

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

September 24, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum,

We write to demand answers on the Department of the Interior's (Department) reported plans to enable massive data center projects on federal public lands.

The Bureau of Land Management is reportedly reviewing at least a dozen data center-related proposals on public lands in six states,¹ at the direction of the President.² These projects that would reportedly cover at least 17,600 acres of public lands across Arizona, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming. Data centers create massive environmental impacts: increased water consumption, noise pollution, land use disruption, and air pollution, among others. Data centers also draw down a massive amount of energy—one study found that data centers could represent up to 12% of all U.S. electricity consumption by 2028—putting strain on the electrical grid and driving up energy prices for the American people.^{3,4}

Our public lands must not be managed by secret deals and industry-led schemes. Following the 2025 Executive Order on Accelerating Federal Permitting of Data Center Infrastructure, Secretary Burgum has met with dozens of technology and energy executives to discuss data center build out.⁵ Bureau of Land Management officials have reportedly compiled lists of public land for data center development.⁶ The administration is moving quickly to permit data centers and has shown a concerning proclivity to skirt environmental reviews and cut the public out of the process. Local officials only learned of several projects from reporters, and the public, including local communities near project proposals, have been left in the dark.

¹ [Trump Is Considering More Data Centers on Public Lands Than Previously Known - The Washington Sun](#)

² [Accelerating Federal Permitting of Data Center Infrastructure – The White House](#)

³ [Lawrence Berkley National Laboratory 2024 United States Data Center Energy Usage Report](#)

⁴ [Center for American Progress, Electric and Natural Gas Utility Rate Hikes Tracker](#)

⁵ Secretary Burgum's Official Calendar, January through November 2025, [Part I](#) and [II](#)

⁶ [Inside Trump's Aggressive Push to Build Data Centers on Public Lands - The Washington Sun](#)

The first BLM-approved data center on public lands, the Townsite Data Center, has been held up in court because the agency allowed the developer to utilize the permit for an approved solar project for the proposed data center without any additional environmental review or public comment on the new proposal. This is a potential violation of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and a betrayal of the public's trust.⁷

Federal public lands belong to all Americans, and all Americans deserve to have a say in development that would affect our lands, waters, and access to public resources. While an administration spokesperson has pledged that each data center proposal will be evaluated under NEPA,⁸ this administration has rewritten the rules to limit transparency and public input while claiming to comply with the law.⁹ Current administration practice gives the public no chance to review project plans and comment on the agency's analysis— or lack thereof, as seen in the Townsite Data Center example – of environmental impacts before issuing a final decision on whether to allow the development.

We are further concerned that the Trump administration is poised to cut Tribal nations out of consultation on data centers on public lands. Secretary Burgum recently issued an order instructing the Department of the Interior to find ways to “streamline” reviews of impacts on cultural and historic sites under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) or exempt projects all together. The order further instructs agency staff to terminate consultation under NHPA if the official determines “further consultation will not be productive.”¹⁰ This order paves the way for the administration to exempt data centers from a key process for protecting Tribal cultural sites on public lands and undermines the federal government's trust responsibility to Tribal nations.

This data center push may come at the expense of other infrastructure development and needed public lands projects. The Trump administration has slashed agency budgets and dramatically reduced staffing in key permitting positions. BLM has lost almost half its staff under this administration; There is a reported 50 percent staff vacancy rate in the agency's Lands & Realty program, which is responsible for overseeing how public lands are bought, sold, leased, and accessed, including industrial and data center development.¹¹ BLM proposed further staff and funding cuts for this key permitting program in fiscal year 2027, while focusing on “highest priorities,” including data centers.¹² This will undoubtedly exacerbate permitting backlogs for projects in the public good, such as ready-to-build clean energy projects that could lower skyrocketing energy bills.

⁷ <https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/judge-orders-pause-on-boulder-city-data-center>

⁸ [Trump Is Considering More Data Centers on Public Lands Than Previously Known - The Washington Sun](#)
⁹ 2025-12433 (90 FR 29498).

