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NRC to issue Levy County new nuclear reactor licenses

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LEVY COUNTY -- A Thursday (Oct. 20) press release from the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) provided by Scott Burnell of the NRC Office of Public Affairs in Washington, D.C., shows hope for significant economic growth in southern Levy County.

However, just as Chiefland has long hoped for a hospital that has not yet appeared, this future of two nuclear power plants in southern Levy County is not firm yet either.

Duke Energy Florida (DEF) just received the news itself about the approval, and so it is very early in the process going forward now. Building nuclear power plants is an extremely expensive gamble by corporations.

Right now, the NRC has provided DEF with the authority to begin construction of the two nuclear power plants. The current construction license permit does not have an expiration date - given that all of the supporting facts remain the same, Burnell said in a telephone interview on Friday morning (Oct. 21).

These two nuclear power plants that might be finished in as few as 10 to 15 years after construction begins are not under construction yet, and DEF has made no announcement of a firm plan to build them yet.

Rick Rhodes of the Duke Corporate Communications Office shared the company's perspective on the NRC announcement in a telephone interview on Friday morning (Oct. 21).

Rhodes said Duke is pleased with the outcome of the NRC review and the regulatory commissioners' choice to license the construction of the two electrical generation plants.

The company will look at all of the factors and make its decisions regarding if or when to build those plants based on what Duke sees as best for the customers, Rhodes said.

The company will look at the projected needs for Florida's electricity, the projected fuel costs, and the legislation for cost recovery as some of the many aspects to consider before starting construction.

The company spokesman mentioned that DEF is currently building a natural gas plant to generate electricity at its Crystal River location.

The link to read all about that project is available by clicking [HERE](#).

DEF, like other electric-generating interests, considers various forms of fuel to convert into electricity – hydro-electric turbines, wind turbines, solar panels, crude oil, coal, natural gas and nuclear fission.

Using nuclear power as a source to create electricity is an option Duke can consider as it goes forward with new electric generation plants in Florida, Rhodes said.

As for Levy County being the site for two nuclear power generators, the site that is under consideration is north of Inglis and south of Gulf Hammock on the east side of U.S. Highway 19.

As Burnell noted in a press release from yesterday (Oct. 20), though, the NRC has cleared the way for the agency's Office of New Reactors to issue two Combined Licenses (COLs) for Duke Energy's Levy County site in Florida.

Based on the mandatory hearing on Duke's application, the Commission found the staff's review adequate to make the necessary regulatory safety and environmental findings.

One hearing was on July 28 and the public is able to watch and listen to that hearing on any computer with Flash software by clicking [HERE](#).

If this link does not work, go to <http://www.nrc.gov/>. Then go to "NRC Library" and click on the slide down tag "Photos and Video." Then find "Webcast Portal/Video Archive" and click on that underlined set of words. Scroll down to "7/28/16" and select the format to view the video and watch it.

Following the Commissioners' direction, Burnell said, the NRC staff will work to issue the COLs promptly.

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The licenses will authorize Duke Energy Florida to build and operate two AP1000 reactors at the site, near Inglis in Levy County. The staff will impose conditions on the license, including:

- Specific actions associated with the agency's post-Fukushima requirements for mitigation strategies and spent fuel pool instrumentation; and
- A pre-startup schedule for implementing post-Fukushima aspects of the new reactors' emergency preparedness plans and procedures.

Progress Energy Florida (now Duke Energy Florida) submitted its COL application for Levy County on July 30, 2008, Burnell said.

The NRC's Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards independently reviewed those aspects of the Levy County application that concern safety, Burnell said.

The committee provided the results of its review to the Commission on Dec. 7, 2011, and provided the results of its review of several exemption requests on April 18, 2016, Burnell said.

The NRC completed its environmental review and issued the final environmental impact statement for the proposed Levy County reactors in April 2012, Burnell said. The NRC certified the amended 1,100-megawatt AP1000 design in 2012, Burnell said.