



# A Closer Look:

## Columbia River Data Centers

February 2026



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# Rapid data center expansion is transforming the Columbia River basin

The extent of the industry's footprint is hidden, and its full impact on our region's resources is unknown. Big Tech wants to keep it that way.

## Tracking Data Center Growth along the Columbia River

Regional data center hubs are expanding, with at least 2.3 GW of additional capacity planned in 12 counties bordering the Columbia River.

- Existing data center capacity
- Planned data center expansion

Microsoft is adding >450 MW of capacity across Malaga and East Wenatchee Chelan & Grant counties

Quincy is Washington's largest hub with over 750 MW of existing capacity Grant County

Goldendale Energy Storage Project & Data Center Campus (Proposed) Klickitat County

Advance Phase (Proposed) Walla Walla County

Google is expanding in The Dalles Wasco County

Amazon operates at least 13 campuses across Umatilla and Morrow counties with plans to expand.

# Background

**Unrestrained data center development in Washington and Oregon is unprecedented and threatens to derail state mandates to decommission methane and coal-fired power plants and reach 100% renewable energy.**

Data center power demand could reach 35 million MWh by 2029<sup>1</sup>, the equivalent of adding as many as four cities the size of Seattle.

Existing laws in Washington and Oregon do not require data center operators to use clean energy. Because clean energy generation is limited, many data center operators are proposing to use fossil fuels as the main source of their power, including “behind-the-meter” generation, meaning the energy would be generated onsite and not through the electrical grid via utilities.

Columbia Riverkeeper has identified over 100 data center campuses at various stages of development and operation in 12 Washington and Oregon counties bordering the Columbia River. Existing and planned data center capacity in these 12 counties alone could reach 4 GW, according to data from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. To put that into perspective, 4 GW of data center capacity would consume 24.5 million MWh electricity per year, equivalent to the annual electricity consumption of nearly 2.3 million households.<sup>2</sup>

There is no state or federal agency collecting data on existing and/or proposed data center projects. At the same time, some of the region’s biggest data center operators—including Microsoft, Google, and Amazon—keep the energy consumption of its facilities a secret. Without this basic information, decision-makers and impacted communities cannot assess the full impacts to the region’s resources.

## **Data centers require an enormous amount of water, which strain local water resources and threaten fish and wildlife our region depends on.**

AI-focused data centers consume vast amounts of water, a significant portion of which is discharged as wastewater, typically into public water systems. Every year a 100 MW data center will consume 100 million gallons of water, enough for 2,500 people's domestic use.

Direct water use for cooling is just a fraction of the industry's water consumption. A vast amount of water is used to produce specialized computer chips used in servers and for fossil fuel electricity generation. Some of the region's data center operators plan to use fossil fuels as the main power source.

## **Data center companies have long resisted regulatory oversight of their water and energy usage.**

Only half of data center owners and operators track water use, due to the lack of regulatory obligations.<sup>3</sup>

Given the lack of regulatory oversight, there are outstanding questions about the impact of discharged water and thermal pollution on watersheds. Wastewater discharged from data centers can contain various contaminants, including PFAS chemicals, biocides, anti-scaling agents, corrosion inhibitors, heavy metals, and other pollutants.

## **Data centers' growing energy demands threaten efforts of Tribes, states, and others to remove Lower Snake River dams to achieve healthy and abundant fisheries.**

The data center industry's rising water use threatens water availability in drought-prone areas and places additional stress on the power system during critical periods. Such stress increases the chance that fish operations will be interrupted, risking harm to Tribal treaty-protected salmon and steelhead.

# Call to Action

Laws designed to protect communities, clean water, and our climate have not kept pace with the rapid growth of data centers.

The most practical step: institute a moratorium on data center development. In 2025 Columbia Riverkeeper [joined over 230 local, state, and national organizations](#) across the country calling for a moratorium on the approval and construction of new data centers. The letter cites massive and unsustainable consumption by data centers of energy and water resources, and skyrocketing utility costs for families and small businesses, among other impacts of unchecked data center growth.

Until a moratorium is in place, Columbia Riverkeeper will advocate for common-sense laws to protect impacted communities, Tribes, and the Columbia River. Columbia Riverkeeper stands in solidarity with Columbia River Basin Tribal Nations who continue to voice deep concern about the unprecedented scale of energy demand anticipated from new data center development. For example, data centers require millions of gallons per day, and proliferation of facilities across Washington and Oregon drains water supply in drought-prone areas and endangers fish and wildlife. Many Tribal fisheries are protected by treaties. In a [2025 report](#) to the Washington Governor's Data Centers Advisory Group, the Yakama Nation details how data centers impact strained river systems relied on by communities, fish, and wildlife, and shares actions lawmakers can take to protect water, air, and the climate.

Bottomline: Elected officials and regulators must take meaningful steps to address the wide-ranging impacts of data centers. **Examples of actions include:**

- 1 Protect limited water resources.** Data centers use enormous quantities of water, and the exact statistics regarding that water use should be made public. Any state approach to data center siting must include consideration of water availability, water quality impacts, impacts on the local water system, and how discharges into municipal water systems may affect that system's capacity. In addition, water should not be allocated to data centers without first analyzing the impacts to watershed conditions, including stream flows for fish, temperature, pollution, and Tribes' un-adjudicated federally reserved water rights.

