DATA CENTERS IN MONTANA: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

TAXPAYERS PROTECTION ALLIANCE



Recently, data center operations and proposed projects have received a significant amount of attention from Montana policymakers, pundits, and economic analysts. A September report from the *Montana Free Press* notes, "Data center developer Quantica Infrastructure has begun construction on its massive project in Yellowstone County. Postcards mailed to area residents said that in early September the company began staging equipment on the nearly 8-square-mile property outside the town of Broadview." The project, which "would be among the largest in the world as currently planned," plans to use an "underutilized" water aquifer, the Madison Aquifer, which sits 1,300 feet deeper beneath ground than the one that Broadview area households and businesses currently use.

PROPOSED AND PASSED RESTRICTIONS ON DATA CENTERS

- Missoula County Data Center Moratorium: On July 9, 2026, Missoula County commissioners unanimously approved a one-year moratorium on new and expanding data centers in areas outside Missoula city limits. The measure temporarily halts development while county officials consider additional zoning restrictions related to water consumption, noise, emissions, and other environmental concerns. Existing county regulations already limit data centers to industrial zones and impose additional requirements involving renewable energy and electronic waste disposal.

- Butte-Silver Bow Data Center Moratorium: In September 2026, Butte-Silver Bow officials began considering a temporary moratorium on data center development. This process culminated in a vote by the County Commission permitting the county attorney to prepare a temporary moratorium on data center development. The restrictions will impose an initial six-month pause, with the possibility of two additional one-year extensions. Although officials subsequently put the proposal on hold while awaiting a Montana Supreme Court decision involving a related ballot initiative, the measure represents another effort to restrict data center investment through local land-use regulations.

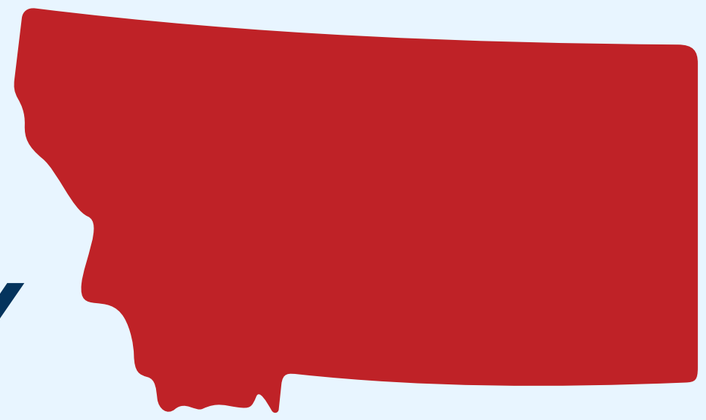
- Yellowstone County Proposed Restrictions: While Yellowstone County has not yet imposed a data center moratorium, local activists have pursued ballot initiatives and zoning restrictions. In addition, on September 22, 2026, all three Yellowstone County commissioners (Mark Morse, Mike Waters, and Chris White) approved a Yellowstone County Commissioners Delegation Letter urging the Yellowstone County Legislative Delegation to amend Montana's 2025 Right to Compute Act (Mont. Code Ann. §§ 2-10-201 to 2-10-207) during the 2027 legislative session



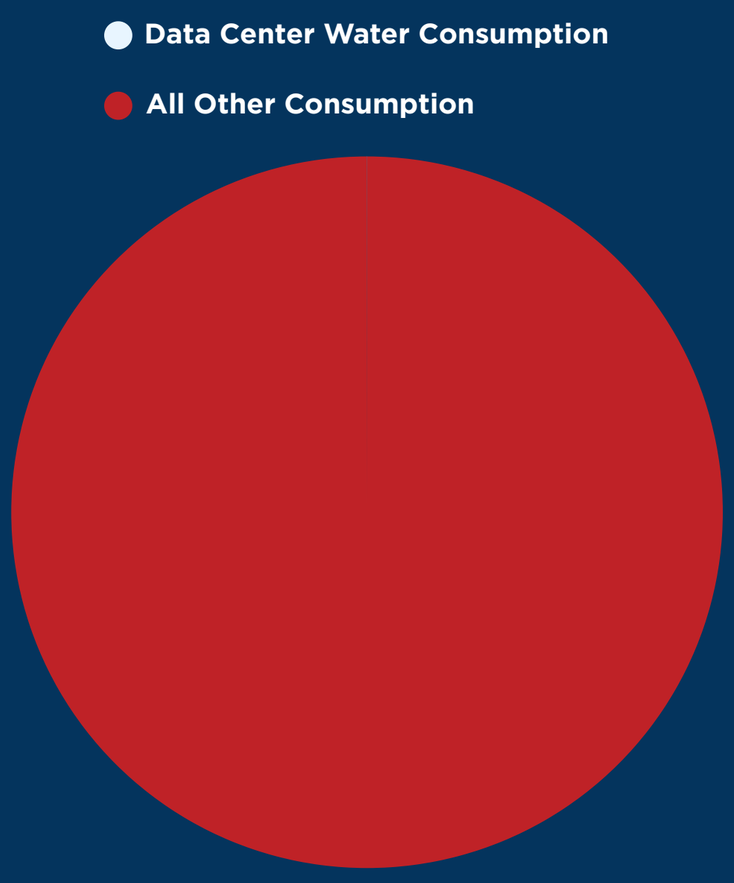
DATA CENTER DANGERS SIGNIFICANTLY OVERSTATED

