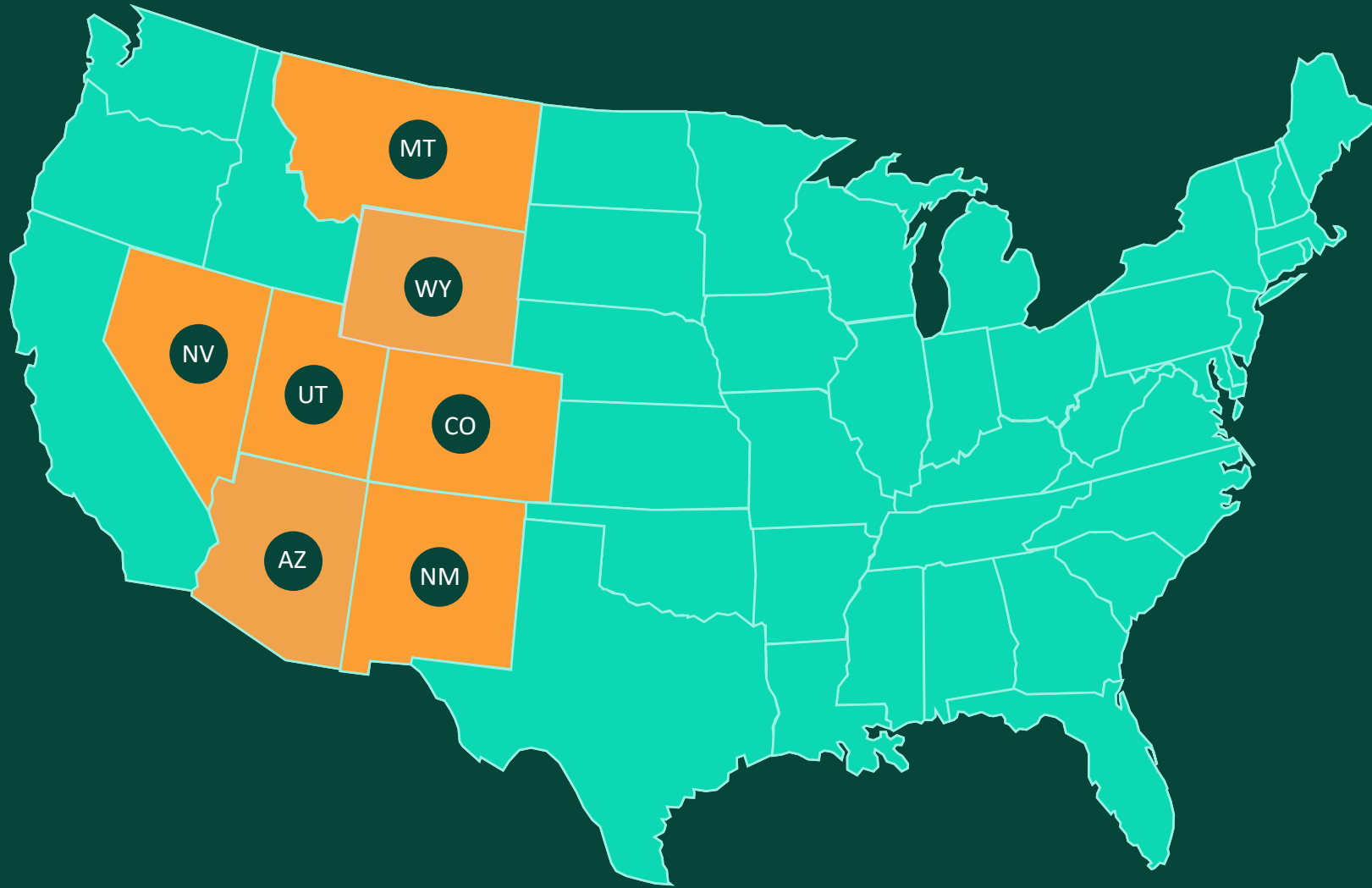


Data Center Water Use – Dispelling Myths

Bart Miller

Bart Miller, Healthy Rivers Director
Colorado River Water Users' Association: December 17, 2025

wra Western
Resource
Advocates®



Western Resource Advocates

- Federal & Regional Collaboration
- State Legislatures
- State Agencies & Commissions
- Local Governments
- Electric Utilities
- Diverse Coalitions & Communities

