BEFORE THE 1 FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION 2 3 In the Matter of: DOCKET NO. 060162-EI PETITION BY PROGRESS ENERGY FLORIDA, 4 INC. FOR APPROVAL TO RECOVER MODULAR COOLING TOWER COSTS THROUGH 5 ENVIRONMENTAL COST RECOVERY CLAUSE. 6 7 8 9 10 ELECTRONIC VERSIONS OF THIS TRANSCRIPT ARE 11 A CONVENIENCE COPY ONLY AND ARE NOT THE OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT OF THE HEARING, 12 THE .PDF VERSION INCLUDES PREFILED TESTIMONY. 13 14 15 PROCEEDINGS: AGENDA CONFERENCE ITEM NO. 6 16 17 BEFORE: CHAIRMAN LISA POLAK EDGAR COMMISSIONER MATTHEW M. CARTER, II COMMISSIONER KATRINA J. McMURRIAN 18 COMMISSIONER NANCY ARGENZIANO 19 COMMISSIONER NATHAN A. SKOP 20 DATE: Tuesday, August 14, 2007 21 PLACE: Betty Easley Conference Center Room 148 4075 Esplanade Way 22 Tallahassee, Florida 23 REPORTED BY: JANE FAUROT, RPR 24 Official FPSC Reporter (850) 413-6732 25

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MARTHA BROWN, ESQUIRE, and BILL McNULTY, representing the Florida Public Service Commission Staff.

1 PROCEEDINGS

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: We will be, Commissioners, on Item 6, and we will give just a moment for our staff to switch out and get their papers in order.

(Pause.)

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: I could use a stretch actually and clear the cobwebs a little bit. So why don't we take about five minutes, and then we will come back. I do note, of course, for the record that this is a post-hearing decision limited to discussion by Commissioners and staff, and we will come back in about five minutes.

(Recess.)

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. We will go back on the record, and we are on Item 6.

MS. BROWN: Good morning, Commissioners. Martha Brown from Legal staff.

Item 6 is staff's post-hearing recommendation on Progress Energy's request to recover the costs of its temporary modular cooling tower project at Crystal River through either the Environmental Cost-Recovery Clause or the fuel clause.

Staff has recommended that the costs associated with the project are appropriate for recovery through the ECRC. We are here to answer any questions you may have, or we can go issue-by-issue addressing each subissue in Issue 1, if you like, whatever is your pleasure.

1 CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you.

Commissioners, do you have a preference as to how to proceed? No.

Why don't you, Ms. Brown, or whoever would be the appropriate other staff person, go ahead and lay out Issue 1 for us.

MS. BROWN: All right, Commissioner.

Issue 1 states what is the appropriate mechanism to recover the prudently occurred costs of Progress Energy's temporary cooling tower project. It's divided into three subissues. The first is should PEF recover the costs through the Environmental Cost-Recovery Clause, through base rates, and then C is through the fuel cost-recovery clause. Staff has recommended that the appropriate mechanism is through the Environmental Cost-Recovery Clause, not through base rates or the fuel clause.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioners, questions or discussion?

Commissioner Skop.

COMMISSIONER SKOP: Thank you, Madam Chair.

A question of staff. With respect to the petition for the cost-recovery, just on the technical side of the issue, basically the petition is based on meeting an environmental requirement, is that correct?

MS. BROWN: Yes, that's correct.

recollection of reading the item is that essentially it is the inlet water temperature, the heating of the cooling canal in the Gulf, the water is hotter than anticipated and they are not able to put as much heat content into the water and then discharge it because of the high inlet water temperature, is that correct?

MS. BROWN: Yes, that's correct. And as a result of that, they run the risk of coming up against their wastewater discharge permit. And if they exceed that temperature, they have to derate the plant.

COMMISSIONER SKOP: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner McMurrian.

COMMISSIONER McMURRIAN: Chairman, I don't really have a question. I guess I was just going to say that I'm in agreement with staff's recommendation about recovery through the Environmental Cost-Recovery Clause. And if we are all in agreement on that point, then I think at some point we might need to talk about whether or not we need to make any finding with respect to whether it goes through fuel or base rates and some of the discussion in the recommendation.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you.

So let me approach that this way. Ms. Brown, if the staff recommendation were to be adopted on Issue 1, does that include a finding as to B and C? And if it does not, does a

finding need to be made by this Commission on B and C?