# Call to Action

- 2 Ensure data centers cannot rely on dirty fossil fuels.** To keep up with growing energy demand, largely from data centers, utilities have increasingly sourced dirty “unspecified” power derived from fossil fuels. Data centers may also delay retirements of gas-fired power plants and continue expanding gas infrastructure, threatening our region’s climate goals. Lawmakers should ensure that data centers do not undermine a just transition from fossil fuels.
- 3 Prevent data centers from gobbling up limited clean energy and, instead, require data centers to develop new renewable energy.** Data centers should be responsible for bringing their own renewable energy online. Columbia Riverkeeper is firmly opposed to small modular nuclear reactors as well as new fossil fuel projects introduced to provide energy to data centers. States should not compromise on energy efficiency or renewable energy development and implementation to accommodate Big Tech’s appetite for more data centers.
- 4 Data center secrecy must end.** Big Tech is notoriously secretive about the amount of water and energy data centers use. Common sense laws to increase transparency are critical to protect communities saddled with data center development. This includes requiring that data centers developers disclose energy use and sources, water and air pollution, and the amount of water required to operate.
- 5 Incentivize load flexibility and best practices for energy efficiency.** States should implement load flexibility practices to reduce data centers’ impact on the grid. For example, Texas requires data centers to reduce their power demands during emergencies. Managing data center load in this way can reduce blackouts, reduce ratepayer costs, and protect salmon recovery efforts during energy emergencies. Further, analysis of data center requirements for load flexibility and/or energy efficiency should focus on how data centers can use clean energy in these contexts.
- 6 Data centers must pay their fair share.** Given data centers’ impacts, Northwest states should end their practice of incentivizing development through tax incentives and make Big Tech pay its fair share. Tax incentives for data centers enrich the world’s wealthiest corporations while communities lose out on tax revenue for schools, public safety, and more.

# Call to Action

- 7 Remove data center costs from customers' bills.** Power companies spend billions to keep data centers running—and they jack up everyday consumers' and small business' utility rates to pay for it. Regardless of whether a data center relies on energy from an investor-owned or consumer-owned utility, data centers should be on the hook for paying for their energy costs. Residential and small business ratepayers should not continue to subsidize data centers or be stuck with stranded assets from data center build out. In particular, data centers should: be assigned a separate rate class; support energy assistance, home weatherization and electrification; and pay for grid buildouts that support their interconnection.
- 8 State agencies should avoid issuing general permits and orders for data centers.** General permits and orders are a one-size-fits-all approach regulators use for some developments. Due to the size and pollution impacts of data centers, regulators should scrutinize their impacts on communities and the environment—from noise to air to water impacts—and support more robust Tribal government and community-engagement opportunities that general permits aren't built for.

*For more information on how policy solutions can address the rising impact of data centers, visit: [bit.ly/data-center-expansion](https://bit.ly/data-center-expansion) and read public comments from Columbia Riverkeeper, Yakama Nation, and other entities advocating for data center reform.*

# A Closer Look at Columbia River Data Centers

Seven counties along the Columbia are the epicenter of the Pacific Northwest’s data center industry: Morrow, Umatilla, and Wasco counties in Oregon, and Chelan, Douglas, Grant, and Walla Walla counties in Washington.

The chart on the following page shows the scale of the current and potential future data center industry compared to residential electricity consumption in each county. We explore the details of the industry in each county below, as well as Benton and Klickitat counties in Washington, and Gilliam, Multnomah, and Washington counties in Oregon.

Because data center operators often keep the size, capacity, power, and water use of their facilities a secret, it is difficult to get accurate data on the industry’s footprint along the Columbia River. Estimates of the number of existing and planned data centers and their power use in Oregon and Washington counties vary widely. The figures presented in this report are drawn from a variety of sources, including the Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and an assessment of company statements, media coverage, public records, and private third-party databases.

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# Data Center Electricity Consumption Dwarfs Residential Consumption Along the Columbia River (MWh)

Data center expansion is driving rising electricity costs and threatening local water supply all while Big Tech seeks taxpayer dollars to keep building without transparency.

- Annual Residential Electricity Consumption
- Current Annual DC Consumption
- Future Annual DC Consumption

## Morrow



## Umatilla



## Wasco



## Chelan



## Douglas



## Grant, WA



## Walla Walla



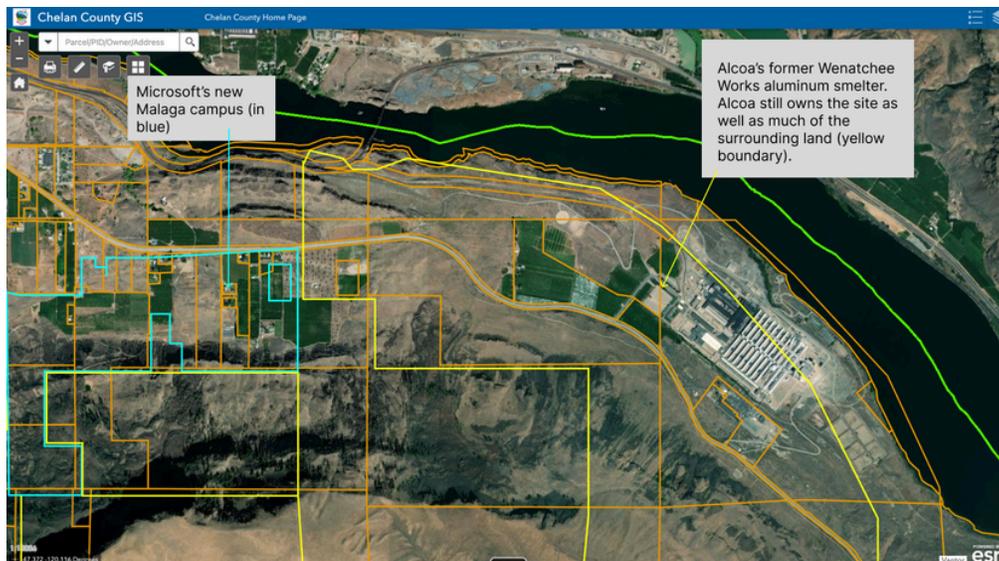
Chart: Zane Gustafson • Source: EIA, WA OFM, OR DOE, NREL, DCM (Douglas current DC consumption) • Created with Datawrapper

# Chelan County Washington

**Utility:** Chelan Public Utility District

**Data center capacity:** 24 MW existing / 288 MW planned<sup>4</sup>

- Microsoft has plans to build at least 6 buildings (Phase I) on the 300-acre property, adjacent to the former Alcoa aluminum smelter site that ceased operations in 2015.
- Chelan PUD agreed to supply up to 288 MW to Microsoft over a 15-year period.
- Chelan County also hosts at least three data center and/or cryptomining facilities, owned and operated by Salcido Enterprises.
- Chelan PUD owns and operates one of the largest non-federal hydropower systems (meaning they do not purchase power from the BPA).
- Chelan PUD forecasts a total load increase of 230% between 2023 and 2032; reducing Chelan PUD's surplus hydropower sales reduces other utilities ability to meet their clean energy obligations and keep rates affordable.
- Major infrastructure upgrades are underway to allow for the Microsoft campus:
  - Chelan PUD plans to construct 13 substations throughout Chelan County over the next 15 years to meet the county's projected electrical demand growth.
  - The Chelan Douglas Port Authority authorized the upgrades to local water infrastructure, including new waterline extensions, two new wells, and two new reservoirs totalling 1.5 million gallons of storage to prepare for Microsoft's Malaga campus.
  - The Port is also building a new cooling-water disposal facility in Malaga to treat Microsoft's industrial cooling water for the data center.

