

WHY WE DON'T WANT DATA CENTERS IN THE WENATCHEE VALLEY

ROCKY REACH
DAM

MICROSOFT
213 aMW



WENATCHEE

EAST WENATCHEE

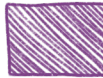


SABEY
170 aMW

Rock Island

MALAGA

MICROSOFT
288 aMW



~1419 aMW of HYDROELECTRIC ENERGY PRODUCED
BY DAMS IN CHELAN & DOUGLAS COUNTIES



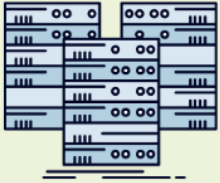
Residential use ~ 12%



Just 3 data centers = 47%

ROCK
ISLAND
DAM

Every year, a 100MW data center will consume 613,200 MWh of electricity



which could power more than 56,000 homes, and 100 million gallons of water, enough for 2,500 people's domestic use



If powered by gas, it will emit 275,000 tons of CO2, which is equal to 60,000 cars on the road for a year.



Illustration from Columbia Riverkeeper [1]

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ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

ENORMOUS ENERGY & WATER USE

Data centers require an enormous amount of electricity and water to power and cool the processors, and range in size from a single room in an office building to massive "hyperscale" campuses. A typical size for a new data center is between 50 and 150 Megawatts (MW); AI-specialized "hyperscale" campuses can draw as much as 1 Gigawatt (GW) of electricity load. [1]

CONTINUED BURNING OF 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. [1]

WASTING RESOURCES & UNDERMINING HANFORD CLEANUP

Tech giants are pursuing plans to develop small modular nuclear reactors (SMNRs) along the Columbia River to power their data centers, including at the Hanford Nuclear Site. SMNRs are a false solution that diverts funding from proven renewable energy technologies that are safer, less expensive, and faster to deploy. [1]

Fusion power like Helion Energy is unproven, and the company has continually claimed power in 5 to 10 years but has still yet to deliver. [2]

MICROSOFT IS ABANDONING THEIR CLIMATE COMMITMENTS

Thanks to the power needs of AI data centers, Microsoft is considering delaying or abandoning its 2030 goal of matching its entire hourly electricity use with renewable energy purchases. [3]

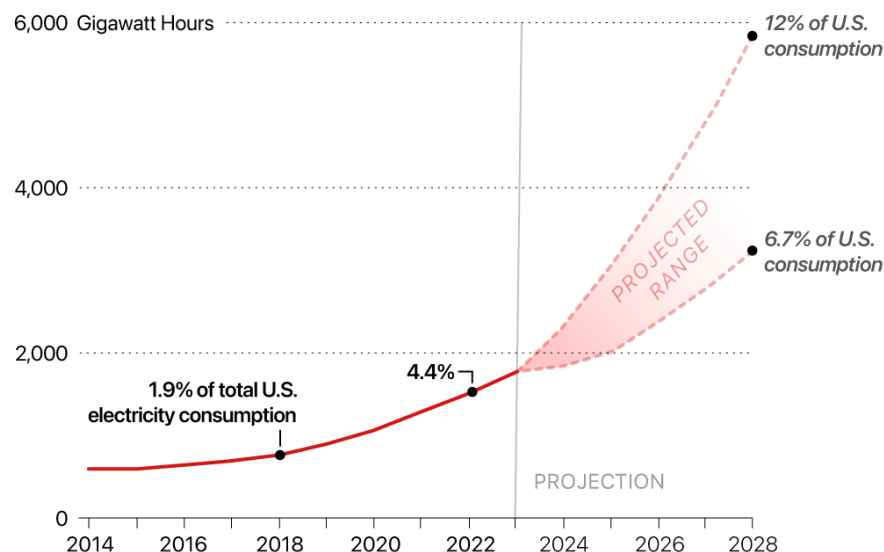
Microsoft is pursuing multiple contracts with oil & gas companies, including a contract with Chevron that would power a massive Microsoft data center in Texas. Chevron is seeking a tax break worth hundreds of millions of dollars for this. [4]

Regardless of Washington's current climate policies, such as the Clean Energy Transformation Act (which requires 80% of electricity used in Washington to come from renewable or non-emitting sources by 2030), laws are changeable, and Microsoft shows no signs of adhering to the limits currently imposed by state law. [5]

If Microsoft is already more than willing to abandon their climate commitments, what's stopping them from going back on any other promise they've made to our communities?

