

COMMISSIONER MEETINGS

All meetings take place in the Commissioners Conference Room (308)
located in the Ostlund Building @ 2825 3rd Ave N (3rd Floor)
and are open to the public unless otherwise noted

THURSDAY - SEPTEMBER 3, 2026

8:45 Calendar

9:00 COMMISSIONERS DISCUSSION

PLEDGE

DEPARTMENTS

1. **Elections -**
 - a. August 2026 Monthly Update
 - b. Request for Record Retention Destruction of Materials
2. **Treasurer -** Amendment to Sundown Security Contract
3. **Bob Morris -** Montana Data Center Water & Electricity Presentation
4. **Gene Jarussi -** Interim Zoning

COMMISSIONERS

1. Commissioner Board Reports

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON COUNTY BUSINESS

**Public comment is an opportunity for individuals to address the Board, however, the Board cannot engage in discussion or take action on items not properly noticed on the agenda. Public comment is limited to 3 minutes per individual.*

Closed - Human Resources Personnel Matter

B.O.C.C Thursday Discussion

1. a.

Meeting Date: 09/03/2026

Title: August 2026 Monthly Update

Submitted By: Dayna Causby, Election Administrator

TOPIC:

August 2026 Monthly Update

BACKGROUND:

August 2026 Monthly Update

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Discussion

Attachments

August 2026 Elections Update



ELECTION ADMINISTRATIONS

(406) 256-2740 (OFFICE)

(406) 254-7940 (FAX)

P.O. Box 35002

Billings, MT 59107-5002

elections@yellowstonecountymt.gov

August 2026 Highlights

Documents Processed

- 4, 516 documents processed. These documents include returned undeliverable ballot updates, out of county moves, out of state moves, any requests to be removed as a registered voter.
- Year-to-date: 18,966 documents processed

The Election Center Update

- MontanaFair- During MontanaFair the elections office had a presence inside of the box office area a week before the fair including a few days after the fair. Workers assisted voters in registering to vote, candidate filing, voter registration certificates, and many other things from that location.

Ribbon Cutting/Open House/Election Worker Appreciation

- The County Commissioners held a ribbon cutting and Election Judge appreciation event at The Election Center on August 31 3:30-7pm. Attendance was between 150-200 people throughout that time. Employees gave tours, conducted interviews, and talked with workers, new outlets, and the public around what services would be offered from The Election Center.

General Election Update (November 3, 2026)

- Ballot envelopes, election instructions, and ballot delivery dates are being prepared. Mailout ballot preparation will begin mid-September.
- Military and Overseas ballots are mailed September 18.
- General mail ballots are mailed to voters on October 9.
- Canvass for the General Election is Tuesday November 17.
- Additional in-person training dates are September 15 and September 17 for any one wishing to join the team as an Election judge, or for any election judges who would like a refresher course before the General Election.

B.O.C.C Thursday Discussion

1. b.

Meeting Date: 09/03/2026

Title: Request for Record Retention Distruction of Materials

Submitted By: Dayna Causby, Election Administrator

TOPIC:

Request for Record Retention Distruction of Materials

BACKGROUND:

Request to destroy per the Montana State Record Retention Schedule. Please see the attached RM88 and records retention schedule.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

discussion-approval to move to regular meeting consent agenda

Attachments

Election Retention Schedule - County

2026-09-03 RM88

Schedule No. 3

Elections Records Schedule

**Adopted by the Local Government
Records Committee, August 1996**

LAST REVISED – MAY 2013

MONTANA LOCAL GOVERNMENT RETENTION SCHEDULE

DEPARTMENT: ELECTIONS

ITEM	RECORD TITLE AND DESCRIPTION	RETENTION TIME	COMMENTS
1.	ABSENTEE BALLOT ENVELOPES a. Returned/Verification (signed envelopes) b. Secrecy	a. & b. 1 year	
2.	ABSENTEE BALLOT LOGS a. Voter's Absentee ballot request-county and local elections b. Voter's absentee ballot request-state and federal elections c. Election administrator's certification of absentee ballots issued d. Confirmation letter to annual absentee voter	a. 1 year if no recount is pending. b. 2 years if no recount is pending. c. 1 year for county & local elections; 2 years for state and federal elections. d. 1 year	
3.	ADDRESS CONFIRMATION CARDS- Notification cards sent to voters that failed to vote in a General election or because mail ballot was returned as undeliverable; part of NVRA process.	2 years	
4.	AFFIDAVITS OF PUBLICATION (Notices of election) a. close of registration b. polling places c. notice of election d. notice-public test of election machine e. filing deadlines f. proof of publications	County and Local Government- 1 year State and Federal- 2 years***	
5.	AUDIT LOG- CENTRAL COUNTER or PRECINCT COUNTER	1 year for county & local elections. 2 years for state & federal elections.	
6.	AUTOMARK FLASHCARD –Necessary to mark the ballots or produce audio of ballot.	6 days after the canvass of the election if no recount or court action is pending.	

MONTANA LOCAL GOVERNMENT RETENTION SCHEDULE

DEPARTMENT: ELECTIONS

ITEM	RECORD TITLE AND DESCRIPTION	RETENTION TIME	COMMENTS
7.	BALLOTS –COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT- a. Voted and un-voted and detached stubs b. Unused c. Unverified Provisional ballots d. Verified Provisional ballot secrecy envelopes and outer affirmation envelope. e. Test Ballots-Automark	a. 1 year if no recount is pending * see MCA 13-1-303 b. 6 months c. and d. 1 year e. 1 year	
8.	BALLOTS –STATE AND FEDERAL a. Voted and un-voted and detached stubs b. Unused c. Unverified Provisional ballots d. Verified Provisional ballot secrecy envelopes and outer affirmation envelope. e. Test Ballots-Automark	a. 2 years* if no recount is pending (federal law) see Federal Law*** b. 6 months c. and d. 2 years e. 2 years	
9.	CANDIDATE FILING FORMS OR PETITIONS		See Clerk and Records Retention Schedule for filing and retention time of candidates financial statements and oaths of office.
10.	CANDIDATES- REGISTER OF	4 years	
11.	CANVASS BOOKS/RESULTS	County and Local Government- 1 year State and Federal- 2 years***	
12.	CERTIFICATION OF AUTOMARK TESTING	2 years if no recount is pending	
13.	CERTIFICATION OF TABULATION EQUIPMENT TESTING	2 years if no recount is pending	

MONTANA LOCAL GOVERNMENT RETENTION SCHEDULE

DEPARTMENT: ELECTIONS

ITEM	RECORD TITLE AND DESCRIPTION	RETENTION TIME	COMMENTS
14.	ELECTION SEAL LOG	2 years if no recount is pending	
15.	ELECTRONIC DEVICE or related software necessary to count ballots.	6 days after the canvass of the election if no recount or court action is pending.	
16.	INVOICES FOR ELECTION COSTS	Audit + 1 year	
17.	M 100 TAPE ROLLS- Tracks all activity on the M 100 machine.	2 years if no recount.	
18.	MAIL BALLOT ELECTIONS a. Secrecy envelopes b. Returned/Verification (signed envelope) c. Undeliverable envelopes d. Ballots e. Daily tally of mail ballots received f. Record of questioned ballots g. Transport box seal register h. Written plan-duplicate-original at Secretary of State office i. Replacement ballot register j. Record of ballot voted in person k. Place of deposit signature log l. Replacement ballot request	County and Local Government-1 year if no recount /court action is pending State- 2 years unless court action or recount is pending.	
19.	OFFICIAL RETURNS OF ELECTION	Permanent	
20.	PETITIONS- LOCAL	8 years	Originals
21.	PETITIONS- STATEWIDE a. non-Presidential b. Presidential	a. 3 months after election** see MCA 13-27-305 b. 2 years***	Copies
22.	POLL AND TALLY BOOKS	4 years	
23.	POST ELECTION AUDIT RECONCILIATION AND REPORT TO SECRETARY OF STATE	2 years if no recount is pending	
24.	PRECINCT MAPS	Permanent	

ER4

FOR RECORD DISPOSAL SEE MCA 2-6-403

For the most current revision go to: www.sos.state.mt.us

Rev. 5-2013 This revision supersedes all previous versions of this schedule

MONTANA LOCAL GOVERNMENT RETENTION SCHEDULE

DEPARTMENT: ELECTIONS

ITEM	RECORD TITLE AND DESCRIPTION	RETENTION TIME	COMMENTS
25.	PRECINCT REGISTERS	4 years	Historic value
26.	ELECTIONS – REGISTRATION a. Voter Confirmation Card – returned as undeliverable b. Cancellation Notice from other Counties or States c. Death Notice from other Counties or States d. Lists of Purged Voters – canceled voters purged from the statewide system by SOS.	a. 5 years b. 4 years c. 4 years d. 5 years	
27.	REGISTRATION CARDS	Permanent- Original and latest change of address or cancellation	Microfilm if possible
28.	RESOLUTIONS CALLING FOR ELECTION a. special district b. school c. county	Original- Permanent Duplicate copies- 1 year	

* In addition to retaining the ballots, you will need to keep any electronic device or related software necessary to read the ballots. For example, if you use a ballot that does not have the names of the candidates printed directly on the ballot, but use an electronic counting board to do the canvass, you need to save the counting board. You will need to retain anything necessary to run a recount.

** Unless a court action is pending on the sufficiency of the petition.

***FEC Regulations require everything pertaining to Federal elections must be retained for 2 years

MONTANA LOCAL GOVERNMENT RETENTION SCHEDULE

DEPARTMENT: ELECTIONS

Revisions to Schedule												
Date	Revision	Change										
11-2003	1	ITEM 5 <u>BALLOTS –COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT</u> Added: c. Unverified Provisional ballots d. Verified Provisional ballot secrecy envelopes and outer affirmation envelope Retention time for c. and d. 1 year ITEM 6 <u>BALLOTS –STATE AND FEDERAL</u> Added: c. Unverified Provisional ballots d. Verified Provisional ballot secrecy envelopes and outer affirmation envelope Retention time for c. and d. 2 years										
10-2006	2	ITEM 1 <u>ABSENTEE BALLOT LOGS</u> Revised: <table><tr><td>a. Voter’s Absentee ballot request-county and local elections</td><td>a. 1 year if no recount is pending.</td></tr><tr><td>b. Voter’s absentee ballot request-state and federal elections</td><td>b. 2 years if no recount is pending.</td></tr><tr><td>c. Election administrator’s certification of absentee ballots issued</td><td>c. 1 year for county & local elections; 2 years for state and federal elections.</td></tr><tr><td>d. Voter’s request to be on permanent absentee list</td><td>d. Permanent</td></tr><tr><td>e. Confirmation letter to permanent absentee voter</td><td>e. 1 year for county & local elections; 2 years for state and federal elections.</td></tr></table> Deleted Citation: 4 years see MCA 13-13-233 ITEM 2 <u>ABSENTEE BALLOT ENVELOPES</u> Changed: Retention time - 1 year ITEM 3 <u>ADDRESS CONFIRMATION CARDS</u> Added: “or because mail ballot was returned as undeliverable.”	a. Voter’s Absentee ballot request-county and local elections	a. 1 year if no recount is pending.	b. Voter’s absentee ballot request-state and federal elections	b. 2 years if no recount is pending.	c. Election administrator’s certification of absentee ballots issued	c. 1 year for county & local elections; 2 years for state and federal elections.	d. Voter’s request to be on permanent absentee list	d. Permanent	e. Confirmation letter to permanent absentee voter	e. 1 year for county & local elections; 2 years for state and federal elections.
a. Voter’s Absentee ballot request-county and local elections	a. 1 year if no recount is pending.											
b. Voter’s absentee ballot request-state and federal elections	b. 2 years if no recount is pending.											
c. Election administrator’s certification of absentee ballots issued	c. 1 year for county & local elections; 2 years for state and federal elections.											
d. Voter’s request to be on permanent absentee list	d. Permanent											
e. Confirmation letter to permanent absentee voter	e. 1 year for county & local elections; 2 years for state and federal elections.											

ER6

FOR RECORD DISPOSAL SEE MCA 2-6-403

For the most current revision go to: www.sos.state.mt.us

Rev. 5-2013 This revision supersedes all previous versions of this schedule

<i>Revisions to Schedule</i>					
Date	Revision	Change			
10-2006 (cont.)	2 (cont.)	ITEM 5 <u>AUDIT LOG</u> New (all items after this are renumbered) ITEM 6 <u>AUTOMARK FLASHCARD</u> New ITEM 7 <u>BALLOTS-COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT</u> Deleted from: a. "Includes signed affirmation envelopes and undelivered or returned envelopes from mail ballot elections" ITEM 8 <u>BALLOTS-STATE AND FEDERAL</u> Deleted from a. : "Includes signed affirmation envelopes and undelivered or returned envelopes from mail ballot elections" ITEM 9 <u>CANDIDATE FILING SHEETS OR PETITIONS</u> Replaced: "SHEETS" with "FORMS" Deleted : Retention Time - "Terms of office" Comments added: "See Clerk and Records Retention Schedule for filing and retention time of candidates financial statements and oaths of office." ITEM 15 <u>ELECTRONIC DEVICE</u> New ITEM 16 <u>INVOICES FOR ELECTION COSTS</u> New			
10-2009	3	ITEM 7 <u>BALLOTS –COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT</u> & ITEM 8 <u>BALLOTS – BALLOTS –STATE AND FEDERAL</u> Added to: a. "...and detached stubs"			
4-2010	4	<u>FACE SHEET</u> Correction: Changed adopted date from April 2005 to August 1996 & added Rev. 1.4 April 2010 ITEM 7 <u>BALLOTS –COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT</u> Added: e. Test Ballots-Automark; Retention: 1 year ITEM 8 <u>BALLOTS – BALLOTS –STATE AND FEDERAL</u> Added: e. Test Ballots-Automark; Retention: 2 years NEW ITEMS: 12, 13, 14, 17, and 23 Note: all items starting with # 12 are renumbered. <table border="1"> <tr> <td>12.</td><td>CERTIFICATION OF AUTOMARK TESTING</td><td>2 years if no recount is pending</td></tr> </table>	12.	CERTIFICATION OF AUTOMARK TESTING	2 years if no recount is pending
12.	CERTIFICATION OF AUTOMARK TESTING	2 years if no recount is pending			

ER7

FOR RECORD DISPOSAL SEE MCA 2-6-403

For the most current revision go to: www.sos.state.mt.us

Rev. 5-2013 This revision supersedes all previous versions of this schedule

<i>Revisions to Schedule</i>														
Date	Revision	Change												
4-2010 (cont.)	4 (cont.)	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>13.</td><td>CERTIFICATION OF TABULATION EQUIPMENT TESTING</td><td>2 years if no recount is pending</td></tr> <tr> <td>14.</td><td>ELECTION SEAL LOG</td><td>2 years if no recount is pending</td></tr> <tr> <td>17.</td><td>M 100 TAPE ROLLS- Tracks all activity on the M 100 machine.</td><td>2 years if no recount.</td></tr> <tr> <td>23.</td><td>POST ELECTION AUDIT RECONCILIATION AND REPORT TO SECRETARY OF STATE</td><td>2 years if no recount is pending</td></tr> </table>	13.	CERTIFICATION OF TABULATION EQUIPMENT TESTING	2 years if no recount is pending	14.	ELECTION SEAL LOG	2 years if no recount is pending	17.	M 100 TAPE ROLLS- Tracks all activity on the M 100 machine.	2 years if no recount.	23.	POST ELECTION AUDIT RECONCILIATION AND REPORT TO SECRETARY OF STATE	2 years if no recount is pending
13.	CERTIFICATION OF TABULATION EQUIPMENT TESTING	2 years if no recount is pending												
14.	ELECTION SEAL LOG	2 years if no recount is pending												
17.	M 100 TAPE ROLLS- Tracks all activity on the M 100 machine.	2 years if no recount.												
23.	POST ELECTION AUDIT RECONCILIATION AND REPORT TO SECRETARY OF STATE	2 years if no recount is pending												
5-2012	5	Changed: ITEM 26 to <u>ELECTIONS – REGISTRATION</u> a. Voter Confirmation Card – returned as undeliverable (5yrs) b. Cancellation Notice from other Counties or States (4 yrs) c. Death Notice from other Counties or States (4 yrs) Moved: Former ITEM 26 <u>REGISTRATION CARDS</u> to ITEM 27 Former ITEM 27 <u>RESOLUTIONS CALLING FOR ELECTION</u> to ITEM 28												
5-2013	6	ITEM 26 <u>ELECTIONS – REGISTRATION</u> Added: d. Lists of Purged Voters – canceled voters purged from the statewide system by SOS (5 years) ITEM 3 <u>ADDRESS CONFIRMATION CARDS</u> Changed: Retention period from “Permanent- Microfilm if possible” to “2 years”. ITEM 2 <u>ABSENTEE BALLOT LOGS</u> Deleted: d. Voter’s request to be on permanent absentee list (Permanent) Changed: e. Confirmation letter to permanent absentee voter to d.; the word “permanent” to “annual”; retention time from “1 year for county & local elections; 2 years for state and federal elections” to “1 year”.												

RECORDS DESTRUCTION DOCUMENT (RM88)				NO.		
				PAGE 1 OF 1 PAGES		
1. AGENCY NAME AND DIVISION/PROGRAM: Yellowstone County Elections			2. AGENCY CONTACT: NAME: Dayna Causby PHONE #: 406-256-2740 EMAIL: elections@yellowstonecountymt.gov			
3. NOTICE OF INTENTION: The schedule records listed in Item 5 are to be disposed of in the manner checked below (specify only one). ☐ Delete ☐ Incinerate ☒ Shred as Classified ☐ Toss without Restriction ☐ Other: Explain						
4. SUBMITTED BY: I hereby certify that the records to be disposed of are correctly represented below, that any audit requirements or Offer to the State Historical Society Archives has been fully justified, and that further retention is not required for any litigation pending or imminent. <u>Documentation attached from Historical Society.</u> SIGNATURE: /s/ Dayna Causby NAME AND TITLE: Dayna Causby Election Administrator DATE: 8/27/2026						
5. LIST OF RECORD SERIES NOTE: Attach any inventories or Excel spreadsheets to this form to help validate records destroyed.						
a. Retention Schedule Number	b. Item number listed on Retention Schedule	c. Record Series Title	d. Retention in months/years	e. Inclusive Dates	f. Volume in Cubic Feet	g. Disposition Action and Date completed after Authorization
3	3	NVRA 1 st /2 nd notice	2	11/2021& 11/2023	5.4	
3	7	Ballot instructions	2	11/2023	5.4	
3	18	Affidavit Envelopes	22 mo	06/2024	6.9	
3	6	School/Heights Water Sewer Ballots	1 year	5/2025	2.6	
3	6	School Ballots, Secrecy, void affidavits, late, rejected ballots	1 year	05/2025	2.6	
3	25	Primary registers	4 years	06/2022	8.6	
3	4	Poll Books	4 years	2022	.8	
3	3	undeliverable notices	2 years	2022	0.8	
6. DISPOSAL AUTHORIZATION: Disposal for the above listed records is authorized. Any deletions or modifications are indicated. Custodian/Records Manager Name: Date: Signature:			7. DISPOSAL CERTIFICATE: The above listed records have been disposed of in the manner and on the date shown in column g. Name and Title: Signature:			

5. LIST OF RECORD SERIES-CONTINUED

NOTE: Attach any inventories or Excel spreadsheets to this form to help validate records destroyed.

a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	f.	g.
----	----	----	----	----	----	----

[illegible]

B.O.C.C Thursday Discussion

2.

