



The Power Source

Igniting the Future of Florida



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Power Profile: Trudy Novak,
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Your organization is a not-for-profit electric cooperative. For those unfamiliar with the role your organization plays in the Florida energy industry, can you please explain?

Rural electric cooperatives became permanent fixtures on May 21, 1936, when the Rural Electrification Act was signed into law. The first Florida electric cooperatives were incorporated in 1937. At the time, electric utilities did not provide service in the vast majority of Florida or the United States. The cost of providing service in the non-urban areas was prohibitive, and other utilities refused to extend their lines into non-urban areas until there was enough development to make it economically worth their time. The Rural Electrification Act empowered local farmers, residents, and businesses to join together to create their own electric utilities to bring electricity to the rest of the Country.

In 1948, Seminole Electric Cooperative was incorporated to give its Member distribution cooperatives buying power by aggregating their demand for electricity. Until the mid-1970s, Seminole remained a “paper G&T.” However, the 1973 oil crisis prompted a decision by the Seminole Board to build its own coal-fired power plant – the Seminole Generating Station in Palatka, FL. The Seminole Generating Station came online in 1984.

Today, Seminole is one of the largest G&Ts in the country. Its purpose is to provide essential wholesale services to its nine distribution Members. Like Seminole, our Members are also not-for-profit cooperative utilities that return all revenues that are in excess of the operating costs associated with providing service to their member-consumers.

Seminole’s primary resources include the Seminole Generating Station (SGS) in northeast Florida and the Richard J. Midulla Generating Station (MGS) in south central Florida. Seminole also supplements our owned resources with purchases from other utilities, including other Florida utilities and independent power producers.

Seminole owns and maintains more than 350 miles of transmission line. Although we own some transmission assets, Seminole is a transmission dependent utility and we rely on other utilities to provide transmission service to serve most of our Member load. Seminole serves approximately 1.8 million people and businesses in parts of 42 Florida counties.



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Over the years, you personally have played a major role in generation needs assessment for the cooperative members. What significant changes have you witnessed during your career that have influenced the generation choices we have today?

The most significant changes I have witnessed over my career include consumer sentiment regarding renewable energy, the declining price of solar, the declining price of natural gas resulting in the shift from coal to gas for reliable generation, and the ongoing uncertainty relating to the regulatory environment. With regulatory uncertainty it becomes harder to make long-term power supply decisions. When I began my career at Seminole, the Power Plant and Industrial Fuel Use Act was still law – it essentially made it illegal for electric utilities to build a power plant that ran on petroleum or natural gas, and required any new construction to be coal-fired generation to reduce the United States’ reliance on foreign sources of energy. As a result, when I started in 1982 Seminole was finalizing the commercial operation of its first power plant, the coal-fired Seminole Generating Station.

Today we are constructing a new state-of-the-art natural gas facility and plan to retire one of the two coal units at the Seminole Generating Station. We are also adding 298 MW of new solar resources to our mix. We are continuing to assess adding new renewable resources to our generation portfolio while taking into consideration its impact on the rates to the member-consumers at the end of the line and the reliability of our electric service. In addition, as the price of solar continues to decrease, we see more consumers beginning to generate their own electricity. This self-generation creates uncertainty with generation planning for the future and provides concerns regarding the recovery of costs associated with the infrastructure required to reliably and economically serve member-consumer load when the sun is not shining.

Based upon your own personal experiences in your profession, what has been the biggest challenge you have faced or lesson you have learned?

Early in my career, I doubted myself. I did not think that I could take on the next level of responsibility, or that I could take on additional duties outside of what I was used to. I remember thinking that I would never be qualified to take on a higher leadership role, but I also knew that I wanted to do more, learn more, and be responsible for more – to do this I had to get out of my comfort zone. I had to reach beyond what I knew and take on new opportunities. I succeeded by working hard, asking a lot of questions, and always being excited to work on behalf of our Member cooperatives and the member-consumers at the end of the line.

What advice would you give a 2nd year college student deciding on a career path?

When I started my career in the utility industry more than 40 years ago, I had no idea what my career path would look like. I took a position as a rate analyst in a consulting firm right out of college, and accepted a position at Seminole four years later. I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to be in various positions at Seminole, which has led to my success in higher leadership roles. For those now thinking about their careers after college, I would suggest finding something you enjoy doing, not necessarily something that you think you are supposed to be doing. A good way to do this is through internships. *(Continued on next page)*



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Since it is difficult to know what it is really like working in a field unless you have actually experienced working in the field, I would encourage those who are unsure about what they want to do, to look for as many different kinds of internships as possible. If you enjoy your work, and you work to become an expert in that field, then you should be able to do the job that you love in many different places

Are there greater opportunities for women in energy today?

Absolutely. I will use Seminole as an example – but we certainly are not the only example. When I first started at Seminole, I was among the very few women in my field. I was the first women to become a director at Seminole in 2000 and when I became a Member of Seminole’s executive team almost thirteen years ago, I was the first female to be on the executive team that was not in an executive assistant position. Today, our executive team consists of five people, three of which are female, including myself, our Chief Financial Officer, and our Chief Executive Officer. This change is evident at the executive team level and flows throughout our organization.

Has your participation in Florida’s Women in Energy Leadership Forum provided additional professional development or other opportunities for your team?

Seminole has been a proud sponsor of the forum since it began. For me personally, the forum has provided a great opportunity to network and establish long-term relationships with other women professionals working in all aspects of the energy field, not only from other organizations but from right here at Seminole. I have also thoroughly enjoyed relaying my experiences with the students attending the forums. I reached out to a few of the women here at Seminole who have attended the forum in the past and they have also provided the following additional comments that I would like to share:

Participating in Florida’s Women in Energy Leadership Forum has shown me that I am responsible for helping shape my own professional destination. The forum has confirmed that I have always had the power within to look for opportunities to make a positive difference in my professional and personal life. I have learned that many times stepping out on a limb and taking calculated risks will help you to grow professionally and go in directions that you never thought possible. Through the forum I have learned to believe in myself and my abilities as a leader and to share these attributes with my team.—Linda Lake

For me, FWELF has definitely provided additional professional development. It has boosted by confidence, further motivated me to embrace change, taught me more about our industry and how to be successful in it, enabled me to engage with many folks in our industry and call on them as a resource, and has strengthened relationships and support within Seminole. But really more than anything, it has helped me to resolve some nagging insecurities, motivated me to be heard, and inspired me to do the same for other women (and men).—Angela DaSilva