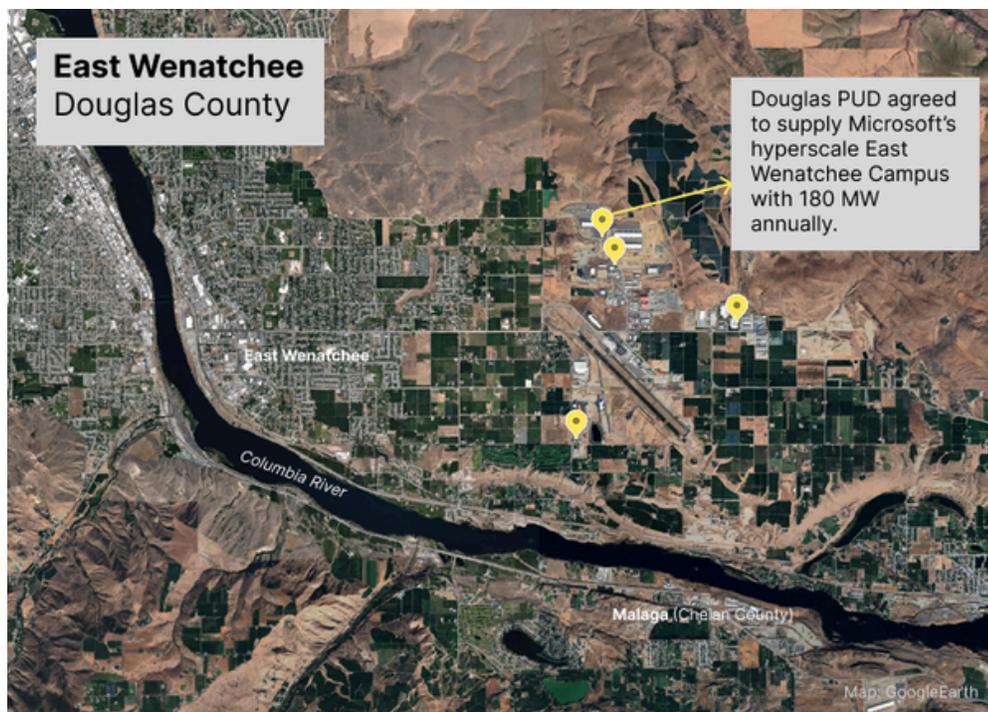


# Douglas County Washington

**Utility:** Douglas County Public Utility District

**Data center capacity:** 213 MW existing / 203.5 MW planned<sup>5</sup>

- Microsoft is building a multi-building hyperscale data center campus in East Wenatchee. While Microsoft has kept private the project's size and capacity, the company has agreed to pay towards a new 180 MW substation to power its new campus, **three times more** than the county's residential consumption.
- In December 2022, Microsoft reached a 180 MW, seven-year agreement with Douglas County PUD (2023-2029) under which **Microsoft agreed** to receive power from a third-party, since it's more power than the PUD can supply from its only power source (Wells Dam).
- East Wenatchee Water District is making **upgrades** to water infrastructure in the Pangborn industrial area including a pump station and a 2 million-gallon reservoir, with Microsoft contributing \$12.5M.
- In 2021, the **Washington State Community Economic Revitalization Board** (CERB) issued a \$2.25 million loan and \$750,000 in grants to the East Wenatchee Water District for the "10th Street Domestic Water Booster Pump Station" project. Microsoft invested \$50 million in the private project, claiming the project would "create an estimated 60 high-tech information and communications technology jobs within five years."

