Socioeconomic Field Notes for August 20–21, 2007 and December 2–3, 2008 Visits to Levy County and Surrounding Communities

The text appended below contains field notes gathered by NRC staff for analyzing potential impacts of construction and operation of the proposed Levy nuclear plants from notes prepared by Polly Quick December 2–3, 2008; and by Kristi Branch and Bob Bryce August 20–21, 2007.

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August 20, 2007

General Area : The proposed site is located in Levy County. The proximate area extends to Citrus County and Marion County. Ocala, the county seat of Marion County (2006 county population 316,183), is a dynamic community (2006 estimated population 52,488, up from estimated 45,943 in 2000) in the heart of Florida's "horse country" with multiple highways, lots of malls and commercial development, and a number of spread-out and varied residential community areas. It serves as a regional center. (The nearest next larger community is Gainesville). Casual discussion with local residents indicated that property values in Marion County have increased significantly over the past 10 years, with continuing development of horse training/riding estates throughout the county, and continued growth of the metropolitan area. However, despite a well-developed road system, it is approximately one hour driving time from the southern edge of Ocala to the proposed project site.

Dunnellon, also in Marion County, is a small, prosperous and compact community on highway 41 between Ocala and Inglis. There are a number of horse farms in the Dunnellon area. Much of the area in the northwestern portion of Marion County and in the area around the plant site in Levy County is forested or pastureland. According to reports, the area to the north in Levy County near Chiefland is more agricultural. There are a number of large limestone quarries in Marion and Levy Counties. The coastline in this part of the state transitions into marshland, with progressively more water vs. land as it nears the Gulf. In addition to Lake Rousseau and the Canal, there are a number of rivers that empty into the Gulf. Yankeetown, a residential community adjacent to Inglis, the city most proximate to the proposed site in Levy County, is located on a river and a paved road that extends to a pier in the Gulf. Throughout the region, and with the exception of Dunnellon, most communities stretch along a highway, with multiple, relatively small shopping malls, and many mobile home parks.

Citrus County starts at the river south of Inglis/Yankeetown and was as rural as Levy County before construction of the Crystal River NPP and coal-fired units. Citrus County has grown rapidly since then. In addition to Crystal River, the community in Citrus County closest to the proposed site, there are now a number of newer, gated residential

communities in the central and northeastern portion of Citrus County (Beverly Hills and Citrus Springs), with Inverness, the county seat, and lakes and 'horse country' further to the east and on to the south. These gated communities, Dunnellon, small areas of Crystal River, Inverness, Inglis, and Yankeetown have neighborhoods with large, well-established residences, but the majority of housing is modest, with many mobile homes and RV parks.

The presence of the Crystal River power plant complex located just west of highway 19 (north of Crystal River and south of Inglis), has resulted in visible cooling towers and transmission lines. Emergency evacuation routes are clearly posted in the area proximate to the proposed site. Along with the Canal, construction of this complex has exposed the area to large-scale construction projects over an extended period of time.

Small residential areas and Trailer/RV parks are common, especially along highway 40 east out of Inglis, many with small neighborhood bars.

August 20, 2007
Gary Bartell, Citrus County Commissioner (Lacanto Building, 3600 W. Sovereign Path, Lacanto; 352-400-0384). Commissioner Bartell stated he had no prior knowledge of the proposed new NPP in Levy County. He emphasized Citrus County has the emergency response capabilities in place to deal with an NPP. He indicated housing for construction workers for the new plant would probably be similar to how it was for the previous plant if it were located in Crystal River, but he could not say whether the same housing pattern would occur if the NPP were located in Levy County, because Levy is much less developed than Citrus. Bartell also identified potential tax and impact mismatches. All the taxing jurisdictions have benefited from Crystal River, but the property taxes for the proposed plant will go to Levy County, even if the impacts are felt in Citrus County. Citrus County and Crystal River will probably receive some benefit from sales taxes.

There are few minorities (~2% black; very few native Americans; ~1% Hispanic).