Data centers claiming a larger share of power use

TOTAL DATA CENTER ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION



Source: 2024 United States Data Center Energy Usage Report, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

& the West

Chart from & the West [6]

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GRANT COUNTY, WA: A CAUTIONARY TALE

The construction of data centers creates thousands of jobs, but they're mostly temporary. As of 2025, **Microsoft has 21 data center buildings in Quincy, WA**, with each of those buildings able to **employ just 40-50 people**. [1] That is not many jobs considering the amount of resources these buildings require. Last year, data centers used a whopping **37% of all the electricity** used in Grant County. [2]

In Grant County, hydropower and water are maxed out. But that hasn't stopped the data centers. Last year, the Grant County Public Utility District (PUD) said they had **79 pending applications in their queue, most of which were for data center projects**. The utility said the combined power for all of those applicants would be roughly **double the demand for the entire city of Seattle**. [1]

Quincy residents worry about increasingly less snowpack to feed the river as the climate gets warmer, which will also impact the dams, and thus impact access to hydropower for everyone. **And if push comes to shove, who will experience blackouts or limited water?** Will it be households getting their power shut off, or the data centers that carry sensitive information and must run at all hours of the day? [1]

Despite the state's goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions 95% by 2050, Quincy just approved a new gas power plant to serve data centers. **"If the state wants to continue to grow Artificial Intelligence data centers in Washington, the renewable resources available today are insufficient for scheduled and firm power,"** said Andy Wendell, vice president of customer experience at Grant PUD. [3]

Alex Ybarra, a Quincy-based Republican state legislator, is **lobbying the governor to create a carve out to the clean energy law for natural gas** if the carbon is sequestered. [1] Carbon sequestration does not work and will not save our climate. [4]

Quincy's data centers are so energy-hungry that **Grant PUD has resorted to stealing farmers' land to power them**. Grant PUD just filed lawsuits to take part of a resident's property along with portions of eight other homes and farms in order to build electric transmission lines to move more power to Quincy. Grant PUD isn't even offering fair market value for the land they are forcing the farmers to give up. [2]

Despite Microsoft's claims that energy prices won't rise near data centers, **Grant PUD's customers are indeed seeing their electric rates going up**. According to Grant PUD, they're responding to higher costs and growing demand. [5]

If we don't stop data center expansion here in Chelan and Douglas County, we'll likely suffer the same fate as Grant County.



Ad from the News/Media Alliance's "Support Responsible AI" campaign in 2025 [7]

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STOLEN LABOR & EXPLOITATION

USE OF SLAVE LABOR

Generative AI is trained on massive datasets, which is why the technology requires so much power. But these models often rely on hidden human labor in the Global South that can be damaging and exploitative, and these invisible workers remain on the margins even as their work contributes to billion-dollar industries. [1]

For instance, in order to make ChatGPT usable, OpenAI paid Kenyan laborers less than \$2 an hour to label data for AI training purposes, which required those workers to be exposed to often traumatic material so that the AI could learn to filter out harmful text and images. [1]

STEALS FROM ARTISTS, WRITERS, & ACTORS

The majority of scraped data used to train AI models is unattributed and used without consent. Generative AI is only able to produce passable writing and art because billions of words of high-quality writing and images were fed into it.

This allows AI to imitate the styles of specific writers or artists, sometimes causing the original artists to lose work because people are generating AI images rather than hiring them, or causing reputational damage to the artists by allowing for the easy creation of stylistically similar work. [2]

LOSS OF JOBS

In 2023, the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) and the Writers' Guild of America (WGA) both went on strike. Studios' growing use of generative AI was a key issue for both. In both strikes, union members feared that studios would effectively utilize generative AI to perform tasks that ordinarily would be performed by paid writers and actors. [3]

There are at least a dozen class action lawsuits being fought on behalf of authors whose books have been copied and used to train AI models. [4] Clearly the threat of legal battles is not enough of a deterrance to stop these companies from stealing.

It's not only creatives. AI was responsible for almost 55,000 layoffs in the US in 2025. [5] A Microsoft Research study ranked 40 occupations that Microsoft thought were at risk of being replaced by AI. Their list includes translators, historians, sales representatives, customer service representatives, journalists, editors, and teachers. [6] Whether or not AI is actually capable of doing your job, if your boss thinks it can, that's often all it takes.