**WRA works across seven states in the Interior West to
protect our climate, land, air, and water.**



Myth/Belief:

Data centers gobble up water and have no place in the desert Southwest.



Myth/Belief:

***Data centers gobble up water and have
no place in the desert Southwest***



Myth/Belief:

*Data centers **gobble up water** and have
no place in the desert Southwest*





DATA CENTER IMPACTS IN THE WEST

Policy Solutions for Water and Energy Use

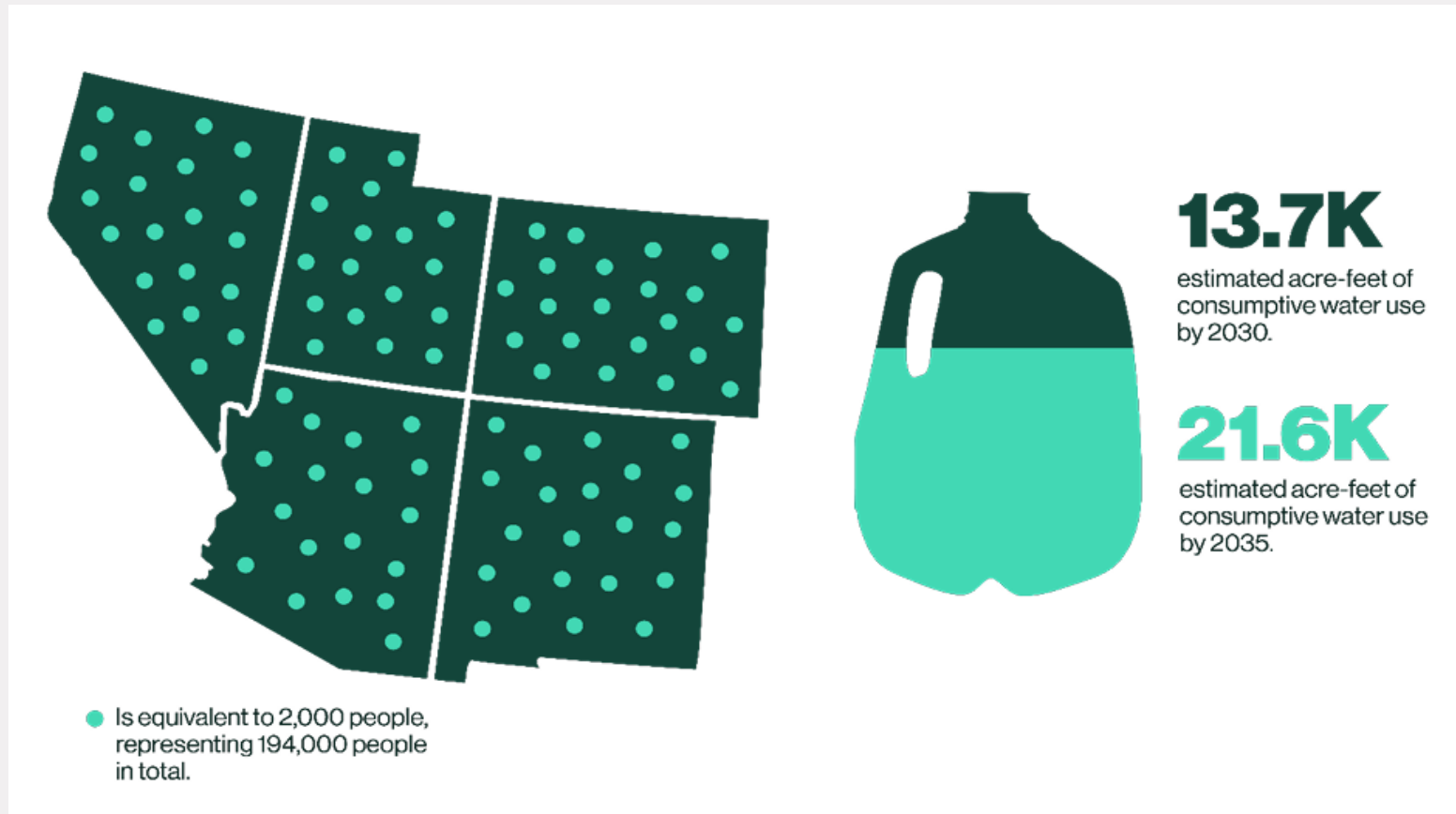
AUTHORS

Deborah Kapiloff | Policy Advisor
Lindsay Rogers | Policy Manager for Municipal Conservation
Stacy Tellinghuisen | Deputy Director of Policy Development

Data Center Resource Use in the West



Estimated Water Use on-site



Water Impacts

- Water is used on-site for cooling
- Water use efficiency varies a lot based on cooling technology, local climate, and design
- Water also is needed “off-site” to generate electricity for the centers



The Denver Post logo, featuring the words 'THE DENVER POST' in a serif font.

NEWS > ENVIRONMENT • News

A new Denver data center could use as much water as 16,000 people every day. Should the city give it a tax break?

CoreSite plans to build a three-building, 600,000-square-foot data campus in Elyria-Swansea