Staff was advised Captain Joe Eckstein, who works in emergency response, would have detailed and current information about the transient population in the area (352-746-6555).

There are 77,000 platted lots in Citrus County, so there is plenty of potential for development, but not much available existing housing.

August 20, 2007
Vicky Phillips, Commissioner, Citrus County (Inverness Court House, 110 N. Apopka Ln, Inverness 352-341-6561). Commissioner Phillips said Levy County was ecstatic that the plant is slated to go there, but that the Citrus County people were a little concerned because Levy County does not have a well developed infrastructure or roads. She sits on the Withlacoochee regional planning commission, which advises on projects that would have a regional impact. She thinks that the influx of construction workers is going to create issues for both Levy and Citrus counties. Citrus County doesn't have many rental properties, and Levy County has even less. Commissioner Phillips anticipated schools will be a determinant for housing since the schools in Citrus County are better than those in Levy County. School districts are county-wide systems.

Most of the coastal areas in the region are not on sewers and many of Commissioner Phillip's constituents are concerned about protecting water quality and the environment. There are only two cities in the county (Crystal River and Inverness) with municipal water—all the others are on wells. Most of the coastal areas have restrictions on development because they are on wells and septic systems—the limit is one residence per five acres. Citrus County is responsible for the following interlocal agreements with other municipalities: emergency evacuations, police functions in a number of smaller communities, and fire protection to Inverness. Commissioner Phillips voiced her concern over the planned use of water from the barge canal for the proposed plant. There is an area where the aquifer has already been breached, and new construction may cause additional problems, primarily salt water intrusion. Local limestone mining can cause similar problems. The county is thinking of putting in a mining ordnance. About 50% of the county is protected as conservation property. Phillips emphasized Citrus County was a retirement community. Commissioner Phillips did not think US 19 would be a problem, but it could become a problem, depending upon where people located and where development occurred.

August 21, 2007
Inglis Town Council Meeting with the Mayor (Carolyn Risher), and the town council members, (commissioners Betty Berger, Dick Kellman, Roy Smith, Bill Lake), and the town clerk (Sally McCranie). This was a regular town council meeting, but the Council responded to our questions. There were additional people in the audience. One unidentified person asked about "the other construction project" being proposed by Progress Energy (this could be the scrubber replacement). Mr. Gary Sanford, a student who has been looking at property transfers in the region, gave the staff a copy of his search results that are included in the materials folder. Progress Energy made a presentation at the community center a month before the staff's visit, (about mid July), and another for Chiefland. The Council explained to the staff that municipalities choose which county services are provided to the municipalities. In Levy County, Yankeetown and Williston or Bronson receive sheriff and fire services from the county. Most municipalities (Chiefland, Cedar Keys, Williston, and Inglis) have their own police and fire services.

The Inglis Town Council did not know about taxing, but did expect traffic to increase on Rte 19, requiring more police and emergency services. Some of the taxes that are being discussed are $120M in taxes of which $30M would go to the county, $12M to the municipalities. There was some discussion among the commissioners about this, with one pointing out that there is currently no mechanism by which this sharing with the municipalities would occur. Commissioner Smith said that the commission itself hasn't gotten involved, and that what they need is direct interaction with Progress Energy and said that they need a unified committee to get involved in this process.

Inglis does not have any available housing in the town or the immediate area. The plant is now being built on county property so no tax revenues will come to Inglis.

The Council asked how they could get the NRC Guide. Alicia/Kris answered. The Council said they were concerned about saltwater intrusion but not about housing for the workers.

Inglis does not have a sewer system. They have one emergency coordinator who is hired by Levy County. There are three rock mines here. Timber is not very important to

the local economy. Unemployment is higher than in the state, both in the town and county. Palm point development and Captains Cove represent some of the nicest neighborhoods—many of the people living in these neighborhoods are retirees from the power plants or current employees there. Inglis has a few small manufacturers—a couple of welding shops. North of hwy 40 and along the western side of 19, housing is primarily trailers and performing service jobs like landscaping and tree trimming.

