

NEWS from NIRS

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For a Nuclear-Free, Carbon-Free World

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Duke Energy (finally) agrees: Levy County New Nukes Wrong Plan

NIRS and Levy County FL Environmental Leaders Celebrate!

Today US Nuclear Regulatory Commission announces Termination of Levy County Units 1 & 2 Combined Nuclear Construction and Operating Licenses at request of site owner, Duke Energy

Ten years ago Duke (then, Progress Energy) began the idea of adding two nuclear reactors to the Nature Coast of Florida. Today, a billion dollars, and thousands of hours of volunteer and public-interest staff time later, the proposal for Levy County Nuclear 1 & 2 is now, officially, dead. Duke Energy has arrived at a decision which confirms allegations by local environmental leaders for nearly a decade: the Levy County cypress swamps are a bad place to build a major industrial power generating site, let alone one capable of contaminating the pristine groundwater and freshwater springs of Levy County with radioactivity. Duke likely blames the debacle of its chosen reactor design, the AP1000, by the now bankrupt Westinghouse / Toshiba.

Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS) Staff Biologist, Mary Olson, was recruited by the Levy leaders to help challenge the proposed site. “We celebrate every atom that will never become highly radioactive waste, and every Rem of dangerous radiation exposure that has now been prevented,” said Olson. NIRS was founded in 1978 by grassroots activists who oppose nuclear energy, including individuals who led *pro se* interventions on the first nuclear power reactor licenses under the Atomic Energy Act. Olson led *pro se* challenges of Duke Energy nuclear license extensions in North Carolina in 2001--2005.

NIRS formed a loose-knit coalition with the Ecology Party of Florida and others in 2008. Early in 2009 a license intervention was filed, raising multiple issues from impact on drinking water in Levy County, to climate impacts, and radioactive waste management. NIRS managed the administrative law process until 2012 when the grassroots effort had garnered sufficient local support to be able to hire noted nuclear licensing attorney, Diane Curran of Harmon, Curran and Spielberg.

Diane Curran said today, “Thank goodness that this environmentally destructive project was finally stopped by the economic reality that it is not needed and way too expensive. But the public should be concerned that the regulatory system designed to protect ratepayers and the environment failed miserably along the way.”

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (US NRC) appointed an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB) of three judges in 2009 to hear the groups' petition. A number of the issues raised were admitted and after an evidentiary hearing featuring multiple experts, the panel ruled some issues "out of scope," some appropriate to different authority, and some rejected. The ASLB declined the petition in 2012. The US NRC subsequently awarded two COL (construction operating licenses) to Progress Energy / Duke in 2016. In the meantime, the project's price tag had grown to \$20,000,000,000. Duke decided to postpone the project, since the NRC licenses would remain valid for 20 years. Meanwhile many public interest organizations, investigative journalists and experts challenged the financial side of the deal.

Other organizations who contributed to the now successful challenge are Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Union of Concerned Scientists, Physicians for Social Responsibility of Florida, Sierra Club, and Sierra Club Education Fund of Florida, West Palm Beach Environmental Coalition, Southern Student Renewable Energy Coalition, Rising Tide and Everglades EarthFirst!

"The entire Levy County Nuclear project stands as a tragic testament to the costs in both time and money of missing out on the real solutions for energy, security and climate stabilization. As a community we raised real solutions that were ignored, denied and rejected. Energy efficiency and solar are not even "admissible" as contentions in federal nuclear licensing—only other technologies for industrial-scale production of electric current are considered 'viable' alternatives to a nuclear power reactor proposal, according the NRC staff. We must do better," said Olson, "so, Duke—thank you for joining us in rejecting nuclear! We call on you to now LEAD in efficiency and solar as part of Florida's energy future."

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