

Data Centers in Nevada

Understanding and Shaping the Impacts

Planning & Community Engagement

Manny Becerra

Nevada Climate Forum | 12.10.25

About Me



I'm **Manny Becerra** - a civic-minded technologist and public servant focused on innovation, sustainability, and smart growth in Northern Nevada. I'm from Reno, a product of the Washoe County School District - go Hawks! - and I led high-performing cross-functional teams at Tesla. Today, I serve as a Reno Planning Commissioner and also work across the region on community engagement, strategic partnerships and sensible approaches to high-energy and emerging land uses.

I'm the co-founder of the [Truckee Meadows Data Center Policy Consortium](#) and work in the AI space, supporting public and private organizations, including K-12 and higher education, with responsible AI adoption, policy, and broader digital transformation efforts.

Welcome & Perspective: Grounding this Conversation

I'm speaking today from both a land use planning and community engagement lens.

Over the past year, Northern Nevada has seen a surge in interest and proposals for data centers, especially around the Truckee Meadows. And it's not by accident.

Nevada offers several things companies are looking for:

- Lots of open land, especially compared to coastal states
- A growing supply of renewable energy, and major grid investments on the way
- Big tax incentives for data center development
- And a relatively flexible, business-friendly permitting environment

All of that, plus a national AI boom, has turned our region into a hotspot for data infrastructure.

Community Concerns: *What the Community is Saying*

The concerns we're hearing are loud and clear:

- "How much water will this use?"
- "Will this drive up my energy bill?"
- "Who is making these decisions?"
- "Where is tribal consultation?"
- "Why does this feel like it's happening to us, not with us?"

These questions are valid, and they reflect real gaps in how we currently plan for and evaluate this kind of growth.

Where Reno Stands Now: What Reno's Doing - and What's Missing

Reno has taken early steps. We now officially recognize data centers in our code (as of 1-year ago), and we require them to go through a special approval process (e.g. 24-hour usage).

But here's the truth: what we have on the books today is a base-level starting point.

Right now, we mostly treat data centers like warehouses. There are no specific requirements tied to:

- Energy demand
- Water use
- Generator pollution
- Long-term environmental performance

And that's a problem, because this land use is different.

Collaboration: *Regional Partners Stepping Up*

Our partners at the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency (TMRPA) have taken an important early lead in studying this emerging land use, after I, Dr. Kerry Rohrmeier, and fellow regional commissioners brought forward and unanimously supported a motion for them to do so in January 2025. Since then, they've been actively:

- Researching national trends in data center development and regulation
- Surveying local residents and stakeholders about how this land use fits in our region
- Analyzing impacts on infrastructure, water, environment, and livability across the Truckee Meadows

As the Data Center Policy Consortium, we're working alongside TMRPA and other public, private, and community partners to:

- Expand the conversation, including through forums like this
- Capture public sentiment
- And translate that into clear, actionable recommendations for policymakers across the Truckee Meadows and surrounding communities

The Real Impacts: What Data Centers Really Bring

Data centers:

- Use massive amounts of electricity, which can lead to higher costs for residents
- Can consume millions of gallons of water per year, depending on cooling systems
- Use diesel generators that affect air and noise quality
- Offer plentiful construction/build jobs to go vertical, unfortunately, often provide only a few permanent jobs once operational

Zoomed out, the pattern is clear:

big infrastructure, big demands, and not always big returns to the community...
yet anyway.

Path Forward – Local Solutions: A Smarter Local Framework

To move forward responsibly, we need stronger tools at the local level.

Let's require:

- Transparent data on water and energy use
- Renewable energy commitments
- Plans to reduce noise, pollution, and waste
- *Community benefit agreements or infrastructure payback* to protect public resources

This is how we ensure accountability and community return.

Path Forward - Early Engagement: Bring People in Early

We also need:

- Early, structured, ongoing engagement with residents and neighborhoods
- Formal tribal consultation, from the beginning, not after the fact

Engagement isn't just a step in the process - it should shape the process.

Path Forward - Coordination: Align Regionally, Lead Locally

Data centers don't stop at city limits.

We need further coordinated planning between:

- Reno
- Sparks
- Washoe County
- Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency (TMRPA)
- and eventually, beyond (e.g. Tahoe, Lyon County, Carson, etc.)

Together, we can create shared expectations and protect shared resources.

Closing: *Let's Shape This Together*

Some folks want zero data centers. Others want unlimited growth.

The real path is more nuanced:

We need a smart, community-first approach that:

- Protects water, land, and livability
- Prevents cost-shifting onto residents
- Sets high standards
- Gives us tools to lead responsibly
- While remaining business-friendly
- In other words, a win-win for everyone

Planning should be about making change work for *everyone* - not just those with the most influence.

That's the work I believe in, and the conversation I want us to keep having - together.

Q&A: *What if the AI Bubble Bursts?*

That's an important question - and one we're hearing more often.

There's real, lasting demand for AI infrastructure, *but* also signs of overbuilding and speculative activity. Some investment is outpacing what the grid, workforce, or actual AI usage can support.

So what does smart planning look like?

- **Draft and adopt flexible, community responsible policies:** so we're not locked into land uses or infrastructure for projects that don't fully materialize.
- **Tie approvals to real performance - not hype.** Tools like phased zoning, community benefit agreements, and infrastructure guarantees, bring your own energy, help.
- **Stay transparent with the public:** so communities understand both risks and benefits and aren't left in the dark.

A possible AI bubble underscores why we plan wisely, with guardrails to protect public resources and community trust - no matter how the market shifts.

Closing: Public Concern ≠ Public Opposition:

What we build matters.

How we engage determines if it lasts.

TRUCKEE MEADOWS
DATA CENTER
POLICY CONSORTIUM

<https://datacenter.policyconsortium.org>
(or policyconsortium.info)



Western Resource Advocates

Emily Walsh, Nevada Clean Energy Policy Advisor

December 10, 2025

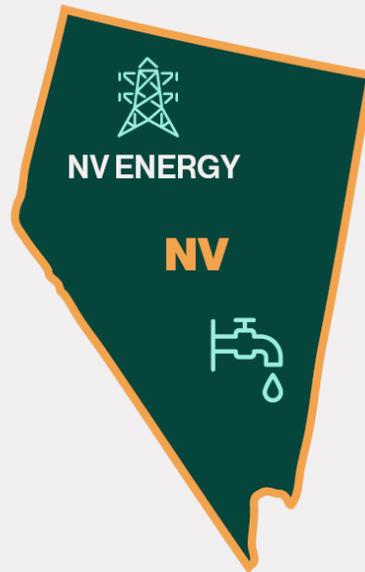
wra Western
Resource
Advocates®

Data Center Resource Use in Nevada

53% increase in greenhouse gas emissions
from 2022 IRP estimates.