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2 MS. BROWN: Let me answer your last question first. I don't think a finding needs to be made on B and C if you are 3 4 all in agreement that it should be recovered through the 5 clause. And if that's the case, because of the way the 6 recommendation is now worded, to include a ruling on B and C, 7 probably you would need to modify your approval of staff's 8 recommendation to say that you are not reaching any conclusion 9 on whether this project should be recovered through the fuel clause or base rates.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner McMurrian, does that respond to the point you're raising?

COMMISSIONER McMURRIAN: Yes, I think it does.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. Thank you.

Commissioners, other questions or discussion?

Commissioner McMurrian, I think that I'm in agreement with the comment that you made. I have spent a lot of time going over this, and in my opinion this does qualify under the statute for recovery under the ECRC, and I also would think that there would be no need or even good reason to make a finding on B and C at this time, if indeed this Commission wants to go that direction.

Commissioner Carter for a question.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: I don't know if I heard properly or not. Ms. Brown, did you say that if we were to adopt staff's recommendation on Issue 1, then we would have to make a separate ruling on base rates in the fuel cost-recovery clause? Is that what you said?

MS. BROWN: No, I said the opposite. I don't think you would have to make a separate finding in those. In fact, probably the order should lay out your reason for approving it under the ECRC and say, therefore, there is no need for us to make a determination on either B or C.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner Carter.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: And this may be something else that I misheard you say. Did you say that based upon the recommendation as it is currently written has information on the base rate and fuel cost-recovery clause?

MS. BROWN: Yes, Commissioner. And so there probably would need to be a modification of that. Approve staff's recommendation on ECRC with the modification that you are not reaching a decision on fuel clause recovery or base rate recovery.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: And, therefore, going along those lines, if we were to proceed that way, then the order would not include the discussion that is included about the fuel clause and base rates.

MS. BROWN: Yes. The base rate discussion, there is some base rate discussion with respect to the ECRC because it is one of the criteria for recovery through the ECRC is that it

not be recovered through base rates. So that should stay in.

Any further discussion, though, I wouldn't include in the order.

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CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. I think I understand your point, and I was probably being too sweeping unintentionally.

So let me try it again this way. The discussions under B and C would not be included in the order.

MS. BROWN: Yes, that's correct.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: All right. Thank you. Commissioner Skop.

COMMISSIONER SKOP: Ladies first. I think
Commissioner Argenziano had a comment.

Just a clarification on a comment that was just made. I am completely on board with the ECRC, and the order not including discussion of B or C. But you mentioned that the statute, or what have you, speaks to the base rates or not including in the base rates, but I just wanted to clarify that, because I did see in the statute on paragraph -- I'm trying to read this, I don't have a really good copy.

MS. BROWN: I think I found it, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER SKOP: Yes. It is the last paragraph right before history, but it does talk about that a decision on one instance doesn't preclude you from reconsidering putting a next instance into another category, is that correct?

MS. BROWN: Yes, I think that's correct. And also

the last sentence in Subsection 2 says an adjustment for the level of costs currently being recovered through base rates or other rate adjustment clauses must be included in the filing.

And the Commission in its Gulf order also addressed that, to make that one of the criteria, that the costs couldn't be presently recovered through base rates.

COMMISSIONER SKOP: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner Argenziano.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: Thank you. For staff, I see that OPC does not agree, and they think that according to their research that the statute demonstrates that the costs were prudently occurred after April 13th, 1993. How do you argue against that saying that the costs don't qualify for the ECRC?

MS. BROWN: I'm not sure I understand your question, but let me give it a shot. The 1993 date is when the statute was enacted and became effective, and both the parties in the case agree that these costs with respect to the cooling towers were incurred after 1993. The dispute is about the date of the permit, the water discharge permit that initially was created in 1988. It has been renewed periodically. It was last renewed in 1995, I think. Or 2005.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: That's not -- I'm sorry, I don't mean to cut you off. OPC thinks -- and have you read their concern regarding --

1 MS. BROWN: Where are you exactly?

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: Position of the parties.

MS. BROWN: Okay.

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COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: There is PEF and then there is OPC.

