



**Dan River Basin Association Board of Directors:
Position Statement on Data Center Development in the Dan River Region**

The Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) is committed to safeguarding the natural and cultural resources of the Dan River watershed and promoting development that supports both environmental integrity and community well-being. After evaluating the resource demands and impacts of large-scale data centers, the DRBA Board of Directors holds a position of opposition to data center development within the Dan River region due to their significant environmental risks and limited long-term economic benefit.

Environmental Concerns

Data centers impose substantial pressures on the region's natural resources:

- High water usage: Large-scale cooling requirements can strain streams, aquifers, and municipal water supplies, particularly during drought cycles that already affect the watershed.
- Massive energy demand: Around-the-clock electricity consumption often necessitates additional power generation and infrastructure, increasing greenhouse gas emissions and environmental disturbance.
- Habitat loss and water-quality impacts: Site clearing and impermeable surfaces can fragment wildlife habitat, eliminate riparian buffers, and increase stormwater runoff into the Dan River and its tributaries.
- Persistent environmental burden: Once constructed, data centers create long-term impacts that are difficult or impossible to reverse.

These cumulative risks threaten the ecological resilience of the watershed and the natural assets that define our region.

Limited Economic Benefit

Despite being promoted as drivers of economic growth, data centers generally offer:

- Few permanent jobs: Operational staffing remains minimal compared to traditional industries occupying comparable acreage.
- High public cost with low return: Significant tax incentives, utility investments, and infrastructure upgrades often outweigh community benefits.
- Weak local economic integration: Data centers typically operate with limited reliance on local suppliers, reducing broader economic impact.
- Opportunity costs: Land and resources devoted to data centers could support more sustainable, job-creating development.

Given these realities, DRBA finds that data centers provide insufficient long-term economic value to justify their environmental impact.

Case-by-Case Evaluation

Although DRBA opposes data center development in general, the Board acknowledges that projects vary and may present different levels of risk and benefit. Therefore, the Board will evaluate data center proposals on a case-by-case basis using criteria that include, but are not limited to:

- Proximity to rivers, streams, wetlands and other sensitive natural resources
- Demonstrated, measurable and locally realized economic benefits
- Commitments to water- and energy-efficient technologies
- Minimization of land disturbance, habitat loss and stormwater impacts
- Transparency in environmental impacts, utility demand and mitigation measures

Projects that fail to meet these criteria, or that pose undue risk to the watershed, will not receive DRBA's support.

Conclusion

The Dan River Basin's clean water, healthy ecosystems and natural landscapes are foundational to the region's quality of life and long-term prosperity. Because data centers present disproportionate environmental risks with limited economic benefit, DRBA is opposed to their development. However, in recognition of the diversity of project proposals being considered in our region, the Board will continue to evaluate each project individually and transparently and be guided by the responsibility to protect the Dan River watershed for generations to come.