MILITARIZATION & ICE

SURVEILLANCE OF AMERICANS

Last year, ICE deepened its reliance on Microsoft's cloud technology as it ramped up arrest and deportation operations, more than tripling the amount of data it stored in Microsoft's Azure cloud platform. Microsoft made tens of millions of dollars through deals with ICE and the DHS. [1]

ICE has access to vast troves of data on people living in the US. It has a growing arsenal of surveillance technology, including facial recognition apps, phone location databases, drones, and invasive spyware. It uses this technology to surveil both citizens and noncitizens alike. [1]

Microsoft is helping ICE carry out its violent arrests and extrajudicial murders of Americans. This technology is hosted on data centers just like the ones in our area.

COMPLICITY IN GENOCIDE & APARTHEID

Microsoft's complicity in Israel's occupation, apartheid, and genocide is well documented through its strong ties to the Israeli military, its collaboration with Israeli government ministries, and its involvement in the Israeli prison system, which is notorious for systematic torture and abuse of Palestinians. [2]

Microsoft is also bankrolling genocide in Sudan by investing \$15.2 billion into the United Arab Emirates, a state arming the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan. [3]

PART OF THE US MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

The US military recently announced agreements with eight leading AI companies, including Microsoft. The Pentagon said: "These agreements accelerate the transformation toward establishing the United States military as an AI-first fighting force and will strengthen our warfighters' ability to maintain decision superiority across all domains of warfare." [4]

The US is also starting to build hyperscaled data centers on military installations, further enshrining AI technology and data centers as weaponry in and of themselves. At the end of February, the US used Palantir's Maven AI system to bomb a school in Iran and kill 155 people, most of them young schoolchildren. [5]

Then in March, following strikes from the US and Israel, Iran attacked several data centers in the Gulf, including an Amazon Web Services data center in the United Arab Emirates. Iran said that the attacks were launched "to identify the role of these centers in supporting the enemy's military and intelligence activities." [6]



No Azure for Apartheid protesters outside of a Microsoft event in March 2025 [7]

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UNSAVORY PARTNERS: MICROSOFT & CHEVRON

Chevron is just one of the oil & gas companies that Microsoft is partnering with to power their data centers, but Chevron is a particularly egregious offender in terms of human rights abuses and climate catastrophe.

Chevron fuels genocide and apartheid in Palestine by supplying nearly 50% of Israel's electricity grid, which includes Israeli military bases, prisons, and settlements. [1]

Chevron is also currently profiting off of the US's invasion of Venezuela as well as the US-Israeli war on Iran. While Americans are watching gas prices go up, Chevron and other oil & gas companies are getting rich off of the increased demand for natural gas, and are inking new deals that throw environmental safeguards aside. [2]

This is the reality of gas-powered data centers. Fossil fuel resource extraction exploits communities all over the world, poisoning those who live near it and making all of us suffer from the effects of climate change.



Chevron fuels many prisons, police stations, & military bases where Palestinians are held, sometimes without charges, and often tortured.



Chevron is responsible for more carbon emissions since 1965 than any other investor-owned fossil fuel company. These emissions accelerate deadly forest fires.



Chevron's refinery accident in Richmond, CA sickened 15,000 people. From environmental racism to funding genocide, Chevron's business model relies on destruction.

Graphic by US Campaign for Palestinian Rights for the Boycott Chevron campaign [3]

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UNSAVORY PARTNERS: SABEY CORPORATION & DHS

In addition to leasing space for data centers in the Wenatchee area, Sabey also leases space to the Department of Homeland Security for their processing facility in Tukwila, WA. Earlier this year, Sabey Corporation rented additional space to ICE that was projected for use as an illegal detention center. [1]

The Tukwila community mobilized to pass a six-month emergency moratorium blocking the expansion of ICE detention centers and new construction within the city, but the City Council stopped short of banning ICE from having office buildings. [1]

The Riverfront Technical Park location is prime for federal immigration enforcement activities because it's a five-minute drive to the King County International Airport, which ICE has routinely used to deport and disappear community members. [2]

Sabey Corporation is currently profiting from ICE's human rights violations. Do we want a company like this in Wenatchee?



