



August 30, 2011

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State of Florida
Public Service Commission
Attention: Ms. Ann Cole
Commission Clerk
Office of Commission Clerk
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida, 32399-0850

COMMISSION
CLERK

RE: Docket No. 110090-EQ – Petition for approval of negotiated power purchase agreement with U.S. EcoGen Polk, LLC by Progress Energy Florida, Inc.

To Whom It May Concern:

We understand that a Power Purchase Agreement entered into between Progress Energy Florida, Inc. and U.S. EcoGen Polk, LLC, with plans to build a 60 MW biomass electrical generating facility in Polk County, Florida, is currently under review by the Commission.

The Central Florida Regional Planning Council plays a key role in the economic development of the region. The US Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated the Central Florida Regional Planning Council as an Economic Development District (Region VII) in 1976. The District is a mix of urban and rural land and includes the counties of DeSoto, Highlands, Hardee, Okeechobee and Polk. As an Economic Development District, the Council provides assistance to local governments and economic development agencies in securing Economic Development Administration funding for viable projects, and to develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS is an economic development plan designed to bring public and private sectors together to create an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy. It serves as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources.

As the Economic Development District Region VII, we would like to express strong support for U.S. EcoGen Polk, LLC's proposed Polk County project.

The proposed power plant will result in approximately 350 construction jobs lasting up to two years, most of which would go to local workers, beginning immediately after construction finance in mid-2012. This construction will provide badly needed jobs in Polk County which has unemployment levels well above the national and state average.

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Once the plant enters into operations in early 2014, it is forecasted to provide approximately 35 full-time plant positions for a minimum of 30 years, with average compensation in the range of \$50,000 annually. In addition, it is projected to provide 50-60 full and part-time positions for a minimum of 30 years in biomass fuel production and transportation with average compensation in the range of \$40,000 annually.

With the reduction of phosphorous mining in the area and greening of citrus groves, Polk and adjacent Counties are in great need of economic development to replace lost jobs, and put idle agricultural lands to productive use. U.S. EcoGen Polk, LLC's Polk County project will provide locally sourced power production and jobs for a distressed rural area.

Recently a study conducted by Polk County Office of Economic Development concluded that the economic impact of this Project on Polk County and surrounding region is likely to be \$11 million annually over the term of the Power Purchase Agreement. In addition, this project is estimated to double the ad valorem tax base for the City of Ft Meade, allowing the city to create new jobs and improve aging city infrastructure.

Biomass is a renewable power resource that will reduce dependence on imported energy and hydro-carbon based fuels such as natural gas and coal.

- U.S. EcoGen Polk, LLC's plans for producing power will require much less water than conventional forms of power generation, and its plans for biomass fuel production will have significantly lower water demand than other likely uses of the land;
- Plans are underway between U.S. EcoGen and Polk State College to create a career based educational training program, allowing people from the County to develop the skills required to work at the plant and enter into a career path with U.S. EcoGen with a long-term future.

It is our hope that the U.S. EcoGen Polk County Generating Facility can move forward as quickly as possible to generate much-needed jobs for our region and renewable energy for the State of Florida. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (863) 534-7130 ext. 130 or contact me by email at psteed@cfrpc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pat - M Steed". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the left side.

Patricia M. Steed
Executive Director