Meeting Date: 09/03/2026

Title: Amendment to Sundown Security Contract

Submitted For: Hank Peters

Submitted By: Hank Peters

TOPIC:

Treasurer - Amendment to Sundown Security Contract

BACKGROUND:

With the upcoming change to US Bank, the Sundown Security contract must be updated to reflect the change. The county attorney's office has reviewed the amendment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Discuss

Attachments

Amendment to Sundown Security Contract

ADDENDUM TO CONTRACT

This Addendum is made part of the Security Services contract between Yellowstone County Treasurer and Sundown Security.

By mutual consent, effective on and after, "10/1/2026", the original Service Contract Agreement dated "2/2/2026" is amended in the following particulars, to wit:



AN ENTITY OF
E & JK Enterprises, Inc.

The COMPANY agrees to call for and receive for and on behalf of the CLIENT, and to receipt therefore, sealed or locked shipments containing currency, coin, negotiable instruments, and other documents incident to the making of deposits or withdrawals (hereinafter called "PROPERTY"), and to transport and deliver same in like, condition to the consignee designated by CLIENT, between points in, and in accordance with, the service, liability, and compensation schedule below, or as stated in the attached, properly executed amendment(s) and/or exhibit(s): **SEE ATTACHED EXHIBIT 1.**

Except as amended above, the original agreement between the parties hereto remains unchanged and all terms, conditions and limitations remain in full force and effect. Commencement of services acknowledges all terms and conditions of contract and addendum. As herein, said Contract is hereby ratified and confirmed.

This addendum is effective upon signature by both parties and remains in effect for the duration of the main agreement unless terminated in writing by either party.

E & JK ENTERPRISES, INC. dba SUNDOWN SECURITY

BY: Natasha Abel

DATE: 08/24/2026

PRINTED NAME: Natasha Abel

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY TREASURER

BY: _____

DATE: _____

PRINTED NAME: _____



AN ENTITY OF
E & JK Enterprises, Inc.

EXHIBIT 1

SERVICE LOCATION	DAY OF THE WEEK/ROUTE	FREQUENCY	RATE	MONTHLY COST**
CURRENCY DELIVERY				
Change order pick up at: US Bank, Downtown location	Wednesday	Weekly	\$28	\$122
Change order delivery at: Ostlund County Administration Building, Yellowstone County Treasurer's Office				
Deposit pick up at: Ostlund County Administration Building, Yellowstone County Treasurer's office	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday	Weekly	\$17	\$295
Deposit delivery at: US Bank, Downtown location				
			SUBTOTAL	\$417

ADDITIONAL SERVICES/FEES	MONTHLY COST**
Fuel Surcharge (currently 3% of vehicle related fees)***	\$12.51
Special Deliveries: off schedule, off route, service on site more than 15 minutes	\$45

\$TOTAL \$429.51

** Fuel surcharge fees are subject to quarterly fuel price review. Fuel surcharges will not exceed 3% of delivery services (calculated on service fees requiring vehicle fleet use only) in 2025. Fuel surcharges are adjusted as follows:

- 3% of vehicle required service fees for previous quarterly average fuel expense exceeding \$3.40/gallon.
- 2% of vehicle required service fees for previous quarterly average fuel expense between \$3.00/gallon and \$3.39/gallon.
- 1% of vehicle required service fees for previous quarterly average fuel expense between \$2.75/gallon and \$2.99/gallon.
-

If the surcharge percent of vehicle required service fees falls below \$5, a \$5/month minimum will be charged.

ARMORED CAR • SECURITY PATROL & GUARD • COURIER SERVICES

5364 Midland Rd. | Billings, MT 59101 | 406-256-1311 | ejk@sundownsecurity.com

SUNDOWNSECURITY.COM

B.O.C.C Thursday Discussion

3.

Meeting Date: 09/03/2026

Title: Bob Morris - Montana Data Center Water & Electricity Presentation

Submitted By: Erika Guy

TOPIC:

Bob Morris - Montana Data Center Water & Electricity Presentation

BACKGROUND:

NA

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Discuss

Attachments

Presentation



Montana Data Centers

Electricity and Water Resources

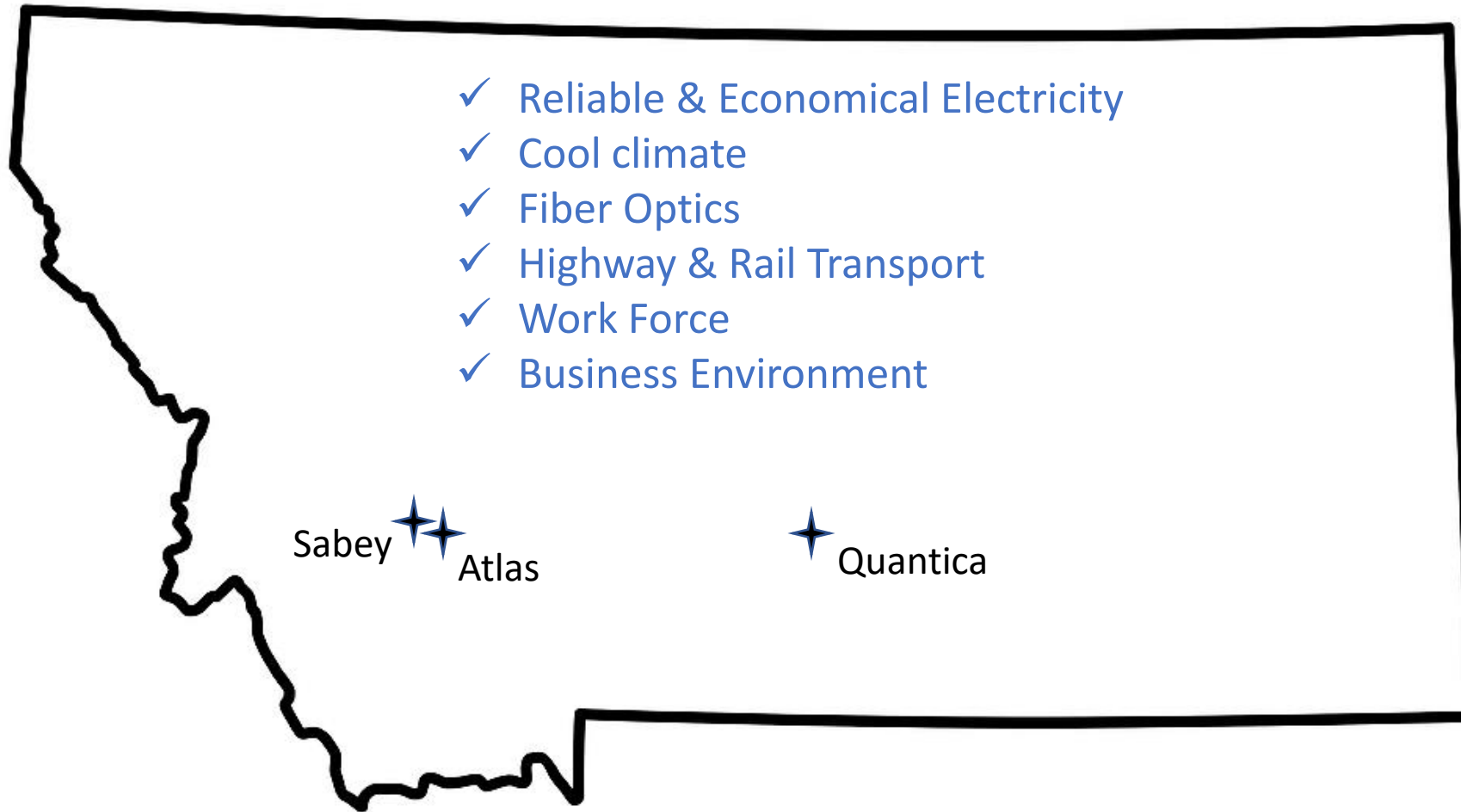
Yellowstone County Commissioners
September 3, 2026



Bob Morris
Lance Energy Chair

rmorris4@mtech.edu

Why Data Centers in Montana?



U.S. Electricity on the Rise (Again)

Terawatt hours

4500

4000

3500

3000

2500

2000

1500

1000

500

0

1900

1935

1955

1975

1995

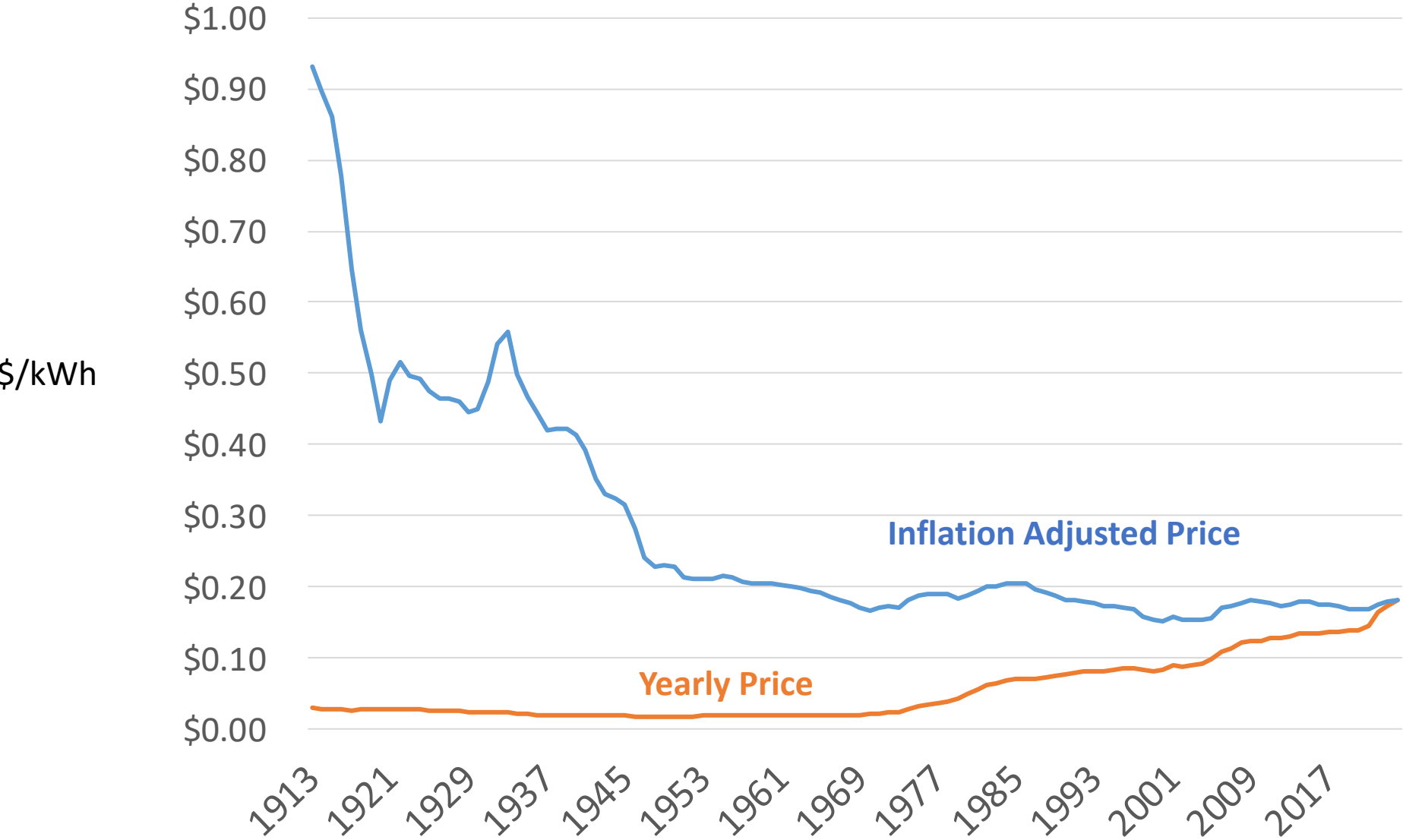
2015

4.7% CAGR

2-3% CAGR

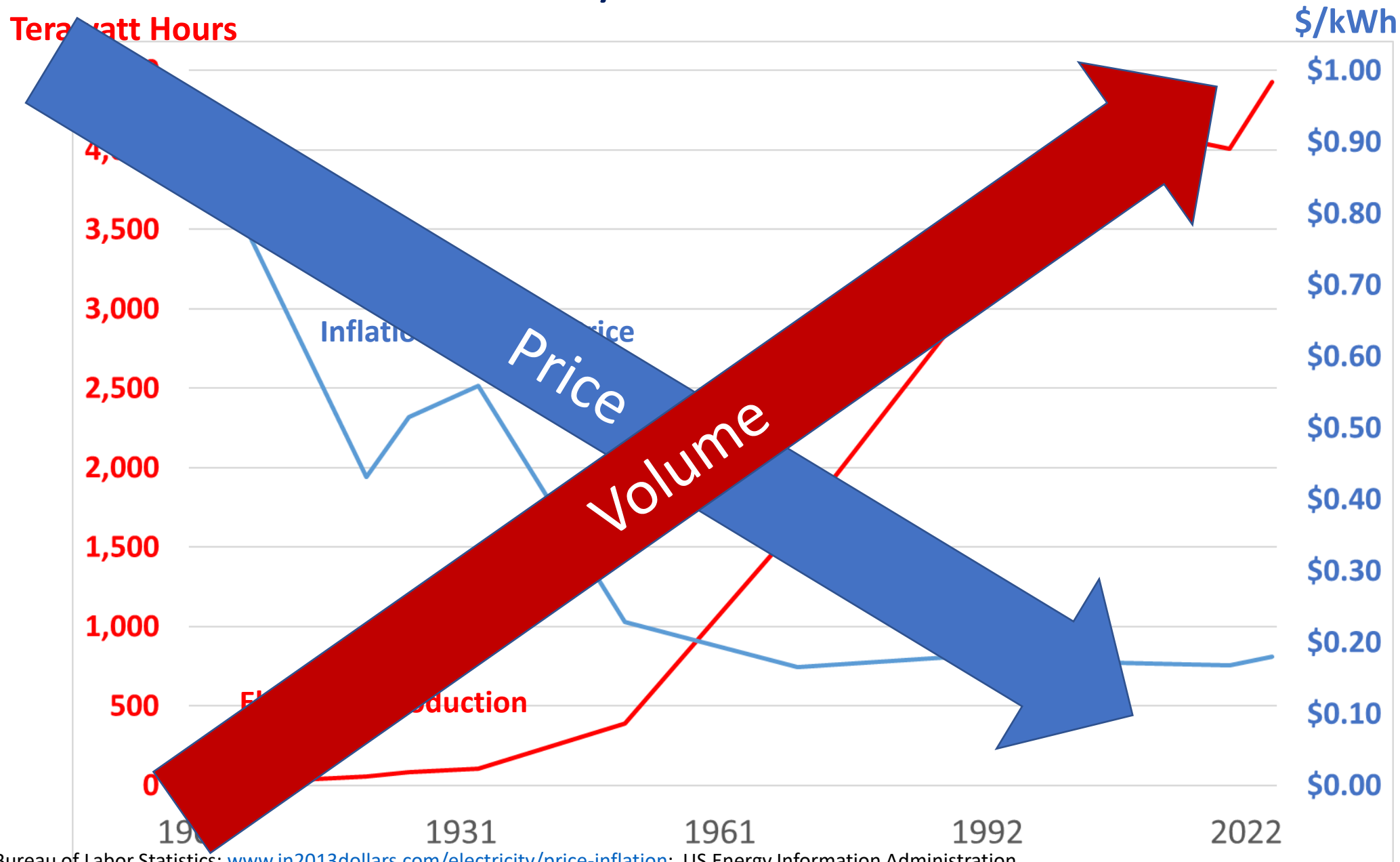
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Statistics of the United States, Millennial Edition (1902-2000); U.S. Energy Information Administration, Electric Power Annual, Table 3.1.A (2001-2024); EIA, Today in Energy, March 2026 (2025, preliminary)

Public Service Companies Reduce Prices for a Century



Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics; www.in2013dollars.com/electricity/price-inflation

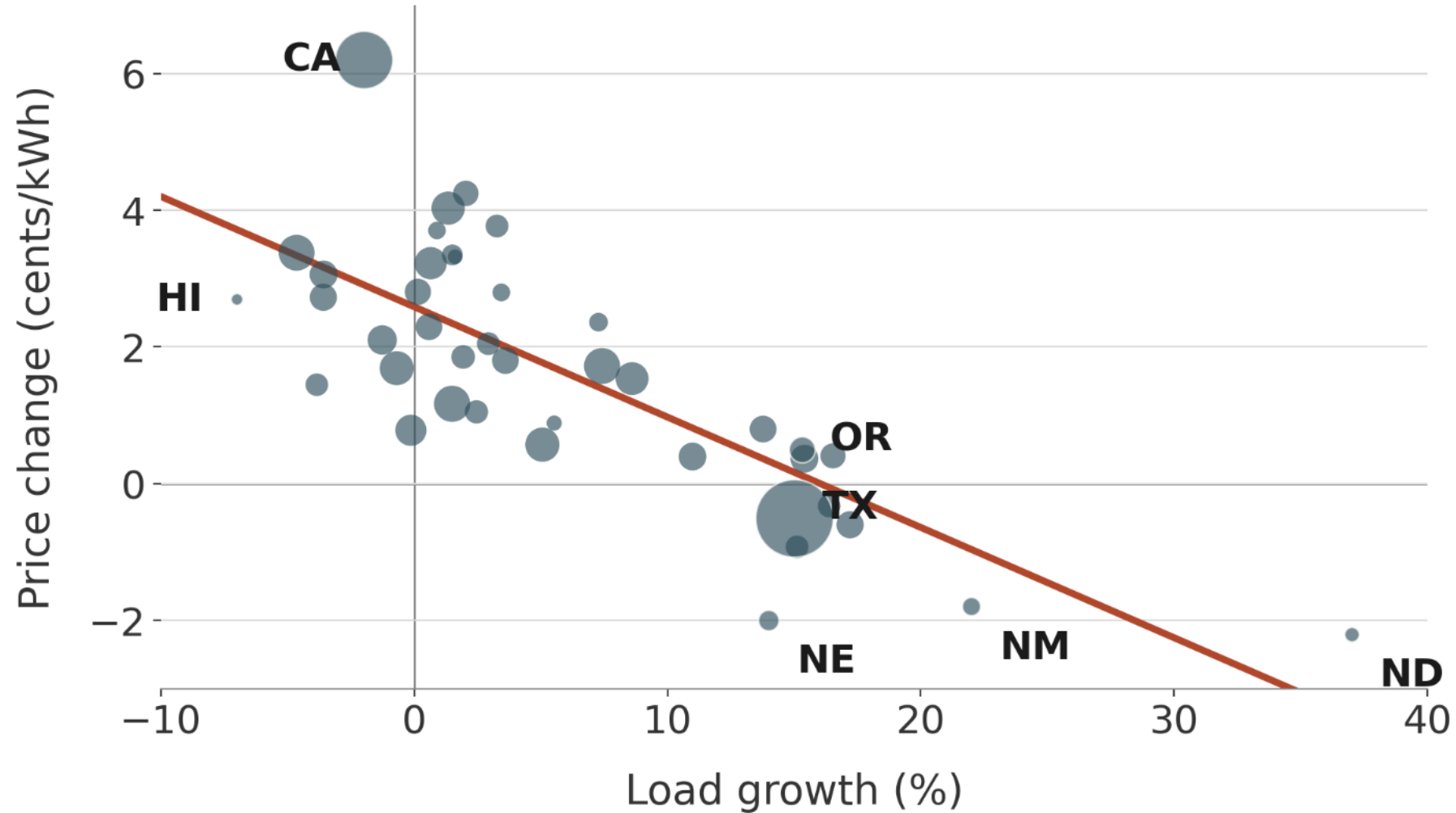
US Electricity Production vs Price



Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics; www.in2013dollars.com/electricity/price-inflation; US Energy Information Administration