Inglis is closer to the new plant than any community in Citrus County. There is a proposed subdivision on route 40 about half way to the Marion county line. Because there is no city sewer, there can only be one house per acre in Inglis, and in areas closer to the coast, only one house per five acres.

August 21, 2007
Gary Sanford, Inglis/Levy County Lifelong resident and nuclear science student. Mr. Sanford is interested in the developmental consequences of power plant siting, and has been looking at what is happening with property ownership and sales in the area.

August 21, 2007
Susan Roach (realtor) and Helen Ciallella (Bee's marina owner) from Yankeetown. Ms Roach spoke about proposed development in Yankeetown, including a potential Inglis / Yankeetown waste water treatment plant and other sewer related issues.

August 21, 2007
Levy County Sheriff Johnny Smith and Bronson City Councilwoman Edith Brown (9150 NE 80th Ave, Bronson 352-486-5111). Councilwoman Brown is a longtime council member for Bronson. She confirmed there were some transient, Hispanic farm workers—primarily in Williston and Chiefland where they grow watermelons and peanuts—used in the area. Otherwise, Councilwoman Brown did not know of any particular concentrations of poor people anywhere, though Levy County as a whole is predominantly low income

Sheriff Smith and Councilwoman Brown believe LNPP construction workers are likely to live in Dunnellon and Crystal River, which are the closest communities. Some may stay as far away as Chiefland. Once the new plant is in operation, they expect there will be lots of new homes in the area, and know that the plant will create a lot of well-paying jobs—so it will be good for the county.

Chiefland has recently approved construction of a new county hospital along the Suwannee River to keep people from having to travel so far for care. There is not much temporary housing in the county. Levyville campground lies just north of Inglis. They don't have many minorities, though Chiefland and Williston, which are a little bigger, do have some migrant workers. Central Florida College is in Chiefland, and offers some college classes at Santa Fe community college. There is no technical training school in Levy County, though there is one in Citrus and there is a large community college in Ocala.

There is gravel mining in the area and there used to be a pencil factory, which is now closed. Cedar is abundant along the coast, and there is a cypress log homes manufacturer, that makes homes from tidewater red cedar that are shipped all around the world. The logs are milled there and shipped.

The Sheriff's office covers Bronson, Vantage Springs, and Yankeetown.

Sheriff Smith and Councilwoman Brown agreed Bronson would feel minor impacts from the plant and that the area wouldn't see an influx of people into Bronson. The general message was that the plant was not going to create problems they couldn't handle.

August 21, 2007
Sammy Yearty, Levy County Commissioner (355 S Court Street, Bronson 342-486-5218). The increased tax base will be good for the county. It will change the complexion of the area. The applicant has explained how they would withdraw water and then return it to the barge canal. They were cooperative about accessing the property off hwy 19 instead of 40 because of the transportation access routes. There is still a lot of permitting to go through. The county's comprehensive plan didn't have any provisions for facilities that produce power, so the commission is working with Progress Energy to rezone the site to this use—they are just going to change it to allow a generating facility to be located in a forestry zone. The company has no plans for on-site housing. The county is concerned about workers housing and traffic. Progress Energy has said that they would voluntarily help with fire and protective services. He described some of the mismatch of timing re tax revenues.

Commissioner Yeartly believes Levy County has the responsibility for a lot of facilities, especially road maintenance, and will probably need the most help with police and ambulance services. School compliance-may have an impact that would require mitigation. There is a newly proposed big rock mine four miles NW of the proposed plant site that has been before the planning commission for its permits.

Minorities—there are Hispanics in Williston and Chiefland areas—there is a big tree farm in Chiefland, and a big nursery, where lots of Mexicans work. Also during the watermelon season. Most of the county's black population lives in Chiefland and Williston—there are none on Cedar Key, for example, where he grew up and still lives.

