DATA CENTERS
INDUSTRY IMPACTS IN VIRGINIA

About The Issue

Virginia today holds the largest global concentration of data centers — the physical structures that store our digital footprint — anywhere in the world. This multibillion-dollar industry has grown rapidly in the past few years, requiring huge amounts of energy, land, and water to operate and resulting in widespread community impacts.

Without swift intervention from our elected officials, the continued proliferation of data centers in the Commonwealth will derail critical climate goals and efforts to improve air and water quality, advance land conservation, and protect national and state parks.

Continued reliance on polluting fossils fuels
According to PJM, nearly all projected electricity demand growth through 2045 is attributable to data centers. Dominion Energy claims it will not be able to meet this projection without keeping coal on the grid and expanding natural gas facilities.

New and expanded transmission lines
Utilities are legally obligated to serve data centers, no matter how much power is requested or where the data center is located. New and expanded transmission line rights-of-ways have cut through conserved lands, parks, and neighborhoods.

Water usage and surface runoff
A data center can consume millions of gallons of water a day depending on its cooling system. The buildings also cover large acreages with impervious surfaces, leading to increased stormwater runoff into local waterways sourced for drinking water.

Direct costs to ratepayers and taxpayers
Virginians currently subsidize the data center industry in two big ways: (1) by paying for its required transmission upgrades through their monthly electric bills, and (2) through billions in state tax exemptions.

Local impacts to communities
Many localities have and continue to approve the siting of data centers adjacent to parks, residential neighborhoods, schools, medical facilities, and nursing homes — bringing noise pollution, diesel generators, and other potential impacts with them.

Desired Outcomes

Better planning and monitoring

regional/statewide planning that guides data center development and monitors cumulative, statewide impacts

Awareness by local descisonmakers

policies which require local governments to consider the regional impacts of proposed data center development

Greater transparency

clear information made available to the public about energy demand, water usage, infrastructure costs, etc. of individual development projects and cumulatively

Improved development standards

better standards in place for more sustainable construction, sustainable power, and onsite energy efficiency

Industry paying its fair share

the data center industry pays for its energy infrastructure needs, relieving ratepayers of any financial obligation

Mitigation of impacts

more robust mitigation paid for by industry and developers to offset impacts to communities and environment

Ways to Take Action

Stay informed on the issues

subscribe to PEC's email updates at **pecva.org/signup** and follow us on social media

Contact your state elected officials

ask them to support data center reform legislation and hold industry accountable

Reach out to town, county and city officials

ask how they are planning for data center industry impacts in your community
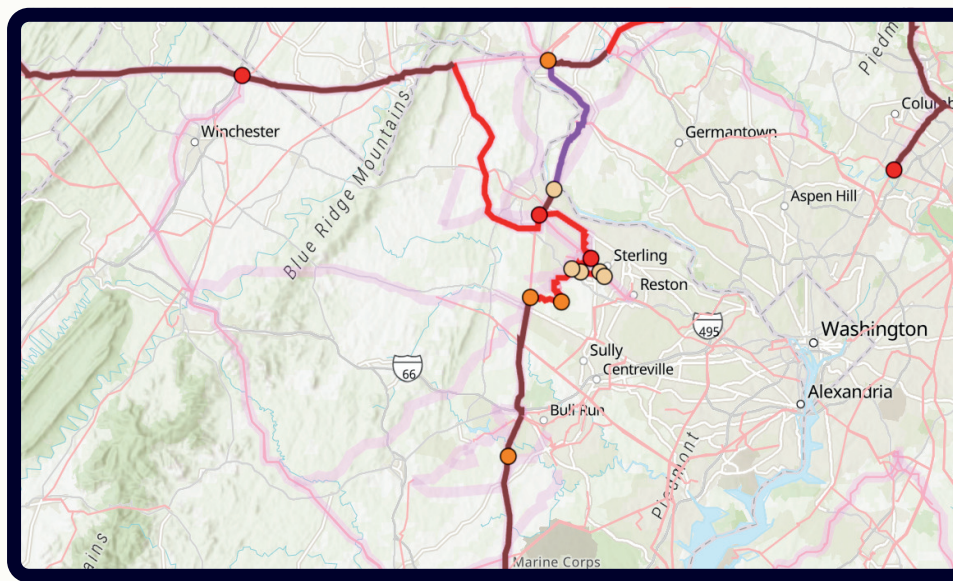
Support community organizers

you can support the Virginia Data Center Reform Coalition directly at **pecva.org/give**
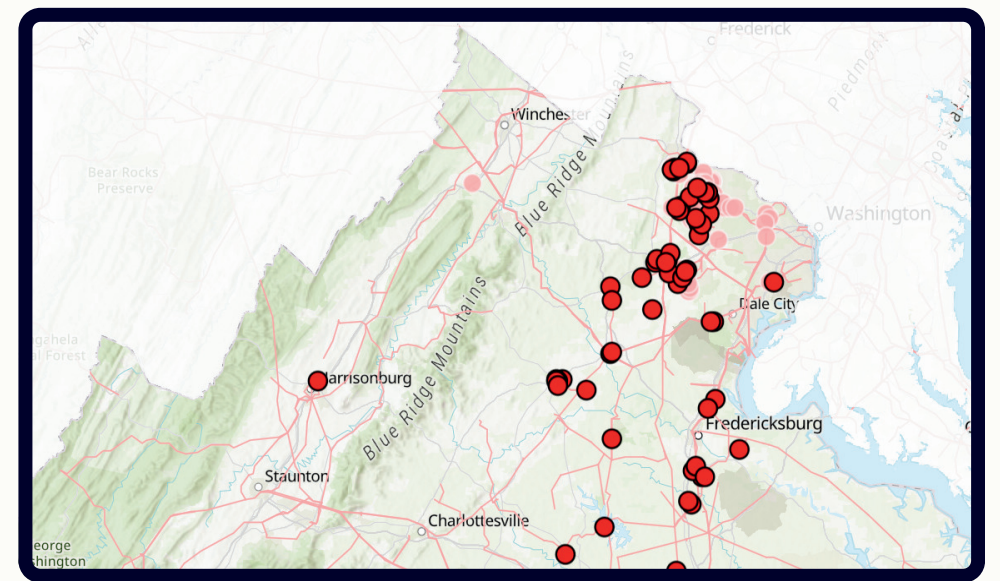
Spread the word

involve your friends, family, neighbors, etc. involved by sharing resources at **pecva.org/datacenters**

"Hidden Costs of the Cloud: Data Centers in Virginia" video

Transmission line proposals map

Existing and proposed data centers map

Protecting and restoring the lands and waters of the Virginia Piedmont, while building stronger, more sustainable communities since 1972.

Piedmont Environmental Council