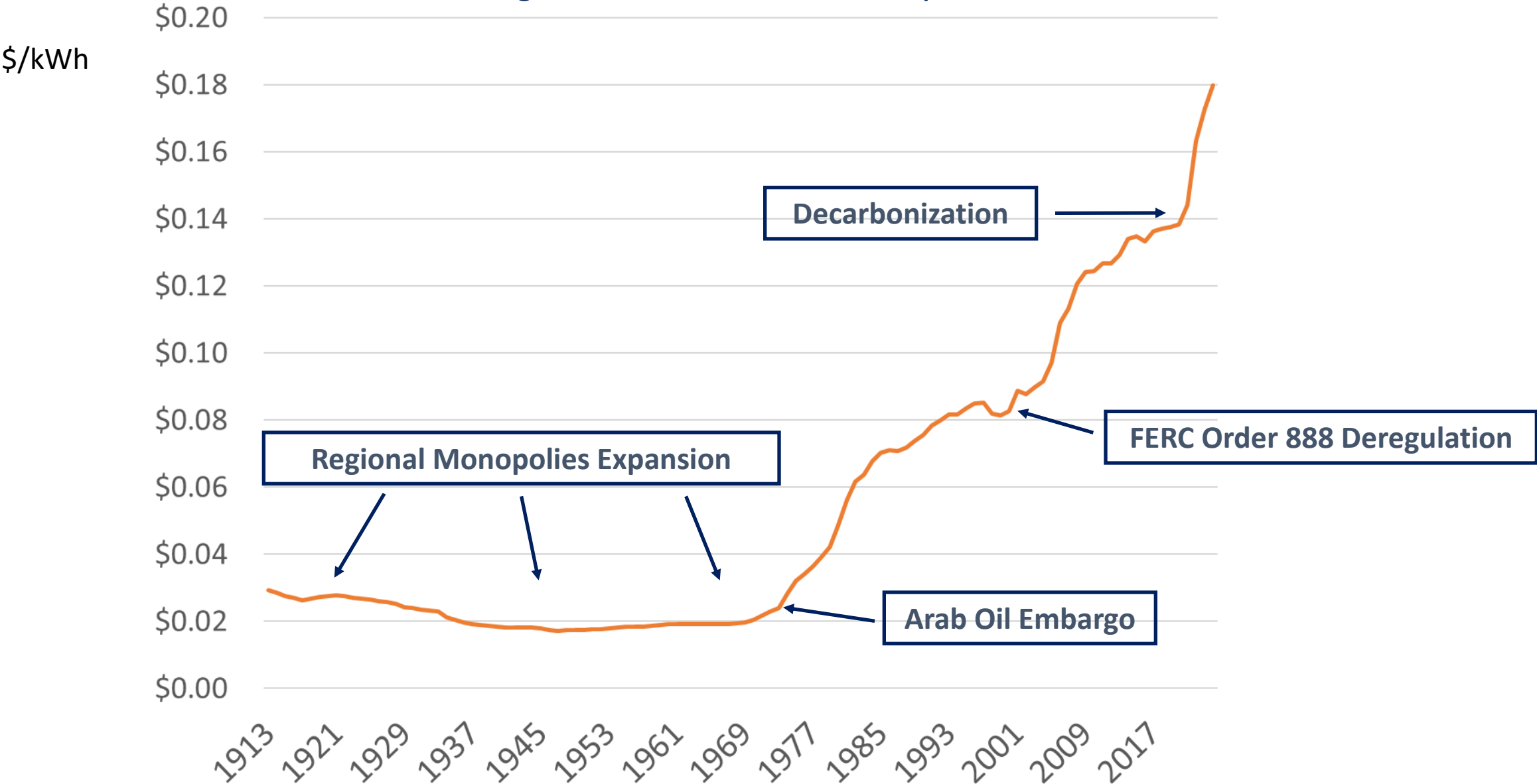
Load Growth Reduces Electricity Prices

2019 – 2024 Inflation Adjusted



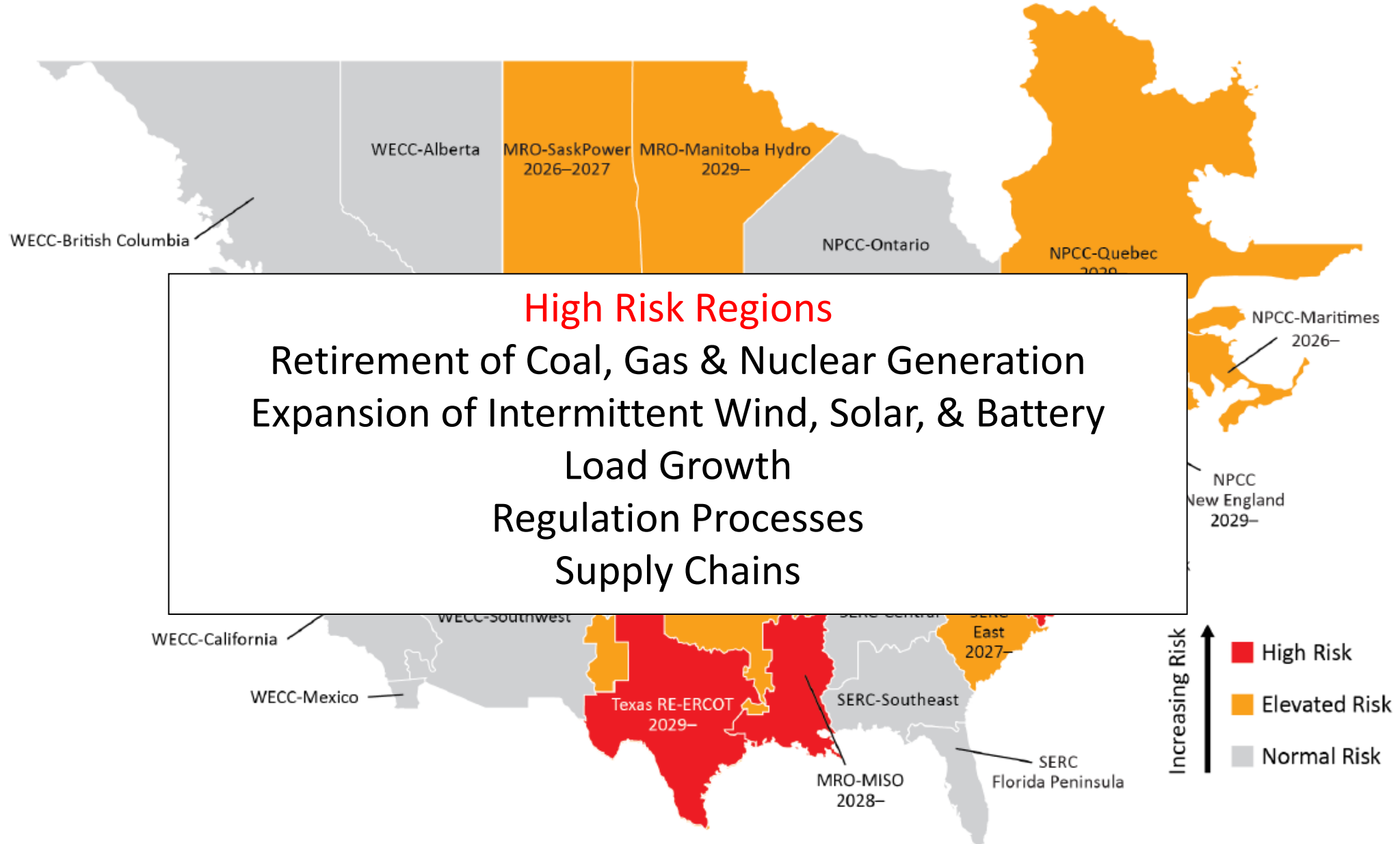
Engineering, Economics, and Policy Drive US Electricity Prices

Average US Residential Electricity Rate



Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics; www.in2013dollars.com/electricity/price-inflation

NERC Assesses Electrical Supply Risks

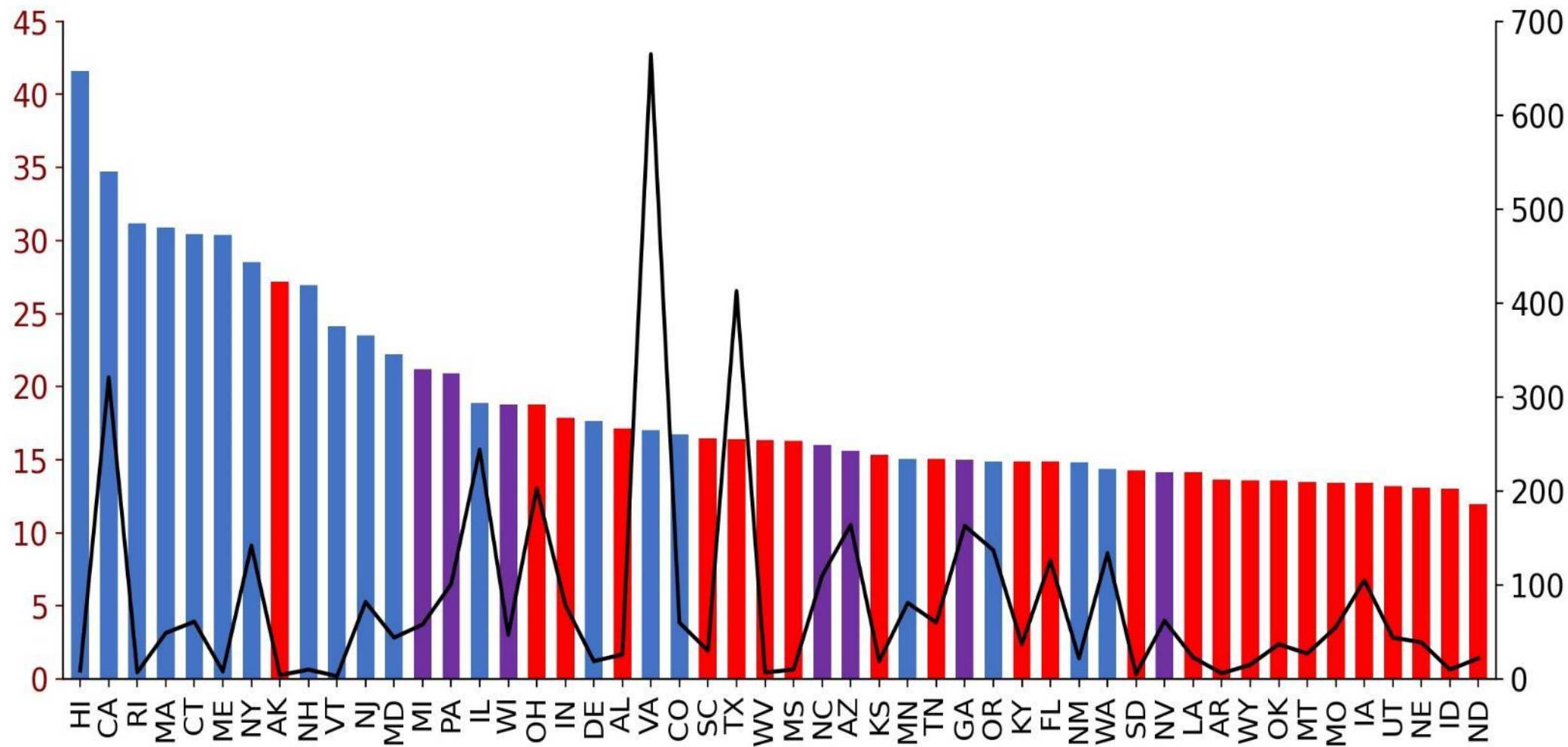


No Correlation Between Data Centers and Electricity Rates

Residential Rates

Cents per kWh

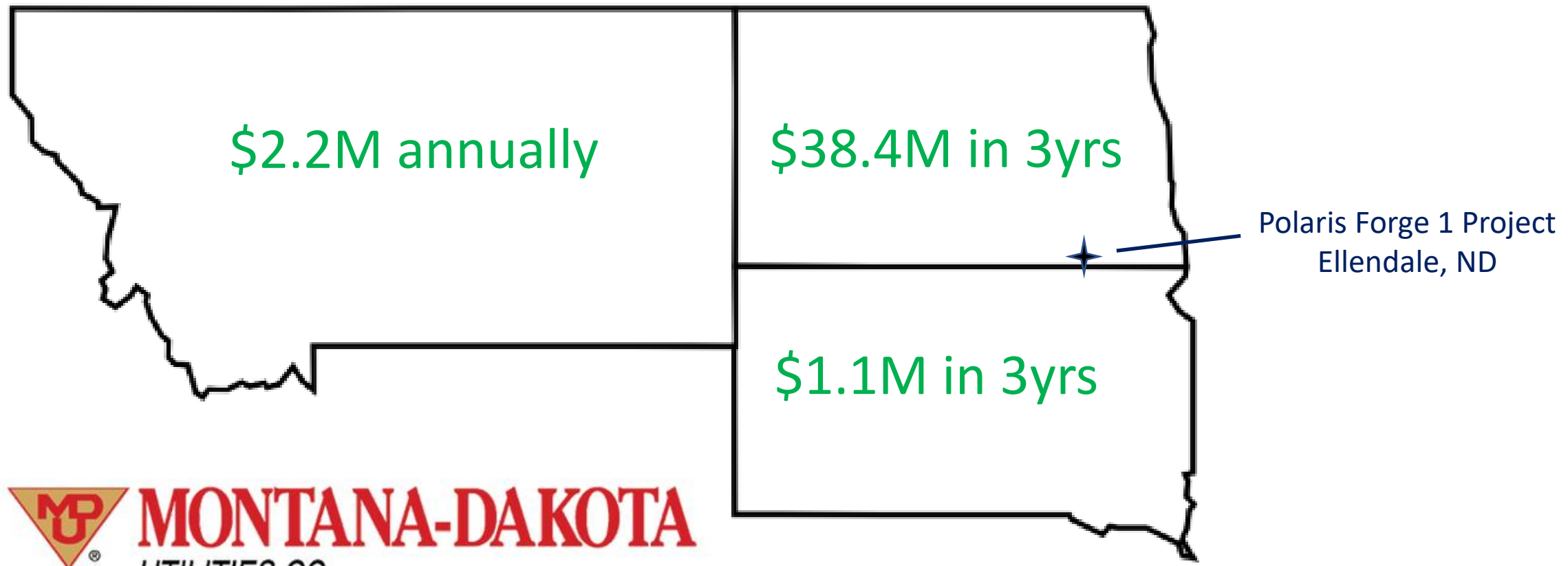
Data Center Count



Sources: (1) EIA Electric Power Monthly December 2025; (2) Institute for Energy Research: Blue States, High Rates; (3) <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/mapped-u-s-states-with-the-most-data-centers-in-2025/>

MDU: Data Centers Cover Their Own Costs, Lower Costs for Others

Returns to Customers



Data Centers Have Electricity Supply Options

1. Northwestern Energy

- Regulated by Montana PSC
- Comply with statute 69-8-201(1)(b) “...electricity service shall not adversely impact existing customers..”
- PSC Large Load Tariff docket



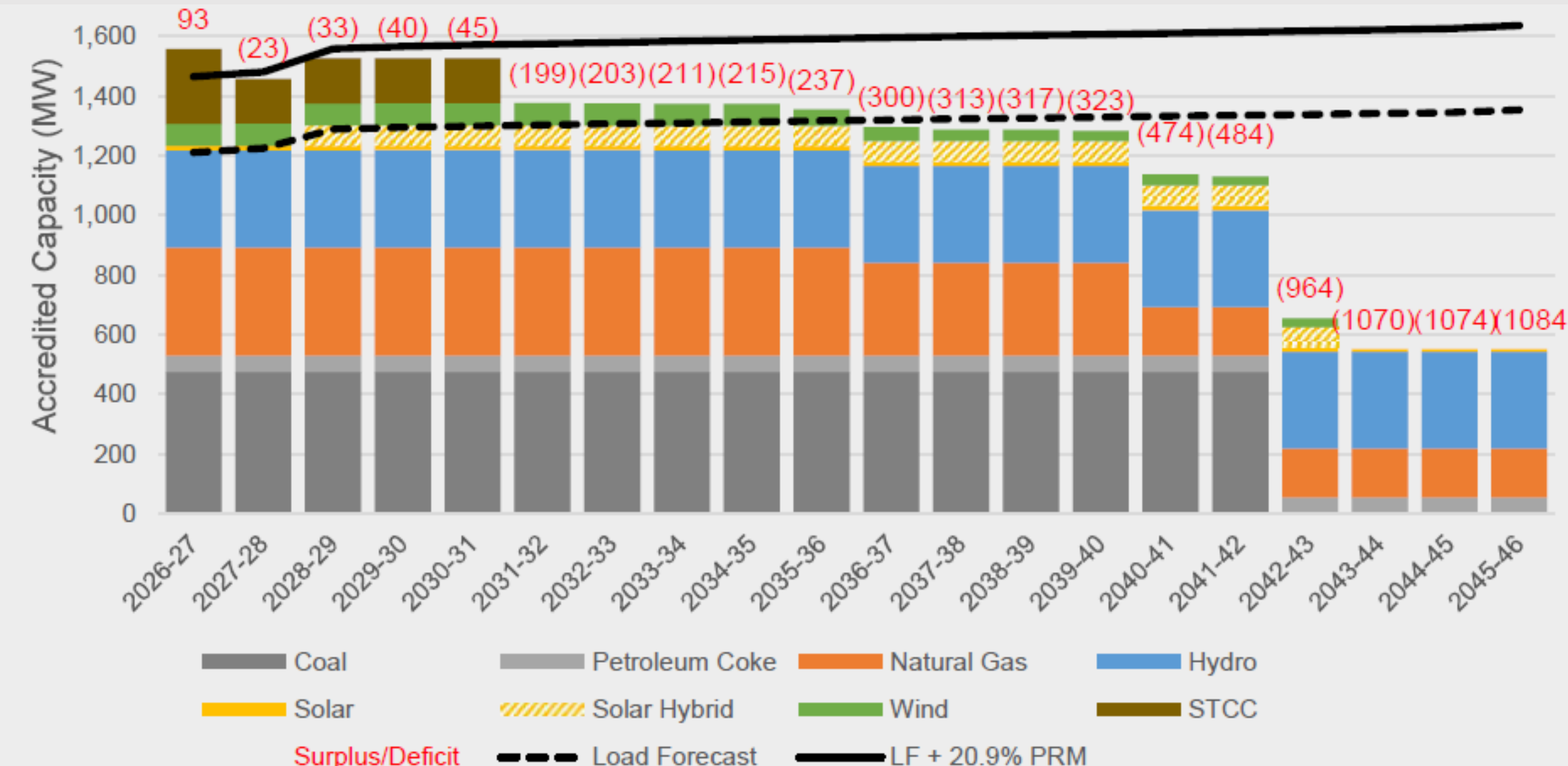
2. Market “Choice”