King County community members expressing their disapproval of Mayor Joe Sabey at a Hunt's Point, WA town hall meeting in May 2026 [3]

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AI MAKES OUR LIVES WORSE

SPREADS MISINFORMATION

A large language model (LLM) like ChatGPT works by essentially just predicting the next word in a sentence, like the “autocomplete” feature when you’re composing text messages or emails, except on a much larger scale. They are very good at mimicking natural human speech, but have no capability of evaluating whether or not information is true. Because of this, they regularly make things up, or “hallucinate”. Hallucination is inherent to how the technology works and is not fixable even with improved models. [1]

CREATES MORE WORK

Because AI frequently hallucinates, any information provided by it isn’t reliable and must be independently verified, which creates extra work. People have to spend more time reviewing, correcting, and editing AI-generated work, including sometimes spending extra time reviewing AI-generated work produced by others. [2]

One study found that AI actually hampered the productivity of software developers despite expectations that it would make them more efficient. Instead, AI increased their task completion time by 19%. The developers had to spend a lot of time cleaning up the code that AI gave them to make it actually fit for the project. [3]

CAUSES COGNITIVE DECLINE

One study found that 83% of LLM users couldn’t quote a single line from essays they had written minutes earlier. And when they were forced to write without AI in a follow-up session, their brain activity did not bounce back to baseline. The researchers coined the term “cognitive debt” for the lingering deficit. [4]

Multiple studies have found that increased AI usage correlates with diminished critical thinking skills. One study found that 66% of workers reported using AI tools without any evaluation of the accuracy of the data. [5]

A study found that AI also makes programmers worse at problem-solving, which threatens our ability to maintain software systems as collective skill sets deteriorate. [6]

Imagine doctors, engineers, and lawyers who are in school right now using AI to pass their classes without developing the core skills they need to adequately do their jobs. Imagine living in a country filled with voters who are unable to read bills or critically evaluate information about candidates. That is the future AI offers us.



Anti-AI zine by Rachel Goldfinger [7]

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“In fact, as with every major technological shift, AI tends to amplify the power of those who already possess economic resources, expertise and access to data. In light of the common good and the universal destination of goods, this raises serious concerns, since small but highly influential groups can shape information and consumption patterns, influence democratic processes and steer economic dynamics to their own advantage, undermining social justice and solidarity among peoples. For this reason, it is essential that the use of AI, especially when it touches on public goods and fundamental rights, be guided by clear criteria and effective oversight, grounded in participation and subsidiarity. *Communities and intermediary organizations must not be reduced to passive recipients of decisions made elsewhere; they must be able to contribute to discernment and oversight.*”

—Excerpt from Magnifica Humanitas, Pope Leo XIV's encyclical

KEY DECISION-MAKERS

Chelan County Commisioners—Could stop the data centers at any time by passing county-wide policies that prevent them from being built here.

Board of County Commisioners: *Kevin Overbay, Shon Smith, Brad Hawkins*

Douglas County Commisioners—Could stop the data centers at any time by passing county-wide policies that prevent them from being built here.

Board of County Commisioners: *Dan Sutton, Randy Agnew, Marc Straub*

Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority—Brought the data centers into our community in the first place.

Board of Directors: *Donn Etherington, Jim Huffman, JC Baldwin, Alan Loeb sack, Mark Spurgeon, Richard DeRock*

Chelan County Public Utility District—Serves power to Microsoft's data center in Malaga. Agreed to hand over our hydroelectric power to Microsoft.

PUD Commissioners: *Kelly Allen, Randy Smith, Steve McKenna, Garry Arseneault, Carnan Bergren*

Douglas County Public Utility District—Serves power to Microsoft's and Sabey's data centers in East Wenatchee. Agreed to hand over our hydroelectric power to Sabey.

PUD Commissioners: *Ronald E. Skagen, Molly Simpson, Aaron J. Viebrock*

RESOURCES

waair.net—Washington Artificial Intelligence Resistance

columbiariverkeeper.org—Columbia Riverkeeper

ainowinstitute.org—AI Now Institute

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The Linktree also has a digital version of the list of references with active hyperlinks.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS DRIVING AN UNPRECEDENTED BOOM IN DATA CENTERS. POWERED BY SOME OF THE NATION'S CHEAPEST HYDROPOWER, NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON HAS BECOME A TARGET FOR ENERGY-INTENSIVE INDUSTRIES SEEKING VAST AMOUNTS OF ELECTRICITY AND WATER. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR WENATCHEE AND NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES? WHO DECIDES HOW OUR SHARED RESOURCES ARE USED, AND WHO BENEFITS FROM THEIR USE?

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



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