

## News Release

County of Hawaii  
Office of the Mayor

# Geothermal working group organized

Thursday, June 3, 2010

A working group established by state lawmakers to evaluate the potential for new geothermal development in the County of Hawaii held its first meeting in Mayor Billy Kenoi's office in the County Building on Wednesday.

The 11-member working group was created under Senate Concurrent Resolution 99 (SCR 99), which asks the County to convene the group to evaluate the potential of geothermal to serve as the primary energy source for electricity in the County of Hawaii.

Geothermal is a proven renewable resource in the County of Hawaii, where the first geothermal power plant began producing electricity in 1981. Puna Geothermal Venture has a contract to provide 30 megawatts of geothermal power to Hawaii Electric Light Co., and is negotiating for a new contract to sell the utility an additional 8 megawatts.

In 2009, PGV's Pohoiki power plant accounted for 13.9 percent of the electricity produced in the County of Hawaii. Overall, about 30 percent of the electricity produced in the County in 2009 came from renewable sources including geothermal.

Geothermal energy offers a viable way to achieve the goal set in the state's Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative that the state obtain 70 percent of its energy from renewable energy sources by 2030, according to the resolution that established the working group.

"Geothermal is a gift," said Richard Ha, president of Hamakua Springs Country Farms and co-chair of the new geothermal working group. "It is proven technology, it is cheap, and if we use it wisely, it will protect all of us from rising oil prices."

"When it comes to geothermal, we've heard a thousand reasons why 'no can' " said Wallace A. Ishibashi, Jr., co-chair of the geothermal working group and Hawaii Division business agent for ILWU Local 142. "What we need now is to find out how we can, and to move geothermal forward together."

The resolution instructs the working group to develop a feasibility and cost-benefit analysis for new development of geothermal, including an analysis of community, environmental and economic benefits.

The resolution also instructs the working group to consider the potential impacts of expanding geothermal production on native forests, wildlife habitat and Native Hawaiian values and practices. The group is to recommend steps that can be taken to mitigate any adverse impact from geothermal development.

The resolution creating the geothermal working group was approved by a vote of 23-2 in the state Senate, and was unanimously approved in the state House of Representatives.

“There is broad-based community support for this initiative because people recognize that we must find new ways to promote energy independence, and must find ways to protect our environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions,” said state Sen. Russell Kokubun, who introduced the resolution with other members of the Senate. “I want to thank Richard and Wally for their work on this important effort.”

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