MS. BROWN: Right.

as ECRC costs pursuant to the Commission's policy defined in Order PSC-94-0044. To qualify costs for recovery through ECRC a utility must demonstrate the costs were prudently incurred after April 13th, '93. The activity is legally required to comply with a government imposed environmental regulation that was enacted, or became effective, or whose effect was triggered after the company's last ten-year upon which rates are based and the costs are not recovered through the same -- excuse me, some other cost-recovery mechanism or through base rates. Have you read through that?

MS. BROWN: Yes, ma'am.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: Can tell me why they are -MS. BROWN: Well, what they are reciting there are
the standards, the criteria that were established by the
Commission in the Gulf order. There are three criteria, and
that the dispute between OPC and Progress here is that these
costs are not appropriate for recovery because they were

triggered -- they weren't triggered after the company's last

test year, and that's because the environmental requirement didn't change from 1988. That's their argument.

We disagree with that argument. We think that the language triggered by encompasses a change in environmental circumstances as well as some sort of environmental requirement that might have stepped up requirements over time. It's an interpretation of that section of the Gulf order, and staff's interpretation is that that language encompasses this set of circumstances. OPC doesn't agree with that. We are recommending our interpretation.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: So their interpretation where they say the triggering event language in the Commission's policy refers to changes in regulatory requirements not operating conditions is not correct?

MS. BROWN: I don't think it's correct. I think it -- first of all, it is a little bit ambiguous, but it also encompasses a great deal more than that. And I think OPC's interpretation wrongly limits the scope of the statute. The statute is even broader than those imposed criteria, in my legal interpretation.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: And, Madam Chair?

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner Argenziano.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: What would the results be if OPC were to prevail as far as saying it should be recovered through rates and not the ECRC on the consumer?

MS. BROWN: Let me respond to that a little bit, and then perhaps staff can jump in, as well. They have the option of shutting down their base load plant and purchasing higher cost power to compensate when the inlet water temperature would increase above 96.5, I think it is. They would have that option, and the result of that would be additional fuel costs

and expenses for the consumer.

With respect to rates, we have the rate person there. I think what would happen, in light of the fact -- and I hope they correct me -- in light of the fact that there is a stipulation between OPC and Progress where their rates are frozen until 2009, I think, probably these costs which are not particularly extensive would be absorbed in existing base rates until they had the opportunity to come in for another rate case. And by that time this project probably would be pretty much over with.

says that to include them in cost-recovery clause, notwithstanding their ineligibility, would impose an unwarranted rate increase on customers. Do we know what the rate increase would be? I'm trying to figure out -- forgive me. As I'm learning this process, I'm trying to figure out which process gives the company their recovery but does not slam the consumer at the same time.

MR. McNULTY: Commissioner, Bill McNulty. The only

thing I can tell you is that the company has estimated these costs at 3 to \$4 million per year after the first year, the first year was a bit more expensive. I think you're interested in these continuing years going forward. And with that in mind, we are talking about a fairly minimal cost level that would be absorbed into rates. This is not a large project, considering the number of customers that's on the system for Progress Energy. They have 1.6 million customers. You're looking at \$4 million, the cost is maybe \$2, \$2 and change per year.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: Through the ECRC.

MR. McNULTY: Well, if you're looking at -- if you're looking at costs through the ECRC, yes. If you're looking at being absorbed into base rates for the duration of the stipulation, then there is no rate effect, if you will, it is presumed to be recovered in the existing rates of the company.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: So then, Madam Chair, OPC is just -- they don't know what they are talking about?

Forgive me, I'm just trying to figure this one out. Because what I am reading and what you are saying are two --

MS. BROWN: Well, you know, they know what they are talking about. They are taking a particular position because they are concerned about the growth of the extent of the clauses, so they are coming forward and presenting that position. You know, in anything you weigh the value of a

particular point of view, and we come down on this other point of view as having more weight than the one OPC is proposing.

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COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: And in my asking questions that's what I'm trying to figure out is where to come down.

Which one does -- I appreciate your answers. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Ms. Brown, your interpretation of the statute, please. If the Commission were to determine that this one or any other petition coming in for recovery under the ECRC, if the Commission were to determine through that petition the request meets the statutory criteria for Environmental Cost-Recovery Clause, is it discretionary upon the Commission whether to allow it, or does the statute require or direct the use of the ECRC if, indeed, the petition meets the requirements?

