



DATA CENTERS AND OTHER LARGE WATER USERS

Data centers are rapidly expanding across the Great Lakes region. These facilities can require large amounts of water – both directly for cooling and operations, and indirectly via the water used for their power generation needs. Without careful planning, increased water and energy use from data centers could lead to strain on local water systems, increased prices for ratepayers, and, ultimately, water shortages, groundwater conflicts, and aquifer contamination.

We need more transparency and better planning. Many data center developers rely on non-disclosure agreements to keep electricity and water demands secret, even when communities are being asked to approve the projects. Once built, data centers are not required to measure or publicly report how much water they use when they connect to and receive water from local municipal systems. We must ensure that data center projects protect local water resources while providing clear community and economic benefits.

Sample candidate questions:

- What policies would you support to ensure that data centers use water efficiently and do not put a strain on local water supplies?
- What transparency requirements should exist so that the public understands how much water data centers are using and how that affects local resources?
- How should policymakers address the cumulative effect of increased water withdrawals and discharges when multiple data centers are proposed in the same region or watershed?
- Would you support monitoring water quality to protect communities from potentially toxic pollution discharged in data center wastewater?
- Who should pay for the water and wastewater infrastructure data centers need to operate and expand?
- How should state and local governments evaluate whether a public water system or community has sufficient water resources to support large data center development?



If you'd like to dive deeper into questions you should ask data center developers, check out our Data Center Playbook at greatlakes.org/DataCenterPlaybook.