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Despite risks, green investments move into mainstream

By Andrew Leckey |

Green investing is no longer just for those who celebrate Earth Day. Decades of talk about alternative fuels and green technologies has turned energy independence into a national priority.

The investment category that focuses on the environment and alternative-energy sources has earned a position in the mainstream financial world.

Some shares have been in a slump during the oil price decline over the past several months and have historically moved with that indicator. Even though oil is primarily used for transportation while most alternative energy is for electricity and heat generation, the two are intertwined in the public consciousness.

Some analysts see any recent stock price slippage as a buying opportunity, though there is substantial risk. Technologies of green companies are not always fully evolved or easy to understand, the firms are often small, and the answers they seek are not easy.

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Among exchange-traded funds, PowerShares WilderHill Clean Energy fund invests in innovative energy firms and PowerShares Cleantech Portfolio selects from tech firms that have a positive environmental impact.