- Bilateral agreement with independent power producer (IPP)
- Regulated by FERC with WECC interconnection



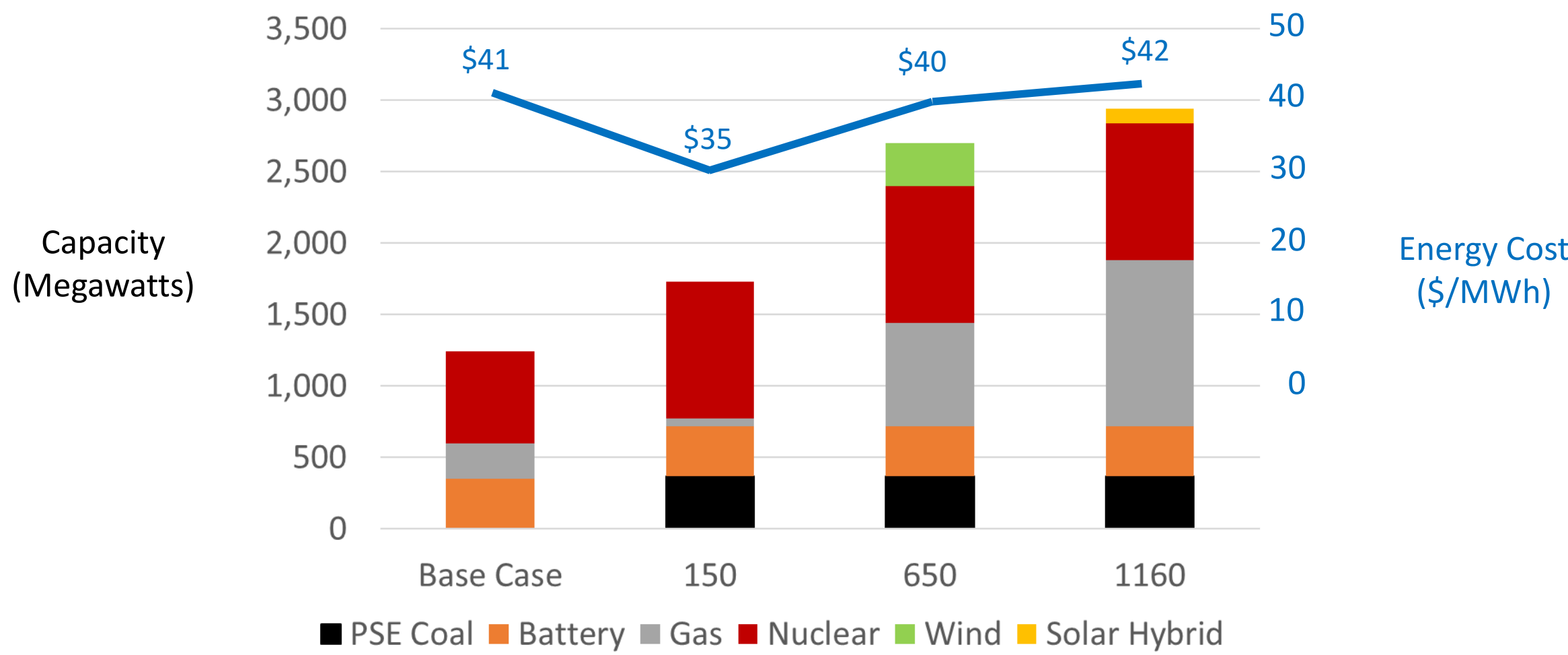
3. Bring Your Own

Northwestern Energy Long Term Energy Forecast



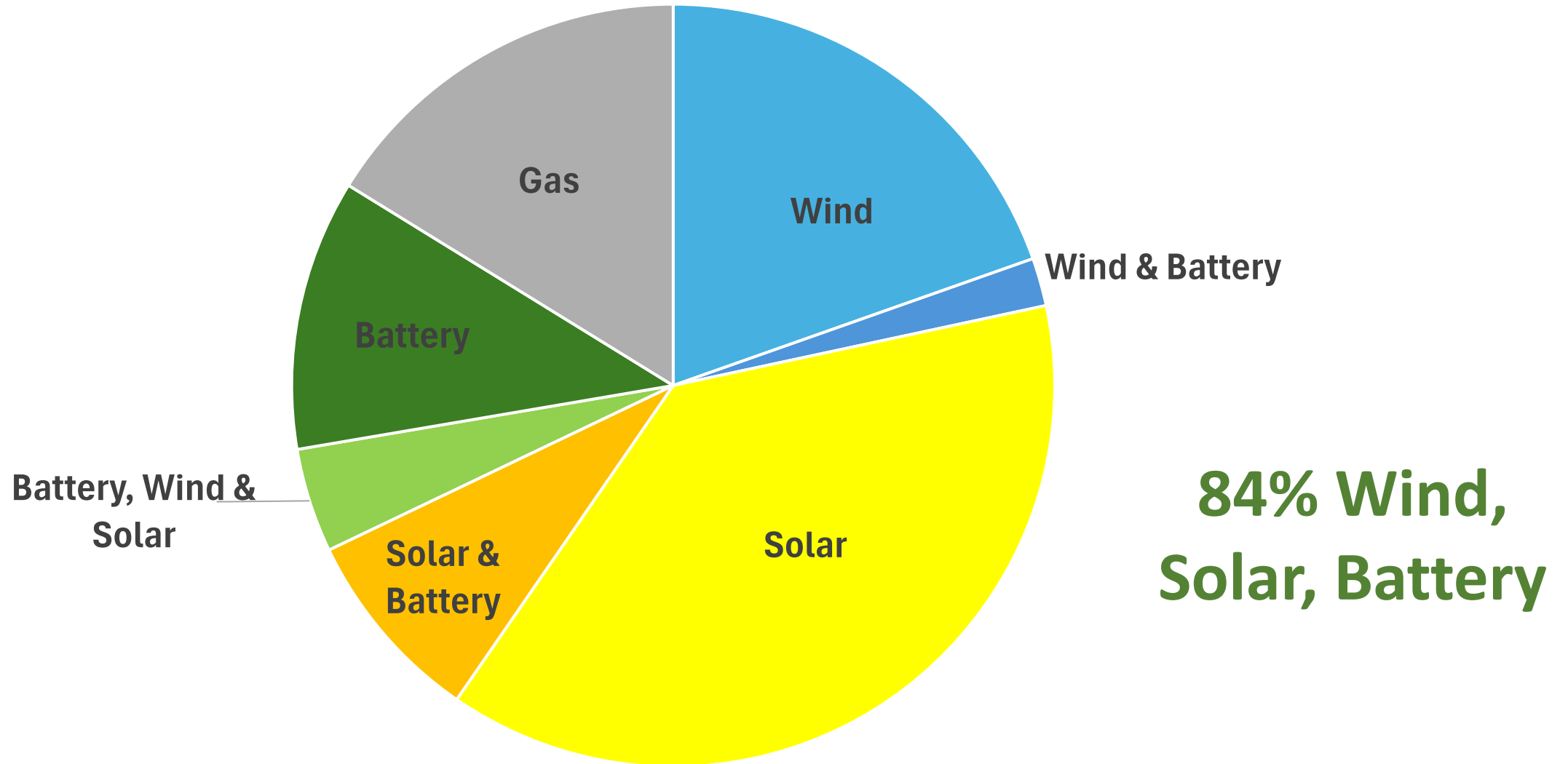
Northwestern Energy Plans for Data Center Growth

Capacity Additions (MW) for Base Case and Data Center Loads of 150, 650, 1160 MW

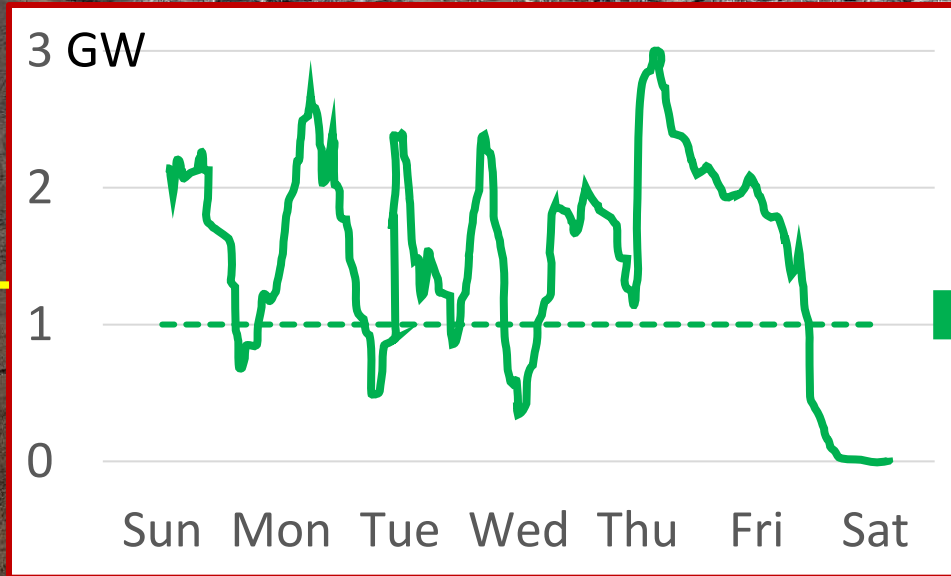
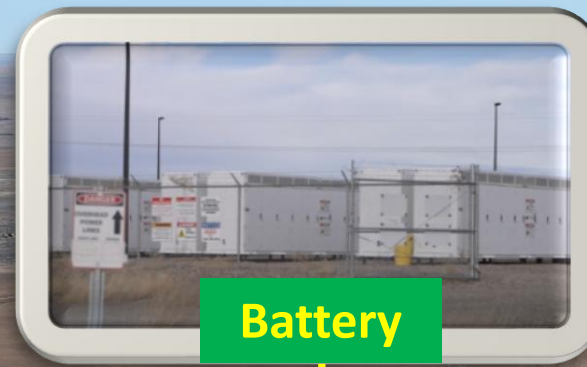


Montana Power Producers Plan for 11GW New Resources

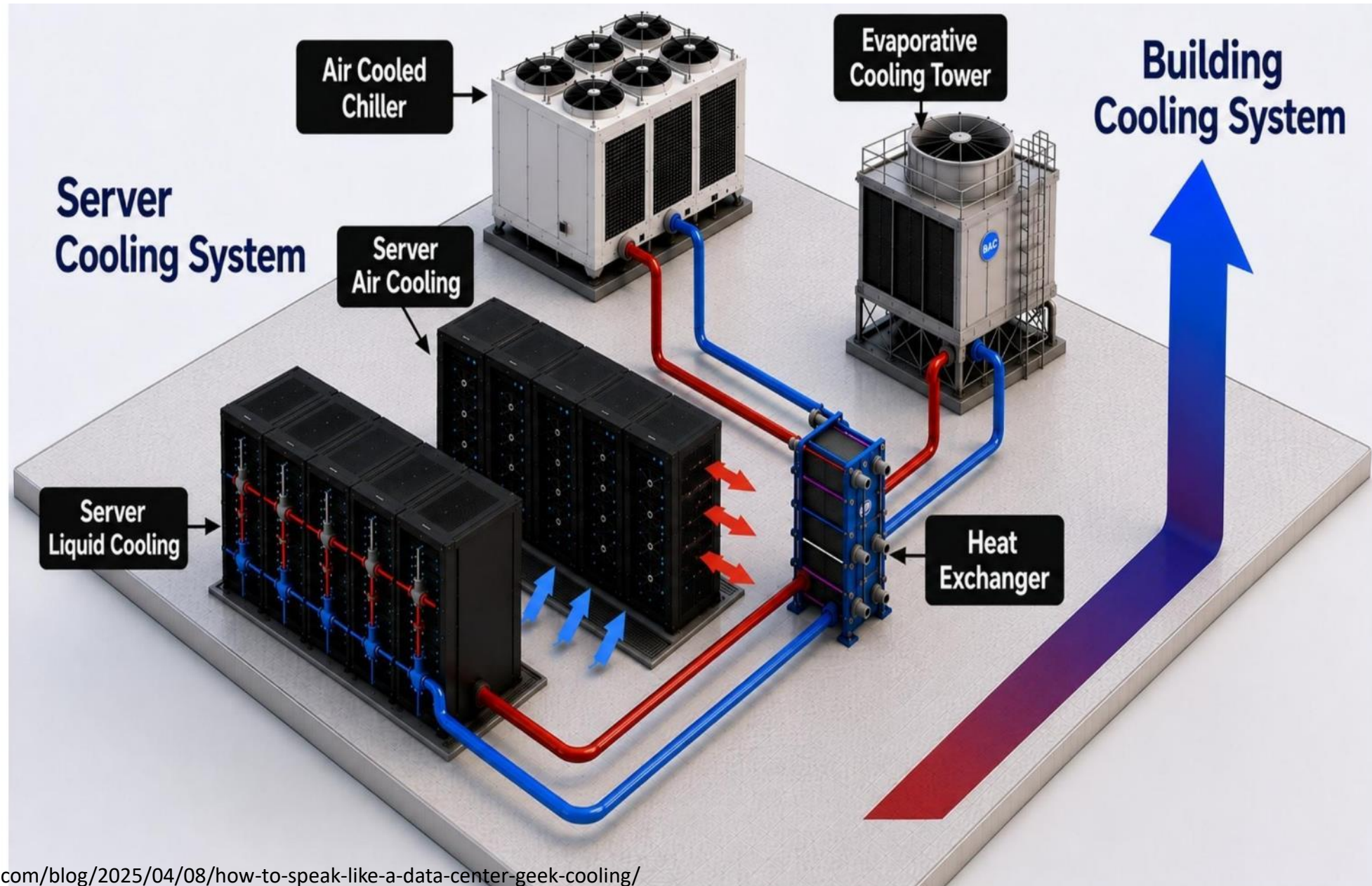
Northwestern Energy Interconnection Queue



Broadview Data Center Energy Concept



Data Centers Optimize Cooling System Design



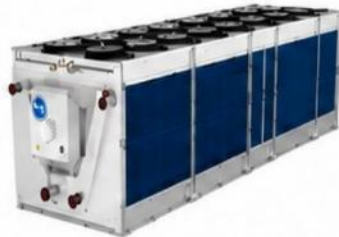
Select Cooling System to Optimize Water & Energy Use



DRY COOLERS



ADIABATIC COOLERS

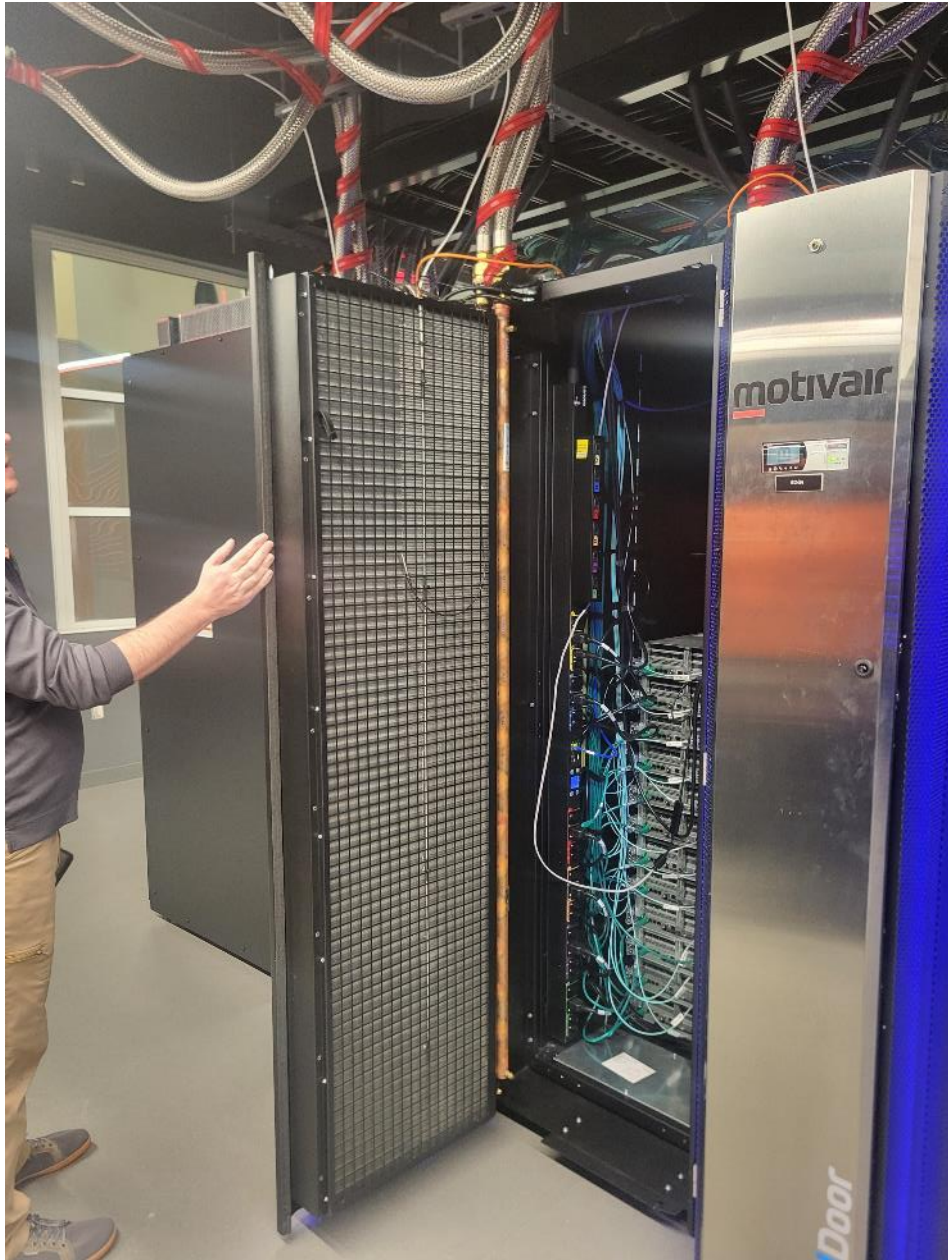


HYBRID COOLERS



EVAPORATIVE COOLERS





Chilled Door Liquid Server Cooling

Oklahoma State Data Center

Closed Loop Liquid Cool, No External Water



How Much Water Will a Dry Cooling Data Center Use?

