



Groups in Montana fighting to stop AI Centers



Thoughts

Several environmental, conservation, consumer advocacy, and community groups in Montana are actively opposing or seeking strict regulations on large AI/data centers, primarily due to concerns over skyrocketing electricity costs for residents, massive water use, land impacts, lack of transparency, potential noise/pollution, and reliance on fossil fuels. montanafreepress.org

Key Groups and Actions

A coalition of nine organizations filed a formal complaint in November 2025 with the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) to prevent NorthWestern Energy from shifting infrastructure costs (new power plants, transmission lines) for data centers onto its ~413,000 residential customers. They argue data centers should be a separate customer class with their own tariffs/rates. Earthjustice is representing them. montanafreepress.org

The petitioners include:

- **Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC)** — Leads education efforts, hosts statewide panels on data center impacts, and pushes for sideboards on water/energy use and governance. meic.org
- **Butte Watchdogs for Social and Environmental Justice**
- **Climate Smart Missoula**
- **Helena Interfaith Climate Advocates**
- **Honor the Earth** (Indigenous-led)
- **Montana Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG)**
- **NW Energy Coalition**
- **Big Sky 55+**
- **Golden Triangle Resource Council** montanafreepress.org

In March 2026, many of these same groups (via Earthjustice) challenged a PSC protective order shielding NorthWestern's data center agreements from public view, citing

Montana's constitutional right to know. earthjustice.org



Other Active Efforts

- **Northern Plains Resource Council** — Organizes local community teams to push for regulations ahead of the 2027 legislative session, provides factsheets on impacts (energy, water, taxes, jobs), and highlights proposals like Quantica's 5,000-acre "Big Sky Campus" near Broadview. They emphasize building people power against "Big Tech." northernplains.org
- Local residents and ad-hoc groups in places like Broadview (e.g., Kassi Solberg pushing for transparency at town meetings), Butte, Missoula (petitions against Bonner/Krambu project), and elsewhere. Public panels and petitions (e.g., Change.org) reflect grassroots concern. facebook.com
- Broader coalitions involving Upper Missouri Waterkeeper and others have celebrated some pullouts (e.g., a Great Falls proposal). dailymontanain.com

Main Concerns Driving Opposition

- **Energy:** Proposed centers (e.g., Quantica up to 1,000 MW, others totaling ~1,400 MW with NorthWestern) could more than double current residential demand (~760 MW average), potentially requiring new fossil fuel generation and raising bills. montanafreepress.org
- **Water and Environment:** High consumption for cooling (hundreds of thousands to millions of gallons/day per large center), plus land use (thousands of acres) and noise.
- **Economics/Transparency:** Low property taxes for data centers, few permanent jobs, backroom deals, and risk of ratepayers subsidizing tech giants. northernplains.org
- **Nationwide context:** Similar pushback in many states over AI data center expansion. projectcensored.org

These groups are focused on regulation and cost protection rather than a total ban in all cases, though some local efforts seek to stop specific projects. Activity includes PSC filings, public education, local organizing, and petitions. For the latest, check sites like MEIC.org, NorthernPlains.org, or Earthjustice. Developments can change quickly with ongoing proposals and regulatory reviews.

31 web pages



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