



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Innovative UAV technology keeps solar energy project cost effective**

**Ewa Beach, HI, Aug. 28, 2017** – An innovative magnetic survey using a high performance unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) has been deployed by Hawaiian Electric at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam’s West Loch Annex as part of a pre-construction environmental assessment for a 20-megawatt solar energy facility. This is the first time a UAV geophysics system has been used by a commercial entity in Hawai‘i to detect buried metal objects such as steel drums and unexploded ordnance.

Hawaiian Electric’s UAS Program team worked in close coordination with Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and the UAV contractor to ensure compliance with all Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, and secured the necessary approvals for the survey.

“UAV borne magnetic surveys are less expensive than conventional ground surveys and can be carried out in areas that are dangerous or remote,” said John Lu‘uwai, Hawaiian Electric project developer. “At West Loch, what would typically take several weeks or more to complete was accomplished in three days without needing to clear the heavy vegetation and rocks from the 102-acre site.”

The state-of-the-art UAV was outfitted with a sophisticated magnetometer, a device used to measure variations in the magnetic field below ground, and flown about 30 feet above ground surface in a “mow-the-sky” pattern across the dusty terrain and trees. With six batteries that can be fully recharged simultaneously in 20 minutes and a dust-proof propulsion system, the UAV was able to run multiple flights reliably for extended periods of time covering roughly 50 acres per day.

Results of the magnetic survey will be used to determine which areas will need further investigation and removal of any identified metal waste before construction on the solar energy facility is expected to start in January 2018, with the project in service by December 2018. The \$67 million project is a joint effort with the Department of the Navy, and Hawaiian Electric will build, own and operate the solar facility at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. It is expected to be the lowest cost solar energy project in Hawai‘i.

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