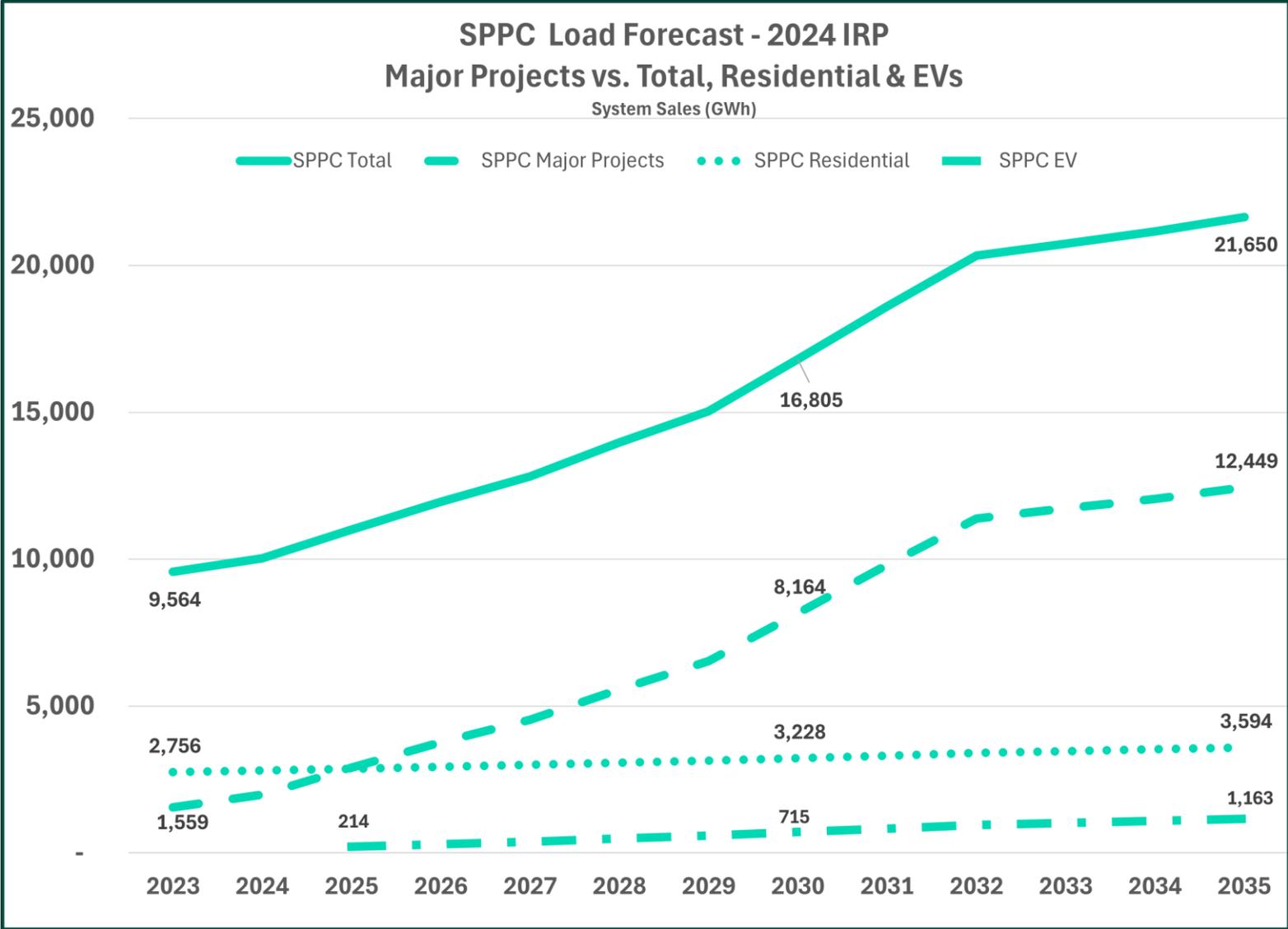
3.2M additional tons
of greenhouse gas pollution.

3,709 acre-feet (1.2B gallons)
per year in 2035 of new water demands, which supports approximately 22,000 individuals.



- Electricity demands will be 18% higher in 2030 and 34% higher in 2035 relative to 2022 IRP estimates.
- Sierra Pacific Power Company's annual energy demand is projected to increase by 64% from 2023 to 2030 and more than double between 2023 and 2045.

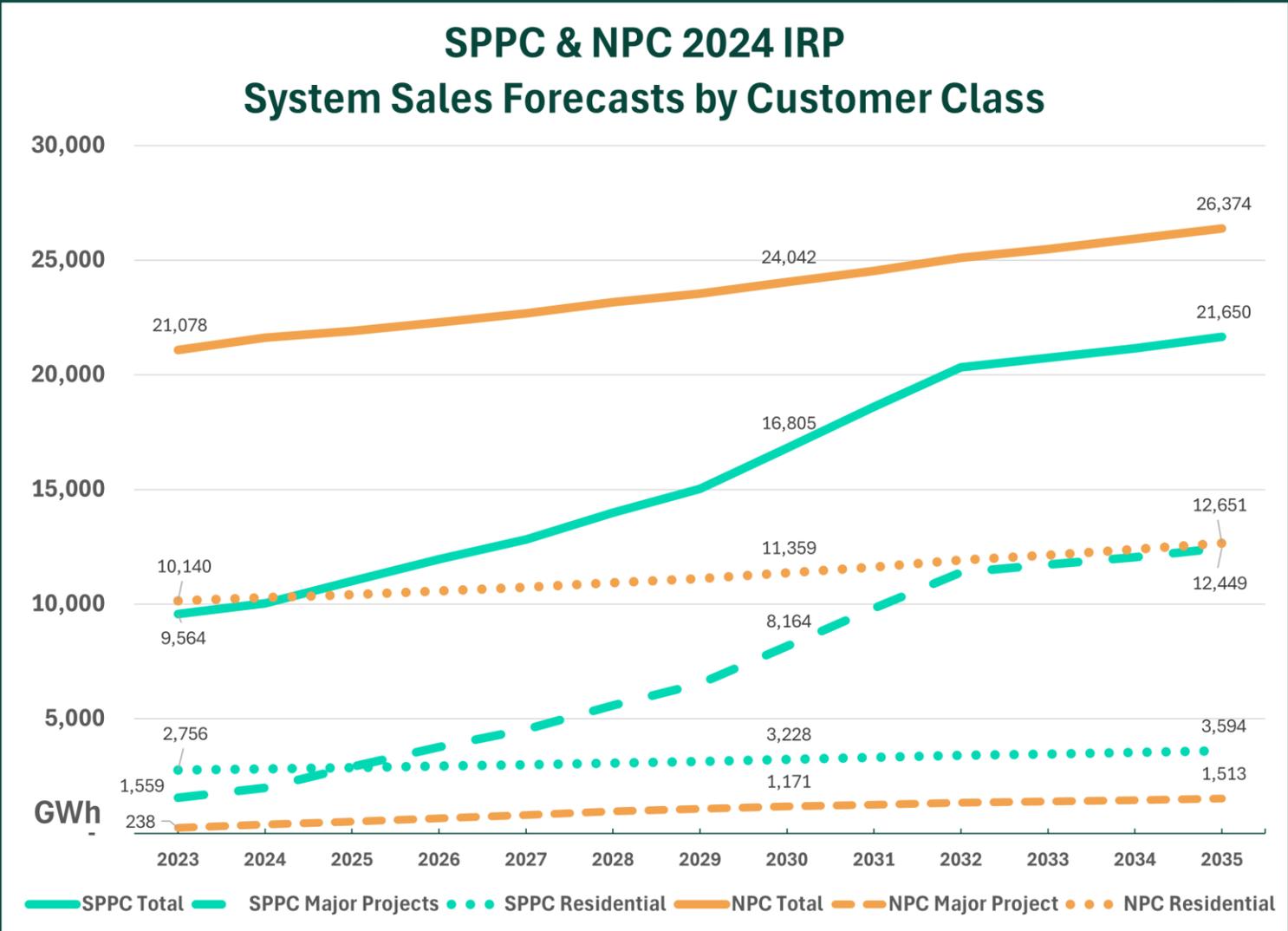
Data Centers Drive System Expansion



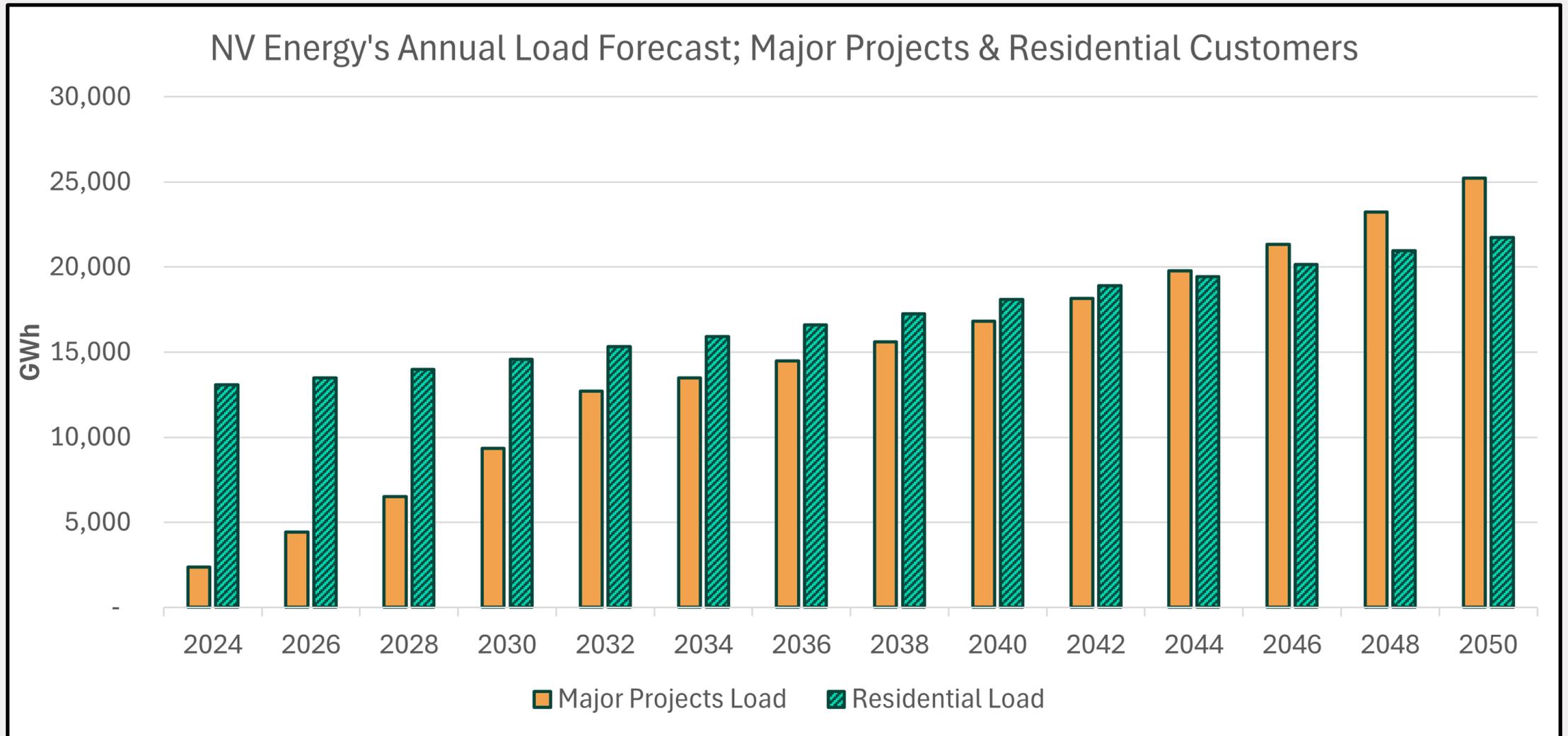
Large Infrastructure Investments Required



