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Honolulu Seawater A/C project clears federal environmental hurdle

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The long-planned \$250 million Honolulu Seawater Air Conditioning project cleared a major environmental milestone on Monday when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' issued a record of decision.

The Honolulu-based company, which is majority owned by **eBay** founder [Pierre Omidyar](#)'s Ulupono Initiative, said Monday that the decision signifies the satisfactory completion of the federal environmental impact statement process for the installation and operation of seawater intake and return pipes off Oahu's South Shore.

"This is a huge milestone," [Eric Masutomi](#), president and CEO of Honolulu Seawater Air Conditioning LLC, said in a statement. "Not only for our HSWAC team and the USACE District Office, but for all those who support and are committed to a clean-energy future for Hawaii, especially our customers."

With a review process spanning six years, the issuance of the record of decision marks the conclusion to one of the longest environmental reviews undertaken by the Army Corps of Engineers in Hawaii.

The corps is required by law to complete an environmental impact statement that takes into account economic, environmental and other pertinent factors for the parts of the project that are in U.S. waters.

"The ... process is one of the most thorough regulatory examinations available and we are very pleased to receive a [record of decision] from the USACE that signals its completion," Masutomi said. "We are excited and looking forward to the start of construction later this year on one of the largest energy-efficiency projects the state has ever seen."

Scheduled for completion in early 2017, the system will produce enough chilled fresh water to supply roughly half of Downtown Honolulu's cooling needs.

Honolulu Seawater Air Conditioning's customers include The Queen's Medical Center, Central Pacific Plaza, Hawaiian Electric Co., Finance Factors, First Hawaiian Center, Alakea Corporate Tower, One Waterfront Towers and the Prince Jonah Kuhio Kalaniana'ole Federal Building and Courthouse, its first federal government customer.

The project aims to reduce electricity consumption for cooling by more than 75 percent and save an estimated 77 million kilowatt-hours of power a year, which is equivalent to a 20-megawatt wind farm or a 40-megawatt solar farm.

The system [will provide](#) air-conditioning to buildings by pulling cold deep seawater through a pipeline from more than four miles offshore into a cooling station in Kakaako.

Duane Shimogawa covers energy, real estate and economic development for Pacific Business News.