



# SECO News

February 2008

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## Bridging the gap with coal

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SECO's Board of Trustees will meet Monday, February 25th at 5:30 p.m. in the Corporate Offices located at 330 South US Highway 301 in Sumterville. A Trustees' meeting will also be held on March 31, 2008.

Much comment came from our articles on climate change in the November and December *SECO News* articles. The vast majority of responses were favorable. We all seem to agree that the earth has warmed. And, no one here is saying that man hasn't had some degree of impact where global warming is concerned. However, there is still much debate about just how dire the situation will become, how big an impact man has made on it and how best to deal with it.

We happen to be in favor of putting as many renewable fuel sources into our energy mix as possible. Our power supplier, Seminole Electric is continually looking for sources of renewable energy that are actually practical to use. Biomass is one such renewable and approximately four percent of Seminole's fuel mix now comes from renewable sources. They hope to add more in the future.

We are all concerned about our environment, but wind and solar will probably never be the ultimate answer (as much as we all might like it to be so) to Florida's ravenous energy appetite. This Co-op looked at doing a wind power pilot project over a decade ago. After looking very closely at the wind data from NOAA it became crystal clear that there was not nearly enough sustained wind in Central Florida to make the project work. Wind and solar can be contributing energy factors, but more research and development is needed here.

Solar farms would have to occupy huge tracts of land and trying to site them without countless court challenges would be a major problem even if they were the answer. And, right now they just can't contribute in a meaningful way to the electric grid. The only part of Florida where there is enough wind to possibly get windmills to turn with any predictability is along the east coast and you can imagine the opposition that would surface if that was attempted.

The research surrounding the harnessing of the energy of wave/tidal flows and ocean currents shows real promise for Florida. Many more resources need to be placed here.

*If one or two power plants should go down here in Florida we could well experience brown outs or rolling black outs.*



Nuclear power is certainly an option. However, the reality is that getting the mountain of regulatory approvals necessary to site a plant and then having to deal with the inevitable lawsuits that will result when a proposed location is announced will take years and years to resolve. Hopefully, the federal government will see the wisdom in streamlining the proce-

*Continued on back...*

## Bridging the gap *continued...*

dures and settling on one nuclear power plant design (such as they have in France) to shorten the time it takes to get one of these built and operational.

Coal is what has kept energy affordable. With a 240 year supply of coal, clean coal technology and coal carbon capture systems make coal a very important part of our overall energy picture. The reality is that it cannot be ignored, nor should it be. It is the answer that will help us **bridge the gap** where bringing nuclear plants on-line and developing renewable technology that can actually make a meaningful contribution to the grid are concerned.

Governor Crist's no new coal-fired power plants plan will bring about massive increases in utility bills across the state. There is simply no question about that. Seminole's new proposed plant is state-of-the-art employing both clean coal technology and a carbon capture system. It was approved by all the regulatory agencies as part of the state's Power Plant Siting Act and the Sierra Club did not oppose it based on the project's stringent emission controls. The state should allow its construction to go forward without delay.

We always try to protect our members and we attempt to provide them with alternative information when there is an information vacuum. We want our members' access to electricity to be unimpeded and we want to be able to sell power to them at a price that won't send them to the poor house. We are, after all, member-owned and not-for-profit.

We have a need for new power plants right now. If one or two power plants should go down here in Florida we could well experience brown outs or rolling black outs. The state issued capacity advisories and alerts all through 2007. That is the stark reality of the situation. As was stated in the November *SECO News* – "we need a rational, thoughtful response to our looming energy crisis here in Florida. All stakeholders should be heard when it comes to developing our state's energy policy."

Right now the Governor's advisory panel on this matter is stacked with staunch environmentalists. It has only one utility person on it and that person is not from an electric cooperative. The panel needs more diversity because environmentalists tend to have a polarized view of the world. Their input is certainly useful and should be taken into consideration, but others have good ideas and advice, as well. As it said at the end of the article in November, "we can prevail (in developing a great energy policy) and we can do it together in a responsible way." ■

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**Plan to attend your  
Annual Meeting!**  
Saturday, March 29, 2008

## NATURE'S *reflections*

tips & quips  
about our  
environment  
and its  
inhabitants



## AMERICAN KESTREL

*Florida's feisty little bird of prey*

The American kestrel (*Falco sparverius paulus*), sometimes called a Sparrow hawk, or "Killy hawk" is the smallest falcon in North America. This little bird weighs four ounces and stands just eleven inches tall. With its bright colors and noisy, sprightly manner it is now uncommon in Florida due to loss of habitat.

The unusual head markings, bright chestnut upper parts and blue-gray wing coverts mark the kestrel with distinction. It is a friendly, sociable bird, fond of perching along roads and near dwellings where it keeps a sharp eye for its prey in open field environments.

With a decided preference for grasshoppers and mice, the American kestrel is a charming, feisty little bird of prey that provides an enormous environmental benefit to us by controlling large populations of insects, lizards and small rodents which helps maintain the delicate balance of nature.

These cavity nesters prefer a natural hole in a tree, typically excavated by a woodpecker in a dead tree, preferably a long leaf pine. It is the only hawk in North America that does not build or use an open nest. During courtship the male puts on a noisy, spectacular aerial display, returning each time to his mate, sometimes presenting her with a morsel of food. Generally, three to five eggs hatch in thirty days.

Young are tended by both parents. The female broods and feeds the nestlings while the male brings all the food. Downy white nestlings, well feathered in 3-4 weeks, leave the nest to perch nearby and start flying lessons. Both parents feed the young another week, before the first hunting lesson is given. Then, instead of feeding the baby as before, the parent drops the food in mid-air giving a quick cry of "killy, killy!" The young bird thus encouraged leaps from the perch and pursues the morsel to the ground. Once the food is clutched in his talons the parent, with a harsh call, urges the young bird to fly to a nearby perch to finish his meal. The parent bird spends some time teaching the fledgling how to hunt before the young go out on their own.

Populations in Florida are, for the most part, permanent residents. All hawks are federally protected. It is illegal to capture or kill a hawk, or to possess a hawk, alive or dead, without proper permits. ☞

–Photo and column by Sandi Staton – [sandi.staton@secoenergy.com](mailto:sandi.staton@secoenergy.com)