

Ivanpah solar project still a disappointment

Renewable, green energy may be the way of the future, but it's difficult to take away very many positives from the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generating System in San Bernardino County, once touted as "revolutionary" by former President Obama.

Having received \$1.6 billion in loan guarantees from the Department of Energy, plus \$535 million from the U.S. Treasury Department in lieu of a tax credit, the plant, owned by NRG Energy, Google and BrightSource Energy, has run into quite a few problems.

Operational since 2014, it has consistently lagged behind its energy production goals, commonly reaching only two thirds of its targets. This has prompted concerns from Pacific Gas & Electric, which purchases energy from the plant.

Last year, the California Public Utilities Commission approved a deal between PG&E and the plant's owners, in which the owners paid an undisclosed sum in exchange for more time to boost production. The CPUC's Office of Ratepayer Advocates argued ratepayers shouldn't be on the hook for the plant's expensive energy.

Still, with the approval of the deal, one would hope the

plant would finally meet its targets. "But the Ivanpah plant still is not meeting its annual production goal," this newspaper reported. "During the 12 months that ended Sept. 30, the plant's electricity was producing about three-fourths of the goal, according to federal data."

While three-fourths is better than two-thirds, it is unfortunate that taxpayers were ever put in a position of proping up a project that, years later, still hasn't fulfilled its promise.

Though the plant has often been in the news for being responsible for the incineration of thousands of birds and bats in its vicinity, the plant is also burning more natural gas. The effect has been an increase in carbon emissions, which jumped by 48.4 percent from 2014 to 2015, to 68,676 metric tons, and are on track to continue rising.

Perhaps had it been known that the facility would rely so much on natural gas, it wouldn't have been seen as "revolutionary" enough to warrant billions of taxpayer dollars. The Ivanpah solar plant is unfortunately creeping toward being an illustration of why governments shouldn't be so involved in such ventures.