Progress energy has been very involved in helping train locals, even some of the construction aspects. There is a central Florida community college branch in Chiefland. The county roads are paid for through a gasoline tax and they share the tax with municipalities with the split being based on the number of miles of roads using the same formula—the county maintains roads, does mosquito control and provides police protection to Vantage Springs, Otter Creek, and Yankeetown. The county also is responsible for recreation, solid waste and land fill, tax collection, property appraisal, jail, courts, and disaster assistance. The applicant provides money for emergency management system and facilities.

August 21, 2007
Ronald Kitchens, Mayor Crystal River, and Andy Houston, City Manager, Crystal River (Crystal River City Hall, on hwy 19). Mr. Houston became City Manager 9 months before the staff's meeting on August 21, 2007. The city council has been very pleased with Progress Energy, which has been the mainstay of the city's employment base. The biggest problem with the construction of the nuclear power plant at Crystal River (CR3) was housing the workers. Current scrubber work is going to bring in new workers and the council is not sure where they will find housing.

The area suffers from a lack of good paying jobs. The scrubber replacement by 09, will be a 3-4 year job. Hwy 19 tends to be the dividing line with respect to affluence, with poorer people to the east. Beverly Hills and Homosassa were built as retirement communities, and as the residents have died, the smaller homes have been purchased by poorer families or converted to rentals.The most affluent neighborhoods are Pine Ridge, Citrus Hills, Black Diamond.

December 2, 2008
Citrus County Schools 1007 West Main Street, Inverness (352) 726-1931

Mike Mullen, Executive Director, School Support Services (mullenmi@citrus.k12.fl.us)
Chuck Dixon, Director, Planning and Growth Management

Mr. Dixon asked if there was a possibility of getting any of the tax revenue to Citrus County schools. With 16,000 students out of 150,000 people, Citrus County has the second highest median age in FL. Mr. Dixon provided the staff with a print out of a report from their web page that provides capacity of schools, utilization. Two of the schools are at or over capacity; others have low amounts of available capacity. Citrus County opened one new school this year.

In-migration to the county has begun to change – used to be people coming from NE of US. Now it is more Floridians coming from other parts of FL to this area, as urban areas have become more expensive.

Source of funds is 1.75 mill on property (was 2.0, but the state cut it). [note: we were later told in Levy that there are other sources of funds for schools – see Levy tax collector notes]

Crystal River Energy Corporation is bringing in 4000 workers for a new scrubber for its coal-fired units. That work will begin next year.

Cross-FL Barge Canal bridge replacement – 3 yr project scheduled to start next year; FDOT project.

Suncoast Parkway will provide easy access to living in Hernando County – which has been growing by about one school/year. Marion is also growing at that rate.

Mr. Dixon believes LNPP construction workers will be dispersed 2/3 Citrus, 1/3 split between Marion and Levy Counties.

Citrus is the least minority county in a wide area, but has a significant low-income population. Citrus County schools have 37% free and reduced lunch across the county [see corrected number from Roy Pistone, below). If the county gets more families with higher income, it will lose some federal support for the program, but will fund the lost revenues by raising prices for those who buy lunch.

High end blue color areas where workers might go: Crystal Mound, Citrus Springs (huge development, only 15% built out, probably 15,000 lots remain), Pine Ridge.

Citrus has highest home owner occupancy in state – about 85%; very little rental.

There are some big RV parks coming in; along with one old RV park between barge canal and Withlacoochee River and another one new one in Crystal River.

Citrus County has strict zoning regulations for mobile homes.

Mr. Pistone, Student Services, says 48% currently economically needy – i.e., income level that qualifies for free and reduced lunch. Mr. Pistone gave his personal opinion that plant will be a good thing, bringing in jobs.

Mr. Mullin says the school district would respond to growth with portable classrooms – building a school takes 3 years.

There is a tech school in Inverness, part of Citrus School District; and the district is talking with Progress about curriculum. Mr. Mullin and Mr. Dixon said there's a school in Taylor County that has provided welders for nuclear plants..

Mr. Mullin explained the "concurrency" requirement in state law. Concurrency means an area cannot approve development if it doesn't have school capacity in place first. The local government has to implement the requirement.