- To meet 2035 data center energy needs in northern Nevada, NV Energy will have to build **more infrastructure than what will serve all residential customers in southern Nevada.**



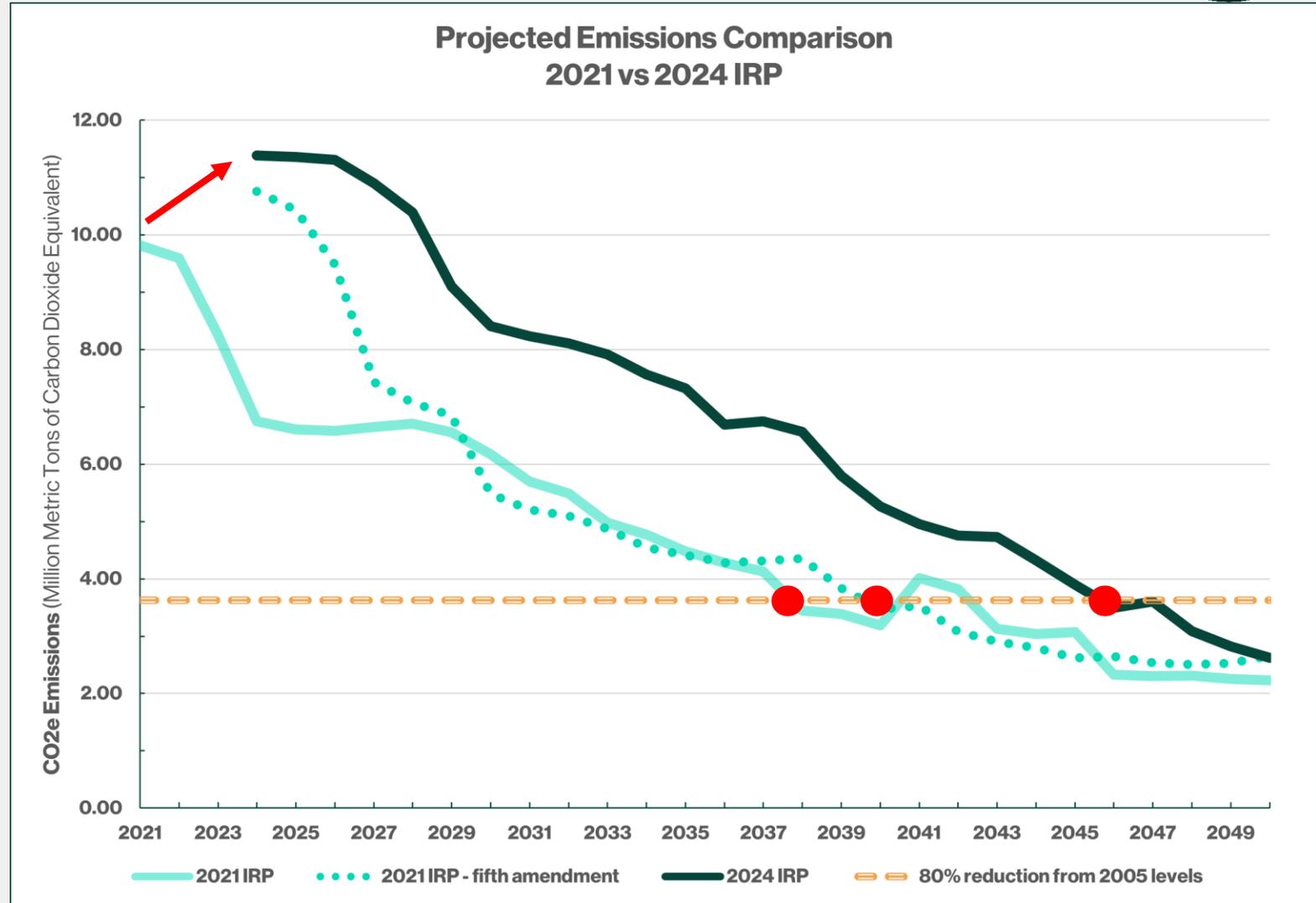
By 2043 NV Energy will provide **more power to data centers than all residential customers combined in the state.**



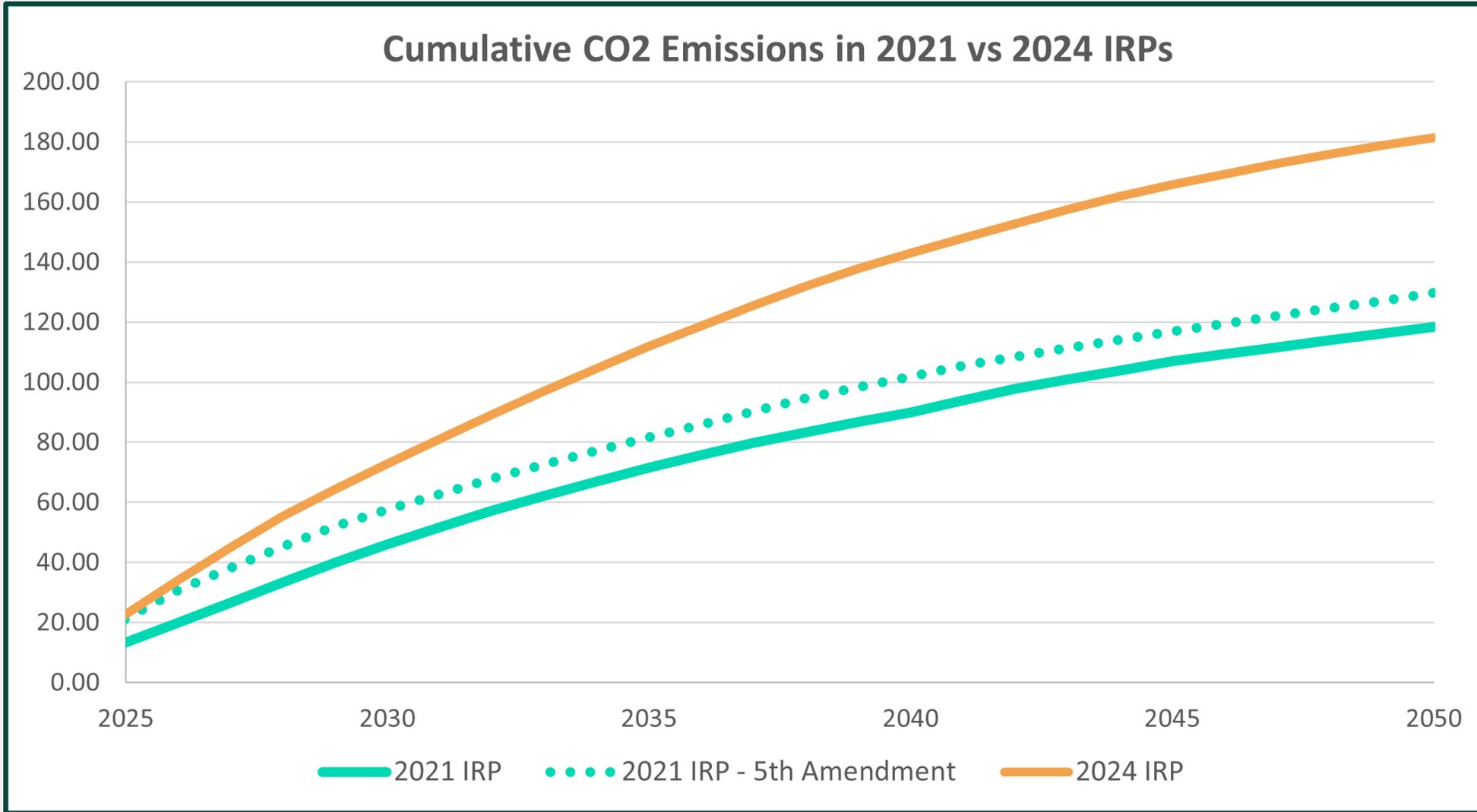


Increasing Emissions and Delays to Reductions

- Since the 2021 IRP, NV Energy has not only **delayed** expected emissions reductions by 10+ years but has also seen **increasing** system emissions.
- While we have the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), there is no binding limit or goal for emissions reductions (or increases) in NV.