Advocates of bans or restrictions often cite supposedly excessive water or electricity consumption by new data center operations. For example, the Montana Environmental Information Center claims, "processes that safeguard our environment, electricity bills, public health, and infrastructure are being trampled by the over-eager juggernauts of 'opportunity.'" This is simply not supported by the evidence.

DATA CENTER MYTH V. REALITY



MONTANA WATER USAGE, 2025



MYTH:

Data centers are using up a significant percentage of water.

REALITY:

In Montana, data centers accounted for **0.01 percent** of all water consumption in 2025.

Brookings Institution data center water use estimates; Baxtel data center count; U.S. Geological Survey state-level aggregate water consumption figures.

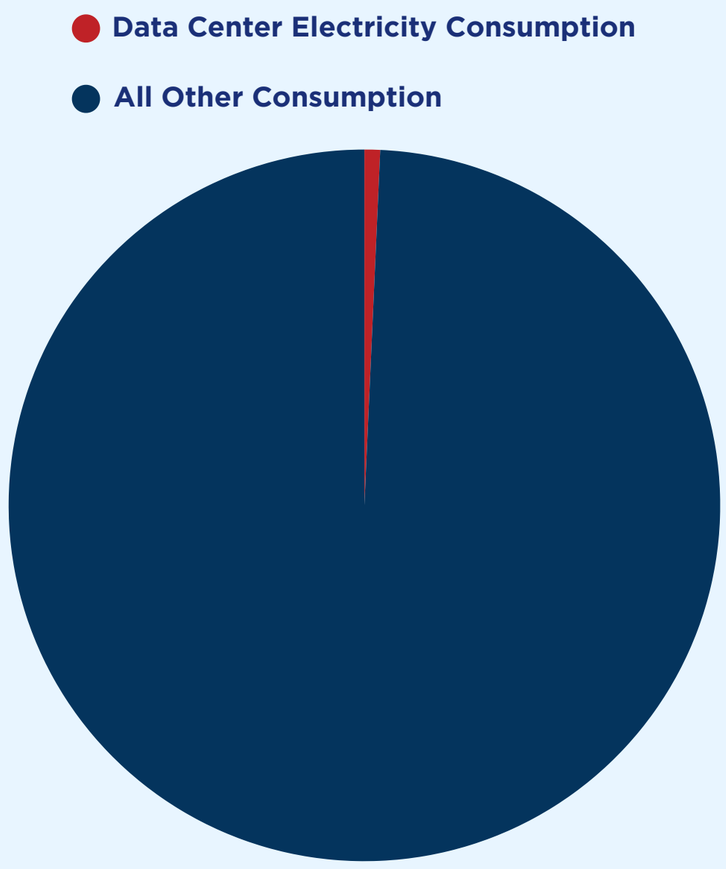
MONTANA ELECTRICITY USAGE, 2025

MYTH:

Data centers are using up a significant percentage of electricity.

REALITY:

In Montana, data centers accounted for **0.7 percent** of all electricity consumption in 2025.



Electric Choice data center power consumption figures; U.S. Energy Information Administration state-level net generation figures.

To learn more about the long-term projected water and electricity demands of data centers, visit the Q&A section at protectingtaxpayers.org/datacenters

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