

Robert Cooper Audubon Society Calls for a One-Year Moratorium on Data Centers in Delaware County, Indiana, to Allow Further Impact Study

Introduction and Summary

To allow their local impact to be studied and a regulatory framework to be implemented in Delaware County, Indiana, the Robert Cooper Audubon Society strongly recommends a one-year moratorium prior to the approval and construction of any new data centers in Delaware County, Indiana.

The Robert Cooper Audubon Society (RCAS) is a regional chapter of the National Audubon Society, serving approximately 400 members in East Central Indiana (www.cooperaudubon.org).

Public Hearings and Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs)

Construction and use of data centers will have far-reaching and long-lasting impacts on nearby residents and communities for 30 years or more.⁽¹⁾ This magnitude of impact necessitates public hearings with at least 90-day advanced notice.⁽²⁾ Further, transparency of the impact and scope of data centers are such that any non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) should be banned from the process of planning, approval, construction, tax incentives, and oversight of data centers.⁽²⁾

Environmental Impact⁽²⁾

Data centers consume vast amounts of electricity to run computers, computer servers, and associated equipment often exceeding that which can be borne by existing electric grids. Further, data centers consume vast amounts of water to cool data processing equipment and negatively impact local community water supplies, including aquifers.

Wetland Protections Needed^(3,4)

Developers often request the draining of wetlands for their building sites. Wetlands protect our surface waters and aquifers by acting as sponges to slow runoff following storms. The horrific August 2026 flooding experienced in East Central Indiana was due in part to the destruction of wetlands. Therefore, the drainage of any wetland for the construction of any data center must be carefully regulated.

Impact of Water Use⁽²⁾

Data centers use massive amounts of water to cool their data processing equipment. This strains water available for residents and agriculture. Thus an independent analysis should be conducted to evaluate water amounts used for cooling systems and construction. Recycled water should be used for cooling. Using water from groundwater aquifers should

be prohibited. Water use impact data should be accessible to the public on an ongoing basis. Data center developers should pay for water and sewer upgrades that are needed to support the data center; the expenses for water and sewer upgrades should not be borne by taxpayers.

Electricity Use⁽²⁾

Data centers use massive amounts of electricity. Data center developers often use coal, natural gas, or nuclear power for their electricity source. Instead, data centers should add new clean energy to the local power grid, using renewable energy in the form of wind and/or solar and battery storage for downtimes. Data centers should not be permitted to buy credits or claim they are matching consumption elsewhere.

Noise Pollution^(1,2)

To reduce the impact of noise pollution, data centers should be placed at least one-half mile from the nearest home, school, hospital, or other important public service. Noise levels should not exceed 55 decibels.

Protections for Ratepayers and Other Taxpayers⁽²⁾

Across the US, consumers are seeing increased electric bills due to data centers. So that data centers cover their electric energy costs and not shift those costs to ratepayers, data centers should disclose their load requirements, including peak load, and commit contractually to cover infrastructure expenses tied to the center rather than having those costs passed on to all utility customers.

Tax Incentives and Job Creation⁽⁵⁾

Data centers often receive billions in tax breaks while creating few permanent jobs, shifting tax burdens to taxpayers, which is detrimental to local school districts and community services. As a result, no sales/use tax exemptions and no school or property tax abatements should be granted to data center developers. Further, data centers should provide evidence of anticipated substantial tax revenues for 20 years and provide an independent cost-benefit analysis available to the public 90+ days before the approval of any data center and allow for public comment.

Backup Diesel Generators and Onsite Natural Gas Turbines⁽²⁾

Natural gas generators and backup diesel generators are noisy and pollute the air when meeting peak demands. Therefore, backup diesel and natural gas generators should be avoided in the construction of data centers in East Central Indiana. Instead, solar, wind, and battery storage should be used for backup power during peak demands.

References:

1. Data centers: An overview for Hoosier communities. Environmental Resilience Institute, Indiana University, Bloomington, updated August 11, 2026.
2. Is AI Coming to Town? 10 steps to ensure an AI data center benefits your community. <https://www.Greenamerica.org>
3. Filchak, Devan. Indiana officials approve permit allowing Google to fill wetlands for Fort Wayne data center. *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, Sept 10, 2026
4. Schneider, Karl. Indiana's wetlands protect from floods, but there aren't many left. *Indianapolis Star* Aug 31, 2026
5. Hicks, Michael J. Data centers and local job creation – some preliminary causal estimates from Texas. *The Country Economist* Nov 10, 2025

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