

DAKOTA COUNSEL

Watchdogs of the Prairie

IN THIS ISSUE

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

STEPPING DOWN BUT STAYING COMMITTED

GOING TO COURT AGAINST RIVERVIEW

STANDING UP TO FACTORY FARMS IN ND

DATA CENTER UPDATES IN MERCER & OLIVER CO.

FIRST DATA CENTER LEGISLATIVE HEARING

FLICKERTAIL WIND UPDATE

AGRIVOLTAICS TAKING SHAPE

MEMBER LTEs

Building Rural Power at the WORC Annual Meeting



DRC organizer Ishauna Jacobberger, far right, joins fellow regional organizers for a panel discussion on data center impacts at the WORC summer meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Grassroots organizers and rural leaders from across our region gathered at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln from June 8 through June 10 for the Western Organization of Resource Councils summer meeting. Member groups came together to build collective power and map out a series of shared power moves that will guide our regional campaign work over the next eighteen to twenty four months.

The first strategic season running through January 2027 focuses on rural election protection. Our democratic systems face serious, multi pronged threats from voter suppression, attacks on grassroots voter organizations and partisan election deniers infiltrating key local oversight roles. WORC is partnering with national leaders like the Brennan Center for Justice to equip rural communities with nonpartisan tools to defend free elections, support local election workers, strengthen public confidence and ensure every legitimate vote is honored.

From January through May 2027 our regional network will launch coordinated state legislative fights targeting unbridled data center developments. Big Tech corporations continue pushing massive facilities that consume astronomical amounts of local power and water, often striking secretive deals behind closed doors without community consent. By coordinating across state lines, WORC member groups will push for strong legislative guardrails, public transparency and real protections for land and water during upcoming state legislative sessions across the West.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

Letter From the Chair



It is an honor to step into the role of Interim Chair of Dakota Resource Council as Lisa Finley-DeVille transitions away from board leadership. On behalf of all of our members, I want to thank Lisa for her outstanding service and leadership over the past several years. We are grateful that she will remain actively involved with DRC while focusing on her growing responsibilities as a legislator and her family and community commitments.

As I begin serving in this role, I am reminded that DRC has always been at its best when members come together to meet new challenges. I served as Chair of DRC more than a decade ago and DRC is even more needed now than it was when I was originally Chair. Whether we're defending our public lands or helping communities navigate complex development proposals, our strength has always come from grassroots organizing.

This summer, I was especially proud of our members who participated in the "Teddy Built It. Burgum Sold It." campaign during the Theodore Roosevelt Library opening in Medora. Together with our coalition partners, we reminded thousands of visitors that Theodore Roosevelt's conservation legacy belongs to all Americans and that our public lands deserve leaders who will protect them for future generations. It was an inspiring example of members standing up for the places they love.

At the same time, another issue is quickly becoming one of the most important facing North Dakota: hyperscale data centers. Communities across the state, including Cass, Oliver, Mercer, Morton, and Barnes counties, are wrestling with proposals that
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

Executive Committee

Vacant, Chair
Linda Weiss, Vice Chair
Curt Stofferahn, Past Chair
April Fairfield, Secretary
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Jenna Vanhorne
Curt Kralicek

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Region 1 - Vacant
Region 2 - Tracy Potter
Region 3 - Vacant
Region 4 - Shelley Lenz
Region 5 - Vacant

DRC Regions

Region 1 covers eastern North Dakota, including the Red River Valley and communities around Fargo and Grand Forks.

Region 2 includes much of south central North Dakota, including Bismarck, Jamestown, and surrounding rural counties.

Region 3 spans north central and northeastern North Dakota, including the Minot and Devils Lake areas.

Region 4 covers western and southwestern North Dakota, including Dickinson, Williston outside the Fort Berthold Reservation, and the Badlands region.

Region 5 is dedicated entirely to the Fort Berthold Reservation, recognizing its unique geography, sovereignty, and organizing history.

Dakota Resource Council
1902 E. Divide Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58501
701-224-8587

(COVER STORY CONTINUED)

Finally, from June through December 2027, our network will focus on shaping a new narrative and policy agenda for the West ahead of the 2028 presidential campaign. Drawing inspiration from the historic 1986 United Farmer and Rancher Congress, this initiative will engage everyday Westerners to build an authentic platform rooted in family agriculture, local control and community stewardship. Together, these strategic moves ensure that rural citizens remain a powerful force directing our shared regional future.