Backsliding Adds Up

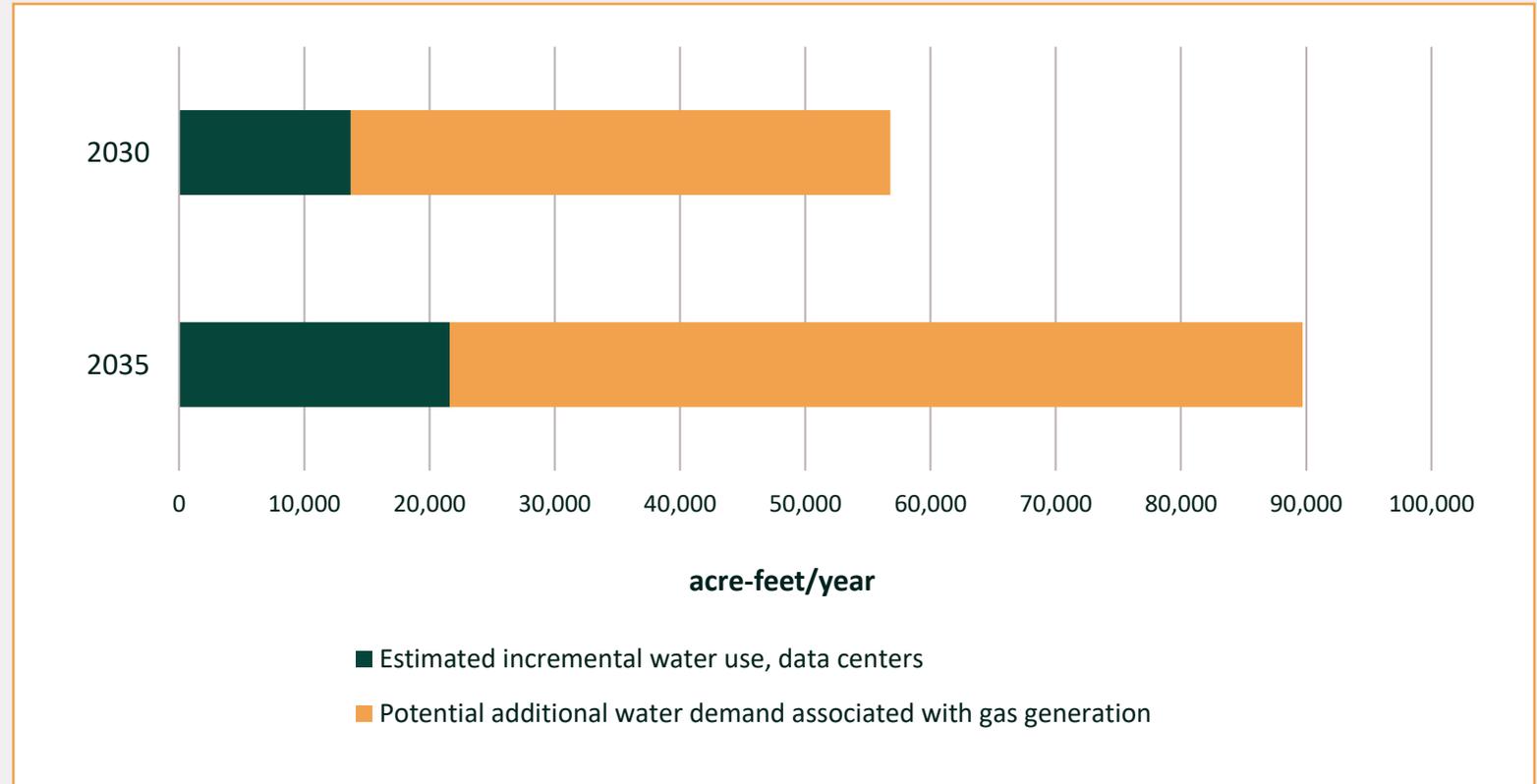


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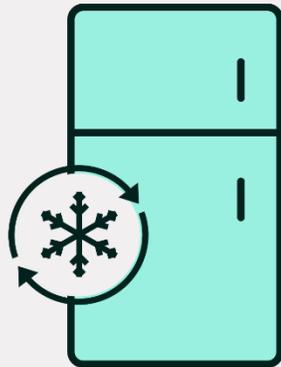


Water Impacts

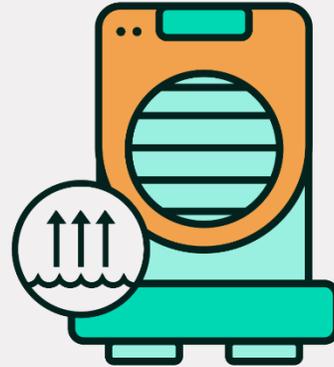
- Water is used on-site for cooling and offsite for power generation
- Using an estimate of the national average on-site water intensity of data centers and NV Energy's load forecast and demand projections, WRA projects that the incremental new water use associated with cooling data centers in Nevada could be 1,924 acre-feet per year by 2030, and increases to 3,709 acre-feet per year in 2035



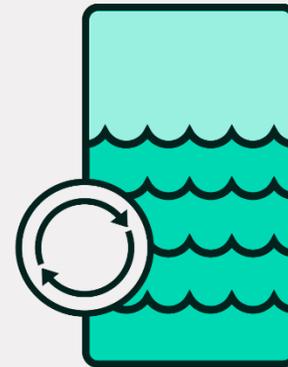
Water vs. Energy Tradeoffs



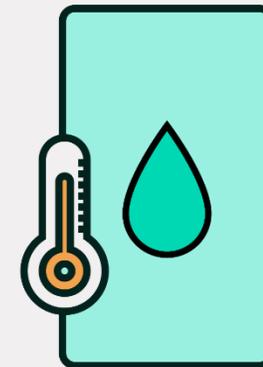
Refrigeration cooling systems use an air handler, circulate either cool air or water in the data center, and remove hot air.



Adiabatic- or direct-evaporative-cooling systems use water to cool air that is circulated in the data center.



Free-cooling systems take advantage of outdoor ambient air or water temperatures to cool the air that is circulated in a data center.



Liquid-cooling systems directly absorb heat from computer components, rather than cooling the air around the computers.

WRA's Recommended Policy Solutions

wra



Clean Transition
Tariffs



Behind-the-Meter
Clean Resource
Deployment



Load Shifting



Energy Efficiency



Contract
Provisions



Ratemaking and
EDR Reform



Water Efficiency
and Reporting



WRA Data Center Report:

Data Center Impacts in the West

- [Full Report](#)
- [Executive Summary](#)
- [NV-Specific Fact Sheet](#)