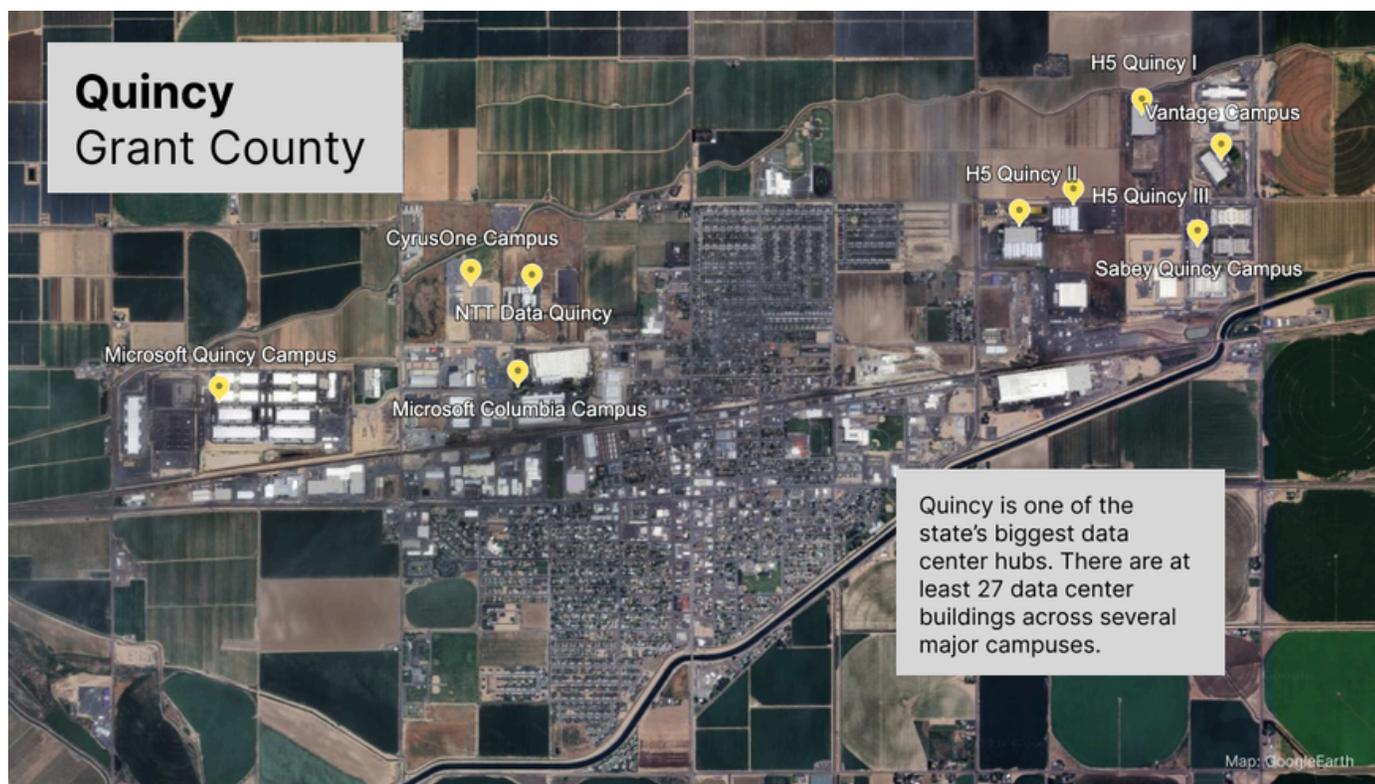


# Grant County Washington

**Utility:** Grant Public Utility District

**Data center capacity:** 1,000 MW existing / >1,568 MW planned<sup>6</sup>

- Quincy is one of the largest data center markets in the region. There are at least 27 data center buildings, including four large, multi-building campuses owned by Microsoft, Sabey, and H5. Vantage and CyrusOne also have plans to expand in the area.
- Because most companies do not release the size or capacity of their facilities (including Microsoft), it is difficult to estimate the power use of the county's data centers.
- Grant PUD has at least [75 applications](#) in their interconnection queue, with data centers asking for the equivalent of 1,568 total peak demand megawatts of power load, the equivalent of peak demand for the entire city of Seattle.
- In March 2025, Grant PUD imposed [load-growth limits](#) for data centers until ongoing projects to upgrade substations and increase transmission capacity allow for the increased volume of energy demand.