A "student station" costs $35k (backed out of cost to build classrooms).

December 2, 2008
Marion County Schools 512 SE 3rd Street, Ocala (352) 671-7705

Wally Wagoner, Dpty Supt – Operations
David Herlihy – Planning
Dianne Greene – Dpty Supt – Curriculum and Instruction

Schools are losing students and Marion County is becoming a retirement county. Marion has also lost people due to the current economic downturn. This makes prospect of jobs in Levy County attractive.

Community Technical Adult Education is their tech school. Progress has been involved with two high schools. Florida Fire College has done some fire training for Progress.

Dunnellon High School serves two counties – started a electrical lineman program with Progress.

Locally, Dunnellon schools are crowded but the western portion of the county is not.

The interviewees speculated that high end workers (ops) would live in Ocala, or maybe even Gainesville.

Mr. Herlihy said that for every 5000 single family houses, the county must build one elementary school. He offered to provide specifics of capacity of different schools.

School board members worked with local governments in response to concurrency requirement and agreed that because the construction worker effect was short-lived,

schools could go to 105% capacity for elementary or middle schools, 100% capacity for high schools – before requiring developers to kick in.

Dunnellon High School is presently overcrowded, but there is a high school 10-15 miles east with space. Middle school is OK, elementary school is near capacity.

The interviewees suggested the staff look for an economic development study paper by the consultant Wilson Miller on Marion County EDC website.

Mr. Herlihy asked to be added to the NRC's list for DEIS notices.

December 3, 2008
Goethe State Forest
Mike Penn (352) 465-8585

Forest is 53,000 acres.

No worry about squatters – no improved camping areas, no easy access to plant site.

Concern about plant effects on their ability to manage controlled burns. Could get some dense smoke that might be concern for security. The forest has a plan for handling situations of smoke moving into sensitive areas – e.g., if it engulfs a highway, they know who is to be contacted, option of closing road or escorting people through; presumes would need to work with plant safety personnel to develop plans. As long as forest and plant act as good neighbors, should be able to address the issues. FL forests in past burned every 3 years, state forests are trying to get back to those conditions; plant won't want a wildfire so should be supportive of this effort.

Question re hunters – there are some, but equestrians are biggest users.

Mr. Penn thinks there may be some subsistence use of the forest, but neither he nor the wildlife guy would be able to estimate level of subsistence use. Mr. Penn would have to talk with residents near the forest who might know more. The staff would have to call Mr. Penn and ask him to talk with them if we need more information.

December 3, 2008
Levy County Schools 480 Marshburn Drive, Bronson

Mike Todd, Director, Secondary Ed
Bob Bildner, Finance Officer
Jeff Edison – Asst. Superintendent
Steve Tyson – Transportation Coordinator

Yankeetown school might be affected; K-8. 2-3 ESE (special needs) students get bussed to Bronson. High school kids go either to Crystal River or Dunnellon. Two buses travel from Levy County to Dunnellon High School (also pick up some Marion Cty kids). Also a bus dips into Citrus, picks up a few students; Citrus bus also picks up a few Levy students.

The staff discussed the chance that 300 to 400 families could settle in Levy County as a result of operations. They suggested there are some houses on the way to Williston or on the way to Chiefland that might be attractive to people who want to be close to Ocala or Gainesville but also want land around a house, more outdoor focus.

A campground is being built at Lebanon Station.

Traffic on 40 will be a problem

Suncoast Parkway has been planned but Mr. Tyson doesn't see it being constructed before plant construction starts. There is a possibility the two construction projects could take place at the same time, which would increase traffic problems.

6-9 am and 2-4 pm are busy bus times. 2-3 buses go down 40 and buses go up 19.

Already have buses for evacuation – keep 7-8 operational buses in area; Mr. Tyson suggests we check with EOC to see what additional needs they might have with a new plant.

Dunnellon might be an attractive location for some. It is 17 miles from Crystal River (where there is a shopping center, community is on the artsy side, is good for boating); 20 miles from Ocala (where there is premier shopping, hospitals, lots of houses. Gainesville is about 50 minutes from the project site.