*City of Round Rock: Sabey data center used **2 million gallons in a year**, about the same as 15 single-family homes¹*

Active Facility Capacity²

38 MW

Average Daily Water Use*

5,500 gal

*** Water is for general facility use, not for cooling system.**

1. <https://www.roundrocktexas.gov/city-departments/administration/data-centers-in-round-rock/#7>

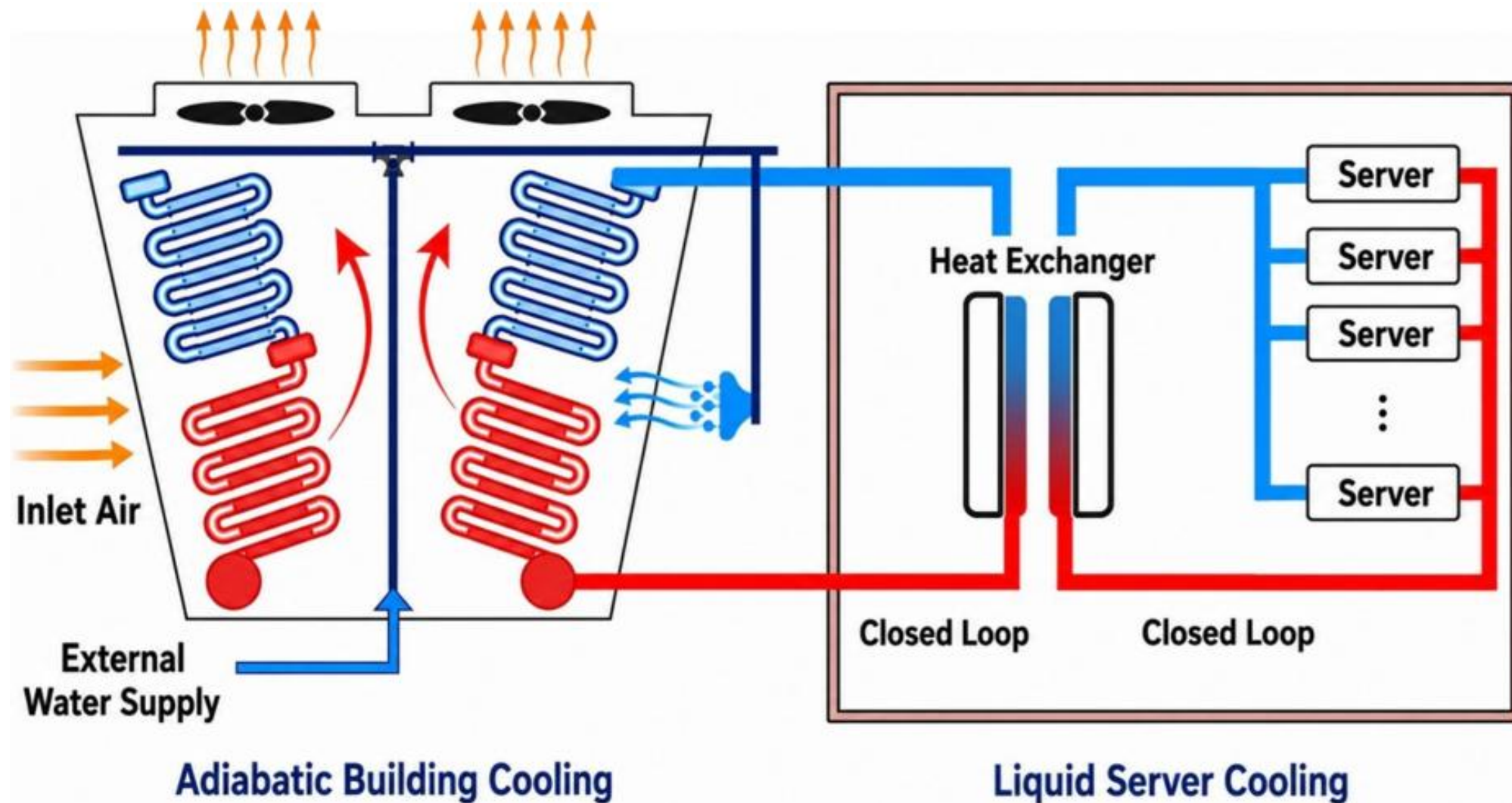
2. <https://sabeydatacenters.com/locations/austin-data-center>

Optimize Energy & Water Use

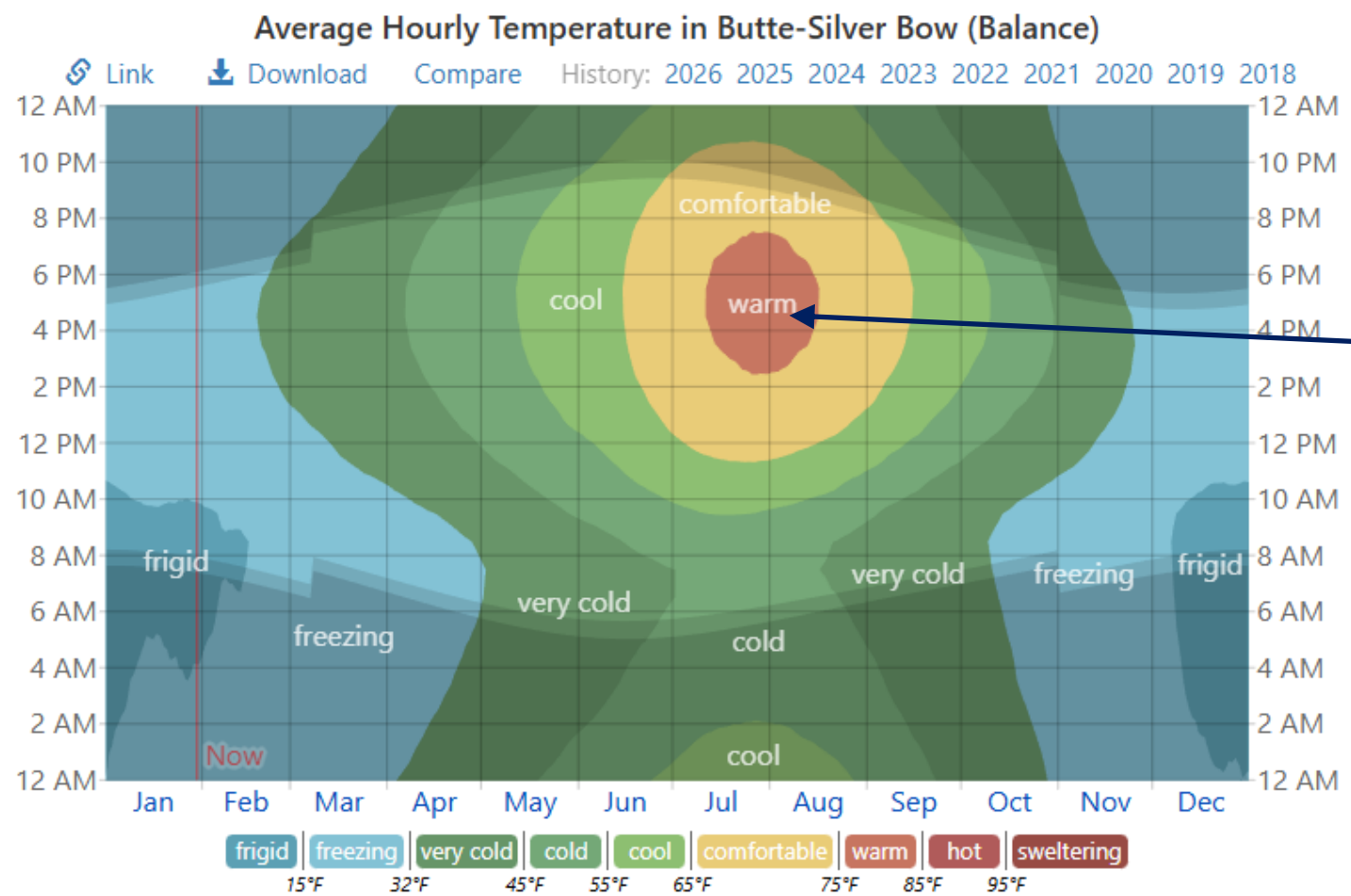
+ Simple Design

+ Low Power Use

+ No Water Use Below 80°F



Butte Air Temperature Above 80°F in July and August

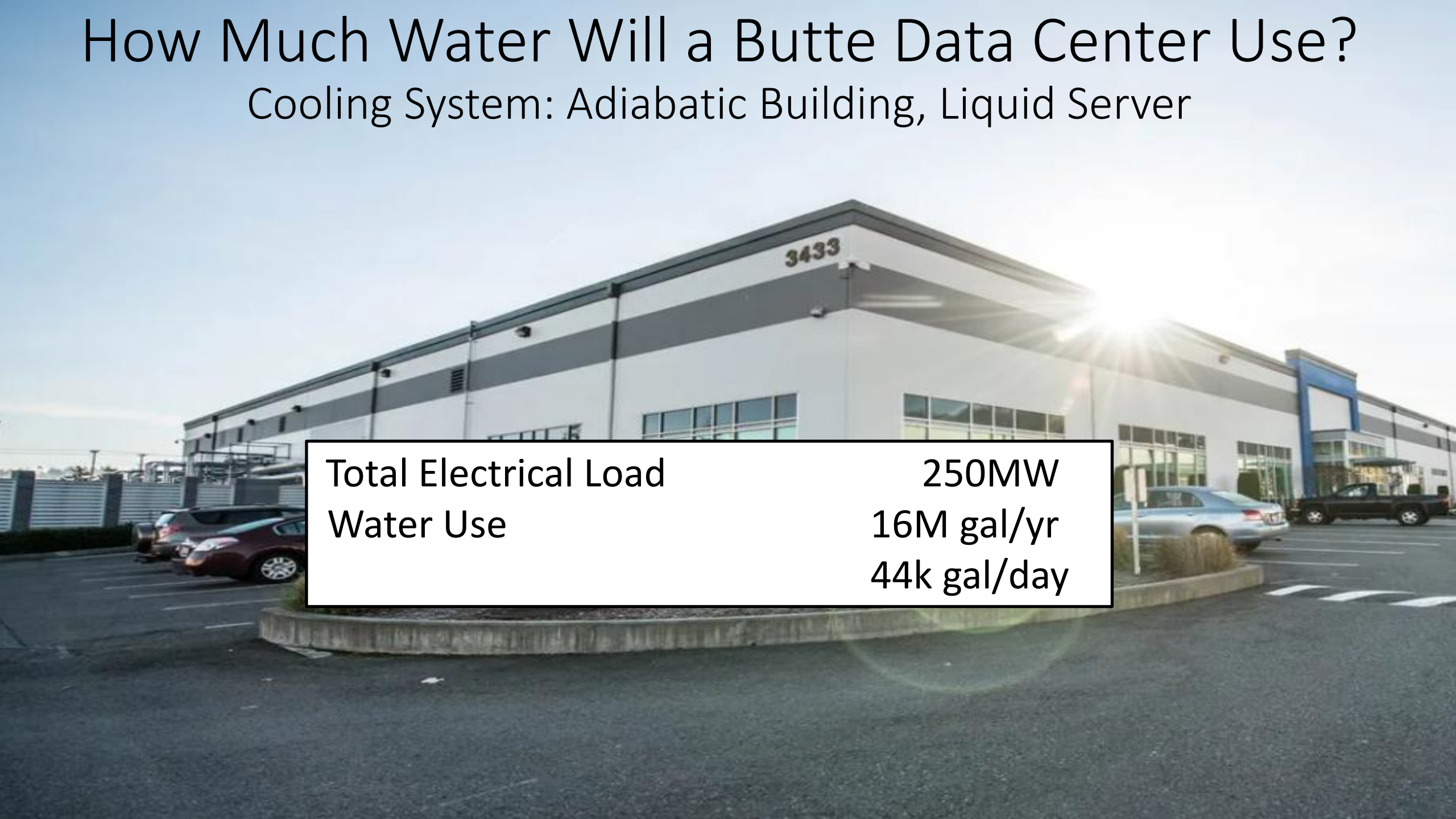


Evaporative cooling four hours per day in summer.

[Butte-Silver Bow \(Balance\) Climate, Weather By Month, Average Temperature \(Montana, United States\) - Weather Spark](#)

How Much Water Will a Butte Data Center Use?

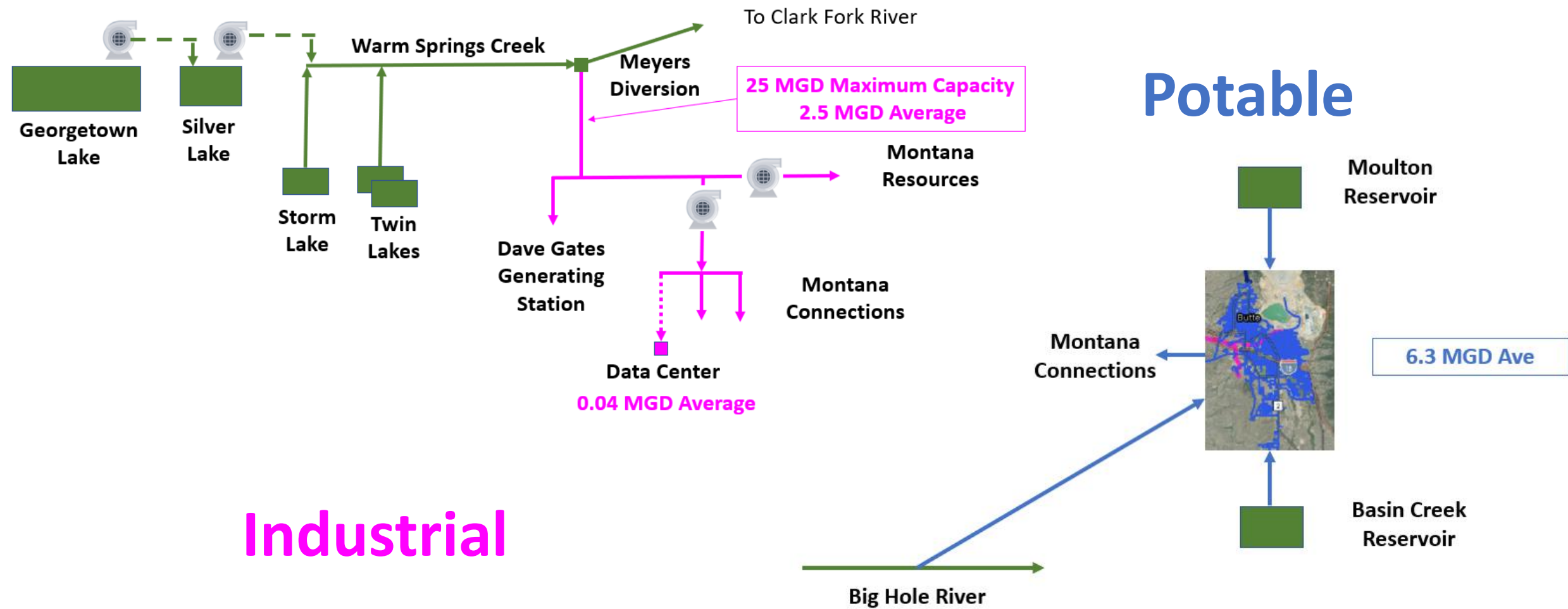
Cooling System: Adiabatic Building, Liquid Server



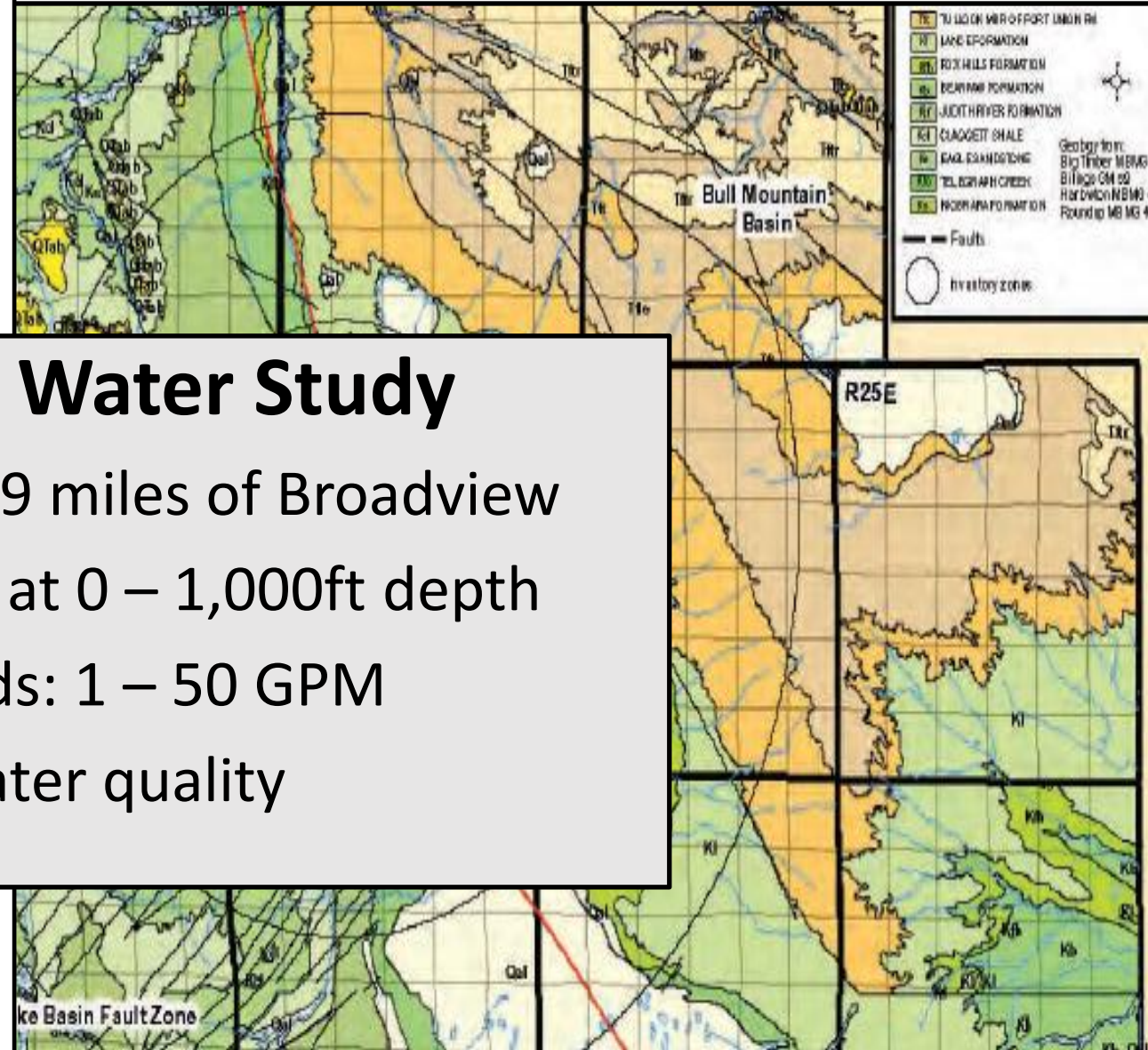
Total Electrical Load	250MW
Water Use	16M gal/yr 44k gal/day

