

Focus on Industry: Florida Power and Light

By Buck Martinez, Senior Director of Development, Florida Power & Light Co.



Florida Power and Light Company

Clean Energy for the Next Generation

With its earliest roots tracing back to Thomas Edison, FPL was formed on December 28, 1925. FPL began its first year of service with 76,000 electric and gas customer accounts serving 58 communities with 230 miles of transmission lines, 1,149 miles of distribution lines, and a generating capacity of 70 megawatts.

Today, FPL is one of the largest and highest-performing electric utilities in the nation, with over 73,000 miles of distribution and transmission lines and a generating capacity of over 22,000 megawatts. In 2008, FPL served 4.5 million customer accounts with clean and reliable energy while keeping customer bills the lowest in the state.

Buck Martinez, FPL's senior director of development, joined FPL in 1981. Prior to being named to his present position, he served as director of human resource services, overseeing the corporate safety department, labor relations and the corporate quality program. Martinez's current responsibilities include overseeing the development of renewable energy projects in Florida.

Martinez is one of the founding members of the FESC advisory board. "It is an opportunity to participate in new and innovative concepts in energy, and at the same time, be able to give back to the State," he said. "Working with our best-in-class universities allows the business community to work in unison with research and academia to provide the residents of Florida with the most innovative and cost effective energy solutions. I would also like to acknowledge the leadership that Dr. Tim Anderson brings to FESC. He is a visionary and demonstrates tremendous commitment in his position."

As a member of the advisory board, Martinez's experience and knowledge will allow him deliver expert advice, ideas, and opinions to FESC's researchers and leadership.

An important part of FPL's business strategy focuses on developing, building and operating clean energy plants. FPL is at the forefront of developing renewable solar energy here in the sunshine state.

“At FPL Group, good stewardship of the air we breathe means producing more clean energy and helping customers consume less energy,” said Martinez. “Today, we are the number one provider of renewable energy in North America. Our emissions rates of carbon dioxide (CO₂), sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) are among the lowest in our industry. We have the number one demand side management program among electric utilities nationwide. And we have called for mandatory legislation that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and puts a price on carbon.”

FPL is a leader in Florida’s development and implementation of an environmentally sustainable and efficient energy future. “FPL is constructing or has completed 110 megawatts of new solar projects in DeSoto and Martin County, and at the Kennedy Space Center, to make Florida number two in the nation in solar energy,” Martinez explained.

President Barack Obama joined FPL Group and Florida Power & Light Company officials in October, 2009, for the commissioning of the DeSoto Next Generation Solar Energy Center, which will be the largest photovoltaic solar facility in the nation. “Together, the DeSoto, Martin County, and Kennedy Space Center sites will prevent the release of nearly 3.5 million tons of greenhouse gases over the life of the projects, which is the equivalent of removing 25,000 cars from the road each year, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,” Martinez adds. FPL is currently working with local officials to secure the necessary approvals to expand the DeSoto facility even further, with a potential future capacity of up to 300 megawatts.

To expand Florida's solar energy future, Florida needs a policy environment that encourages a dramatic expansion of renewable energy. FPL believes that the governor, state Legislature and Public Service Commission have shown strong leadership, and that leadership needs to continue. The renewable energy industry must see bold action and a continued commitment from Florida to attract new investment to the state.

The renewable energy industry in Florida has the possibility to create sustainable job growth and provide a significant economic stimulus to local economies. FPL has several additional shovel-ready solar projects on which it is ready to move forward with legislative and regulatory support. Billions of dollars in construction, operation and maintenance of clean energy facilities in Florida could result in thousands of new jobs. FPL’s ultimate goal is to position Florida as a leader in clean-energy generation and as a hub for the development of cutting-edge technology that will rival job corridors in other states.