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Big Island Co-op's Clean Energy Plan

The Hawaii Island Energy Cooperative says the county can be nearly 100 percent renewable, at a savings, by 2045.

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The Hawaii Island Energy Cooperative has produced a plan that it says could satisfy nearly 100 percent of the Big Island's electricity needs with renewable energy before 2045.

According to a February 10 statement from the co-op, its power plan would — if it were put in place — “move the Big Island faster and cheaper toward cost-effective clean energies.”

For the non-profit co-op to take action, it would need to take ownership of the Hawaii Electric Light Co. But there has been no public indication that the Big Island utility will be broken off from the Hawaiian Electric Co.

Similarly, NextEra Energy, which is seeking a green light from regulators to buy Hawaiian Electric, has said that it has no intention of selling off any part of the power company for at least a decade.

To put the plan together, the co-op analyzed the Big Island's existing alternative energy materials, the potential for new solar and wind energy generation, and energy storage possibilities.

Their conclusion is that by expanding rooftop solar and wind power, and investing in utility-scale energy storage, they can achieve “a less expensive and cleaner alternative to previous plans” — including those involving importing liquefied natural gas into the state to generate electricity.

The co-op also highlighted the possibility of geothermal energy coming on line, if that is what the membership of the co-op and the elected board decides to pursue.