

11/12/2025

PA DEP Citizens Advisory Council  
Rachel Carson State Office Building  
400 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Re: Public Comment on the Environmental Justice Concerns of Large-Scale Data Center Development in Pennsylvania

To the DEP Citizens Advisory Council (CAC),

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment today. My name is Lauren Posey, and I am the Environmental Policy Advocate for Protect PT (Penn-Trafford), a grassroots nonprofit based in Westmoreland County, PA. Our mission is to protect the economic, environmental, and legal rights of residents who have been negatively impacted by unconventional oil and gas development and industrial pollution. I'm here today to express my organization's strong concerns about the proposed large scale data center buildout in our state.

Here in Southwestern PA, AI tools are driving a surge in data center project proposals, and by extension, intent to increase shale gas extraction. To say these data centers are energy intensive is to put it lightly. Many of these facilities consume as much energy as a mid size city. And to power them, developers are saying we will need all of the new gas generation we can get. Two of these recent data center proposals, in Upper Burrell and Homer City, would be built alongside gas-fired power plants. Generating 4.5 GW, if built, the Homer City site would become the largest gas-fired power plant in the nation, which raises serious concerns about air pollution.

We see fracking and this new wave of AI data centers as intertwined – data centers are the perfect excuse for oil and gas companies to continue the cycle of natural resource extraction in our communities, and they may pose a significant roadblock to transitioning away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy sources. My organization's members currently struggle

with negative health impacts, stress, and life disturbances from fracking operations extremely close to their homes, schools, and businesses. We know that rural communities in our region will face the brunt of the impacts because these areas are the most appealing for hyperscale data center development: large land parcels, cheaper land prices, and existing energy infrastructure. Our residents face enough harms from industry as it is, and large scale data centers – with their extreme energy and water use and polluting gas – may only add to the burdens we face.

The only benefits to a community that data centers can tout are job creation and tax revenue. However, this argument has not been particularly convincing to residents. According to the Wall Street Journal, data centers create the lowest number of jobs per square foot when compared to other large facilities like office parks, warehouses, and factories.<sup>1</sup> Just as the bulk of the profits from the fracking boom have not trickled down to create prosperity in Southwestern PA, data center developers make lofty promises that residents have a hard time trusting will come to fruition. If improperly designed or managed, these projects may take a lot more than they give back to our region, and they have become very unpopular as a result.

My organization is currently working alongside residents in Springdale, PA, who have been rallying around a proposed 180 megawatt (MW) data center in the middle of their town. They feel great trepidation at the idea of being guinea pigs for the first facility of this kind in our state, or becoming a “billionaire’s playground.” They need real, concrete answers from their leaders as to how they will be put first instead of corporate interests.

In order to mitigate the concerns associated with data centers and protect the health and well-being of our residents, we must act immediately. The window of opportunity for our state agencies is now, as it will take years for these facilities to be built and brought online. If strong, commonsense, specialized regulations exist across our state, Pennsylvania residents will be better safeguarded from impacts like electric utility rate hikes, water scarcity, and air, noise, and light

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Dotan. “The AI Data-Center Boom is a Job-Creation Bust,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Feb 25, 2025. [https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai-data-center-job-creation-48038b67?st=jSoRah&reflink=desktopwebshare\\_permalink](https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai-data-center-job-creation-48038b67?st=jSoRah&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink)

pollution. Regulation at the state level, and not just at the local level in the form of ordinances, is important to ensure that all Pennsylvanians are protected equally.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Lauren Posey  
Environmental Policy Advocate