

China's great dam in midst of eco-debate

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The year-old Three Gorges Dam along the Yangtze River has spawned environmental problems such as water pollution and landslides, Chinese officials admitted.

The dam is the world's largest man-made producer of electricity from renewable energy, The New York Times reported Monday. Hydropower is central to one of China's green initiatives, a plan to expand renewable energy by 2020.

The Three Gorges Dam is at the center of an energy challenge. China's economy relies on electricity producers, such as coal-fired plants, that pollute the air. But dams, which are cleaner electricity producers, displaced millions of people and triggered environmental issues, the Times reported.

"It's really kind of a no-win situation," said Jonathan Sinton, China program manager at the International Energy Agency. "There are no ideal choices."

Chinese officials said the Three Gorges Dam will serve as an anchor in a string of hydropower plants planned for the middle and upper ends of the Yangtze River.

"In western China, the one-sided pursuit of economic benefits from hydropower has come at the expense of relocated people, the environment and the land and its cultural heritage," Fan Xiao, a Sichuan Province geologist and a critic of the Three Gorges project, told the

Times via e-mail.

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