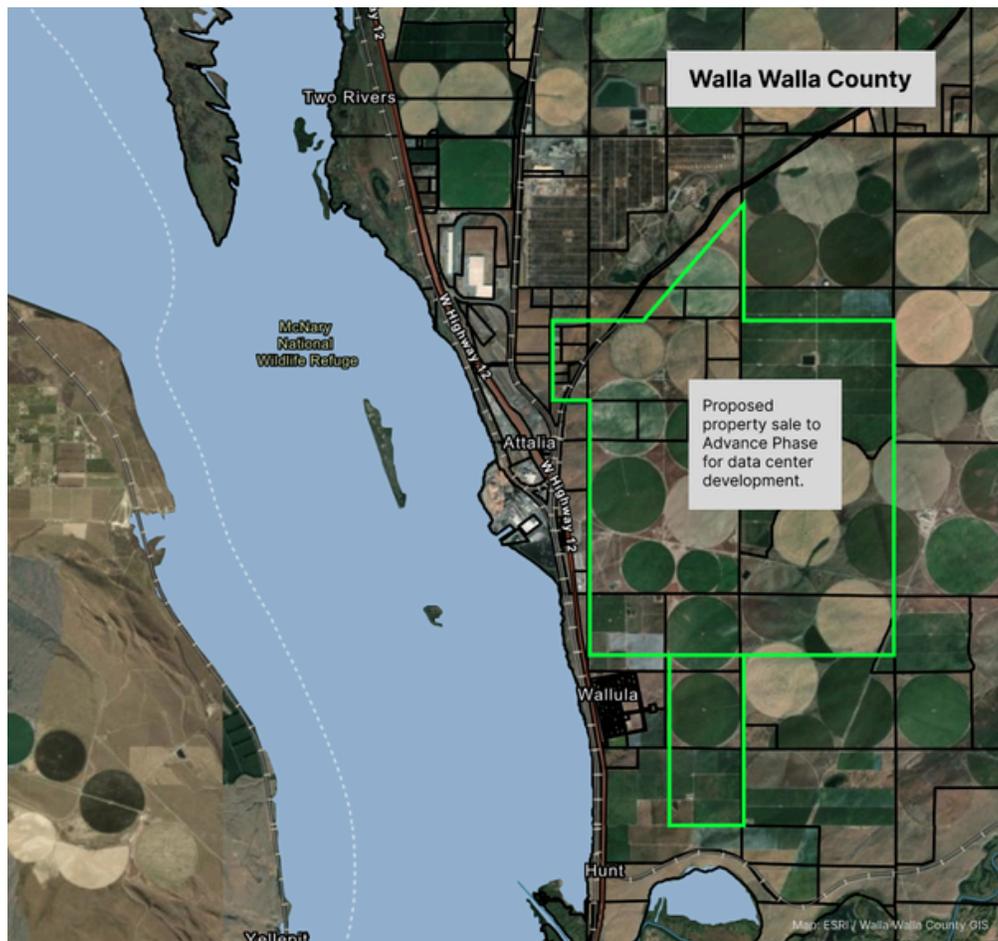


# Walla Walla County Washington

**Utility:** Columbia Rural Electric Cooperative

**Data center capacity:** Unknown existing / 500 MW planned

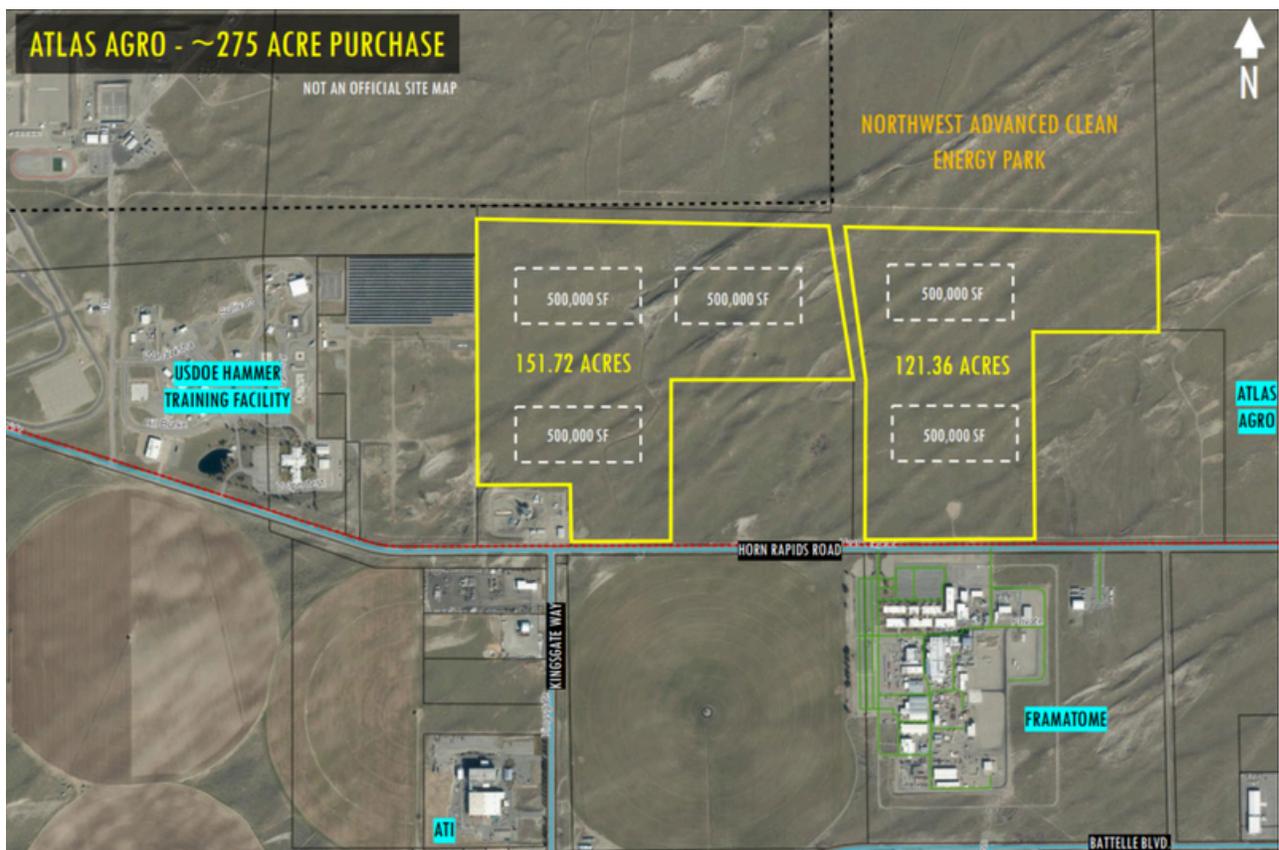
- Walla Walla hosts at least four data centers, but the energy consumption is unknown due to the lack of transparency and reporting requirements. Data from the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory suggests there is at least 500 MW of capacity planned in the county.
- The Port of Walla Walla Commission is considering [selling 500 acres](#) at Wallula Gap Business Park to Advance Phase LLC, a holding company for a larger tech company, which some [suspect](#) is Amazon. The company plans to build a large \$5 billion, sixteen building campus along the Columbia River around 10 miles south of McNary Wildlife Refuge.
- The Port of Walla Walla is extending and [upgrading utilities](#) to the Wallula Gap Business Park in anticipation of data center development.



# Benton County Washington

**Utility:** Benton Public Utility District  
**Data center capacity:** 320 MW proposed

- Swiss fertilizer company Atlas Agro is proposing to build the county's **first data center campus** adjacent to the company's planned "green" fertilizer plant. Atlas Agro has yet to purchase the land from the county.
- The campus would need at least **320 MW** to power the facility along with 5 data center buildings on an adjacent campus, though the future of the fertilizer project is uncertain with the rescission of hydrogen tax credits.
- The data center campus would be adjacent to the **Northwest Advanced Clean Energy Park**, a potential location for an advanced nuclear fuel cycle facility.
- In February 2025, the West Richland City Council **voted** to change the city's municipal codes to allow data centers to be built in areas zoned as urban transition and light industrial.



# Kickitat County Washington

**Utility:** Klicitat Public Utility District

**Data center capacity:** None existing / 1,100 MW proposed

- Data center developer Stack Infrastructure is proposing to build a massive data center campus alongside the Goldendale Energy Storage Project, with load commencing in 2026 and increasing to 1,100 MW by 2033 (read our [press release](#)).
- The Goldendale Energy Storage Project is planned to be built on the site of the former aluminum smelter operated by Lockheed Martin in Klickitat County. Part of the project is on federal Army Corps of Engineers land and subject to Tribal treaty rights.
- The development would completely destroy [Pushpum](#), a sacred site for the Yakama Nation.
- The Washington Department of Ecology [released a notice](#) in October 2025 that it is in negotiations with the prior smelter operators regarding a Cleanup Action Plan. Ecology is simultaneously negotiating a Prospective Purchaser Consent Decree with Stack, who is “proposing to purchase, clean up and redevelop a portion of the former aluminum smelter for a data center campus.” Negotiations will likely conclude by March 2026, with an opportunity for public comment on the draft cleanup action plan and the SEPA threshold determination.