Butte Has a Robust Industrial Water System

MGD = Million Gallons Per Day



Developing a Viable Water Supply for the Town of Broadview, South-Central Montana



Broadview Water Study

~700 wells within 9 miles of Broadview

Multiple aquifers at 0 – 1,000ft depth

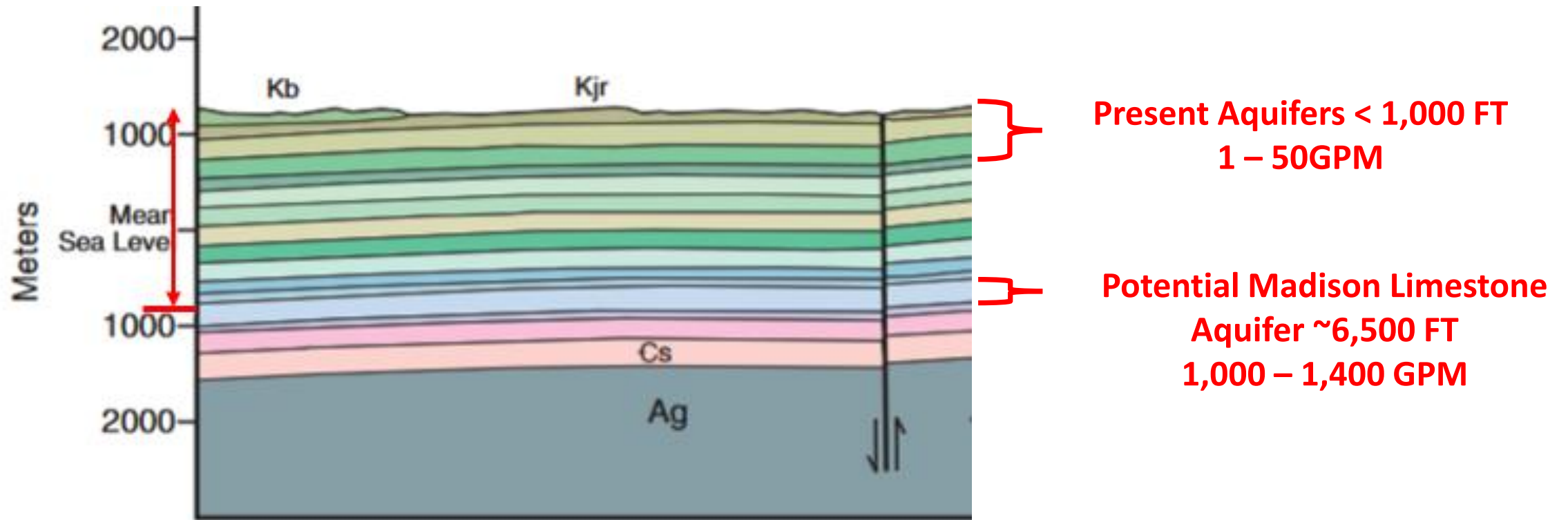
Typical yields: 1 – 50 GPM

Poor water quality

by
Jon C. Reiten and Jay Hanson
Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology

2008

Proven Shallow Aquifers. Potential Deep Aquifer?



Broadview Data Center Water Use Considerations

Use dry building cooling, liquid server cooling

Design for 20,000 gallons per day

Explore deep aquifers

Build a water treatment facility

Typical Water Use Rates gallons/day

Average Home	300
Garden Hose	15,000
Proposed Broadview Data Center	20,000
100 Room Hotel	44,000
Proposed Butte Data Center*	44,000
Butte Copper Mtn Sports Complex*	47,000
Montana Golf Course*	123,000

*Annualized daily averages.

Done Right, Data Centers Benefit Montana

Lower electricity rates

A modernized grid

Designs matched to local water resources

Strong ratepayer and environmental protections

B.O.C.C Thursday Discussion

4.

Meeting Date: 09/03/2026

Title: Gene Jarussi - Interim Zoning

Submitted By: Erika Guy

TOPIC:

Gene Jarussi - Interim Zoning

BACKGROUND:

See Attached

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Discuss

Attachments

Interim Zoning

August 13, 2026

Commissioners Morse, Waters & White

On August 11th, I participated in the public comment portion of your meeting. In summary, I asked that the Board utilize the authority granted to it by §76-2-206, MCA (Doc. 1) and introduce and adopt an interim zoning district or regulation to address an emergency that involves public health, safety, morals and general welfare in a jurisdictional area (specifically that part of Yellowstone County upon which Quantica proposes to build the Broadview Data Center).

The three minutes allotted for public comment was too short to fully explain why I believe the Board should exercise the authority which the legislature has given it. The purpose of this memo is to lay out why the Board should utilize the authority given to it by §76-2-206 MCA. (Doc. 1).

I have attached various documents, including six articles (five of which are from Montana sources) setting forth existing facts about the Broadview Data Center as well as representations made by Quantica. I will lay out why these facts and representations justify adopting an interim zoning district or regulations that would pause (i.e. a moratorium) construction or expansion of any data center for a period of one year within Yellowstone County, including zoned and unzoned areas.

REPORTED FACTS, REPRESENTATIONS, AND SOURCE

1. Quantica's Data Center campus will be around 5000 acres. (Doc. 2, pg. 3 & Doc. 4, pg. 3). That is approximately 7.8 square miles. (Doc. 5, pg. 2). The proposed data center would be among the world's largest. (Doc. 5, pg. 1).

2. Quantica anticipates constructing 12 to 16 buildings--each 200,000 to 300,000 sq. ft. (Doc. 5, Pg.2)

Note: 12 buildings at 200,000 sq ft each = 55 acres (approx.)
16 buildings at 300,000 sq ft each = 110 acres (approx.)

3. "Quantca's website states that phase 1 will start in 2026." (Doc. 3, pg. 4) Quantica hopes to bring the first building online in 2029. (Doc. 6, pg. 2).

4. A Stillwater County Commissioner (Roger Webb) attended a Zoom conference and reported that "One presenter from a county in Texas, population 1800, described a data center there that employed 5,000 during construction. (Doc. 4, pg.2).

5. Plans are for an AI data center that aims to attract companies like Meta, Apple, and Google. (Doc. 3, pg. 2). The actual tenant is not known. (Doc. 6, pg. 3).

6. Quantica estimates its near-term power requirements at 1,100 megawatts. But in a press release, the company has indicated that number could eventually reach 7,000 megawatts." (Doc. 5, pg. 2). "The facility has filed interconnection applications with NorthWestern Energy to expand power generation for its 1,100-megawatt center outside Broadview." (Doc. 4, pg. 3).

7 The Billings Gazette, citing internal emails from the Mt Dep of Environmental Quality, suggest the company plans to build gas-fired power plants to generate 1,785 megawatts. To put that in perspective NWE owns just 1,285 megawatts of power in the entire state of Montana. (Doc. 4, pg 3)

8. In May Quantica's website stated it had filed applications with NWE for additional capacity totaling 7,235 megawatts. (Doc. 4, pg. 3)

9. Quantica is "asking for a maximum of 7,235 megawatts to connect into the power grid. . ." (Doc. 5, pg. 2). "[T]he capacity ask from Quantica is roughly 10 times larger than NorthWestern's entire load for all Montana Customers." (Doc. 5, pg 2)

10. Quantica says that this new filing doesn't necessarily mean the center would use all this power, which includes renewables, firming generation and battery storage, only that the company is planning ahead with increased capacity. (Doc. 5, pg. 2)

11. Quantica says it will generate its own power on-site, which it says will shield NorthWestern rate payers against rate increases. (Doc. 5, pg. 2).

12. Quantica is working with the Mt. Dept. of Environmental Quality on permits, "including firming power such as natural gas, geothermal and other potential sources." (Doc. 5, pg. 2)

13. Early on, Quantica stressed "renewables" as a major power source. More recently, information refers to a mix of renewables and natural gas power plants. (Doc. 4, pg 3).

14. Quantica is working on permitting gas plants. 585 megawatts will be generated by gas-fired engines and another 1200 megawatts from gas-fired turbines. (Doc. 7, pg. 2)

15. The 1785 megawatts (1.785 gigawatts) is more than 10 times the megawatts generated by the Laurel gas plant¹ (172 megawatts) which is currently the largest in Montana. (Doc. 7, pg. 2).

¹ It is undisputed that the Laurel Gas Plant produces the equivalent of 769,706 tons of carbon dioxide each year.

16. One gigawatt of energy is enough to power approximately 750,000 homes. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates Montana has around 540,000 housing units. (Doc. 7, pg. 3).

17. The 1785 megawatts is more than the entire generation capacity (1285 megawatts) owned by NWE in the state. (Doc. 7, pg. 2)

18. A gas pipeline would have to be run to the facility. (Doc. 7, pg. 2).

19. Quantica's CEO John Chesser states, "[t]hat power, . . . , could come from small-scale nuclear reactors, a reliable alternative when wind and solar are not producing energy." (Doc. 3, pg. 5)

20. Quantica's CEO John Chesser states, "the facility will use close-looped cooling systems drawing from deep aquifers, limit noise through design, and generate its own electricity to avoid straining Montana's power grid." (Doc. 3, pg. 5). There are no enforceable commitments or standards to measure these representations by Quantica.

21. Closed-looped systems use less water than the older systems. (Doc. 4, pg. 3)

21. BSDI's (Big Sky Digital Infrastructure) website states, "its water demands will be limited to domestic purposes—not for cooling." (Doc 4, pg. 3)

22. BDSI's website states, "... early planning shows water use would be minimal by industrial standards." (Doc. 4, pg. 4)

AN EMERGENCY EXISTS

There is a train coming down the tracks. Right now, it is off in the distance, but Yellowstone County needs to and is entitled to deal with the issues so that we don't get run over.

Here are just some of the issues raised by the attached articles.

1. Is Quantica going to purchase electricity from NWE? If it is going to purchase power from NWE, how much of the 1100 megawatts? Will consumer rates increase? If so, by how much? Will there be any separate rate categories for data centers and other customers? Will Yellowstone County be paying more for its utility bills? If so, how much? What about the City of Billings? (The City opposed the last rate hike by NWE)

2. If electricity is generated by a small-scale nuclear power plant, what are the risks? What regulations need to be in place to govern a nuclear plant? Where will it be located? What is the water requirement for a nuclear plant? Source of the water?

Potential impact on surrounding landowners who also need water? Water discharge? Will the discharged water carry pollutants? What grid and infrastructure improvements are necessary, and who will pay for them?

3. If electricity is generated by solar, where will the solar farms be located? Size in terms of acres? Size in terms of how many megawatts are expected to be generated? What grid and infrastructure improvements are necessary, and who will pay for them?

4. If electricity is generated by wind, where will the wind farms be located? Size in terms of acres? Size in terms of how many megawatts are expected to be generated? What grid and infrastructure improvements are necessary, and who will pay for them?

5. If electricity is generated by geothermal: Where are the geothermal features which lend themselves to generating electricity? What is involved in the construction of a geothermal generator? Size in terms of how many megawatts are expected to be generated? What grid and infrastructure improvements are necessary, and who will pay for them?

6. If electricity is generated by gas-fired power plants, where will the turbines be located? What grid and infrastructure improvements are necessary, and who will pay for them? Air pollution? (Note that the Laurel Gas Plant puts the equivalent of 769,706 tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year.) Light pollution? Noise pollution? How large of a pipeline will be needed to transport gas to the turbines? Route?

7. A closed-loop cooling system using water from deep aquifers: How much water is needed? What will be the impact on the deep aquifer? How much water is available in the deep aquifer? Depletion concerns? Is there any water discharge? How much water used for flushing and maintenance of cooling loops? Are there pollutants in the water? What are they and in what concentration? Where would the water be discharged?

8. Quantica also says water demands will be limited to domestic purposes—not cooling: this seems inconsistent with the representation that forms the basis for Question 7, supra. What are these “domestic purposes?” How much water is required for “domestic purposes?” Is there any water discharge? Concerns about pollution? And if water is not used for cooling, how will this huge data center be cooled?

9. Noise will be limited through design: What will be the source(s) of the noise? What will the decibels be? Presumably constant—i.e. 24 hours per day. Will there be computers whirring and fans running 24/7? Will nearby residents and landowners be exposed to the noise on a continuing basis?

10. There is no mention of increased temperatures on surrounding land, 24/7 lighting, vibrations, and other known and documented impacts of AI data centers, and their impacts on livestock and other elements of an agricultural community.

11. Thousands employed during construction: Quantica has not said how many workers would be employed during construction, but one can imagine the labor demand would be huge. As noted, 5000 workers were employed in the construction of a data center in Texas. How many workers are available through the union halls in Yellowstone County? It would seem almost certain that there would be a big influx of construction workers and their families. Can the City of Billings (in terms of personnel and budget) handle such an influx? Can Yellowstone County's services (in terms of personnel and budget) handle an influx? There are no unequivocal and clear public statements or representations regarding local worker employment, either temporary or permanent, associated with the project.

12. There is no mention in these articles of increased temperatures on surrounding land, vibration, and other documented impacts of AI data centers on livestock and other elements of an agricultural community.

13. Although not raised by these articles, the issue of data centers and their regulation will certainly be a topic before the 2027 session of the Montana Legislature. It would seem prudent to wait for guidance from the Legislature and the Administration before tackling these weighty issues on our own or ignoring them altogether.

CONCLUSION

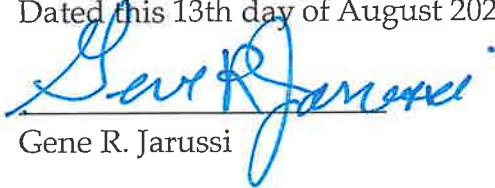
Available information about the Quantica data center is uncertain, often inconsistent, and simply insufficient to resolve important questions about the documented adverse impacts of a hyper-sized data center like the Quantica project, on the public health, safety, morals and general welfare of residents of Yellowstone County. For all of the above reasons, I respectfully suggest that in fact Yellowstone County is faced with an emergency. The issues are not small nor are they inconsequential. I believe that Yellowstone County is obligated to devote the time and resources to "get a handle" on the possible consequences of the construction of the Broadview Data Center. Please use the power given to this Board by §76-2-206, MCA (Doc. 1) and adopt County-wide data center interim zoning or regulation.

I am attaching copies of the Request for Commission Action (Doc. 8) and the resulting Resolution No. 2026-093 (Doc. 9), enacted by the County Commissioners in Missoula County to implement temporary zoning under § 76, 2-306, for your consideration in drafting a resolution for Yellowstone County.

In the Request (Doc. 8), the City Planner states that "Data centers are a significant new use with distinct potential adverse impacts. Data centers are capable of consuming enormous amounts of energy and water while producing heat, noise, vibration and other impacts on their surrounding environment. This is particularly salient given the recent development of high-profile, large data center projects across the West. (emphasis added)." (Doc. 8, pg. 1).

The proposed Quantica data center in Broadview is one of the largest in the entire United States, and even the world. These cautions apply with extra force to this project and strongly warrant the enactment of interim zoning or regulations to study these known impacts and get ahead of them, for the sake of the public health, safety, morals and general welfare of the citizens of Yellowstone County.

Dated this 13th day of August 2026.



Gene R. Jarussi

Cc: Steve Williams

Montana Code Annotated 2025

TITLE 76. LAND RESOURCES AND USE

CHAPTER 2. PLANNING AND ZONING

Part 2. County Zoning

Interim Zoning District Or Regulation

76-2-206. Interim zoning district or regulation. (1) Except as provided in **76-2-240** and subject to subsection (3) of this section, the board of county commissioners may establish an interim zoning district or interim regulation to address an emergency that involves the public health, safety, morals, or general welfare if:

(a) the purpose of the interim zoning district or interim regulation is to classify those uses and related matters that must be regulated to mitigate the emergency; and

(b) within 30 working days, the county initiates a study or investigation to verify that an emergency exists and to identify the facts and circumstances that constitute the emergency, the potential options for mitigating the emergency, and the course of action that the governing body intends to take, if any, during the term of the interim zoning district or interim regulation to mitigate the emergency.

(2) A resolution for an interim zoning district or interim regulation must be limited to 1 year from the date it becomes effective. Subject to subsections (4) and (5), the board of county commissioners may extend the resolution for 1 year, but not more than one extension may be made.

(3) The board of county commissioners shall observe the following procedures in the establishment of an interim zoning district or interim regulation:

(a) Notice of a public hearing on the proposed interim zoning district boundaries or of the interim regulation must be published as provided in **7-1-2121**. In addition to the requirements of **7-1-2121**, the notice must state:

(i) the boundaries of the proposed district;

(ii) the specific emergency compelling the establishment of the proposed interim zoning district or interim regulation;

(iii) the general character of the proposed interim zoning district or interim regulation, including how those uses and related matters that must be regulated to mitigate the emergency will be classified and regulated; and

(iv) that the proposed interim zoning district or interim regulation is on file for public inspection at the office of the county clerk and recorder.

(b) At the public hearing, the board of county commissioners shall give the public an opportunity to be heard regarding the proposed establishment of an interim zoning district or interim regulation.

(c) After the hearing, the board of county commissioners may adopt a resolution to establish an interim zoning district or interim regulation.

(4) The board of county commissioners shall observe the following procedures in the extension of a resolution pursuant to subsection (2):

(a) A study or investigation as provided in subsection (1)(b) must be completed prior to the hearing on the proposed extension of the resolution.

(b) Notice of a public hearing on the proposed extension of the resolution must be published as provided in **7-1-2121**. In addition to the requirements of **7-1-2121**, the notice must state:

(i) the boundaries of the existing interim zoning district;

(ii) the specific emergency that compelled the establishment of the existing interim zoning district or interim regulation and the reason for the proposed extension of the resolution; and

(iii) that the proposed extension of the resolution is on file for public inspection at the office of the county clerk and recorder.

(c) At the public hearing, which must be held prior to the expiration of the existing interim zoning district or interim zoning regulation, the board of county commissioners shall give the public an opportunity to be heard regarding the proposed extension of the resolution.

(5) After the hearing provided for in subsection (4), the board of county commissioners may in its discretion extend the resolution for the interim zoning district or interim regulation.

History: En. 16-4711 by Sec. 20, Ch. 273, L. 1971; R.C.M. 1947, 16-4711; amd. Sec. 16, Ch. 582, L. 1999; amd. Sec. 4, Ch. 87, L. 2003; amd. Sec. 9, Ch. 446, L. 2009; amd. Sec. 5, Ch. 56, L. 2013; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 416, L. 2013.

Disclaimer: The Internet version of the Montana Code Annotated is provided as a research tool to users of the Code. In case of inconsistencies resulting from omissions or other errors, the printed version will prevail.

You Can't Stop This Data Center, a Mom Was Told. She Won't Quit.

Kassi Solberg has concerns about a proposed complex, the size of 3,800 football fields, near her home. Trust us, the developer says.

Published May 26, 2026Updated May 31, 2026



"I hope I will be able to make a difference," said Kassie Solberg, 43.

"I hope I will be able to make a difference," said Kassie Solberg, 43.