Stepping Down and Staying Committed: A Letter from Lisa Finley- DeVille

Dear DRC Members,

It has been an honor to serve as Chair of Dakota Resource Council and to work alongside so many dedicated members, leaders, and staff.

During my time on the board, I have been proud to see DRC accomplish so much. Together, we helped secure stronger methane rules in North Dakota, successfully defended federal methane protections, and supported the installation of an air quality monitoring system on the Fort Berthold Reservation. These accomplishments demonstrate what is possible when grassroots members work together to protect their communities.

At this time, I have decided to step down as Chair. My responsibilities as a legislator, along with growing family and community commitments, have made it difficult to give this position the time and attention it deserves.

While I am stepping down from board leadership, I am not stepping away from Dakota Resource Council. I look forward to remaining involved as a member and continuing to support DRC's important work whenever I can.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve. I am proud of what we have accomplished together and excited for what lies ahead for Dakota Resource Council.

With gratitude,

Lisa Finley-DeVille

(LETTER FROM THE CHAIR CONTINUED)

could permanently reshape their local economies, landscapes, and energy systems. Questions about electricity demand, water use, noise, road infrastructure, tax incentives, and who bears the cost of new infrastructure deserve thoughtful public discussion, not rushed decisions.

That is why DRC has been working alongside local residents to encourage temporary moratoriums where appropriate. A moratorium is simply a pause that gives communities time to understand these massive projects, hear from the public, and develop local regulations before permits are approved. Good planning benefits everyone by creating clear expectations while ensuring that local voices remain at the center of local decisions.

I know the work ahead will not always be easy, but I also know what DRC members can accomplish when we organize together. Thank you for your continued commitment to protecting North Dakota's communities, natural resources, and democratic values. I look forward to working alongside all of you in the months ahead.

Linda Weiss

Acting Chair, Dakota Resource Council

Agriculture Riverview Dairy Challenged in 2 Court Hearings

On July 16, lawyers argued before Administrative Law Judge Hope Hogan on whether the Dakota Resource Council (DRC) and eight citizens of rural Richland and Wilkin Counties had the right to contest a decision by the Department of Water Resources (DWR). The DWR allowed the city of Wahpeton to sell 500,000 gallons of water per day to supply Riverview's 12,500 head dairy. The water would come from the Wahpeton Buried Valley Aquifer, which has been severely stressed for many years.

Attorneys on behalf of the DWR petitioned Judge Hogan to dismiss the case on the grounds that Wahpeton, not DWR, was responsible for the water sale. The DWR argued that the citizens lacked standing to bring the case because they were not

(STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

(DAIRY COURT HEARINGS CONTINUED)

Wahpeton citizens and had not yet been harmed. Then, the DWR pointed out that if the water level were to become inadequate to supply the city of Wahpeton, the sale could be halted.

Katie Garvey of the Environmental Law and Policy Center, representing the Dakota Resource Council and the eight citizen members, reminded the Tribunal that the mission of the DWR is "To responsibly manage North Dakota's water resources for a resilient future." She stated that DWR's decision violated the water rights of the petitioners, who all use well water from the Wahpeton Buried Valley Aquifer. Furthermore, "The whole point of an administrative proceeding like this one is to evaluate a decision before its consequences become irreversible.... They (the citizens) are asking for the right to be heard, to have their day in court, to present evidence at the August hearing and prove that this water sale will deplete an aquifer that these Petitioners have relied on for generations for their families and their farms."

Judge Hogan made no ruling at the end of the arguments.

DRC Challenges DEQ Mega Dairy Permit in Court

Dakota Resource Council's Appeal of the DEQ permit of Riverview Dairy was finally heard in court after several months of waiting and one rescheduling. DRC Lawyer Dani Replogie argued that Riverview had failed to deliver a complete and accurate permit that would adequately protect the citizens of North Dakota and the Red River. In the process, the DEQ inaccurately concluded that a 25,000-head operation was self-contained and, by doing so, failed to apply for several national permits required to protect the Red River.

