



**WOMEN FOR WISE GROWTH**  
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**DECEMBER 13, 2004 WOMEN FOR WISE GROWTH  
COMMENTS TO GAINESVILLE CITY COMMISSION ON THE GRU PROPOSAL**

Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) relies heavily on carbon-intensive fossil fuel, such as coal, to accommodate the energy demands of the city of Gainesville. We at Women for Wise Growth understand that the bulk of Gainesville's current energy needs can be most reasonably met with fossil fuel. Technologies and resources required for lower-carbon fossil fuels, like natural gas, and renewable energy sources are not as inexpensive as those needed for coal to provide for the majority of our city's energy demands. However, WWG is requesting that GRU commit to programs that more dramatically 1) increase energy efficiency of electrical applications; 2) shift to lower-carbon fossil fuels than coal; and, 3) increase renewable energy projects to reduce the serious public health and environmental impacts induced by intensive coal burning. A 2004 investigation by the Environmental Protection Advisory Committee (EPAC) of Alachua County documents that GRU coal power plant produces particulates that are a threat to our citizen's respiratory health. Regarding the environment, Gainesville's energy generation through fossil fuel burning contributes to the carbon dioxide emissions responsible for global warming. Electricity generation produces 37% of the world's carbon emissions. The climatic effects of global warming threaten major harm to habitats, biodiversity, food systems, economies, and human life.

By analyzing United States Census data using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the WellFlorida Council has determined that the population of Gainesville will grow by over 19,000 residents, an increase of approximately 10% by 2009. This growth will increase the energy demands that GRU proposes to meet by building a new power plant to burn more coal. World Wildlife Fund calls coal use for energy generation "the antiquated answer". Although municipally-owned GRU has renewable energy source projects and conservation efforts, their level of stewardship, commitment, and creativity regarding these projects are not as aggressive as that of many other municipally-owned utility companies in Florida and the United States. These companies take the effects of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on health and the environment seriously. Further, the WellFlorida Council shows that for 1999-2003, the age-adjusted death rate per 100,000 Gainesville citizens due to respiratory disease is higher than that of the state of Florida. Age-adjusted death rate is an indicator which standardizes the effects of age distribution of a population. Another GRU coal plant may exacerbate this health problem in Gainesville by increasing particulate emissions.

Based on the actions and commitments of other municipally-owned utility companies, such as Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA) and Orlando Utilities Commission (OUC), WWG suggests that GRU can and should 1) have renewable energy, efficiency and conservation programs as mentioned above determined to reduce public health risks and environmental impacts; 2) more seriously and creatively address future energy demands; and 3) COMMIT to prioritizing a safer and cleaner future for our community.

Regarding Renewable Energy Programs:

- In Florida, JEA has committed to producing 7.5% of energy from renewable sources by 2015 and has an aggressive solar program that includes 520 kW of installed solar power at high schools and solar power rebates up to \$25,000 for residential and commercial customers.

Regarding energy efficiency:

- OUC has generous rebate programs that include rebates to customers for insulation, heat pumps, duct repairs and other energy-saving measures.

While some investor owned and municipal utilities take strong steps in energy conservation and reducing heat-trapping gases, these efforts are seriously undermined when other communities build new coal plants. Certainly, we can all agree that GRU and the City of Gainesville could improve energy efficiency and energy conservation programs. For example, GRU could begin sending its consumers two compact fluorescent bulbs every two years to reduce energy demand, since lighting accounts for 15-25% of electricity needs. A compact fluorescent bulb uses 75% less energy than standard incandescent bulbs. In February of this year, five electric power companies from across the United States, two of which are municipally-owned, supported a mandatory cap on carbon dioxide emissions and committed to reducing their carbon dioxide emissions by following the guidelines of the World Wildlife Fund's PowerSwitch campaign. Through PowerSwitch, WWF requests US power companies to support a cap on national CO2 emissions and to do one or more of the following: renewables as the source for 20 per cent of their electricity sold by 2020; increase energy efficiency by 15 per cent by 2020; and/or retire the least efficient half of coal generation by 2020. The two municipally-owned companies that have committed are Sacramento Municipal Utility District in California and Waverly Light and Power in Iowa. The Sacramento Municipal Utility District promises to generating 20% of the electricity it sells from renewable sources of energy by 2020. Waverly Light and Power committed to increasing its energy efficiency by 15% by 2020. Municipally-owned Waverly Light and Power was the first public power company in the Midwest implementing wind generation. This company's pursuits of energy efficiency and renewable energy are innovative approaches to a cleaner environment and healthier community. The health of our citizenry, now and in the future, is and will be this community's richest resource. WWG implores the city commissioners to seek a commitment from GRU to increase energy efficiency and conservation practices as well as renewable energy projects with a vision for a safer and cleaner future.

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