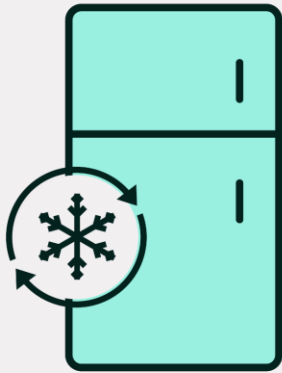
A rendering of a modern, multi-story data center building at dusk. The building has a prominent glass facade on one side, showing interior lights. The CoreSite logo is visible on the top corner of the building. The surrounding area includes some landscaping and a parking lot.

A rendering shows the design of a new CoreSite data center proposed for Denver's Elyria-Swansea neighborhood. (Provided by CoreSite)

A small profile picture of Elise Schmelzer, a woman with brown hair, smiling.

By **ELISE SCHMELZER** | eschmelzer@denverpost.com | The Denver Post
UPDATED: October 14, 2024 at 6:03 AM MDT

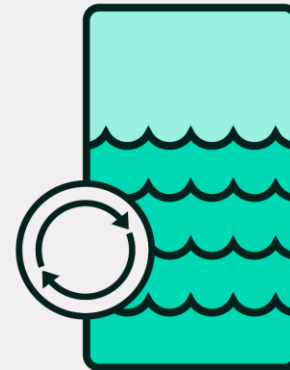
Water vs. Energy Tradeoffs



Refrigeration cooling systems use an air handler, circulate either cool air or water in the data center, and remove hot air.



Adiabatic- or direct-evaporative-cooling systems use water to cool air that is circulated in the data center.



Free-cooling systems take advantage of outdoor ambient air or water temperatures to cool the air that is circulated in a data center.



Liquid-cooling systems directly absorb heat from computer components, rather than cooling the air around the computers.

