

Restore the Delta
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Stockton City Council
501 W. Weber Avenue
Stockton, CA 95203
Sent via email

San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors
44 North San Joaquin Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 627
Stockton, CA 95202

August 31, 2026

Re: Concerns with AI Data Center Development in Stockton and San Joaquin County

Dear City Councilmembers and County Supervisors,

As AI data centers continue to advance across the United States, we urge policymakers in Stockton and San Joaquin County to consider economic, environmental, and community concerns before greenlighting development.

Restore the Delta recently published a first in-depth white paper (attached) examining how AI-driven industrial expansion could change the Delta region's water, energy, land use, wildlife, and community health. This white paper is both an instructional tool and a call to action for lawmakers, environmental justice campaigners, Tribal governments, and communities to set guiding principles now, while there is still time to make decisions.

AI technologies offer a range of potentially transformative benefits, risks, privacy concerns, and ethical dilemmas. For the purpose of this letter, we focus on the impacts of AI infrastructure to local communities. We recognize the potential for AI technologies in limited research areas, such as medical advancements, however, we have serious concerns with the resource intensive infrastructure these technologies rely on and their compounding impacts on communities like San Joaquin County – namely water and energy use. [A typical 100-megawatt data center in the U.S. may consume about 2 million liters of water per day.](#) This puts even greater stress on the Delta's already overdrawn groundwater basins and fragile surface water systems. Training and running AI models also take a huge amount of power. In 2023, data centers used 4.4% of the electricity in the U.S. By 2028, that number is expected to jump to 6.7–12%, mostly because of the growth of AI. These demands impact grid reliability, increase energy costs for ratepayers, and add to local air pollution.

The ecological hazards are just as bad. More water withdrawals, thermal pollution, and habitat loss put endangered species like Delta smelt and Chinook salmon in even more jeopardy. These species are very important to the environment and culture, especially for Indigenous communities. The extinction of these species endangers biodiversity, cultural continuity, and traditional ecological knowledge.

Additionally, the AI technology industry has [failed to reliably demonstrate quality job creation opportunities](#) surrounding data centers and the products and services they enable. Data centers largely create short-term construction jobs, and very few operational positions thereafter. They additionally compete for land with other industries, such as housing, that would generate more jobs and be far less resource-extractive.

Despite these major risks, California lacks a comprehensive regulatory framework to govern AI infrastructure and set AI-specific standards for resource use, emissions, cost-and-benefit distribution, or community and workforce protections.

Restore the Delta believes that this is a very important time for the region. AI infrastructure is already being built in the Delta, with Stockton, Pittsburg, and Tracy all hosting AI workloads. Many proposed and current data centers are located near low-income communities that already have high levels of pollution, little political power, and strong cultural links to Delta ecosystems. If policymakers don't act quickly and focus on the needs of the community, AI infrastructure could make water shortages worse, speed up the degradation of ecosystems, put more stress on the electrical grid, and worsen environmental injustices in some of California's most overworked areas.

We encourage the City of Stockton and San Joaquin County to join the more than [500 US counties or municipalities](#) now actively restricting or blocking AI data center development in the absence of state or federal regulations. Local policymakers should establish a moratorium on data centers. This would allow for an open and transparent process to develop thoughtful land use policy regarding zoning, permitting, and development priorities for new data centers. Such a process could consider guardrails for environmental, workforce, and economic impacts, such as energy sourcing requirements; water usage restrictions; setbacks from residential areas; community benefits agreements; and local fair labor requirements.

We thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla
Executive Director



Esther Mburu
Carbon & Energy Program Manager



Davis Harper
Director of Strategic Planning



Morgen Snyder
Director of Policy & Programs



Mariah Looney
Director of Operations