in Campbell's planned Kapolei Harborside Industrial Park, a 345-acre light industrial and business park bordered by Campbell Industrial Park, Kapolei Business Park and Kalaeloa Harbor.

At an unrelated press conference on Friday, Office of Hawaiian Affairs officials said they are also eyeing producing solar energy in the Kapolei-Kalaeloa region. The 110-acre former Campbell feed lot in Kalaeloa is among three parcels that would be handed over to OHA by the state as part of a \$200 million ceded lands revenue settlement, a plan that still must be approved by the Legislature.

As for the Campbell-Hoku Solar venture, a nonbinding agreement that is subject to conditions and government approvals has been signed.

The site includes an area that is a capped, former hazardous waste pile and clearance must be obtained by the state Health Department before the project can begin. Campbell has cleaned up the site, which was used as a waste disposal area for the now-defunct Hawaiian Western Steel, and the Health Department has proclaimed that "no further action" is necessary.

Hoku Solar would be responsible for designing, engineering, financing, procuring, installing and operating the solar facility. The company would lease the property from Campbell, which has also promised to help market the energy.

Hoku Solar provides turnkey photovoltaic system installations in Hawai'i for commercial and residential applications. This would be the company's first development of a photovoltaic energy farm and it would rank among the largest in the country. Hoku Solar officials believe only one such photovoltaic farm exists in Hawai'i — a 1.75-kilowatt system at Waimea's Parker Ranch on the Big Island that was installed in 2001.

Scott Paul, Hoku Scientific vice president and general counsel, estimated the cost of the new development at \$10 million to \$15 million.

"We applaud James Campbell Company's vision and commitment to sustainability in Hawai'i," said Dustin Shindo, chairman, president and chief executive of Hoku Scientific, in a statement. "We look forward to working with them as we pursue the solar farm concept."

Campbell officials said that the solar farm is part of a larger effort that it and subsidiary Kapolei Property Development hope will make O'ahu's Second City "a model for sustainable development."

Said Campbell president and CEO Steve MacMillan: "This is just one of many steps we have been and will be taking to actively reduce Kapolei's carbon footprint. We intend to do more to make Kapolei 'green' and are currently looking at additional sites in Kapolei that would be suitable for alternative energy projects."

Campbell's urban design plan for Kapolei encourages energy-efficient buildings, as well as walking and biking, Campbell officials said.

Hoku and Campbell are looking at different uses for the electricity that will be generated, which may include selling the generated power to adjacent commercial users.

Contingent on receiving the necessary approvals and agreements, Hoku and the Campbell Co. plan to have the system installed by the end of this year. The facility is permitted on agriculturally zoned lands but a conditional use permit would need to be obtained.

Lynne Unemori, Hawaiian Electric Co. vice president of corporate relations, applauded the move.

"This large PV project and many others we know are in the planning stages confirm our view that with everyone working together, we can gain more energy security for Hawai'i," she said.

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Hoku Solar's 12-acre solar farm would rank among the U.S.'s largest.

Courtesy of the James Campbell Co.



Dustin Shindo