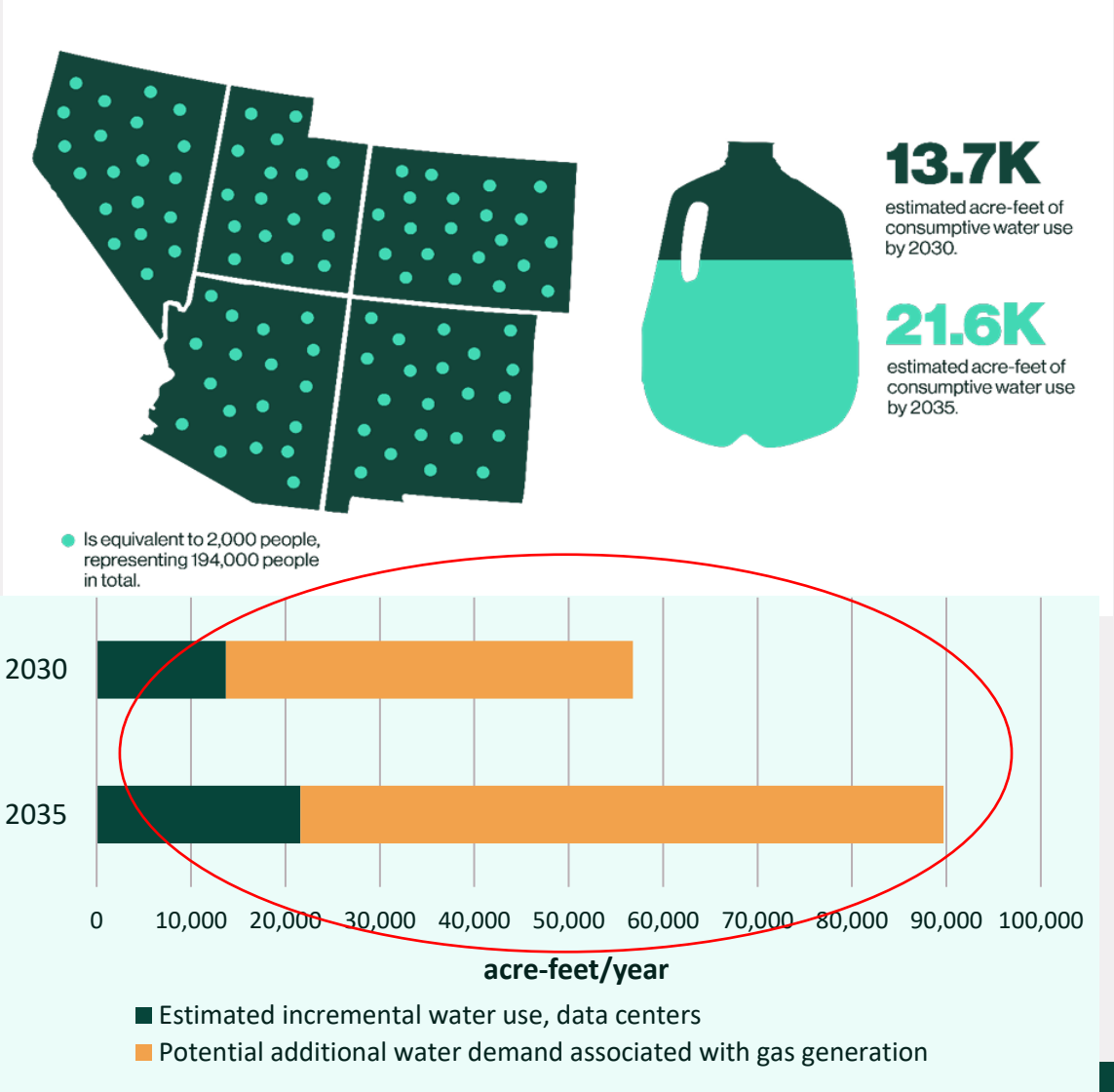
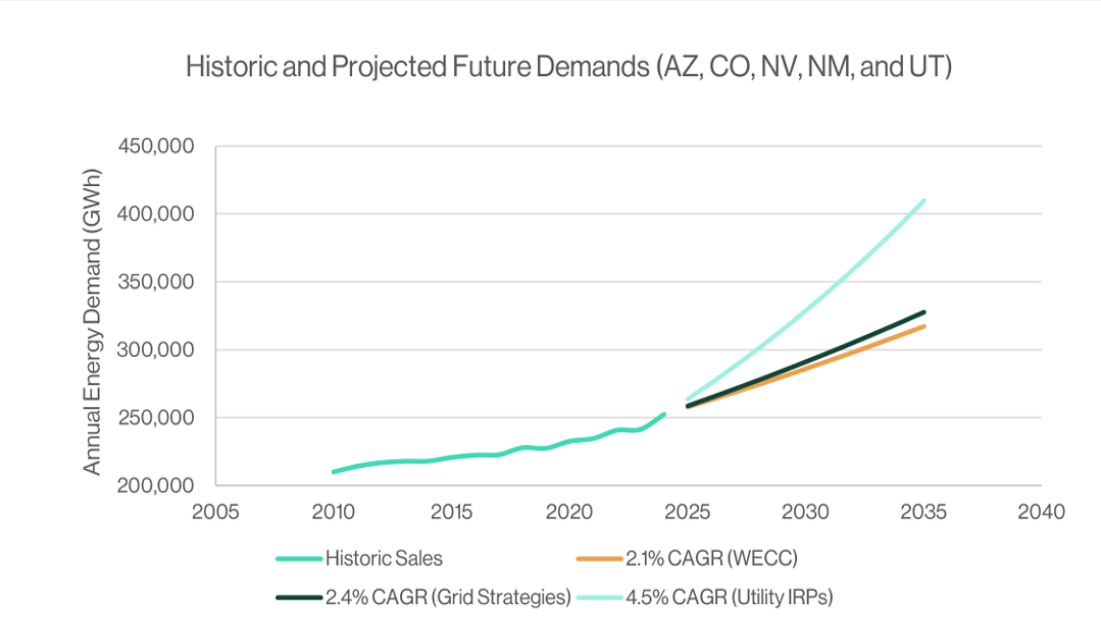
Data Center Resource Use in the West



