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Seawater A/C project could begin this spring

\$150 million system for downtown Honolulu will create 950 jobs

Premium content from Pacific Business News by Lynn Nakagawa, Reporter

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First introduced in Hawaii in 2006, a \$150 million system to cool downtown Honolulu buildings with seawater is moving forward with major construction bids due in February and work slated to start in May.

Construction work is expected to take 19 months and create 950 jobs, said [Bill Mahlum](#), president and CEO of the developer, **Honolulu Seawater Air Conditioning**.

The company currently is accepting bids for construction of its cooling station and installation of the system's distribution pipes. The bids are due Feb. 7 and Feb. 14, respectively.

At least three Hawaii companies are bidding for the work.

"We are planning to bid on the cooling station and distribution work," said [Bill Wilson](#), president of **Hawaiian Dredging Construction Co.**

Nordic PCL Construction and dck Pacific Construction also confirmed plans to bid on the cooling station work. Watts Constructors had planned to bid but now says it will not do so.

General contractors that don't bid on the project are likely be hired as subcontractors, Honolulu Seawater Air Conditioning executives say. The company also will hire a project manager and is

working with Kiewit Infrastructure West Co. for construction advice.

The project will draw cold, deep seawater from 4.5 miles off Oahu's southern coast into a cooling station behind the Gold Bond Building on Ala Moana Boulevard. The seawater then will pass through heat exchangers and be dispensed through a network of distribution pipes to downtown buildings.

Construction work will include the installation of 15,000 feet of pipeline from the cooling station to the downtown Honolulu streets. Work is expected to involve at least 12 streets and their intersections, including Bishop and Alakea streets and part of Nimitz Highway.

Mahlum said work is expected to be "minimally disruptive" because of the sequence of construction, working with traffic flow, and hours of work.

"All that is designed to make it work as quickly and efficiently as possible," he said.

Honolulu Seawater Air Conditioning has about 40 customers that plan to utilize the service, including **Hawaiian Electric Co.**, which signed a contract in December 2011 to service its four-story Richards Street office building. The system is expected to reduce the building's energy use by 20 percent, according to HECO spokesman [Peter Rosegg](#).

HECO previously sent letters to owners of downtown buildings suggesting they sign up for service.

"You should never ask somebody something you wouldn't be willing to do yourself," said [Robbie Alm](#), HECO's executive vice president. "All we're using is a product that already exists and making use of it to save energy."

In 2008, **First Hawaiian Bank** was one of the first to sign a multiyear contract with Honolulu Seawater Air Conditioning to use the renewable-energy system.

"The green nature of the project, combined with its potential to directly and indirectly create new jobs and contribute to our state's economy, make it an important addition to our local community," First Hawaiian Bank spokesman [Brandt Farias](#) said.

Honolulu Seawater Air Conditioning LLC *Developer of building cooling systems using seawater*

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Lynn Nakagawa covers labor and workplace issues, banking and finance, higher education and technology for Pacific Business News.