

BRYAN COUNTY NEWS

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LETTERS

Datacenter problems mounting & inadequately evaluated, legislation needed

The surge in building datacenters, driven by speculation in demand for artificial intelligence [AI] systems, is expected to triple its use of electricity by 2028 and could grow ten times that much by 2035, according to industry analysts.

In Georgia alone, 10 gigawatts of new power production by Georgia Power was recently sanctioned by the Public Service Commission – by far, the single largest increase in the state’s electricity generation ever, mainly justified by predicted AI needs. Between half and 70% of electricity used by datacenters is for equipment operation, the remainder for cooling, power distribution, and lighting.

Last year, 17.4 billion gallons of water were used to cool U.S. data centers. Although that was just 5% of total U.S. water use, development of datacenters is accelerating, plus that tally doesn’t account for 40% of America’s water used in power generation. Datacenters’ two-part demand for water [directly for cooling, indirectly by power use] poses a major threat to other water users, including agriculture and households – especially when electricity is generated by burning fossil fuels that worsen evaporative water losses caused by climate-change.

Greenpeace warns of “a frantic, unregulated race to build [datacenters] – a race with no clear finish line and next to no rules to protect the planet or people.” Troubling financial risks remain clouded by uncertain AI markets. Impacts of expanding the grid, required for distributing massive increase in power-generation, and abandoned projects may shift burdens from investors to consumers, taxpayers, and the environment.

These issues justify rigorous, well-implemented legislation holding datacenters accountable.

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