In Levy County, upscale development would be in Williston (20 miles from Gainesville, 25 miles from Ocala); or Chiefland. Generally, Levy offers more of the outdoor experience. For the folks who want a house and 10 acres – they'd settle in Levy; those who want amenities would go to Citrus or Marion.

Schools: overall, county is down 140 kids this year, but the district is still close to capacity. The county has land to build a high school in Yankeetown, but don't have the money.

In the area of the plant site, Yankeetown is the only school; so growth close to the plant site would be a capacity issue.

If Williston School were affected (it is a K-2 school now; with a newly constructed wing), the school is landlocked, no room to expand. However, there is a grade 3-5 school near by, with room to expand.

Cedar Key has no available land for expansion. Chiefland elementary school is 800 kids; high school could grow.

At any schools with population increase, will need to do something to absorb more students.

Mr. Edison suggests possibility of Progress pre-paying taxes (to provide revenue for school construction).

Levy County is talking about establishing a technical school; Progress Energy is in the discussion.

Mr. Edison would like to be on the distribution list for the DEIS.

There is a plan for a hospital in Chiefland, but it has gone nowhere.

Williston has a higher percentage of black students, Bronson and Chiefland more Hispanic, Yankeetown more white, Cedar Key is almost entirely white. Minorities are more low-middle income.

Have only two schools in Levy that do not qualify for reduced and free lunch aid from federal government.

The interviewees believe there is some subsistence activity, but not much.. In Cedar Key, clamming is an industry (but for sale, not subsistence); Hispanics sell pine straw; some people prepare fire starter.

Mr. Tyson wants information from Progress regarding site work so he can tell his bus drivers when to expect heavy truck traffic.

December 3, 2008
Linda Fugate, Levy County Tax Collector 355 S. Court St., Room 202, Bronson (352) 493 4646

Ms. Fugate looked up data on the project site and advised staff the proposed site is made up of multiple parcels that have not been merged yet on the tax maps. A representative parcel is the Rainier parcel, with a millage of 15.7806 now, with an agriculture exemption.

The applicant will lose the agricultural exemption on the portion of the proposed site that is built upon. Example, $219,000 is the value of a 125-acre parcel; with the exemption, $22,000.

With training facility built (first), county would get a bump in tax revenue.

School district has an impact fee when a building permit application is filed.

There is an exchange deal between counties on a per-student basis (so Levy receives money for Citrus County students it serves, Marion gets money for the Levy students who go to Dunnellon).

School gets income from 3 millage rates:
Discretionary - 0.748
Local – 1.75
State – 5.244

There is a gasoline sales tax. The county road department operates on this. Inglis would be providing gas near the site.

There is also a 1% county retail sales tax – probably not significant in terms of what/where Progress would be buying.

Inglis will see a big change – a lot of people coming in and out of the town. County sheriff might have concerns. Site is out of the city limits of Inglis. Sheriff's budget comes out of Board of Commissioners general budget.

December 3, 2008
Francis Akins, County Appraiser 486-5188

Mr. Akins informed the staff that when the footprint of a building appears, the status of the land under that footprint will change. When land is no longer used to farm trees, it will lose its agricultural tax exemption. The county uses "substantial completion" as a criterion for when taxing of improvements begins.

Without an agricultural exemption, millage rate would be 15.78 (by current values). Millage rate may go up (because property values are going down).

Power lines will be prorated, by county, with the millage rate determined by the usage of land under the lines.

Mr. Akins was not sure whether parcels would be combined or not.

December 3, 2008
Drive-by through Inglis and Yankeetown

The retail and business section of Inglis is at the intersection with Highway 19, more development on west side, including a strip mall along Highway 19. Small houses along road and on side roads, a developed (and used) bicycle path paralleling road. Yankeetown is west off 19, has a little town center area with a bank, a couple of restaurants, some civic organizations. Also small houses; didn't notice any mobile home parks. As you drive west you get closer to water on both sides of the road.