The DEQ's message was simple: "Just Trust Us," and that they can write the permit and make whatever decisions they see fit. Riverview argued that the 25,000-head facility will be entirely self-contained. They also made ridiculous claims, such as that dairy is a benefit to the environment because they are writing down how much manure they are applying, that the manure in the lagoon will eventually plug the clay liner to seal it better, and that manure is not

waste. It only legally becomes waste when you apply too much of it. The phrase "We have no legal obligation to" was used many times in their arguments.

Riverview and the DEQ frequently stated how they would respond to spills or other disasters if they happened, but seem to have forgotten that they can prevent them completely in the first place.

Ultimately, this case will answer the question "Does the DEQ have the authority to make whatever ruling that they see fit as long as they can prove they followed the law by receiving the permit and the public comments?" Did Riverview provide adequate information to the DEQ to make an informed decision? Or will the Dakota Resource Council be able to prove that the DEQ did not do enough to comply with the laws and regulations needed to protect the local community and the state of North Dakota? A ruling will likely be issued by the next newsletter. And DRC would like to thank all the members who took the time to travel to the hearing.

Member Action Update: Standing Up to Factory Farms in ND

DRC will continue to work with LSP and Dakota Rural Action and will produce a series of media highlighting the stories of ordinary people in the Midwest fighting Riverview Dairy. There will be a North Dakota-centric video, and DRC will ask members to speak up about the project.

The Summit Hexagon 2 CAFO will continue to face challenges from residents of Cando, North Dakota. Since the past article, the Commission of Pierce County has rescinded the permit, rescinded the rescind vote, and then rescinded the rescind of the rescind (it's okay if you're confused because we were too at first). In simple terms, they said yes, then no, then yes again, and then no one more time. The case being brought to the citizens will basically state whether they need to start the process over again. A hearing has not been set yet. In the meantime the state has recently approved the DEQ permit submitted by the operation as of July 17th. DRC member and resident near the facility Paul Overby quoted "It is disappointing to see this CAFO being given a permit by ND DEQ to build a 9,282 head hog barn and apply their manure on the north shore of (CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

(MEMBER ACTION CONTINUED)

Hurricane Lake. It sets the stage for some serious water quality problems, like blue-green algae blooms, in the lake. And since Hurricane Lake flows into Devils Lake, it will hurt the water quality of that lake, too." "I want to see more livestock in ND. I just want to see it done right and be good stewards of the environment. This permit by ND DEQ does not do that."

In Valley City, the Blackhawk Pipestone project was approved by the County Commission, but there has been no DEQ permit filed to date of publishing. The citizens of Barnes County have collected signatures in support of a moratorium on large-scale animal agriculture and will be ready to comment when the DEQ permit is submitted.

Celebrating 40 Years of Grassroots Power: DRC Joins National Family Farm Coalition Gathering

DRC Ag Organizer Sam Wagner recently traveled to St. Louis to represent our organization at the National Family Farm Coalition Annual Gathering. Meeting near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, representatives from member groups across the country gathered for two days of connection, strategy, and celebration.

This meeting held special significance as it marked 40 years since the founding of NFFC back in 1986. It was a fantastic opportunity to catch up with fellow members, past presidents, and long time allies who made the trek to honor four decades of standing up for independent family farmers and rural communities.



DRC Staff

Scott Skokos
Executive Director
scott@drcinfo.com

Sean Arithson
Comms Coordinator/Dept. Director
sean@drcinfo.com

Sam Wagner
Ag & Food Organizer
sam@drcinfo.com

Ishauna Jacobberger
CO-OP Field Organizer
ishauna@drcinfo.com

Mike Graalum
Clean Energy Organizer
mike@drcinfo.com

Jeffon Seely
Bookkeeper & Accountant
jseely@drcinfo.com

Mary Swanson
Office Administrator
Mary1@drcinfo.com

Judy Sauter
Membership and Database Coordinator
judy@drcinfo.com



DATA Centers

Data Center Updates in Oliver and Mercer Counties

Data center developments are moving fast across West River country, and community members are staying active to protect our land, water and rural communities. Here is the latest update on where things stand in Oliver and Mercer counties.

In Oliver County, commissioners voted 2 to 1 on July 7 to approve a building permit for Applied Digital near Center. Commissioner Rob Schmidt voted against the permit due to concerns about placing industrial sites on productive farmland and the company failing to secure a reclamation bond. Without a bond, local taxpayers could be left paying to demolish a massive facility decades down the road. While the county added conditions regarding offsite water delivery, noise limits and private access roads, local residents raised concerns about weak zoning protections. Our members will keep demanding strict enforcement of every single condition.