By Juliet Macur

Photographs by Will Warasila

Reporting from Broadview and Billings, Mont.

At the top of a gravel road, inside a small aluminum-clad building, Kassi Solberg arrived at another town council meeting in Broadview, Mont., causing trouble.

This time, the mayor threatened to call the sheriff.

Ms. Solberg was at it again, demanding information about a Houston company's plan to build a behemoth 5,000-acre A.I. data center campus near her rural property. The development, part of a nationwide boom in facilities that can power artificial intelligence, would be the size of about 3,800 football fields.

Her face grew red when Broadview's mayor gruffly turned down her request to host a public forum about the data center. Because the property was outside the town limits, "it doesn't affect us," he said.

"It affects your residents!" Ms. Solberg said, leaning forward in her chair, frustrated that the council members didn't share her unease that the project could destroy the area's traditions of farming and ranching that have endured for generations.

One of only two members of the public at the meeting last month, she asked: Has anyone on the town council signed a nondisclosure agreement with the developer that would keep them silent about the project?

The mayor said the council wasn't obliged to answer the public's questions at the town meetings, according to what the town's lawyer had told him.

Thank you for your patience while we verify access.

Already a subscriber? [Log in](#).

Want all of The Times? [Subscribe](#).

Proposed AI data center sparks debate in rural Montana

A proposed AI facility promises jobs and new energy options, but some residents question water use, taxes and trust.



BROADVIEW - Data centers are increasingly looking to Montana, drawn by a skilled workforce, vast open land, and a property tax rate of less than one percent.

Now, a proposed artificial intelligence data center near Broadview, a town of about 130 people in rural Yellowstone County, is placing that national trend squarely in the spotlight.

"It's kind of a bedroom community," said Duane Swartz, owner of the

Homestead Inn.

Watch: What residents think of a proposed massive AI data center in one rural Montana community

Located along Highway 3, Broadview is a quiet agricultural town where, Swartz said, "Most people either ranch here or travel to Billings to work."

Plans are underway for a massive, 5,000-acre AI data center development just outside town, a project years in the making that aims to attract major tech companies like Meta, Apple, and Google to power AI tools used nationwide.

"They say it's going to bring people in here to live," Swartz said.



MTN News

The Homestead Inn in Broadview

At the Homestead Inn, the town's only restaurant, residents regularly gather

to talk about what the project could mean for their community.

"The town doesn't really have the infrastructure to build much more here," Swartz said.

Swartz said he's watched technology projects come and go, but believes this one feels different.

"All the big companies, they make their back door deals, and that's what they do," he said. "America is pushing to be more AI-dominant, and these people are pushing for it."

For now, the proposed site remains an open field.



MTN News

Cari Olson talks concerns over a proposed data center

Broadview area resident Cari Olson said rural towns like hers often face these developments with little warning.

"This is how these data centers work," Olson said. "They go to rural towns and put the data centers there because they don't get a lot of pushback."

Olson said she's concerned about water use, noise, and tax incentives for large tech companies.

"They quietly bought the land, so they didn't alarm the community," she said.

She's calling for greater transparency before the project moves forward.

"I want you to be open and transparent... how much water you're going to use, how much energy you're going to use," Olson said. "If it's going to cost us money. I don't think a billion-dollar industry needs less than one percent property tax."



MTN News

Quantica CEO John Chesser

Quantica, the company behind the proposal, said it has designed the project

to address those concerns.

"We wanted to be a champion for the state of Montana," said John Chesser, Quantica's CEO.

Chesser said the facility will use closed-loop cooling systems drawing from deep aquifers, limit noise through design, and generate its own electricity to avoid straining Montana's power grid.

"The market is rapidly evolving to this bring-your-own-power model," Chesser said.

That power, he said, could come from small-scale nuclear reactors, a reliable alternative when wind and solar are not producing energy.

"Those can be built anywhere in the state, and the power can be brought into the Broadview area," Chesser said.

Chesser also said the company is mindful of past projects that failed to deliver on economic promises.

"We are very sensitive to the experiences others have had, promising benefits to the state and not delivering," he said.

While economic projections have not yet been finalized, Quantica said the project could bring high-paying jobs and expand Montana's energy infrastructure.



MTN News

Broadview's only restaurant owner Duane Swartz

Back at the Homestead Inn, Swartz sees at least one clear benefit.

"I am the only restaurant in town," he said. "If it does come through, it should benefit me in that manner."

On slower days, that could make a difference.

"That would be good to get more business in," Swartz said.

But Olson said growth without trust is not progress.

"Be open and transparent. Be the neighbor you want us to be for you... because right now, you aren't," she said.

www.stillwatercountynews.com/news/they-re-coming-ready-or-not-as-plans-for-proposed-broadview-data-center-evolve-many/article_dbea72ef-0c16-41f0-81c6-572565456eaa.html

TOP STORY

'They're coming, ready or not' : As plans for proposed Broadview data center evolve, many questions remain

Linda Halstead-Acharya SCN Contributor
Jul 9, 2026



An aerial view of a Quantica Infrastructure substation facility.

Courtesy of Quantica Infrastructure

What exactly is a data center?

IBM defines a data center as "a physical room, building or facility that houses IT infrastructure for building, running and delivering applications and services. It also stores and manages data associated with those applications."

Primitive data centers trace back to the 1940s. Cloud computing pushed data centers onto a fast track. Not all are "mega" size, though some newer data centers are described as "hyperscale," typically containing 5,000 servers.

In early June, Kassi Solberg presented a petition to the Stillwater County Commissioners urging them to take action now that would put the county ahead of the curve should the proposed Broadview data center become a reality.

The petition carried 174 signatures — some local, some from out of the area — seeking transparency, accountability and protections for the county's water resources, its livestock, ag lands and wildlife.

The petition also requests that the commissioners provide "a clear demonstration that (they) will fight to protect the community and its resources, and its long-term well-being."

A cover letter with the petition states that "residents have the right to understand these impacts fully before irreversible decisions are made."

Solberg, a Montana native who recently relocated to the northeastern corner of Stillwater County, only learned about the data center proposed for Broadview in early January.

Since then she's been on a mission to alert residents and county officials to the changes a data center could bring to the region. And the more she has learned, the more she has dug in.

More specifically, the petition poses questions about water usage, noise, wastewater outputs, light emissions, air quality and fire hazards associated with the massive batteries that may be used to store energy. It also seeks transparency regarding tax abatements, reductions, exemptions and incentives for which the data center may qualify.

"The speed at which these things are moving is concerning," she said. "I just want to make sure you are proactive because they (data center developers) might be coming for you."

On one point at least, Commissioner Roger Webb agrees with Solberg.

"They are coming, ready or not," he said during an interview in late June.

All three commissioners had recently attended a symposium on data centers held in Miles City. That meeting left Webb amazed at the scale of projects currently being built. One presenter from a county in Texas, population 1,800, described a data center there that employed 5,000 during construction.

"The biggest thing I brought back from that meeting was the sheer magnitude of these things," Webb said. "But we use it (AI) every day. Whether we like it or not, we're our own culprits."

While Webb was speaking about data centers in general, there remain many questions about the one planned for Broadview. The proposal comes from Quantica Infrastructure. Its website, [quanticainfra.com](https://www.quanticainfra.com), describes the company as "Infrastructure for AI and Hyperscale Growth." Last summer, Quantica introduced Big Sky Digital Infrastructure (BSDI) as its "flagship development platform" in Montana.

According to the website, BSDI is "redefining what it means to scale smart and at speed."

The company and its supporters see the center as a massive economic boost that will create a huge surge in job opportunities.

While opposition has mounted in Yellowstone County, there's been little information regarding how the facility might affect surrounding areas. What is known is that the data center campus includes 5,100 acres just outside Broadview — approximately three-and-a-half miles from Stillwater County.

Responding to several questions posed by the News, Quantica said its plans have not been finalized as it evaluates the Broadview opportunity.

"That said, we want to be good neighbors who listen," Quantica said.

As plans progress, Quantica said the company will keep communities and local government officials informed.

When asked about projected employment numbers, Quantica did not offer figures, instead referring to an analysis of data centers in Montana — not yet complete — being conducted by the University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

The facility has filed interconnection applications with NorthWestern Energy (NWE) to expand power generation for its 1,100-megawatt center outside Broadview. More recent reports from the Billings Gazette, citing internal emails from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, suggest the company plans to build gas-fired power plants to generate 1,785 megawatts. To put that in perspective, NWE owns just 1,285 megawatts of power in the entire state. In May, Quantica's website stated it had filed applications with NWE for additional capacity totaling 7,235 megawatts — an amount of connectivity that may or may not be needed should BSDI expand its Montana footprint.

Early on, Quantica stressed "renewables" as a major power source. More recently, information refers to a mix of renewables and natural gas power plants. So where will those power plants be built, and what impacts should residents anticipate?

Quantica reports that the company has leased land from private landowners in Yellowstone, Stillwater and Golden Valley counties and is "exploring opportunities for renewable and firming generation development on portions of this land."

On the topic of water, the details remain particularly murky. It's estimated that older data centers can consume up to 5 million gallons of water per day. Newer designs, however, sometimes use a closed-loop system that relies on a fraction of that.

BSDI's website states that its water demands will be limited to domestic purposes — not for cooling.

"While the final site and building design are still being determined and could change some of our estimates marginally, early planning shows water use would be minimal by industrial standards," it says.

Commissioner Jeff Ruffatto said he and fellow commissioners have been tracking news of the proposed data center. Besides the symposium, he also listened in on a Zoom panel discussion organized by Solberg on June 18 in Broadview.

"I think the general concern with data centers is water and what will they do to customers' power bills," Ruffatto said. "They (Quantica) claim they won't be using water for cooling. And as far as raising power bills for everyone else, they're touting that they'll be generating their own power."

While Quantica's website states the company has signed a pledge to "build, bring, or buy" all the power its new data centers need, Solberg isn't convinced. To address her concern, she has urged commissioners in all area counties, including Stillwater, to contact the Public Service Commission to make the pledge a mandate.

Ruffatto said he had reached out to Brad Molnar, the region's public service commissioner, but had not heard back.

"I don't think this will move quickly," Ruffatto said of the project.

Quantica's website states that phase 1 will start in 2026.

Commissioner Steve Riveland said the county has not yet been presented with any proposal. But if it should be, such a proposal would be subject to review and a public hearing as required under the county's development and zoning regulations.

"We haven't seen anything, so therefore there's nothing for us to act on," Riveland said.

Solberg has presented commissioners with a sample resolution urging them to rely on a statute (76-25-307 of Montana Code Annotated) that allows them to enact interim zoning regulations related to health, safety and general welfare.

"The interim regulations are meant to allow the board to have time to study the situation to formulate a permanent plan to deal with the situation," the sample resolution states.

Simultaneously, Solberg has spearheaded another petition effort to put the brakes on data centers in Yellowstone County. The language in a proposed ballot initiative would require voter approval for any new or expanded data center in Yellowstone

County. As of Tuesday, July 7, Yellowstone County was poised to file an action to determine the validity and constitutionality of the proposed initiative. Depending on the outcome, Yellowstone County voters could see it on their November ballots.

"No matter which way you're leaning, let's put it to a vote," Solberg said during the June 18 panel presentation in Broadview.

Others who spoke during the panel discussion raised concerns regarding health risks, environmental impacts and effects on area communities. Neither Quantica nor BSDI personnel were on the panel.

Anne Hedges, executive director of the Montana Environmental Information Center, commended Quantica for taking steps to hire union workers. But she, too, cautioned local governments to be proactive.

"A lot of communities are finding these things popping up and they have no say," she said. "Nobody lives in rural Montana because they like bright lights and loud noises. Every single county should have a permitting system for data centers."

Dr. Lori Byron, a pediatrician and advocate for Montana Health and Climate, spoke of the impacts of the natural gas plants.

"Even though they are natural gas, they will actually pollute the air more than Colstrip 4," she said.

That pollution would result in more preterm births, more children with learning disabilities and more children with asthma, she said. As for adults, increased pollution would raise the incidence of heart attacks, strokes and dementia.

Another panelist was Jim Doherty, a rancher and former county commissioner in Morrow County, Oregon. Referring to a data center built there a decade ago, he described broken promises, farms and ranches losing land to eminent domain, and serious health concerns.

"I'm not going to tell Montanans not to have data centers," Doherty said. "But just go into this with your eyes wide open."

Although Solberg has concentrated her efforts in Yellowstone County, she'd like to see other counties follow suit.

"I believe we could and should pursue this in every county statewide," she said.

Currently, Missoula County is the only Montana county with a permit system that would be somewhat applicable. Earlier this week, plans for a data center in Bonner were scrapped when the property owner decided not to sell.

More information from BSDI can be found at bigskydigitalinfra.com. The company reports that it hosts weekly office hours on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the BSDI office at 16652 Montana Ave. in Broadview.

Agreement between data center developer and union federation thin on details

Proposed 5,000-acre data center near Broadview would be among world's largest.

by [Zeke Lloyd](#) 06.17.2026



The location of the proposed Broadview Data Center is seen on Jan. 15, 2026, in Broadview. Credit: Chris Boyer, Lighthawk

Limited information is publicly available regarding an agreement announced Wednesday between Quantica Infrastructure, a development firm that [hopes](#)

[to build a 5,000-acre data center campus near Broadview](#), and the Southeastern Montana Building and Construction Trades Council, a regional federation of unions.

According to the release, the developer and the trades council signed a memorandum of understanding that "establishes a cooperative framework focused on union-backed workforce development, apprenticeship and training pathways and project stability for the Big Sky Campus, which is planned to include a large-scale data center campus and new energy infrastructure."

Trades Council President Clint McCulloch declined to share the MOU with Montana Free Press during a Wednesday interview.

McCulloch said the agreement guarantees that "skilled and trained workers" would construct the facility, which still has to jump a number of hurdles before it can break ground. McCulloch declined to provide details about how many jobs construction would create or how many of those jobs would be unionized.

Plans for the data center facility include 12 to 16 buildings of about 200,000 to 300,000 square feet each. The entire campus would encompass about 7.8 square miles. Quantica estimates its near-term power requirements at 1,100 megawatts. But in [a press release](#), the company has indicated that number could eventually reach 7,000 megawatts.

The facility is planned for a site just outside Broadview, a town of about [140 people](#), about 30 miles north of Billings.

Travis Hall, a former adviser to Gov. Greg Gianforte, distributed the release on behalf of Quantica. Hall declined a request to speak with Montana Free Press, instead providing a comment via email.

"This is a big win for Montana workers, especially those [the Building and Construction Trades Council] represents," Hall wrote.

The Montana Environmental Information Center, an environmental nonprofit, has raised concerns about the environmental and community impacts of data center development. MEIC Executive Director Anne Hedges told MTFP Wednesday that she isn't surprised by the dearth of available information.

"All you hear from these guys is PR, just like this press release today. It's feel-good," Hedges said. "But the rubber hits the road when they put things on paper and we can hold them accountable for those things."

RELATED



[Groups push back on Montana's 'data center boom' in](https://montanafreepress.org/2026/06/17/agreement-between-data-center-developer-and-union-federation-thin-on-details/)

[petition before utility commission](#)

In a petition before the Public Service Commission, a coalition of groups working on energy, climate and social justice issues argued that hundreds of thousands of Montanans will face higher bills unless the state's utility regulator provides stricter oversight of NorthWestern Energy, the state's largest utility. NorthWestern has inked agreements with at least three data...

Hedges said she has unanswered questions about the prospect of utility rate increases, power consumption, water usage, light pollution, ambient noise, traffic congestion and other community impacts associated with the proposed data center.

Hedges said she hopes to find a middle ground with unions, like the Southeastern Montana Building and Construction Trades Council, that are supporting data center developments.

"Every data center should be a union outfit. Absolutely," Hedges said. "But the bottom line is we have to make sure the people of the state and the people of the area aren't forced to suffer with the consequences of bad decisions and harmful impacts. And that's what really needs to be tested."

Hedges said she also believes Quantica is trying to exploit schisms between unions that have backed data centers and data center opponents within the Montana Democratic Party, which will have its state convention in Billings this weekend.

Jason Small, executive secretary of the Montana AFL-CIO, told MTFP Wednesday that his organization does not have an official stance on data centers, though some affiliate unions have signaled their support. Small, a former Republican state legislator, said the state Democratic Party plans to discuss data centers at this weekend's convention.

This story was updated June 18, 2026, with additional information about the facility's near- and long-term power needs.

Zeke Lloyd writes about labor, business and criminal justice for Montana Free Press. Prior to his current role, he worked as a wildfire reporting intern at MTFP in 2024 and spent a summer writing for the Colorado Springs Gazette. He is a graduate of Colorado College, where he worked at the student newspaper. He grew up in central Ohio and is now based in Helena. You can reach him at zlloyd@montanafreepress.org. [More by Zeke Lloyd](#)

Quantica seeking to boost energy capacity at proposed Broadview data center

If approved, the site capacity would be 10 times the size of NorthWestern Energy power load for all of Montana

By: MTN News



The company seeking to build a large-scale data center on 5,000 acres near Broadview is seeking a seven-fold increase in its energy-generation capacity with NorthWestern Energy.

Watch the video below:

Quantica Infrastructure said Wednesday in a news release that it's asking for a maximum of 7,235 megawatts to connect into the power grid through an interconnection agreement with NorthWestern Energy. The company had initially announced the data center would use around 1,000 megawatts, which would still have made it among the highest power users in the state.

To put the number in perspective, the capacity ask from Quantica is roughly 10 times larger than NorthWestern's entire load for all Montana customers.

Company officials said this new filing doesn't necessarily mean the center, known as Big Sky Digital Infrastructure, would use all this power, which includes renewables, firming generation and battery storage, only that the company is planning ahead with increased capacity. Quantica officials have said they will generate their own power on-site, which they say will shield NorthWestern rate payers against rate increases.

"Data center companies are looking for places that can deliver power, connectivity, and building capacity at scale. By investing in additional capacity now, we plan to address what we're seeing in terms of power demand from data center companies. This expansion significantly increases our total investment in Montana, and the additional power capacity would result in even more economic opportunity, construction jobs over several years, and strengthen the State's power grid," said John Chessser, CEO of Quantica Infrastructure, in a written statement.

The company also said in the news release that it is working with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality on permits for its 5,000-acre campus, located by the substation about three miles south of Broadview, including firming power such as natural gas, geothermal and other potential sources.

Company officials say they hope to bring the first building online in 2029.

They have not announced which tenant will be housed at the campus.

Previous MTN coverage:

Montana has become a recent hotbed for data centers over the last year, with proposals surfacing in Butte and Bonner, near Missoula. Opponents have criticized developers for a lack of transparency and expressed concerns that the project will raise energy rates regionwide and foul nearby groundwater used for cooling.

"They need to come here in a way that does not harm those of us who already live here. Doesn't increase our electricity bills. Doesn't harm our water resources. Doesn't cause contamination of water," Anne Hedges, executive director of the Montana Environmental Information Center, said at a January community meeting in Broadview.