MS. BROWN: My view, Commissioner, is that the statute requires the Commission to allow recovery through an environmental clause. The utility may propose a petition for recovery of costs through the ECRC. If it meets the standards, the statute says the Commission shall allow recovery of the costs through the ECRC. That magic word shall means there is no discretion.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: Madam Chair?

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner Argenziano.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: It also says under (5) that the recovery of environmental compliance costs under this

section does not preclude inclusion of such costs in base rates and subsequent rate proceedings. So it is not a must. Shall, if that is what you determine, I guess, if the Commission determines, but it doesn't preclude through base rates either.

Am I correct?

MS. BROWN: Yes, I think that's correct. Going forward.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: And that is the point I wanted to make. In my reading of that portion of the statute where it says in subsequent rate proceedings, I think is perhaps important language.

Other questions? Okay.

Commissioner McMurrian, when you are ready.

COMMISSIONER McMURRIAN: I guess this is for staff, and I'm not sure if it is a question or maybe a confirmation that I understood a couple of things correctly. One was with respect to the criteria that are at issue, I just wanted to make sure it's clear. I think there were actually two of the three criteria that OPC took issue with. I think that staff's response focused on the second criteria about the triggering, because I think that was probably the crux of the case. That is where most the arguments were made, and I'm getting a nod from Ms. Brown. And I just wanted to point that out just to be clear.

And the other thing was there was a discussion with

Ms. Brown about a plant could be shut down as an option, and I think we probably need to be clear that OPC wasn't making an argument that the plant be shut down in any way.

MS. BROWN: No, they weren't making that argument.

I was just saying that would be an option that OPC, of course, wouldn't want to take, but it would be one. We have had to do that in 2006.

COMMISSIONER McMURRIAN: Right. I just thought it was worth clarifying, because I think that really hasn't been -- I think the main focus is whether or not the statutory criteria for -- well, the criteria for recovery through the ECRC as laid out in the '94 order, the Gulf order that you called it had been met. And OPC took issue with a couple of those. It seemed that everyone agreed on the first criteria, if I'm correct.

MS. BROWN: Yes, costs incurred after 1993.

COMMISSIONER McMURRIAN: And then most of the discussion focused on the triggering. I personally believe that the criteria have been met, and as I understood the part we were just talking about in the statute, I believe that that was there to say that at some point in the future, after you have put things in the Environmental Cost-Recovery Clause, you were able to roll them into base rates if you had a subsequent rate case. Is that correct?

MS. BROWN: Yes. And I also think it's important to

point out that that would be the utility's choice to make in their new rate case, if they wanted to do that. I'm not sure the Commission would be the one to make that decision, but we would have to decide that going forward, I guess.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: That would be if the

Commission were to determine that those were environmental

costs that, as the OPC -- I mean, the OPC has an argument, and

I agree they are environmental costs, that is how I feel about

it, but looking at OPC's argument, they have an argument also,

and I'm trying to determine, because to me it looks like they

are -- and I'm not hearing their argument, I have to read it.

It looks like they are saying that under the triggering event

that it's regulatory requirements. I mean, changes in

regulatory requirements, not operating conditions. And they go

on to say, you know, why they have a no in that column. And

I'm trying to sit here and figure out, you know, really if

they're correct, who is correct here.

It looks like to me that there is leeway on considering what you think really is environmental and goes through, whether we go through the OPC's suggestion or staff's suggestion. Even though I agree that environmental costs should probably go through the ECRC, I'm just having a hard time determining why their scenario is wrong. And I guess you have told me, but I guess I don't have their argument in

response, so it just looks kind of flexible to me as far as which way the Commission would go in determining whether we shall put it in the ECRC or not.

MS. BROWN: Yes, in determining whether it's appropriate, the project costs are appropriate for recovery, it has always been done on a case-by-case basis. And one of the reasons the statute exists, I believe, is to accommodate changing circumstances in the environmental regulation. And so there is some flexibility there. I would point out, though, that in the recommendation we state that we believe OPC's point of view unduly restricts the scope of the statute, and that's not kosher in administrative law. As you know, the agency has to comply with the statute and can't change it or modify it.

COMMISSIONER ARGENZIANO: Sure. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner Skop.