In Mercer County, the initial ordinance phase is wrapping up and the moratorium is essentially lifted as county leaders finish final procedural formalities. Attention now shifts from broad zoning rules to specific conditional use permits. As recent local editorials highlight, general ordinances only set a basic starting point. When companies bring forward actual hyperscale proposals, county officials must demand complete transparency, full site details and rigorous protective conditions before any ground work starts. If a corporate proposal is vague or fails to protect public interest, elected leaders have a duty to reject it completely.

These next steps prove why persistent grassroots organizing matters. Outside tech developers see central North Dakota as a target for massive resource extraction, but our families live with the lasting impacts. Dakota Resource Council will continue working alongside landowners, family farmers and local residents to ensure clean water, strong conditions and local accountability always come first. Join our upcoming task force meetings as we track these conditional permits and keep organizing our communities.

Demanding Safeguards: Overcrowded Capitol Hearing Focuses on Industrial Data Centers

State lawmakers gathered at the Capitol in Bismarck on July 15, 2026 for the inaugural hearing of the newly formed Artificial Intelligence and Data Center Committee. Chaired by Representative Jonathan Warrey, the twelve member interim panel met to examine artificial intelligence policies and evaluate how massive data center developments impact North Dakota power grids, water supplies and local communities.

An overflow crowd of concerned citizens packed the hearing room shoulder to shoulder, with dozens standing along the walls to make their voices heard. While committee members spent time reviewing federal regulations and how other states approach algorithmic liability and consumer privacy, public testimony was overwhelmingly focused on the rapid spread of data centers across our state. Local landowners and residents urged lawmakers to slow down the pace of approvals, warning that high energy demands, heavy water usage and weak local zoning controls threaten rural quality of life.

This first gathering made one thing clear. Everyday North Dakotans are deeply worried about outside tech interests rushing into our towns without adequate safeguards. Public comments emphasized that economic gains cannot come at the expense of local health, livestock, water tables and county authority. In response to the intense public interest, Chairman Warrey took the unusual step of opening the floor to ongoing written testimony from citizens.

The committee plans to hold roughly four more interim meetings, including regional field trips, before drafting legislative recommendations for the 2027 session. The next hearing is set for August 13, 2026.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

(AI LEG. HEARING CONTINUED)

Dakota Resource Council will be tracking every step of this process. As state leaders study these massive industrial sites, our members will continue organizing to ensure clean water, reliable power grids and strong local control remain top priorities. Stay connected and prepare to make your voice heard as these meetings move forward.

Harwood Citizens Pursue Home Rule Charter to Protect Land and Water

As Applied Digital pushes forward with its massive Polaris Forge AI data center facility near Harwood, local residents are refusing to sit back and let corporate developers dictate the future of their community. The dedicated grassroots group in Harwood continues holding regular strategy meetings to organize neighbors, protect natural resources and demand real accountability from local decision makers.

A major focus of their ongoing work is finalizing official language for a Harwood Home Rule Charter initiative. Under North Dakota state law, adopting a home rule charter grants local communities true self government authority. This power allows residents to establish customized zoning rules, public health protections and municipal safety ordinances that fit local priorities. Group members are preparing to collect the required signatures from local voters to place the charter on an upcoming ballot, giving citizens a direct legal mechanism to assert local control and safeguard their town from unchecked industrial growth.

Beyond the charter campaign, Harwood residents are actively challenging pro data center rhetoric. Members have been writing letters to the editor in regional publications to elevate widespread citizen concerns regarding heavy energy consumption, potential noise pollution, property values and overall corporate transparency. To cut through marketing spin with real data, the group is also moving forward with independent environmental studies to evaluate the true long term impacts these massive digital facilities have on water supplies, soil health and surrounding ecosystems.

The relentless efforts in Harwood highlight why grassroots organizing is vital when big tech moves

into rural North Dakota. Dakota Resource Council is proud to stand alongside these local advocates as they defend family landowners, build grassroots power and ensure public health comes first. Watch for upcoming announcements regarding petition signing drives, public strategy sessions and ways you can help support the Harwood community initiative.