New Data Center Water and Electricity Demand in Nevada

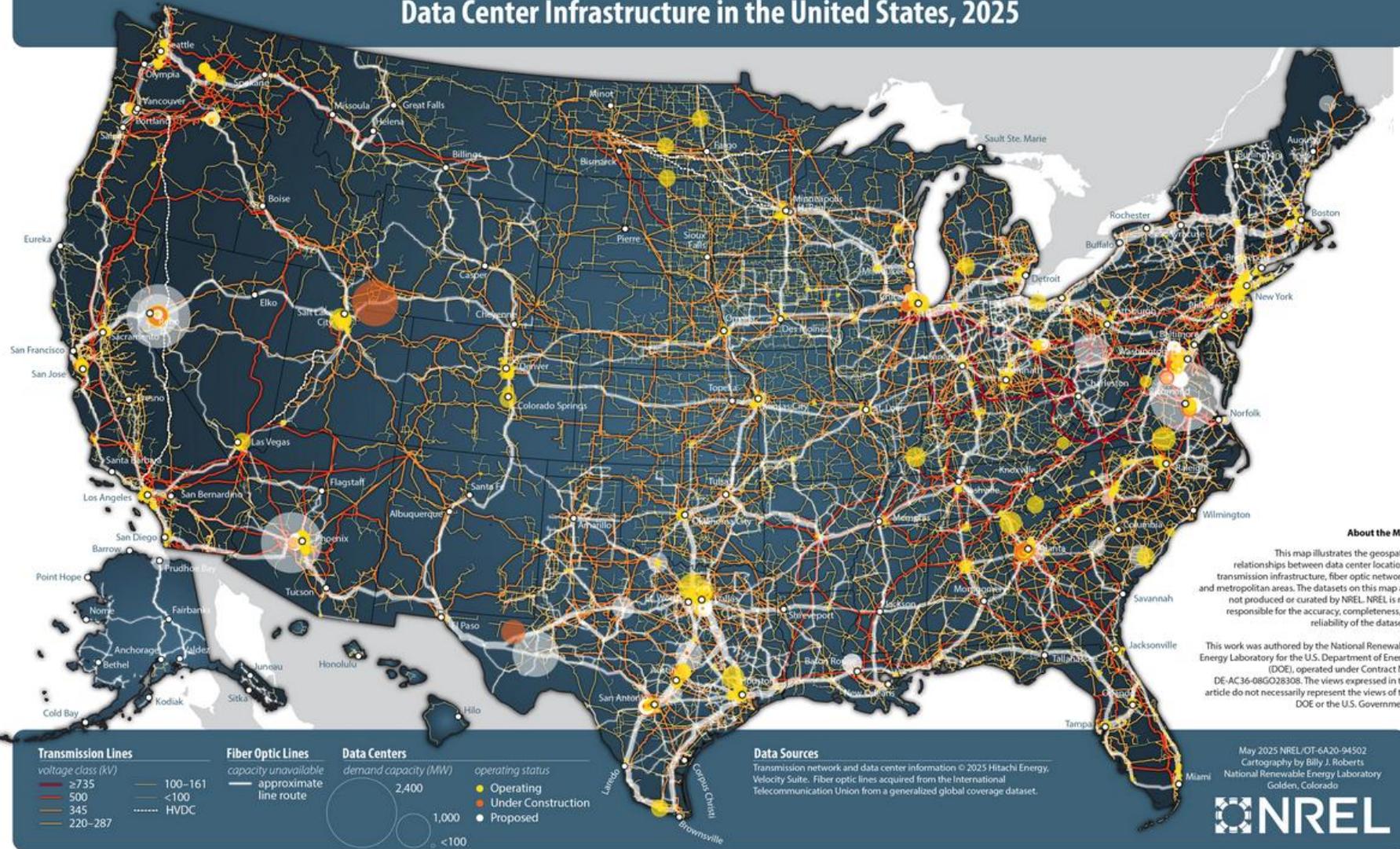
Erik M. Henzl

December 10, 2025



Impactful science, inspiring solutions.

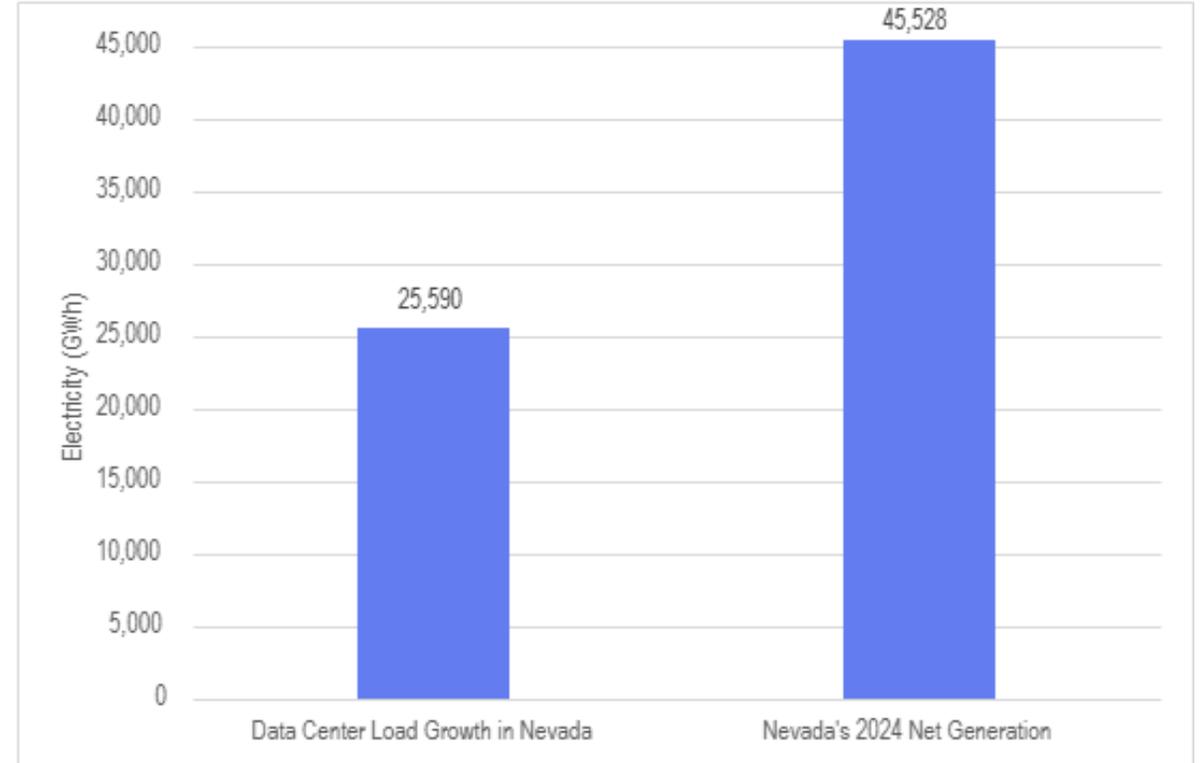
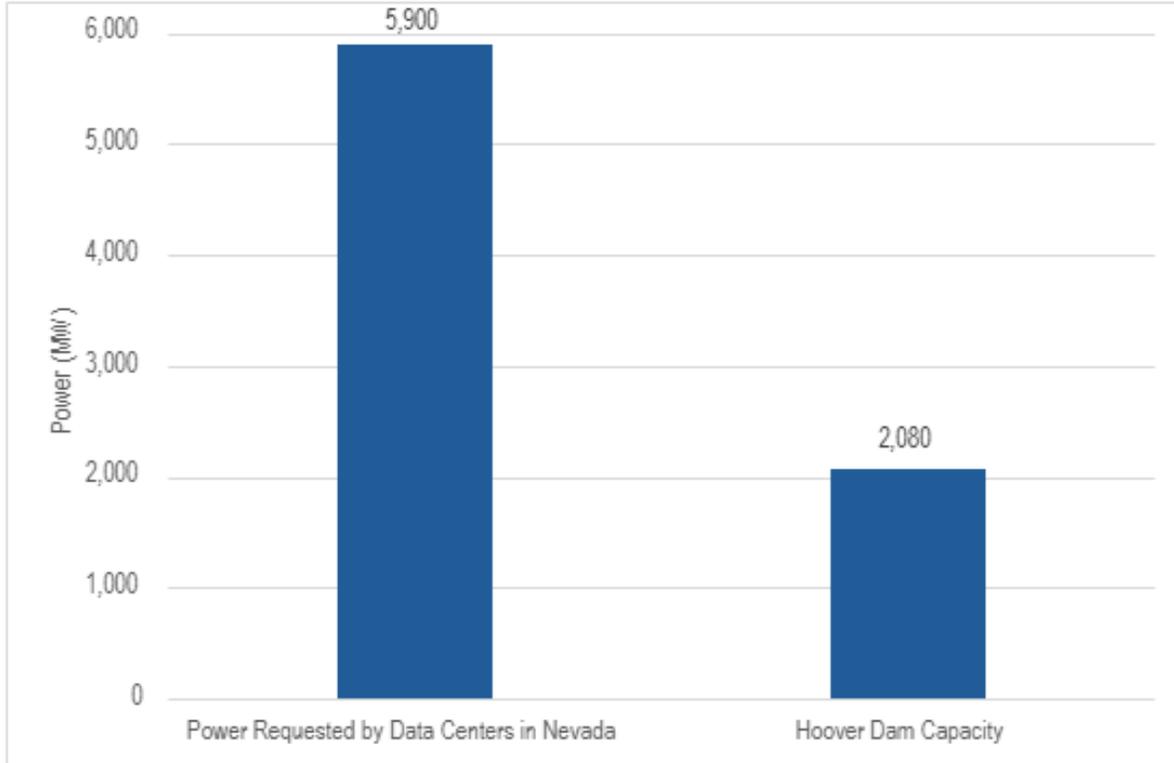
Data Center Infrastructure in the United States, 2025



Catalysts for Growth

- Abundant land
- Clean, cost-competitive energy
- Business-friendly tax and regulatory environment
- Proximity to key markets

Roberts, B. (2025). Data Center Infrastructure in the United States, 2025 (Map). National Renewable Energy Laboratory.



