

Thursday, September 14, 2006



West Hawaii Today

News from the Big Island



83

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e-Edition

Local News

Local Features

Obituaries

Archives

Photo Galleries

Volcano Update

Special Reports

Sports

Local Sports

Big Fish List

Opinion

Letters - Your Voice

Editorial

Columns

Forums

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Classifieds

Submit your Ad

Announcements

Automobiles

Employment

Instructions

Miscellaneous

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Services

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Archives

South Point wind farm will power 10,000 homes

by Nancy Cook Lauer
Stephens Capitol Bureau
nclauer@stephensmedia.com

Thursday, September 14, 2006 8:33 AM HST

HONOLULU -- Blades from India. Hubs from Germany. Turbine towers from China.

This "United Nations of turbine supply" will be landing at Hilo Harbor during the next few weeks and then heading to South Point for installation in the newest renewable energy facility in the state.

Fourteen 1.5-megawatt wind turbines will generate enough power for 10,000 homes when the new Pakini Nui wind farm is completed in mid-March, officials said at a news conference Wednesday.

The project will result in 160,000 fewer barrels of fossil fuels burned each year, reducing the state's dependence on imports while lowering air pollution, especially in the Kona area, said Tony Pace, CEO of Apollo Power Corp., the project developer.

It should thrust the Big Island into the forefront of energy self-sufficiency in Hawaii.

"For the Big Island, for the island of Hawaii, they're well on their way to being the most energy-efficient and self-sufficient island in the state," said state Sen. Kalani English, D-East Maui, Molokai, Lanai, who a chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy, Environment and International Affairs pressed for change legislation to make renewable energy feasible.

The state has set a goal of having 20 percent of its energy come from renewable sources by 2020.

Apollo Power will sell the electricity to Hawaii Electric Co., which is required by state law to purchase the power.

Pace declined to say how much the project costs or when it will be expected to generate a profit.



In this undated digital simulation created by Wind Engineers Inc., and provided by GE Energy Financial Services, the planned 21-megawatt Pakini Nui Wind Project at South Point on the Big Island in Hawaii is shown. The wind farm, scheduled to go online in March 2007, will generate enough power for 10,000 homes. - Courtesy Of GE Energy Financial Services

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The 21-megawatt Pakini Nui joins the 10-megawatt Upolu Point wind farm, which began operation in February. The Big Island's entire power grid consists of fewer than 300 megawatts.

A 30-megawatt wind farm began operation on Maui this summer and another 40-megawatt farm is in the works for the island.

GE Energy Financial Services is providing financing in addition to the equipment. The company has invested about \$1 billion worldwide in wind, solar and geothermal energy. The new Hawaii project is the 15th equity investment it's made, said GE Senior Vice President Andy Katell.

"These are some of the best wind conditions that GE has seen in the entire world," Katell said. "When the strong, warm ocean breeze that creates the waves blows onto South Point, we will be there to catch it. Hawaii and GE are tilting toward windmills."

Pakini Nui, to be located in the center of a 21-acre tract of Bishop Estates land that stretches from Highway 11 to the ocean, is being praised by the industry and environmentalists alike.

Unlike the Upolu Point facility, which has been criticized by neighbors because of red lights atop its turbines, Pakini Nui is expected to draw little controversy.

There are only five or six homes within 1 1/2 miles, and the new facility is close to Kamaoa Wind Farm, which was shut down Aug. 14.

Contractors had to alter a curve on Highway 11 near Kamaoa Road and the turn from Highway 11 onto South Point Road to accommodate the large windmill pieces. The blades for the 14 windmills measure almost 112 feet in length. The towers will be moved in three pieces, the longest almost 100 feet.

"Some people don't like the way windmills look," said Kat Brady, a lobbyist for Life of the Land environmental group. "I love the way they look because this is the future and we're thinking of your children. I look at it, it's a sign of hope."

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concerned wrote on **September 14, 2006 7:53 PM:**

"Correction - The project will POTENTIALLY result in UP TO 160,000 fewer barrels of fossil fuels burned each year. What studies is Mr. Pace referring to to say that pollution in Kona will be reduced? Wind power is not a panacea to solve energy woes, but a mere supplement."


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