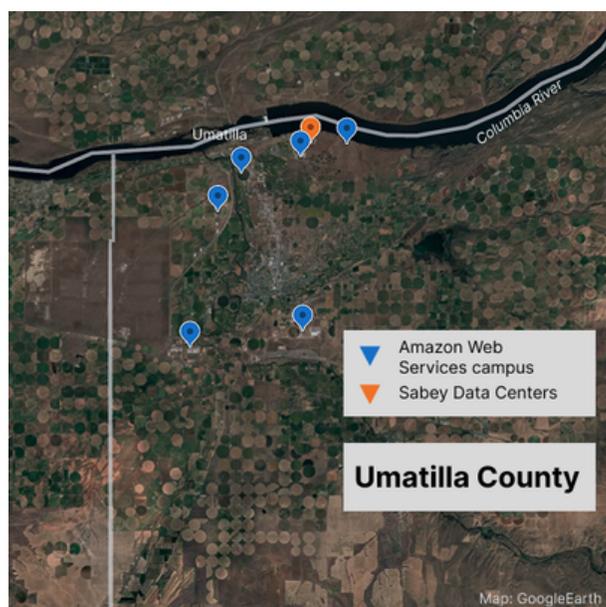
Image source: [WA Department of Ecology](#).

# Umatilla County Oregon

**Utility:** Umatilla Electric Cooperative, Hermiston Energy Services<sup>7</sup>, Pacific Power, Columbia Rural Electric, Milton-Freewater Light & Power, Columbia Power Cooperative

**Data center capacity:** 893.5 MW existing / >326 MW planned & under construction<sup>8</sup>

- Amazon owns six large data center campuses in Umatilla County at various stages of operation and expansion within Umatilla Electric Cooperative territory. A typical Amazon campus houses at least four buildings.
- Amazon does not release the energy use of any of its facilities, however Umatilla Electric Cooperative delivered **8.4 billion kilowatt-hours** (kWh) in 2024, of which only 3.7% was delivered to residential customers.
- Umatilla Electric Coop's emissions **skyrocketed** in years past due to the increase in purchase of unspecified power to serve data centers. Unspecified power is electricity purchased by utilities on the wholesale market, generated by unknown sources. A significant portion of unspecified power often comes from methane-fired power plants.
- Umatilla Electric Cooperative has raised residential rates at least three times in the past four years, most recently by 11% in **October 2025**. Meanwhile, Hermiston Energy Services residential customers will see a **20% rate increase** over the next three years.
- The Hermiston City Council **voted** in Sept. 2025 to annex 800 acres of land for the purpose of attracting more data centers. Hermiston is the largest population center in Umatilla County.



# Morrow County Oregon

**Utility:** Umatilla Electric Cooperative, Pacific Power, Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative

**Data center capacity:** 877 MW existing / 300 MW planned<sup>9</sup>

- Amazon owns and operates at least five data center campuses in Boardman, with two more under construction. Amazon’s data center campuses typically host at least four buildings.
- Amazon does not release the energy use of any of its facilities, however Umatilla Electric Cooperative delivered **8.4 billion kilowatt-hours** (kWh) in 2024, of which only 3.7% was delivered to residential customers.
- Umatilla Electric Coop’s emissions **skyrocketed** in years past due to the increase in purchase of unspecified power to serve data centers. Unspecified power is electricity purchased by utilities on the wholesale market, generated by unknown sources. A significant portion of unspecified power often comes from methane-fired power plants.
- Umatilla Electric Cooperative has raised residential rates at least three times in the past four years, most recently by 11% in **October 2025**.
- In 2025, PacificCorp informed the Oregon Public Utility Commission that power from the controversial **Boardman-to-Hemingway project** would primarily serve a private industrial customer rather than the public. Pacific Power has not named the customer, though it’s likely the power from the nearly 300-mile high-voltage transmission line would serve a data center in eastern Oregon.
- Morrow County is in the midst of a **water emergency** after extremely high levels of nitrates were found in residents’ well water. Data centers release high volumes of wastewater, which some experts argue is further exacerbating the county’s **water crisis**.