State of Nevada

- 12 data center projects forecast by NV Energy by 2033
- 5,900 MW capacity requested
- 25,590 GWh load growth

Sierra Pacific Power

- 24,633 GWh at Sierra Pacific Power
- 3,820 MW of incremental capacity requested at the Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center

Nevada Power

- 957 GWh at Nevada Power
- 390 MW were requested at the Apex Industrial Park

Under the medium WUE scenario, the total cost of cooling and electricity in Nevada exceeds \$2.3 billion annually following the eight-year buildout

WUE = Water Usage Effectiveness (L/kWh)

- Low: 0.242 L/kWh
- Medium: 0.465 L/kWh
- High: 1.8 L/kWh

Electricity generation: 0.6 L/kWh

Buildout to 2033

22,500 to 168,000 ac-ft needed for cooling

>56,000 ac-ft needed for electricity generation

Annual Post-Buildout Demand

5,000 to 37,400 ac-ft needed annually for cooling

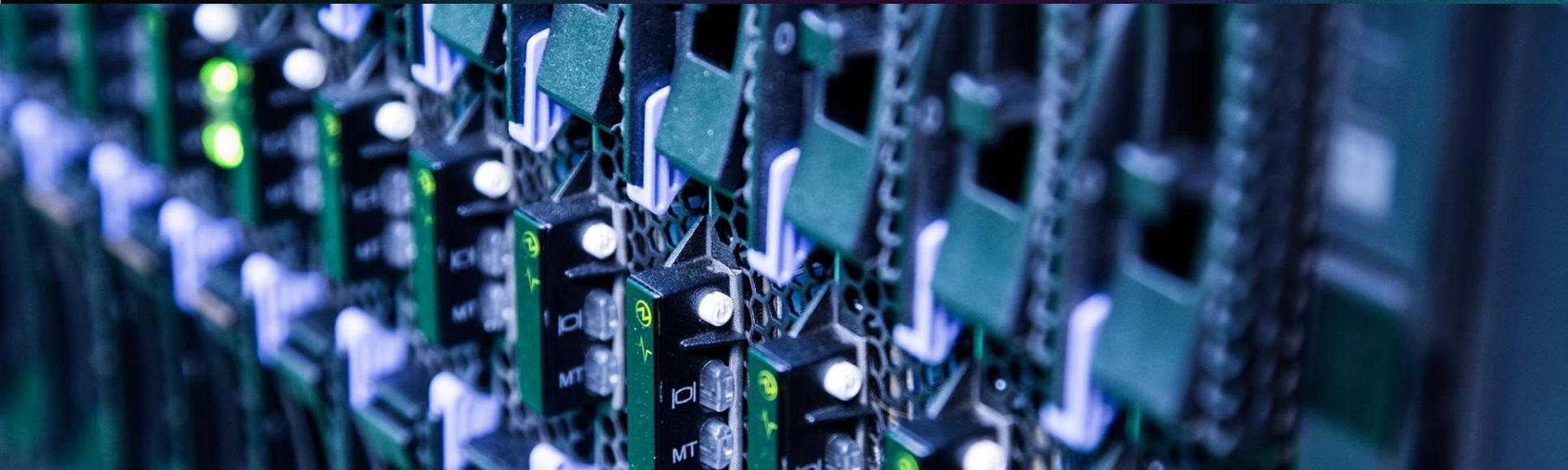
Nearly 12,500 ac-ft needed annually for electricity generation

	Buildout to 2033	Annual Post-Buildout Demand
Electricity need (GWh)	115,155	25,590
Electricity cost (\$ mil)	\$10,363.95	\$2,303.10
Water for generation (ac-ft)	56,015	12,448
Water cost (\$ mil)	\$5.04	\$1.12
Medium (Cooling, ac-ft)	43,411	9,647
Medium (Cost, \$ mil)	\$3.91	\$0.868
Total water demand (ac-ft)	99,426	22,095
Total cost (\$ mil)	\$10,372.90	\$2,305.09

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- Statista Research Department (2024). Electricity price for the industrial sector in the United States from January 2020 to May 2024. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1395805/monthly-electricity-price-industrial-sector-united-states/>.

HOW NEVADA'S DATA CENTER TAX ABATEMENT WORKS



12/10/2025 NEVADA CLIMATE FORUM
DATA CENTERS IN NEVADA: UNDERSTANDING AND SHAPING THE IMPACTS

CAROLYN "LINA" TANNER, ESQ.
TANNER LAW & STRATEGY GROUP, LTD.

Primary Statutory Framework:

NRS § 360.754 (partial abatement procedures applicable to data centers) and § 274.310 (general application to businesses sited in designated development zones)

2025 Legislature passed SB69 - allows for payments to local government for emergency and infrastructure services during abatement period.

Key requirements to qualify:

A data center (or combination of data center + colocated businesses) must make a cumulative capital investment in the county of at least \$25 million (for 10-year abatement) or \$100 million (for 20-year abatement) within 5 years of approval.



- **What Gets Abated**

- Sales and use tax (up to 2% rate)
- Personal property tax (up to 75% abatement)
- Equipment-specific exemptions



Industrial Development Revenue Bonds (IDRBs):
Tax-exempt municipal bonds used for financing
acquisition and construction

Benefits like tax-exempt interest and temporary
tax-shielded ownership

Link: [Nevada Department of Business & Industry](#)

A photograph of a server room. The view is through a black metal grid fence. Inside, several server racks are visible, filled with various electronic components, cables, and network equipment. The lighting is somewhat dim, with some blue and orange cables providing a contrast against the dark background.

THE POLICY DEBATE OVER ABATEMENTS

Scale and Cost to the State:

- Substantial and accelerating revenue impact (>\$100+ billion in planned investments)
- No state cap or sunset clause
- Transparency concerns (bilateral negotiation, limited public input)
- Jobs vs. wages mismatch (modest number of direct employees relative to capital invested)

Legislative Interest in Western States:

- Proposals for increased oversight, mandatory public disclosure, and performance clawbacks
- Potential for higher job/wage adjustments and duration limits
- County revenue stabilization ideas (payment in lieu of taxes, protecting local school taxes)



Issue	Current Rule	Possible Fix
Revenue visibility	GOED approves; limited public disclosure	Require public notice, comment period, and published abatement register by facility and county
Duration	Up to 20 years flat	Cap at 10 years; require legislative renewal after 10 years
Job/wage thresholds	10–50 FTE, statewide avg wage	Raise to 50–100 FTE for 20-year abatement; require annual wage audits
Statewide cap	None	Impose annual aggregate cap on total abatements issued (e.g., \$X million/year)
Performance clawback	No automatic clawback; GOED can renegotiate	Add automatic reduction/suspension if job counts fall below threshold for 2+ consecutive years
School funding protection	Applicant can seek abatement of Local School Tax with $\frac{2}{3}$ approval of GOED Board.	Ensure local school support taxes are not abated; restrict abatement to state revenues only
Transparency on colocated biz	GOED maintains list; limited disclosure	Require published list of colocated businesses receiving abatement; annual updates
IDRB oversight	County-issued; limited state review	State review/approval of IDRB structures; cap on bond authorization per facility

THANK YOU!

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Renewable energy and transmission planning for a heavy load future



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The Nature Conservancy
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2025 MASTER PLAN ESMERALDA COUNTY, NEVADA

Authorized by the
Esmeralda County Board of County Commissioners



2025

Esmeralda County Public Lands Policy Plan

Esmeralda County
Public Lands Policy Plan

Behind the Meter Renewable Solutions are the Short-term Solution



3Cs Community, Conservation, Climate

Working on ordinances and asks for the critical minerals mined, for the solar and geothermal energy generated, and the transmission infrastructure developed to supply data centers in Northern Nevada

BILL NO. 2025 -

ESMERALDA COUNTY ORDINANCE NO.:

SUMMARY: An ordinance regarding special use permits for renewable energy generation, transmission projects, and mining operations; providing for review and approval of a special use permit; establishing an application process, and providing for application review, public hearing, and a final decision on the application, and related severability, constitutionality, effective date, and other matters properly relating thereto.