COMMISSIONER SKOP: At the appropriate time, Madam Chair, I would like to make a motion to approve staff recommendation.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. I will come back to you in a moment, because I think Commissioner McMurrian had a question. So let's take that question, and then, Commissioner Skop, back to you, if that works.

Commissioner McMurrian.

COMMISSIONER McMURRIAN: Thank you. I did have another question for staff along the lines of your discussion

with Commissioner Argenziano. I thought it may be helpful to talk a little bit about some of the other cases and their similarity to this case. Some of the past cases that have been -- perhaps they may shed light on the triggering effect at issue. And maybe if you could just explain, again, sort of Progress's determination of the triggering effect, OPC's interpretation of triggering effect, and why you have interpreted it the way you have and feel like it goes through under that criterion. And then also maybe talk about some of the other cases that are sort of similar to this as far as the triggering effect criteria.

MS. BROWN: I will try in 50 words or less, Commissioner. No, I'm just teasing.

OPC's position is that whose effect is triggered by can only mean that the environmental requirement has stepped in over time, additional requirements. And if there is an increased requirement in the environmental requirement, like some of the clean air amendment has phases to it, that that would be allowed for recovery.

Progress says that the language whose effect is triggered by contemplates change in environmental circumstances that require additional costs to be incurred to remain in compliance with existing environmental requirements. Whether or not the environmental requirement itself is changing if the world changes, and the company needs to respond, then that's

covered. And I believe that the Commission has taken that kind of approach in the past. And starting, basically on Page 8, we discuss several cases where the Commission has approved recovery of costs in order to remain in compliance with existing regulations. Sometimes it's a new project that is designed to do both things, to comply with new environmental requirements and remain in compliance with others.

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In the turtle order FPL installed a new five-inch mesh net in order to remain in compliance with an existing order requiring the net, but it also added a bunch of other things in order to make the net effective and to remain in compliance. So, I would suggest that staff's review of this statute and the Gulf order are more consistent with what the Commission has done in the past.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner McMurrian.

Question. So in the turtle case that you cite that's discussed at the bottom of Page 8 there was no new environmental requirement, it was a previous environmental requirement, but FPL made the decision that they had to add a new net to remain in compliance, and that's similar to this case in that Progress took the action it did in order to remain in compliance with the wastewater or water permit, I'm not sure which one it was now.

MS. BROWN: Yes. The wastewater discharge permit,

yes. That's correct, the NRC permit for the St. Lucie Plant had an Appendix B that required certain actions to be taken to protect endangered sea turtles. And the requirement itself was that a five-inch mesh net be attached over the intake canal to protect the turtles. That had been in existence for quite awhile.

When FPL discovered that the net by itself was not doing the trick, it came in with a new project to put in a new net of stronger material and do reinforcing and dredging and a whole bunch of other things in order to remain in compliance with that Appendix B.

COMMISSIONER McMURRIAN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioners, further questions or comments?

Commissioner Skop.

COMMISSIONER SKOP: Thank you, Madam Chair.

At this time I would like to make a motion to approve staff's recommendation to include the costs for the cooling towers within the ECRC subject to the understanding that the final order will not have any discussion with respect to whether the costs should have been included in the current base rate or the fuel recovery clause.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: And, Commissioner Skop, does that include -- my understanding is that would include Issues 2 and 3 in the staff recommendation, as well, is that correct?

1	COMMISSIONER SKOP: Yes, Madam Chair.
2	CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you.
3	Okay. Commissioners, we have a motion, and
4	Commissioner Carter has given us a second. Is there further
5	discussion? Seeing none. All in favor say aye.
6	(Unanimous affirmative vote.)
7	CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Opposed?
8	Show it adopted. Thank you very much.
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1	STATE OF FLORIDA )
2	: CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER
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4	T TANE BAUDOE DDD Chief Heering Deporter Convige
5	I, JANE FAUROT, RPR, Chief, Hearing Reporter Services Section, FPSC Division of Commission Clerk, do hereby certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the time and place
6	herein stated.
7	IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I stenographically reported the said proceedings; that the same has been
8	transcribed under my direct supervision; and that this transcript constitutes a true transcription of my notes of said
9	proceedings.
LO L1	I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative, employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorney or counsel
L2	connected with the action, nor am I financially interested the action.
L3	DATED THIS 21st day of August, 2007.
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