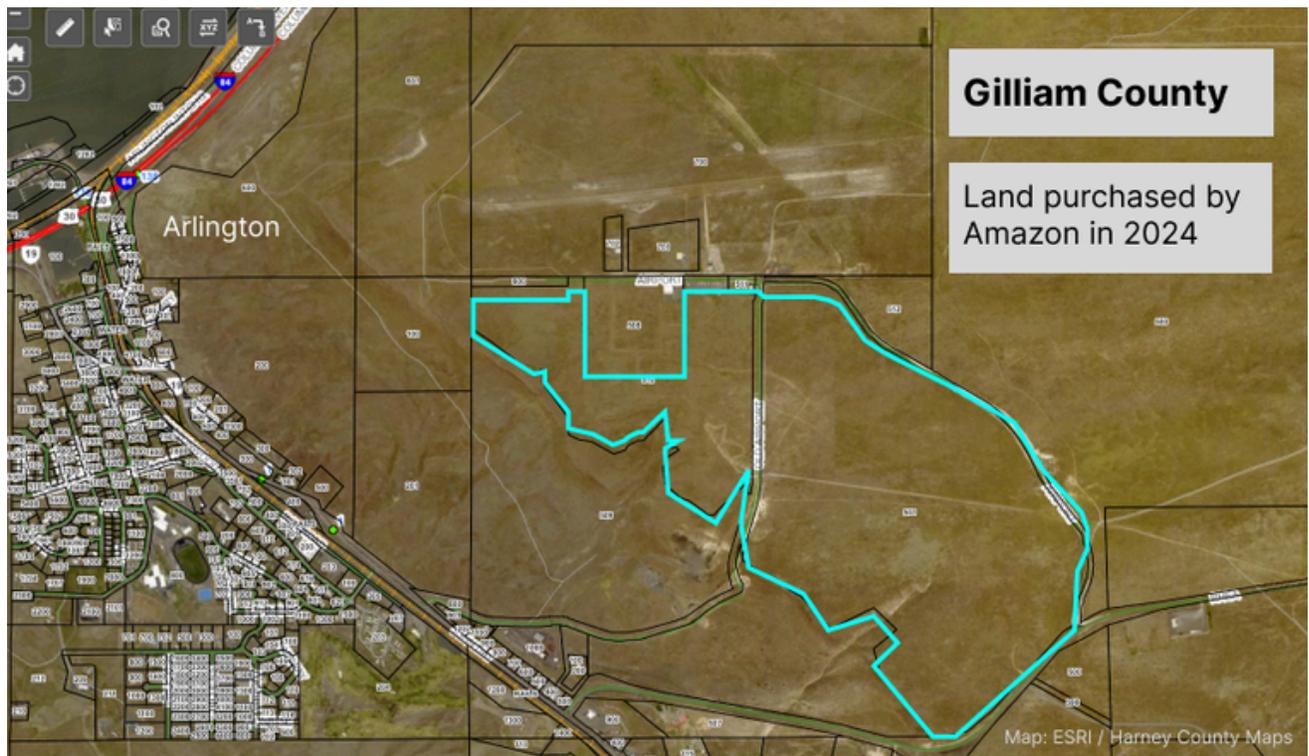


# Gilliam County Oregon

**Utility:** Pacific Power, Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative

**Data center capacity:** None existing / Unknown planned

- Amazon is planning to build at least one new campus in Arlington, though details about the size and capacity are unknown. [Amazon bought](#) 376 acres for \$10 million in 2024 and plans to buy 30 more acres from the Port of Arlington.
- The Amazon facility will be the county's first data center, and will be served by Pacific Power.
- Amazon has made two Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) with [Avangrid](#) to supply power to its planned data center, including one for 57 MW from the Oregon Trail Solar project and the other for 98.4 MW from the Leaning Juniper IIA wind farm. Both projects are in Gilliam County.