Related:

[Montana businessman sues Quantica over alleged stolen AI data center deal in Broadview](#)

[Proposed AI data center sparks debate in rural Montana](#)

[About 130 people hear concerns about proposed data center in Broadview](#)

Emails: Massive gas power plants planned north of Billings for Broadview data center

05.21.26

[Data Centers \(https://northernplains.org/category/data-centers/\)](https://northernplains.org/category/data-centers/)

Originally published here

(https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/business/development/article_72b2ec17-3180-46e0-9145-b45ae4cfc.html) in the Billings Gazette

Author: Alex Mitchell (<https://billingsgazette.com/users/profile/amitchell>)

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DATA CENTERS
(<https://northernplains.org/data-centers/>)

CLICK HERE TO JOIN YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL
(https://northernplains.org/campaign/concerned-about-fbclid=PAZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQMMjU2MjgxMDQwNTU4NPAJNQ_aem_mHOuUm)

A data center proposed north of Billings intends to utilize gas plants to provide more energy than every single residential customer typically uses in Montana.

The Billings Gazette learned of data center developer Quantica Infrastructure's plans after the newspaper submitted a records request to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

Using gas-fired generators for the planned data center near Broadview seems to contrast Quantica's public messaging repeatedly emphasizing renewable power being crucial in powering the data center.

But last week, a press release (https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/business/article_a5073e62-1fa5-48d9-a901-ca204da4812b.html) by the company seemed to reveal a shift in public messaging. Quantica CEO John Chesser described a "resilient, all-of-the-above power portfolio, including renewable and traditional energy resources" for the project.

Behind the scenes, that shift in messaging seems to go much further.

Quantica is currently working on permitting gas plants to power its data center planned for 5,100 acres of land south of Broadview. Specifically, 585 megawatts are proposed to be generated by gas-fired engines and another 1,200 megawatts from gas-fired turbines.

In internal emails with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, air permitting supervisor Eric Merchant described Quantica's proposal as a "proposed fossil-fuel (gas)-fired data center project in Broadview, MT."

The proposed gas plants would generate 1,785 megawatts, an amount that would easily dwarf every gas plant in Montana. It is more than the generating capacity of any gas plant operating statewide combined. For comparison, the recently built Yellowstone County Generating Station in Laurel creates less than a tenth of the planned project's power at 172 megawatts. It's currently the largest gas plant in Montana.

It's also more than the entire generation capacity of Montana's monopoly utility NorthWestern Energy. The company owns 1,285 megawatts of power in the state.

The DEQ emails obtained by the Gazette include DEQ, third-party environmental consultants and Quantica employees. The estimated power needs of the data center weren't included in the emails.

In a response, Quantica noted they are in the early stages of planning and are evaluating a range of potential energy options.

"From the outset, our approach has been to develop a power portfolio where a substantial portion of the energy is expected to come from renewable resources, supported by additional capacity needed to ensure reliability," the company said in a statement.

The company also pushed back against the idea that this represents a change in plans for powering the data center. Quantica said it's not unusual that power resources are still being evaluated and refined, with the company saying the DEQ emails reflect that.

Quantica's Big Sky Digital Infrastructure website mentions the data center's unspecified energy supply would be located nearby to minimize transmission infrastructure. That same sentence on a frequently asked question list about how Quantica will power the data center mentions a mix of "renewable generation" for the project, omitting any direct mention of gas plants, but mentioning "on-demand capacity." The company currently points to this as indication of planning including the potential for gas plants from the start.

Additionally, a focus on renewable energy is repeated throughout the website and project descriptions.

"BSDI's new renewable generation and battery storage will add capacity to Montana's energy system, supporting grid resilience while avoiding impacts on existing community power supplies," a section on the home page titled Integrated Renewables reads. "On-site renewables, backed by grid power, creates a strong business case for data center development."

The home page also mentions large-scale on-site solar, wind and battery storage in development for a "phase 1 zero-carbon, resilient energy mix."

As of Wednesday morning, the company's plans for gas plant development aren't mentioned anywhere online. Nor have such plans for a gas plant been explicitly referenced in public statements or past interviews with the Gazette.

However, last week's press release mentioned "carbon-reduction solutions," something that wouldn't likely be considered with standard renewable energy development.

Last week, a company statement to the Gazette clarified that Quantica is "evaluating tools that can make the project more reliable and lower-carbon over time" alongside other "lower-carbon firm resources."

And currently, the company still emphasizes having environmental responsibilities in its messaging.

"As a responsible developer and with a leadership team with deep Montana roots, we want to ensure we comply with all applicable regulations and to be good stewards of our land and resources," Quantica said. "As such, we're in early discussions with MDEQ to better understand the process and requirements associated with not only power resources, but also water and other resources."

Following a pre-application meeting with Quantica Infrastructure, DEQ emails from Merchant on March 23 estimated the project would need a Major NSR-PSD air quality permit. Such a permit is needed when a project has the potential to emit more than 100 or 250 tons of pollutants per year. It would also require an eventual public review and likely an environmental impact statement. They would also need to run a gas line to the facility, according to an April 3 email by Merchant.

In emails, Merchant repeatedly referenced a Data Center Regulations document to inform future permitting processes for Quantica.

According to the attached Data Center Regulation document, which was recently prepared by DEQ, wastewater discharge may also be in play," Merchant wrote in an April 3 email addressed to Tatiana Davila, bureau chief of DEQ's Water Protection Bureau.

DEQ Data Center Regulation document (https://billingsgazette.com/article_219d3a42-5c13-485d-b3ea-e3a90f9e6d6b.html#tracking-source=in-article)

Read the DEQ Data Center Regulation document referenced to Quantica employees in emails.

The document is not a guiding or regulatory mechanism for DEQ, agency spokesperson Madison McGeffers told the Gazette. The document in those emails was meant to provide high-level information for Quantica, she said, and was shared to the public in February at a Governor's Energy Task Force Open House in Butte.

According to a March 26 email from Ed Warner, a Quantica consultant, the company's objective is to have the data center online in late 2029, with the air permit for the gas plants in place early enough to support construction. The company has previously shared plans to receive power by 2028, including on its Big Sky Digital Infrastructure website as of Wednesday. Wind and solar typically does not require air quality permits.

A summary by Merchant noted plans for on-site generation will be supported by minimal grid infrastructure, referencing ongoing discussions with NorthWestern to assist with that. NorthWestern has previously entered into an agreement to provide up to 1,000 megawatts to Quantica, but it has remained unclear where that much power would come from.

"Finally, during last Friday's meeting, QI (Quantica Infrastructure) noted their interest in connecting with all affected DEQ programs early and often," Merchant wrote in an email during what he described as the early stage of regulatory planning

Data center proposals in Montana

Over the last year, data center companies from around the country have staked out Montana with a bullseye as the place to build giant new facilities. NorthWestern Energy has signed Letters of Intent with several data center companies to supply power. The monopoly utility has publicly mentioned at least 11 more data center companies are eyeing Montana, though little details have been provided. Hover over each icon on the map to learn more about the emerging proposals.

Quantica would have more than enough space to develop its proposed gas plants. It owns about 8 square miles of land after past planned renewable projects eyed north of Billings never materialized, the Gazette previously reported (https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/business/article_88f533fa-d005-4ccc-bab5-90bdd010a29f.html). Quantica's founder, Houston-based EnCap Investments, had mothballed the land before eventual CEO Chesser approached EnCap with the idea of a data center using the remnants of those planned projects.

EnCap is historically steeped in oil and gas investments. Chesser was previously involved with Talen Energy's Colstrip plant.

He's not alone in his Talen Energy ties, with several Big Sky Digital Infrastructure employees having worked for the company. In addition to operating the 1,480 megawatt Colstrip plant, Talen Energy has a portfolio (<https://www.talenenergy.com/our-portfolio/>) of coal, gas and nuclear generation nationwide, but no wind and solar.

How much power could Montana's proposed data centers use?

Data center companies have turned to Montana as a place to build new facilities. The largest center proposal has come from Quantica Infrastructure, which aims to power a center near Billings with up to 1 gigawatt of energy, which is enough to power approximately 750,000 homes. To put that into context, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates Montana has around 540,000 housing units.

While battery technology has improved significantly in recent years, wind and solar generation still can't provide 24-hour power that data centers demand. And though small nuclear reactors have been discussed as an option for data center power, that expensive technology is still far from commercial deployment.

Nationally, that's left many data centers turning to readily deployable off-the-grid gas (<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/05062025/texas-data-center-gas-power-plants/>) for power (<https://www.americanactionforum.org/insight/ai-data-center-power-surge-shifting-trends-toward-natural-gas/>). Last year on March 28, Austin-based Thunderhead Energy Solutions LLC requested a Clean Air Act exemption to the Environmental Protection Agency for a 500 megawatt behind-the-meter gas plant "supporting data center infrastructure in Jefferson County." That exemption request was unsuccessful, according to reporting by Grist (<https://grist.org/regulation/these-data-center-developers-asked-trump-for-an-exemption-from-pollution-rules/>) and the Boulder Monitor (<https://jcmonitor.com/no-ai-data-center-coming-to-county/>), with there being no indications of future gas plant development in the county currently.

Even with the planned gas plants, Quantica still continues to anticipate public concerns about data centers growing in unpopularity.

"We're also committed to protecting our Montana way of life, including being good stewards of the land and our resources," Quantica told the Gazette last week.

Montana Environmental Information Center Director Anne Hedges has been on the road for months campaigning statewide to packed rooms about the environmental costs of data centers and the associated lack of transparency from companies.

In Missoula County, a proposed data center plans to use 7 megawatts before potentially scaling up to 29 megawatts. She was preparing to speak on data centers in Missoula Tuesday evening when the Gazette informed her of Quantica's plans for 1,785 megawatts of gas power to supply its data center. She expects serious air pollution and leaking pipelines with the power supply.

"I'm horrified and not surprised," Hedges said.

Originally published here (https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/business/development/article_72b2ec17-3180-46e0-9145-ebab45ac4cfc.html)



Request for Commission Action

Public Hearing

Meeting Date: July 9, 2026

Action Information

Date Required:

Action/Motion Requested: Consider resolution adopting a countywide data center interim zoning overlay district establishing a moratorium on new or expanded data centers for one year

Parties Involved:

Fiscal Impact: N/A

Budget Action Required:

Requester Information

Submitter: Karen Hughes

Department: PDS - Current Planning

Submitted: 07/02/2026

E-mail: khughes@missoulacounty.us

Presenter: Karen Hughes

Project Information

Project/Item: Data center moratorium interim zoning

Project Location: Unincorporated Missoula County

Project/Contract Begin Date:

Project/Contract End Date:

Action Request Summary

Overview

Missoula County is considering the adoption of interim zoning to place a temporary pause on the development or expansion of data centers while the County develops updated zoning regulations to mitigate potential impacts to health, safety and natural resources. The proposed interim zoning would apply to both zoned and unzoned areas of Missoula County outside Missoula city limits.

Data centers are a significant new use with distinct potential adverse impacts. Data centers are capable of consuming enormous amounts of energy and water while producing heat, noise, vibration and other impacts on their surrounding environment. This is particularly salient given the recent development of high-profile, large data center projects across the West.

By initiating interim zoning and taking a pause, Missoula County intends to investigate the circumstances that constitute the emergency, explore the potential options for mitigating the emergency, and determine the course of action that the county commissioners intend to take, if any, to mitigate the emergency. Developing clearer, more robust regulations would provide more clarity for the public, staff and applicants in terms of what the County's residents would need to see in responsible data center development before the development occurs.

Interim Zoning Requirements

To establish interim zoning, the Commissioners must do the following:

1. Hold a noticed public hearing
2. Adopt a resolution that identifies
 - a. The boundaries of the proposed interim zoning

- b. The emergency compelling the establishment of the interim zoning
 - c. The interim zoning regulations that will apply to mitigate the emergency
3. Once adopted, initiate a study within 30 working days to:
 - a. Verify that an emergency exists
 - b. Identify facts and circumstances that constitute the emergency
 - c. Identify the potential options for mitigating the emergency
 - d. Identify the course of action that the Commissioners intend to take during the term of interim zoning

Overview of the interim zoning proposal:

- Boundary of the interim zoning overlay district: applies countywide to unincorporated area of Missoula County (both zoned and unzoned areas)
- Regulations: this is an interim zoning district overlay that establishes a moratorium on new or expanded data centers in order to allow for time to update county zoning regulations to address the full scope of impacts of data centers
- Period of interim zoning: effective upon adoption for one year, or until replaced by permanent zoning
- Identified emergency:
 - Data centers are a relatively new use and current regulations do not adequately address potential impacts
 - Potential significant adverse impacts include: substantial energy consumption, water quantity and quality impacts, air quality impacts, heat, noise and vibration, and other potential impacts to health, safety, property and the environment

Draft Resolution to Adopt Interim Zoning

Information about the proposed interim zoning is outlined in the draft resolution provided with this request for commission action. Following the close of public comment and should the Commissioners wish to proceed with interim zoning, any additional needed updates related to the regulations and the description of the emergency can be incorporated into the resolution.

Action Request Approval

PDS - Current Planning
 PDS - Current Planning
 PDS - Current Planning
 Attorney
 Risk & Benefits
 BCC Admin Staff

Created/Initiated - 07/02/2026
 Approved - 07/02/2026
 Approved - 07/02/2026
 Approved - 07/06/2026
 Approved - 07/06/2026
 Final Approval - 07/07/2026

Commissioner Signatures

Chair _____
 Commissioner _____
 Commissioner _____
 Action Date _____

Chair Authorized to Sign: No

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-093

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A COUNTY-WIDE DATA CENTER INTERIM ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT IN MISSOULA COUNTY, MONTANA, ESTABLISHING A MORATORIUM ON PERMITTING NEW OR EXPANDED DATA CENTERS, EFFECTIVE JULY 9, 2026, AND EXPIRING JULY 8, 2027, OR WHEN REPLACED BY PERMANENT ZONING.

WHEREAS, Montana Code Annotated §76-2-201 authorizes the Board of County Commissioners to adopt zoning regulations for the purpose of promoting public health, safety, morals and general welfare; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners adopted zoning regulations for Missoula County through passage of County Resolution No. 2022-063, as amended; and,

WHEREAS, Montana Code Annotated §76-2-206 provides for the establishment of an interim zoning district or regulation to address an emergency that involves public health, safety, morals and general welfare in a jurisdictional area; and,

WHEREAS, Montana Code Annotated §76-2-206 authorizes the Board of County Commissioners to adopt interim zoning regulations for one year; and,

WHEREAS, Montana Department of Environmental Quality in a publication for the Governor's Energy Task Force describes a data center as "a physical facility that houses and runs large computer systems. Data centers typically include multiple computer servers, data storage devices and network equipment that can provide information technology infrastructure services for organizations to store, manage, process and transmit large amounts of data. A primary driver of rapidly growing demand for data centers is in the field of artificial intelligence (AI)." Data centers optimized for AI are sometimes called AI factories; and,

WHEREAS, Missoula County recently received a proposal to establish a new data center within an existing building, which has resulted in an enhanced understanding of the significant impacts of these facilities and operations that current zoning regulations do not adequately address; and,

WHEREAS, data centers are a significant new land use with distinct potential adverse impacts. Data centers often consume significant amounts of energy and water while producing heat, noise, vibration and other impacts to the surrounding environment, especially large data center projects; and,

WHEREAS, data centers may adversely affect life, health, property and the environment; and,

WHEREAS, without adequate zoning regulations, data centers may create public nuisance, public health, and/or environmental impacts that the County has an obligation to prevent or abate; and,

WHEREAS, Missoula County needs time to further study the impacts of data centers to determine zoning regulations necessary to adequately address the siting and permitting process for data center facilities and operations and mitigate impacts on life, public health, property and the environment; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners concludes that an emergency exists relative to potential impacts of data centers, which include, but are not limited to, noise and vibration, heat and thermal impacts, air quality, water quantity and quality and energy use, and that the County therefore

has an obligation to take action to prevent and abate these impacts and protect public health, safety, morals and general welfare; and,

WHEREAS, the 2016 Missoula County Growth Policy, as amended, includes multiple guiding principles in Chapter 2 relevant to the County's consideration of the impacts of data centers:

- Local government should strive to make decisions that are environmentally sound, fiscally responsible and supportive of healthy communities over the long term.
- The right to a clean and healthful environment is fundamentally important. Missoula County's natural and cultural resources make this place unique; they should be conserved, enhanced and enjoyed.
- Local government decision-making should consider the impacts of and adaptation to climate change in policy and regulatory decisions.
- Economic measures should focus on long-term economic development that is fiscally responsible and does not unduly compromise quality of life or the natural environment.
- Missoula County will strive to protect public health, safety and welfare in a fiscally responsible manner; and,

WHEREAS, Objective 5.3 of the 2016 Missoula County Growth Policy is to "facilitate well-designed commercial and industrial development that is located appropriately, served by necessary infrastructure, conducive to public health and the environment, and reduces buyer and developer financial legal risks"; and,

WHEREAS, Action 5.3.2 of the 2016 Missoula County Growth Policy is to "modernize the county zoning resolution to reflect current and anticipated industries and businesses and to encourage clean technology firms"; and,

WHEREAS, a notice of public hearing was advertised in the Missoulian on June 27 and July 7, 2026, for consideration of a resolution to adopt interim zoning regulations establishing a one-year moratorium on data centers; and,

WHEREAS, notices were also posted at the Bonner Post Office, West Riverside Post Office, Missoula Post Office, Missoula Public Library, Missoula County Courthouse and the Missoula County Administration Building; and,

WHEREAS, information about the proposal and hearing was initially posted on Missoula County Voice (<https://missoulacountyvoice.com/data-center-interim-zoning>) on Friday, June 26, 2026; and,

WHEREAS, a hearing was held by the Board of County Commissioners of Missoula County on July 9, 2026, to give the public an opportunity to be heard regarding the proposed interim zoning regulation; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners finds that it is in the best interest of the County and its residents to adopt interim zoning establishing a one-year moratorium to allow time to analyze and evaluate the impacts of data centers and develop regulations to mitigate those impacts on public health, safety, morals and general welfare.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Missoula Board of County Commissioners adopts interim zoning for a county-wide Data Center Zoning Overlay District, which imposes a temporary moratorium

on new or expanded data centers in the unincorporated area of Missoula County, effective July 9, 2026, for a duration of one year, until July 8, 2027.

SEVERABILITY. If a court of competent jurisdiction declares any provision in this resolution to be contrary to law, such declaration shall not affect the validity of the other provisions of this resolution.

PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 9th DAY OF JULY 2026

ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

MISSOULA COUNTY

Sam Scott
0F81A92449EBA6F32E04728FA54EF821 ready:ig:1
Tyler Gernant, Clerk and Recorder

[Signature]
13FD54ED89FA2244FFA408545EBDD56F ready:ig:1
Josh Slotnick, Chair



[Signature]
A6AGE084F2B05A3A08867E7EB9B8C312 ready:ig:1
David Stronmaier, Commissioner

Juanita Vero, Commissioner

B.O.C.C Thursday Discussion

Meeting Date: 09/03/2026

Title: Closed Personnel Matter

Submitted By: Teri Reitz, Board Clerk

TOPIC:

Closed - Human Resources Personnel Matter

BACKGROUND:

N/A

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Discuss.