Energy Demand

Water Use

Maybe add/swap p. 24 graphic



Myth/Belief:

*Data centers gobble up water and **have**
no place in the desert Southwest*



Navigating Water Demands

1. Consistent, transparent water use reporting
2. Technical best management practices for on-site water management
3. Large water users policies

After Project Blue outcry, Tucson adopts rules for large water users

New ordinance adds oversight and transparency for companies seeking millions of gallons of water for cooling systems

Email Bluesky X Facebook



Sign at the Project Blue info session at the TCC on Aug. 4, 2025. Photo by Michael McKisson // sostiene un cartel en la sesión informativa del Proyecto Blue en el TCC el 4 de agosto de 2025.

Water authority moves to conserve on cooling systems in Southern Nevada

High-consumption evaporative systems banned in new commercial buildings amid drought



Steven Lewis, general manager for the a/c company Ambient Edge, showing their own evaporative cooling unit at their shop in Henderson, Nevada. Thursday, September 14, 2023. Brian Ramos Photo by: Rhiannon Saegert

By Rhiannon Saegert
Monday, Sept. 25, 2023 | 2 a.m.

Denver and El Paso County order disclosure of data centers' water consumption records

JANUARY 28, 2025

Energy/water connection

Three parallel white lines of varying lengths, slanted upwards from left to right, located in the bottom right area of the slide.

wra

Myth/Belief:

*Data centers ~~gobble up~~ **will impact**
water **and energy use** and ~~have no~~
~~place in~~ **pose complicated questions for**
communities in the desert Southwest*



A close-up photograph of a field of Gaillardia flowers, which have bright yellow centers and petals that transition to a deep red at the tips. Several bees are visible on the flowers, including one prominently on the central flower in the foreground. The background is a soft-focus field of similar flowers.

Thank You!