CLEAN ENERGY

Flickertail Wind Levels Up, Wins County Approvals

Flickertail Wind, the community instigated project in Eddy and Wells counties, has seen multiple major developments since the spring. In June, Minnesota developer PRC Wind proposed a new project layout, splitting it into two phases, and increasing its size by nearly 200 megawatts. Flickertail #1, composing the eastern townships of the original, will fill the original 400 MW interconnection permit, while Flickertail #2 will compose the western third of the footprint and another 200 MW.

The project will utilize the same number of towers; however, the project will transition from using a 4.2 MW tower to a much larger 5.9 MW tower. This change was due to significant delays in negotiations in the western townships and resulting delays in approval. Splitting the project into two would have allowed them to fill their approved interconnection permit for Flickertail #1 had delays continue.

In early July, both phases were granted their conditional use permits from the county, as The delays in negotiations for Flickertail #2 have ended. It is unknown at this time the sequence of construction, but Flickertail #2 will likely need to receive interconnection permitting before going before the Public Service Commission, while Flickertail I will likely to have its hearing this fall.

This does not affect the roughly ~\$18 million community benefit agreement previously signed for Flickertail #1, however, it will add another \$600k in public revenues for the host communities. Combined, the tax revenue and CBA will increase public revenue in the Eddy County by roughly 20% once completed.

(STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

(FLICKERTAIL CONTINUED)

While the larger-scale towers are not ideal for many, the combination of the project's scale, its large public benefits, the voluntary mile setbacks, and many other accommodations make this the best clean energy project in North Dakota's history and one of the best in the country. If Eddy County, with its middling wind resources and transmission capacity, can put together a project of this quality, why should we accept anything less ever again?

Agrivoltaic Operation Takes Shape

With 5600 acres of the Red River Valley already permitted for solar arrays, another 1800 acres near Jamestown trending toward approval, and several rumored projects behind them, North Dakota will finally get its first utility scale solar array. North Dakota is currently a distant dead last in solar generating capacity, however the two approved arrays would jump the state into the middle of the pack.

While we all support local clean energy, these projects are very large, unattractive, and take large chunks of land out of cultivation. They bring few jobs, perhaps a dozen combined if all the planned and rumored projects are built.

People around the world are experimenting with dual-use for these facilities, and some states are beginning to mandate it. Small livestock and wildflower habitats with honeybees are the primary uses, but a wide variety of livestock and crop systems can and are being used.

With 5600 acres just in the southeastern corner of the state, there is a significant opportunity here. We have put together a research project to do a detailed investigation into this research in order to determine if there is a viable business model for managing the land on these facilities as a worker-cooperative. These will come advantaged, in that they will be operating on 'free' land whose property taxes are already being paid by the solar array.

Our goals are to keep these facilities under productive agricultural management, to increase the number of agricultural jobs in host communities, and to use the scale of this operation to diversify and intensify local agricultural economies.

If this model works on one array, it will work on many, so there is a significant opportunity to scale here. To service multiple arrays managed by several different utilities, we hope to form a general producers' cooperative to service the hoped-for multiple products streams coming from these facilities, and this operation could service local farmers as well.

100,000 acres are already under solar arrays in the Midwest, and this will grow several-fold over the coming decades, and even capturing a fraction of this would result in a powerful industrial ag operation, a successful one would result in a powerhouse with the ability to invest in downstream producer-owned processing operations. Whether any of this is viable remains to be seen, but there are reasons to be optimistic.

Clean Energy Recap

Aside from the developments with Flickertail Wind, only two other projects have seen activity since the spring.

MN Power's Longspur Wind in western Morton County was approved by the Public Service Commission this summer after facing extensive criticism from both the community and the commissioners themselves. An error in a previous project led to a lawsuit and the deconstruction of a wind tower, which had not been documented on its permit.

Buffalo Solar in Stutsman County is currently in negotiations between the township and the developer, New Leaf. This project is expected to have a township hearing in late summer or early fall, before potentially heading to approval by the Public Service Commission.

The approval of the widely disliked JetX 345 kV line between Jamestown and Ellendale will likely lead to several projects advancing in the adjacent corridor, and we expect these projects to face major opposition.

