

Italian leader helps dedicate unique Nevada geothermal plant

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Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval, left, Italy's Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, second from left, Enel CEO Francesco Starace and Enel Green Power CEO Francesco Venturini attend an inauguration ceremony at Enel Green Power North America Inc.'s Stillwater Geothermal Plant near Fallon, Nev., on Tuesday, March 29, 2016. The facility is the only geothermal power plant in the world that combines geothermal energy with two kinds of solar technology. (AP Photo/Cathleen Allison)

The Italian premier was in Nevada on Tuesday to attend the formal dedication of the only geothermal power plant in the world that combines geothermal energy with two kinds of solar technology.

Premier Matteo Renzi joined Gov. Brian Sandoval, Sen. Dean Heller and others at the ceremony and tour at the site bordering Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge.

"The future of energy is technology. If we invest in technology, we can create a different world, a new world," Renzi said.

The Stillwater Geothermal Plant was built by Enel Green Power North America Inc. about 75 miles east of Reno. Its corporate headquarters is in Italy.

Enel CEO Francesco Starace said the pioneering technology that combines a solar thermal facility with a geothermal facility increases the amount of energy available while reducing the intermittent nature of renewable sources.

He said production from solar is highest during the sunniest, hottest days when the geothermal production is lower.

"The lessons we are learning at this advanced geothermal-solar facility will be key to the development of other hybrid plants throughout the world," he said.

Italy was the site of the first geothermal experiment a century ago that established the potential to harness renewable energy produced by the steam from hot water beneath the ground.

Renzi's energy-themed visit to the U.S. includes other stops in Chicago, Boston and Washington.

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