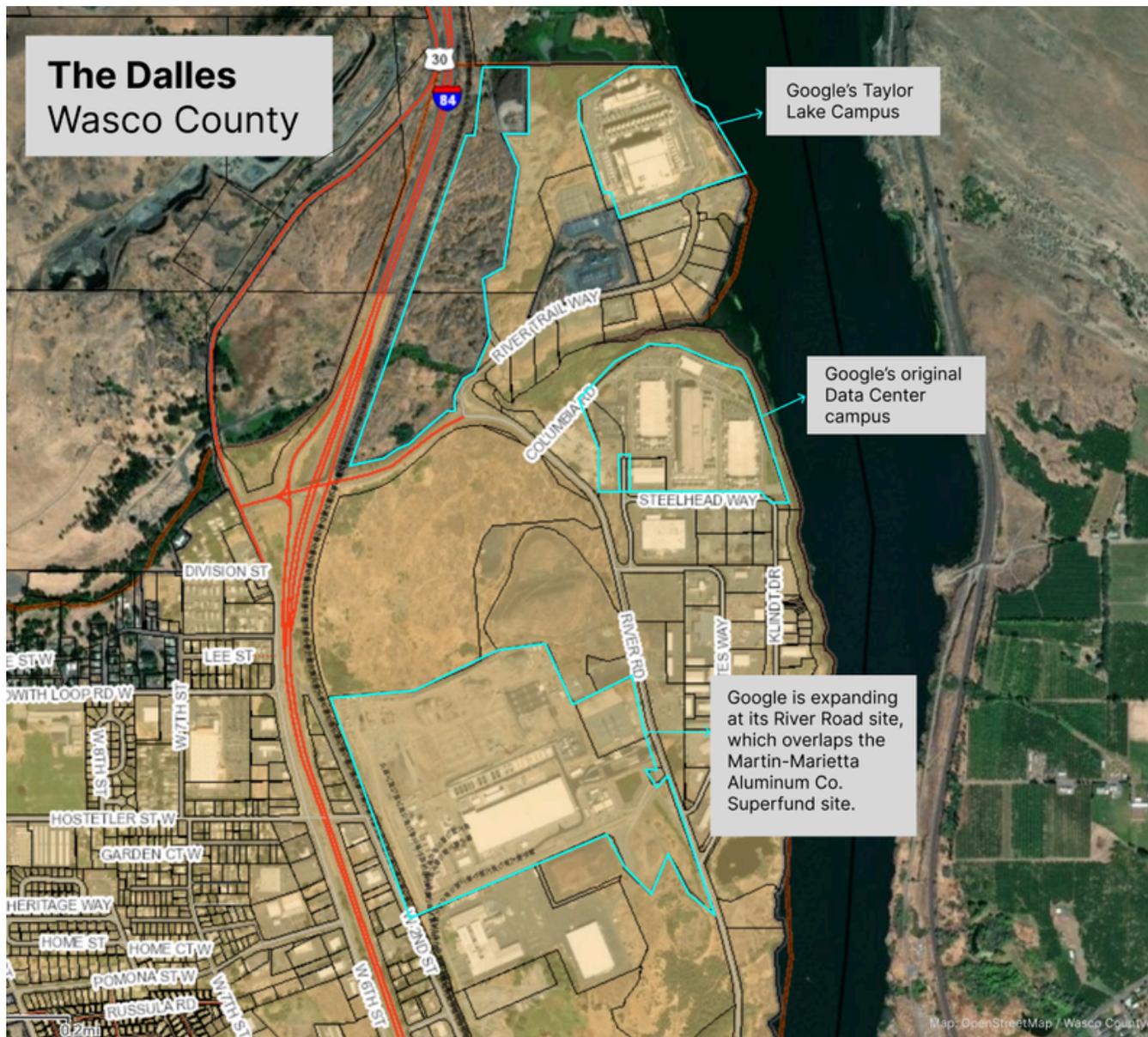
# Wasco County Oregon

**Utility:** Northern Wasco Peoples Utility District, Wasco Electric Cooperative, Pacific Power

**Data center capacity:** >135 MW existing / >40 MW planned<sup>10</sup>

- Google built its first data center in The Dalles in 2006. The Dalles City Council has since approved a series of expansions, authorizing tax breaks on two new buildings in [2021](#). Google plans to build a fifth building in [2026](#).
- Google is building on land purchased from Northwest Aluminum in 2016, the former site of the Martin-Marietta Aluminum Co. smelter. The site is a federally-designated [Superfund Site](#) with ongoing monitoring and maintenance activities.
- The Dalles [fought](#) the release of Google's water usage data in 2022. The city turned over data to the Oregonian in 2023 after an unsuccessful 13-month legal fight. Google's facilities consume roughly a third of The Dalles' water supply, which topped 1.3 billion gallons in 2024.
- Google has paid for [major water and sewer upgrades](#) in The Dalles, including a [new Aquifer Storage and Recovery system](#) at its new campus.
  - When Google bought the aluminum smelter site, it received the water rights from the former smelter owners (3.88 million gallons per day). Google made an agreement with The Dalles in 2021 to pay \$28.5 million for a massive portal water and sewer upgrade in The Dalles. As part of the agreement Google transferred the water rights of the former smelter to the city, allowing the city to pump additional water from the aquifer.
- In December 2025, the House of Representatives passed a bill ([H.R. 655](#)) introduced by Rep. Bentz (R-OR2) that would [transfer ownership](#) of 150 acres of U.S. Forest Service land to The City of The Dalles. The Dalles aims to raise its dam and triple its reservoir's capacity, and under city ownership, the project would not require a federal environmental assessment. The Hood River Basin is already stressed by drought and diverting additional water from the Dog River would harm fish and wildlife.

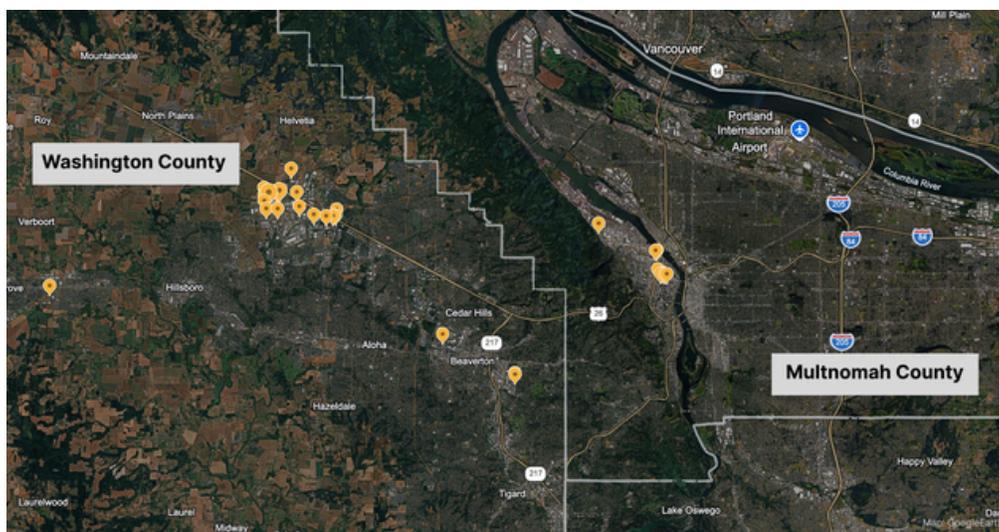
# Wasco County Oregon



# Multnomah & Washington Counties Oregon

**Utility:** Portland General Electric (PGE), Pacific Power, Forest Grove Light and Power, Columbia PUD, Western Oregon Electric Cooperative, City of Cascade Locks  
**Data center capacity:** >841 MW existing / >765 MW planned and under construction<sup>11</sup>

- There are at least 31 data centers across Multnomah and Washington Counties. Hillsboro hosts the highest concentration of data centers in Oregon, and expansions in nearby Beaverton and west Portland are contributing to unprecedented load growth for the state's biggest investor-owned utility, PGE.
- Existing and planned data center capacity in Multnomah County will reach the equivalent of a third of PGE's [all-time peak load](#).
- Rate hikes have already been a hot button issue in Oregon, particularly in the service areas of the state's major IOUs PGE and Pacific Power. Overall rates for residential customers of both utilities—which together serve more than 1.4 million customers in Oregon—are now [up about 50% since 2020](#), with the Public Utility Commission approving rate hikes nearly every year for the past five years.
- Hillsboro has been the center of zoning fights and debates over expanding urban growth boundaries in Oregon. In response to community pushback, Governor Kotek [decided against](#) bringing 373 acres of rural reserves into Hillsboro's urban growth boundary through a temporary authority lawmakers granted her during the 2023 state legislative session.
- Proposed legislation (HB 4084) would extend the duration of [property tax breaks](#) under the state's standard enterprise zone program, which could increase the region's appeal to data centers.



# Endnotes

1. The Northwest Power and Conservation Council’s August 2024 report “Pacific Northwest Power Supply Adequacy Assessment for 2029” forecasts data center demand growth of between 2,384 to 3,976 average MW by 2029 (page 15). One average MW is equivalent to 8,760 MWh.
2. Assuming 70% average usage for data centers, and 10.791 MWh electricity per household.
3. According to the [Uptime Institute](#) global survey of IT and data center managers, 49% of owners and operators say they track water use in some way. Of those owners and operators that do not track data center water use, 63% said there is no business justification for collecting water usage data.
4. Estimates for existing and planned data center capacity in Chelan County are based on an assessment of company statements, utility records, and third-party databases.
5. Estimates for existing and planned data center capacity in Douglas County are based on data from the Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory.
6. Estimates for existing and planned data center capacity in Grant County vary widely. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates existing capacity of 750 MW, however, according to an assessment of company statements, utility records, and third-party databases, data center capacity in Grant County appears closer to 1,000 MW.
7. Hermiston Energy Services serves 5,500 customers after acquiring electric facilities of Pacific Power within the city limits of Hermiston.
8. Since Amazon does not publicly release the size and capacity of its data centers, existing and planned data center capacity estimates for Umatilla County are from the Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory, last updated June 2025.
9. Since Amazon does not publicly release the size and capacity of its data centers, existing and planned data center capacity estimates for Morrow County are from the Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory, last updated June 2025.
10. Since Google does not publicly release the size and capacity of its data centers, existing and planned data center capacity estimates for Wasco County are from the Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory, last updated June 2025.
11. Existing and planned data center capacity estimates for Multnomah and Washington counties are from data from the Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory, last updated June 2025. According to an assessment of company statements, utility records, and third-party databases, we’ve identified 23 data centers in Washington County with a combined capacity of at least 506 MW.

# Join us to protect the Columbia River and river communities from the dangers of data center proliferation.



Photo credit: Paloma Ayala



Learn More:



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