TITLE: This ordinance is known as and may be cited as the "Special Use Permit Ordinance of Esmeralda County, Nevada."

WHEREAS, pursuant to NRS 278.020, for the purpose of promoting the health, safety, or the general welfare of the residents of Esmeralda County, the Esmeralda County Board of County Commissioners (Board) is authorized and empowered to approve, regulate, and restrict the improvement of land in its jurisdiction and control the location and soundness of certain structures in its jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, any such approval, regulation, restriction, and control must take into account the potential economic benefits to the County, potential effects on natural resources, and the total population which the available natural resources will support without unreasonable impairment; and

WHEREAS, the Esmeralda County Master Plan (Master Plan), adopted <insert date>, Policy 3-9 establishes categories of County Land Use, consisting of Multiple Use, Agriculture, and Community and Commercial/Industrial Use; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan, Policy 3-9 states, "A Multiple Use category is designated for Public Lands," and "renewable energy and other activities are recommended under the multiple-use concept," and Policy 3-10 provides that "All existing land uses are allowed;" and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan provides that "excellent solar energy generation potential also exists locally," and that "the county continues to rely on...an emerging potential for renewable energy production," and that "economic development that does not require significant additional population is encouraged. Examples include geothermal, solar, and wind renewable energy;" and

WHEREAS, NRS 278.26503 establishes specific procedures for issuance of a permit or special use permit for construction of certain utility projects with a nameplate capacity of 10 MW or more;

BILL NO. 2025 -

ESMERALDA COUNTY ORDINANCE NO.:

SUMMARY: An ordinance regarding development agreement review; providing for negotiation, approval, and amendment of development agreements; establishing required contents of development agreements; administration, severability, constitutionality, and effective date; and providing for other matters properly relating thereto.

TITLE: This ordinance is known as and may be cited as the Development Agreement Ordinance of Esmeralda County, Nevada.

WHEREAS, pursuant to NRS 278.020, for the purpose of promoting the health, safety, and general welfare of the residents of Esmeralda County, the Esmeralda County Board of County Commissioners (Board) is authorized and empowered to approve, regulate, and restrict the improvement of land within its jurisdiction and to control the location and soundness of certain structures within its jurisdiction; and

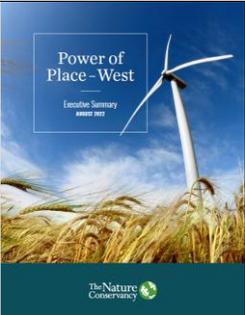
WHEREAS, any such approval, regulation, restriction, and control must take into account the potential economic benefits to the County, potential effects on natural resources, and the total population which the available natural resources will support without unreasonable impairment; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to NRS 278.0201, the Board is authorized to enter into an agreement with any person having a legal or equitable interest in land concerning the development of that land, which agreement may provide for the permitted uses of the land, density or intensity of the use of the land, protection of environmentally sensitive lands, conditions, terms, restrictions and requirements for infrastructure on the land, and related enumerated matters; and

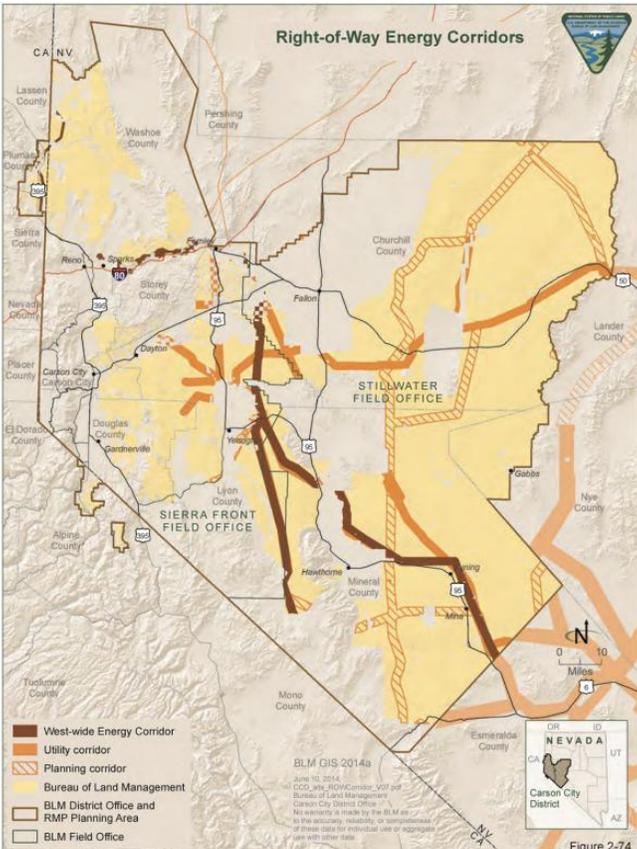
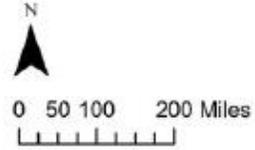
WHEREAS, pursuant to NRS 278.0201(3), the ordinances, resolutions, or regulations applicable to the land subject to a development agreement and governing the permitted uses of the land subject to a development agreement, are those in effect at the time the development agreement is made; and

WHEREAS, the Esmeralda County Master Plan (Master Plan) establishes categories of County Land Use, consisting of Multiple Use, Agriculture, and Community and Commercial/Industrial Use; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan states, "A Multiple Use category is designated for Public Lands," and "renewable energy and other activities are recommended under the multiple-use concept," and provides that "All existing land uses are allowed;" and

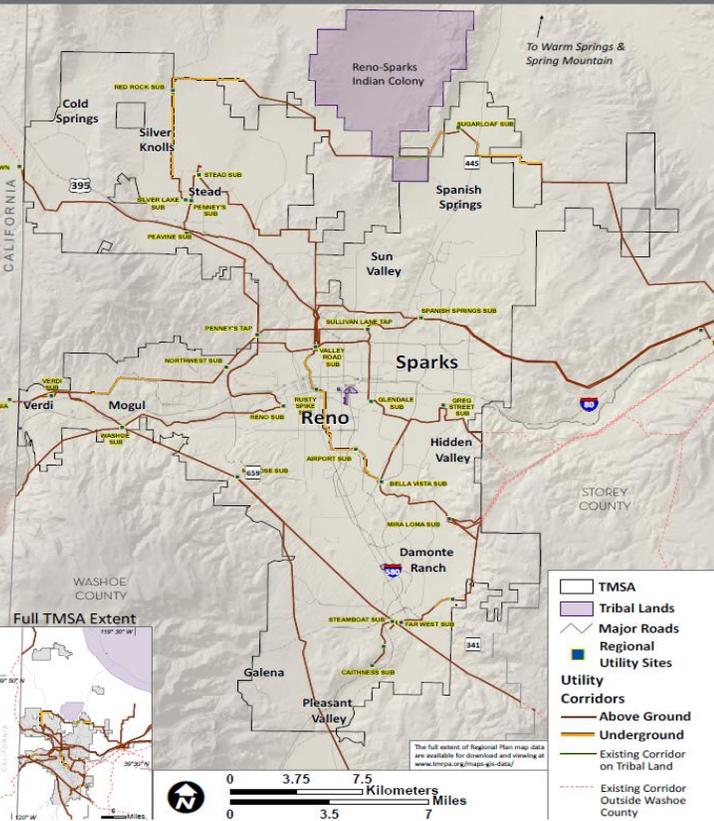


- Substations
- Existing transmission
- New 500 kV
- Colocate 500 kV
- Reconductor 500 kV



A-74 Carson City District Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement November 2014

MAP 3 - Regional Utility Corridors & Sites Adopted: Dec 12, 2024 TMRPA



- TMSA
- ▭ Tribal Lands
- Major Roads
- Regional Utility Sites
- Utility Corridors**
- Above Ground
- Underground
- Existing Corridor on Tribal Land
- Existing Corridor Outside Washoe County

DATA CENTER BOOM, WESTERN BUST? SCTC'S WORK IN 2025



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Date:
December 10,
2025

ISSUE OVERVIEW



The ecosystem of data centers and cryptomining, which are sometimes linked but not interchangeable, have an outsized negative impact on surrounding communities, especially if gone under-regulated. The big issues associated with data centers that we are focused on are:

RISING UTILITY RATES

CLIMATE CONSIDERATIONS

ECONOMIC DRAIN

*WATER + PUBLIC SAFETY
IMPLICATIONS*

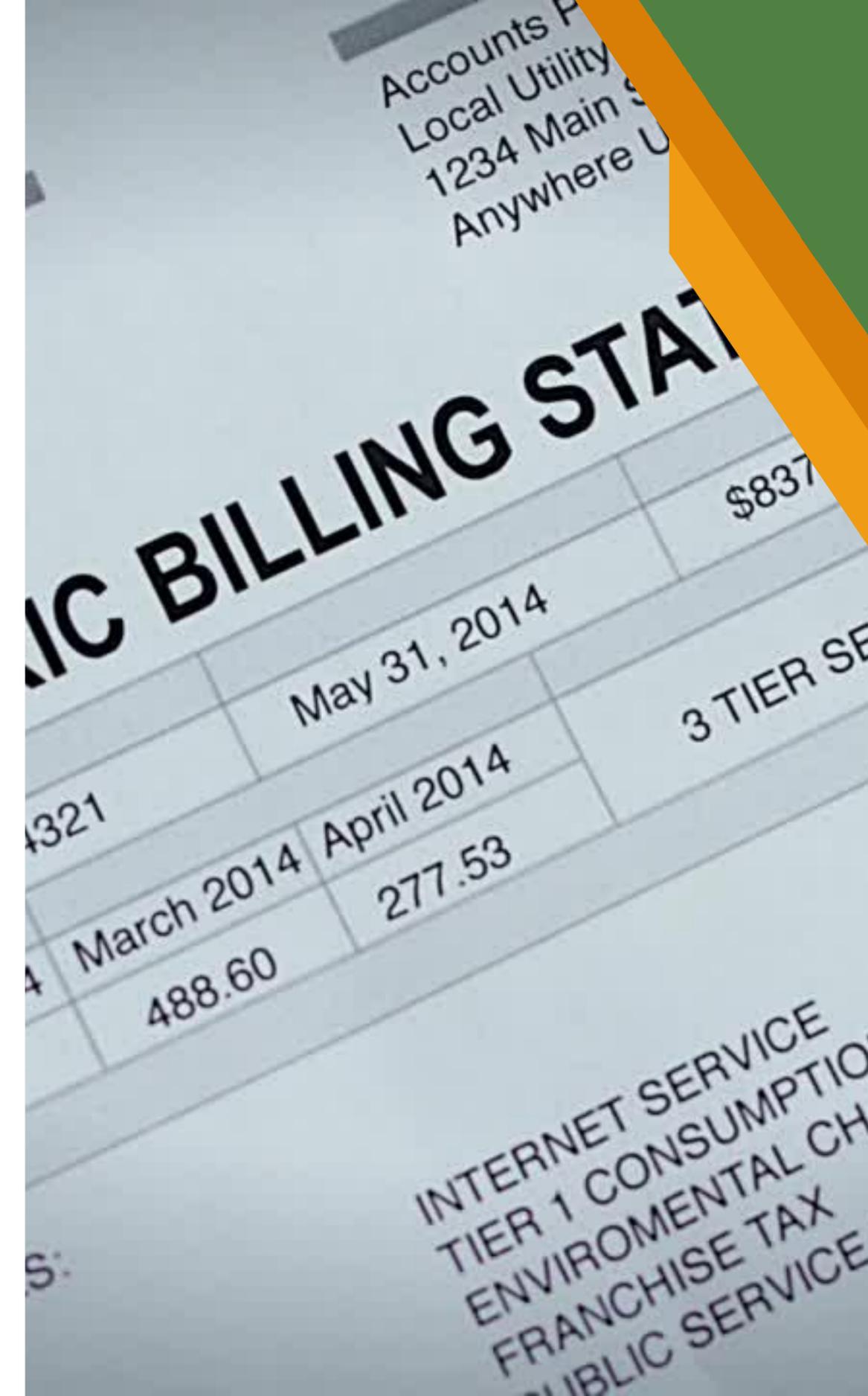
*This list is not all encompassing and is intentionally broad

RISING UTILITY COSTS

Data center development can cause utility bills to go up for regular customers because data centers use massive amounts of electricity—often more than entire neighborhoods or towns. Here's why that impacts your bill:

1. **Increased Demand = Higher Costs:** Data centers require constant, high-level energy use 24/7. Utilities must build or buy more power to meet this demand, which drives up costs.
2. **Infrastructure Upgrades:** Utilities often need to expand or upgrade transmission lines, substations, and generation capacity to serve data centers. These infrastructure costs are often passed on to all ratepayers.
3. **Special Deals for Data Centers:** Utilities sometimes offer discounted rates to attract data centers. To make up for the lost revenue, they raise rates on residential and small business customers. There is evidence of data centers in Nevada getting special deals on power.
4. **Grid Strain:** During peak times, data centers can contribute to grid congestion, leading to more expensive energy purchases by utilities—again, raising overall rates.

In short: data centers drive up energy use and infrastructure costs, and many regulatory bodies are not equipped to deal with this very unique and rapidly expanding industry.



CLIMATE CONSIDERATION

In order to build out enough energy generation to meet growing demand from data centers, we are already building more massive fossil fuel projects, and are going to have to build more.

- U.S. Grid Impact: In the U.S., data centers currently consume about 4% of total electricity use, a figure expected to double by 2030.
- Peaker Plant Use: In some cases, utilities fire up gas peaker plants to meet the 24/7 demands of data centers, which are dirtier and more expensive than baseline power sources.



ECONOMIC DRAIN



TAX BREAKS

Nevada gives a 75% personal property tax abatement to data centers, and abates the sales tax down to 2% if they meet certain (minimal) criterion. These deals can divert public money from schools, infrastructure, and services. Nevada lost \$140 million from abatements from data centers in FY24.



STRAIN ON UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Data centers demand huge amounts of electricity and water, which can lead to increased utility rates and infrastructure spending—costs often passed on to local residents and businesses.



OPPORTUNITY COSTS

Land, water, and energy devoted to data centers could be used for more community-benefiting development—like housing, schools, clean industries, or small businesses that generate more local jobs and economic activity.



JOBS

Despite their large footprints and massive energy use, data centers create very few permanent jobs—often just a handful—offering little return on local investment or subsidies.



AVENUES FOR ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

LOCAL ORDINANCE DEVELOPMENT

NEVADA STATE LEGISLATURE

*PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF
NEVADA INTERVENTION*

Federal legislation defeNSE



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter has developed what we are referring to as a “model ordinance” for local governments to adopt. This ordinance was developed in large part by our volunteer members, and addresses siting and natural resource concerns at the local level. We have had staff or members present at a local meeting concerning every data center that has gone through a local permitting process in Nevada in 2025.

*WATER CONSERVATION TECHNOLOGY
(RESTRICTIONS ON EVAPORATIVE
COOLING)*

CLIMATE + ENERGY STANDARDS

*ZONING + PROXIMITY TO SENSITIVE
GEOGRAPHIES*

Health + Safety

PUBLIC PROCESS

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF NEVADA



The PUCN is the appropriate regulatory body for adopting regulations on data center rates, preventing cost shifting to residents and small businesses, and ensuring climate standards are being upheld.

*TRANSPARENT RATE
STRUCTURES*

*CONSIDERATION FOR DATA
CENTER PARTICULARITIES +
COST-SHIFTING*

*CLEAN TRANSITION TARIFF (CTT)
ADOPTION*

*CONSIDERATION FOR
INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS +
STRANDED ASSETS*

The Sierra Club intervened in the CTT docket to ensure the best possible outcome for consumers and climate. We are continuing to work on implementation, and working with the PUCN on data center issues, and will be heavily involved in the new IRP.



SIERRA CLUB
TOIYABE CHAPTER

STATE GOVERNMENT



The state government can, and should, address issues arising from data center development in 2027. There are state level policies that have been passed in a bipartisan matter in other states, with data center developers coming to the table in support of responsible policy with community and environmental advocates. The state is not the only avenue for addressing data center issues, and the state is not the most appropriate arbiter for all issues surrounding data centers, but it is an important one. The Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter has lined up several bills for next session to address some public policy gaps pertaining to data centers.

ABATEMENTS

RATE CLASSIFICATION

REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

*CLIMATE AND NATURAL
RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS*



TAKEAWAYS

- This issue is urgent + pressing
- This issue must be addressed at multiple levels (local, state, regulatory)
- Residents + community members are rightfully concerned and taking action is the best way to address the concerns
- Economic benefits are not clear or easily calculable, and a good cost-benefit analysis should be done
- Just because a data center is not a hyperscale data center does not mean it inherently has intangible impacts
- We are not anti-data center but are staunchly pro-responsible appropriately regulated development





1.3 Webb Data Center
RENO CITY COUNCIL AND REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
Wednesday, January 22, 2025

THANK YOU



SIERRA CLUB
TOIYABE CHAPTER