Member Letters

True local control means neighbors write the rules, not tech lobbyists by Curt Stofferahn

As former chair of Dakota Resource Council, which works with communities facing proposed or existing data centers, I read Terry Effertz's guest piece in the North Dakota Monitor with interest. She wrote, "We should demand transparency, genuine local input, and skepticism of proposals that don't serve our communities." On that point, we agree, local zoning is central to the debate over North Dakota's future. But we disagree with her claim that, when it comes to data centers, "we're actually doing this work." The "we" in her guest piece includes data center industry representatives, and representatives of TechND. Although TechND's website does not publicly list its full membership, its core champion members include Applied Digital, Core Scientific, Dakota Carrier Network, Geronimo Power, Midco and Microsoft.

Our disagreement is with the idea that the "model ordinance"—co-authored by tech lobbyists through TechND and big business groups such as the Greater North Dakota Chamber, is a victory for local democracy. It is not. It is a preemptive defensive strike designed to give industry a predictable path to government approval. True local control means county commissioners and township boards should treat this model as a bare-minimum floor, not a ceiling. North Dakotans have already seen model zoning ordinances, such as the concentrated animal feeding operation model zoning ordinance, become embedded in state law, including Senate Bill 2174 from the 2025 legislative session, weakening local authority over the siting of industrial facilities. The same risk exists here. The industry template has three fatal flaws: the "by-right" fast track, the "ghost town" risk, and toothless noise and resource enforcement.

Flaw 1: The "by-right" fast track silences neighbors. The model framework allows data centers to bypass public hearings if they locate in general industrial zones. But a data center is not a typical warehouse; it is a massive resource-intensive facility with countywide impacts. No project over one megawatt should receive automatic approval. Communities

should require conditional use permits and public hearings for every facility, regardless of zoning classification.

Flaw 2: The "ghost town" risk leaves taxpayers exposed. The industry model is silent on what happens when a crypto or AI venture fails, relocates or becomes obsolete. Rural North Dakotans have seen this pattern before with extractive industries. If a company abandons a massive, windowless concrete shell, taxpayers should not be responsible for demolition or cleanup. Communities should require upfront decommissioning bonds so developers, not local taxpayers, pay for future site restoration.

Flaw 3: Toothless noise and resource enforcement offers no real protection. The template relies on pre-construction acoustic reports signed by the developer's engineers. But paper promises do not prevent a 24/7 low-frequency hum from disrupting nearby livestock, farm families and rural residents. Information alone is not protection. Communities should require continuous third-party monitoring at the property line, backed by automatic daily fines and immediate shutdown provisions for violations.

Our broader concern is protecting local water resources and electrical grid capacity. These mega-projects consume enormous amounts of North Dakota's water and electricity. Our aquifers and electrical grid should serve local agriculture, residents and existing businesses before powering hyperscale data demands.

Our advice to county commissioners as they write their AI zoning ordinances is to not let a model AI zoning ordinance promulgated by AI/tech/energy interests establish a maximum ceiling, but instead they should regard it as a bare-minimum floor.

The Dakota Resource Council welcomes economic growth, but only on North Dakota's terms. Our recommendation to county commissioners is to take the industry's model zoning ordinance, rip it open, and insert the structural guardrails necessary to protect your communities, your taxpayers, and your quiet way of life.

Pausing Data Center Development to Protect Local Communities

by Sam Wagner

To Jonathan Warrey,

Thank you for the legislative interim update in the last issue of the Cass County Reporter. The tone of your letter sounds like a well thought out public response, but in the same vein I feel that your message is not consistent with your words on the Plains Talk Podcast with Rob Port. In the podcast, you stated you would be against any data center moratoriums because moratoriums suggest that our state is closed for business. This could not be any further from the truth. There is no harm in pausing development on data centers before we have all the facts and it would stop the most egregious offenders from setting up shop and being grandfathered in before responsible laws can be put into effect.

In regards to the agenda of the interim committee's meeting, the list of presentations are heavy on industry insiders and lobbyists, while extremely light on the side of county, township, and city officials. There are very few experts on environment, energy industry, and water resource department officials. The narrative coming from the podcast and Mr. Warrey considers public opposition to be an obstacle to overcome rather than concerns that need to be taken seriously. There is an idea that AI tech and data centers are inevitable in North Dakota – this does not have to be the case. We have state autonomy and we should be making the rules. We should not be listening solely to data center developers and boosters.

