

Kahuku wind farm developer touts low electric bills

By Kathryn Mykleseeth
POSTED: 1:30 a.m. HST, Jun 18, 2015



Na Pua Makani Power Partners plans to open a second wind farm in Kahuku. Thomas Narvaez, a resident that farms nearby, walked along a ridgeline Wednesday near the proposed site.

Na Pua Makani Power Partners LLC countered recent community opposition to a second wind farm in Kahuku Wednesday by saying the new turbines will lower electricity bills.

The company added that the wind farm will be placed far enough from residents to have minimal visual and noise impact.

Na Pua Makani Power Partners, a subsidiary of California-based Champlin/GEI Wind Holdings LLC, made its case for the 25-megawatt wind project at a media event at the planned sites for up to 10 wind turbines, set to begin construction early 2016.

Hawaii residents will benefit from the lower cost of energy generated by the wind farm, said Scott Bradshaw, community outreach specialist for the project.

"This will help the environment and save residents of Hawaii money in the long term," Bradshaw said. "We live on an island. We all have to do our part."

Na Pua Makani's wind project would be the second wind farm in Kahuku and the third on the North Shore. Both wind farms currently operating are owned by Maryland Heights, Mo.-based SunEdison. The 69-megawatt Kawaiolo Wind project northeast of Haleiwa was completed in November 2012, and the 30-megawatt Kahuku Wind farm was completed in March 2011.

Kahuku residents have voiced concern about the location of the latest wind turbines. The visual impact and noise of the turbines were two issues residents said they were concerned about at the company's last public meeting held at the Kahuku Village Association Community Center on June 5.

Na Pua Makani officials said the company has moved the projects back farther from the community than required. The minimum setback is 512 feet, according to Honolulu City and County rules. The nearest homes are 2,000 feet away, the company said. Kahuku Elementary School is 2,205 feet away, according to Na Pua Makani.

"The company has moved them (the planned wind turbines) back six times, listening to community concerns," Bradshaw said.

Bradshaw said the company has pushed the wind farm as far back as possible, as the U.S. Army owns the land behind the project.

Community members have said they were worried about the wind project's visual impact and the effect the wind turbines would have on birds and the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat.

The company will host a final public meeting to present the draft of the project's Environmental Impact Statement on Tuesday at the Kahuku Village Association Community Center at 6 p.m.

Federal and state agencies have to approve the environmental impact draft. The company also needs to apply for a building permit before construction can begin.

The Public Utilities Commission approved a power purchasing agreement for the project in January. The planned wind farm will supply energy to Hawaiian Electric Co. at 15 cents per kilowatt-hour over the next 20 years, according to the contract.