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Monday Musing: Energy Balance Needed

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Besides facing a horrendous state budget deficit, California also faces a serious energy crisis.

Even so, it was entirely predictable that California utilities would cancel their planned participation in a new coal-fired electrical generating unit at Utah's Intermountain Power Project, killing the third unit. (See [Tribune editorial](#).)

By refusing to use coal-fired electricity after 2010, California has exacerbated its energy problems. Power shortages are now predicted, along with dramatically increased energy costs for consumers (who also face higher taxes to deal with the state budget deficit).

A recent [Wall Street Journal story](#), entitled "State's Renewable-Energy Focus Risks Power Shortages," tells the sad tale. California's wild and crazy politicians mandated that the state garner 33% of its power from renewable sources by 2020. The state auditor is now warning of a "high risk" to the state's economy from power shortages and high costs.

The State Energy Commission says shortages may arrive as soon as 2011. Energy agencies predict a cost of \$114 billion or more to meet the 33% renewable energy mandate. Consumers will bear those costs. Transmission problems are also rampant. Environmentalists are also cracking down on water use for power plants. And air quality agencies are making it harder to build new plants.

Meanwhile, nationwide investment in alternative energy has taken a nosedive because natural gas is so cheap.

If Utah doesn't want to end up like California, we need to be smart, balanced and reasonable in energy development. We can clean up the air (which is already cleaner today than in many decades), and use more renewable power, without destroying our economy and causing hardship for families and small businesses.

We can scale back coal energy, over time, as renewable energy becomes more affordable, and as clean, safe, next-generation nuclear energy comes on line.