As we as a state consider legislation, it would be prudent to consider the following basic guidelines:

1. We need to have a moratorium of at least 1 year to get regulations into place. ND citizens are asking legislators to take their time.
2. The public, cities, counties, and townships must be able to remain autonomous in their ability to deny these projects.
3. All statewide laws passed regulating these facilities must be treated as a floor rather than a ceiling.

4. Public officials should never be allowed to sign Non Disclosure Agreements regarding these projects.
5. The facilities proposed must be able to prove their profitability before being considered.
6. The state should cap the size of these centers to 50 megawatts of power and that power should be provided on-site by the developer, not putting additional strain on our rural electric cooperatives and utilities.
7. The state should not give tax breaks to companies building or using data centers.
8. There should be bonding or reclamation plans required to restore the land if the facility goes out of business or becomes obsolete.

The citizens of the state are paying attention and they will take action if the committee doesn't. I've had several conversations with citizens across the state that are considering a potential statewide moratorium ballot initiative if our legislators don't protect us, the citizens that work and live here. Casselton has decided to pause any construction and work on planning and zoning for Data Centers and I would advocate for every political subdivision to follow our lead. This is a process that we are all working through, and we are stronger when all voices are considered.

Regards,

Sam Wagner, Casselton ND City Council
President/DRC Ag Organizer

Data Center Facts

North Dakota now leads the nation in commercial electricity growth as massive AI data centers set up shop across our state. Some of these single campuses are built to pull up to 1,000 megawatts of continuous power 24/7, matching the around-the-clock power use of tens of thousands of homes. As these projects expand into our rural and urban counties, protecting our local power grid, water supplies and everyday ratepayers has quickly become one of the most critical issues facing North Dakota communities.

What to Watch for as Data Centers Target Our Counties

Across North Dakota, out of state developers are looking for large plots of land, heavy power lines and abundant water to build massive hyperscale data centers. While county commissioners and economic development boards are often pitched promises of tax revenue and high tech investment, these projects bring unprecedented demands on local resources. As DRC members, staying informed and engaged at the county level is our best defense against hasty decisions that could impact our land, water and local electric grid for decades to come.

What to Watch for at County Meetings

The approval process usually starts quietly long before groundbreaking. Developers look for rural land near existing transmission corridors or regional substations. Keep a close eye on your local county commission and planning and zoning meeting agendas for any of the following warning signs:

- Zoning Changes: Requests to rezone agricultural land to heavy industrial use.
- Permit Requests: Fast tracked applications for conditional use permits or special variances.
- Tax Incentives: Discussions around local tax abatements or infrastructure waivers.

Key questions need to be asked before any permit moves forward. Where will the facility get its electricity, and will local ratepayers be on the hook for new substations or line upgrades? How much water will the cooling system consume daily, and will it draw from local aquifers? What are the plans for noise mitigation, high voltage power lines and light pollution near rural homes?

Pushing for a One Year Moratorium

When these projects arrive, developers often push local officials to move fast before residents fully understand the scale of the facility. That is why DRC members should talk to their county commissioners early and advocate for a one year moratorium on large scale data center approvals.

A one year pause gives your county commission the time needed to step back, study the real impacts and update local zoning ordinances. It allows local leaders to establish clear setback requirements, set water protection limits, mandate noise controls and ensure developers cover all infrastructure costs. Passing a

moratorium ensures our counties do not get rushed into bad agreements before all the facts are clear.

Get in Touch with the DRC Office

Local organizing makes all the difference when it comes to protecting our communities and rural land. If you notice data center proposals popping up on your county agenda, or if you have any questions or comments, please reach out to the DRC office. Our team is ready to help you organize your neighbors, prepare comments for meetings and make sure local voices are heard. We can also provide sample moratorium language, planning checklists and presentation materials to help you present to your county commissioners.

To get involved or share news from your area, contact DRC Data Center Organizer Ishauna Jacobberger. You can reach Ishauna directly by emailing her at ishauna@drcinfo.com or calling her at (701) 793-0042. Whether you need assistance reviewing a local permit application, hosting a community informational meeting or connecting with neighboring landowners, we are here to support your efforts every step of the way.



Dakota Resource Council
1902 E. Divide Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58501
www.drcinfo.org



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