¹⁰ <https://www.doi.gov/document-library/secretary-order/so-3452-timely-completion-national-historic-preservation-act>

¹¹ [Inside Trump's Aggressive Push to Build Data Centers on Public Lands - The Washington Sun](#)

¹² [Budget Justifications and Performance Information FY 2027: Bureau of Land Management](#)

The federal government must assess data centers’ potential impacts on our public lands and waters and the local communities and Tribes who rely on our shared natural resources. Traditionally, land management agencies have undertaken public notice-and-comment rulemaking when proposing a new type of use of public lands, as was undertaken during the 2024 Conservation and Landscape Health Rule. Congress has previously required programmatic environmental reviews and regulations for novel industrial uses of public lands, such as oil shale development.¹³ Data centers are a major new industrial use of public lands with profound implications for our shared natural resources that deserve at least as much comprehensive public planning. To date, the Trump administration has taken no effort to involve the American public in these data center plans – only industry executives.

The House Natural Resources Committee has jurisdiction under House Rule X.1(m) to conduct oversight and investigations of matters relating to public lands generally including easements thereon. To further our understanding of the Department’s plans to use federal lands to site data centers, please respond to the following questions and document requests by October 8, 2026.

1. How is the Department ensuring the public has a role in deciding whether data centers are an appropriate or best use of our federal public lands?
2. Please provide all internal communications and documents regarding opportunities for public input into data center development on federal lands, including any decisions to limit public participation.
3. Did the Department consider a public notice-and-comment rulemaking for data center development as a new use of public lands? If not, why not. If considered and rejected, why was a rulemaking rejected? Please provide all internal communications and documents regarding the consideration of a rulemaking for data center development on public lands.
4. Will the Department commit to conducting an environmental impact statement (EIS) and publishing a draft EIS with a public comment period on said draft EIS of at least 45 days for all data centers with a peak load of 50 megawatts or greater?
5. For all other data center-related major federal actions, including permits, leases, rights-of-way or other authorization for use or occupancy of public lands, will the Department commit to publishing all environmental assessments conducted or categorical exclusions used, and the analyses used to justify that level of review?
6. Will the Department commit to conducting meaningful Tribal consultation and completing all data center-related historic preservation reviews under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act without terminating consultation if an agreement cannot be reached within 180 days?
7. How has the Department ensured that any data centers or related infrastructure projects are consistent with relevant resource management plans? Please provide all internal

¹³ [42 USC 15927](#) (Energy Policy Act of 2025 sec. 369)

communications and documents regarding consistency of said projects with resource management plans.

8. Please provide a list of data center and data center-related infrastructure project proposals the Bureau of Land Management was considering as of September 24, 2026.
9. Please provide a list of all land exchanges and disposals for data centers and related development the Department was considering at each of its bureaus, including the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management as of September 24, 2026.
10. Please provide documentation of all meetings between DOI employees and representatives of technology and energy companies related to data center development on public land, including meeting agendas, meeting minutes, calendar entries, and attendees.
 - a. If project developers submitted a data center-related development proposal within a month of meeting with a DOI employee, please provide the timing and details of the submission and the authorization sought, as well as the details of any subsequent meetings between said developer and DOI employees.
 - b. Has the Department ever proactively suggested to any prospective data center developers that they prioritize development on public lands? Please provide all relevant communications.
11. Please provide Secretary Burgum's official 2026 calendar, including details of meetings and attendees related to data center development, through September 24, 2026.
12. Please provide all lists of priority public lands for data center development created by Departmental or Departmental bureau employees, including all directives and communications with internal or external stakeholders regarding the creation of said lists, and all analyses performed to determine priority lands.
13. Please provide all lists of priority public lands for data center development created by non-Departmental or non-Departmental bureau employees, including all directives and communications with internal or external stakeholders regarding the creation of said lists, and all analyses performed to determine priority lands.
14. Please provide a list of policies under development, including but not limited to the establishment of categorical exclusions under NEPA and exclusions or alternative procedures under NHPA, or other federal actions under consideration regarding the development of data centers or data centers' ancillary infrastructure on federal land.
15. Please provide the authorities the Department is planning to use to issue permits and authorizations for data centers or related ancillary infrastructure. Please list statutory and regulatory support, including specific citations.
16. Please provide the Bureau of Land Management's FY2026 spend plan and year-to-date expenditures for the entire Lands & Realty program, specifying any expenditures related to data center development and permitting.
17. Please provide a list of all political appointees who spent any time working on data centers on public lands.

18. Please provide all documents and communications between each of the employees listed as a result of request number 17 of this letter and anyone from the Departmental Ethics Office at the Department or its relevant bureaus.

Sincerely,



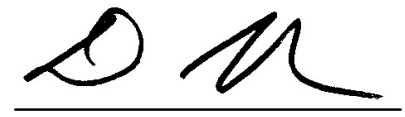
Jared Huffman
Ranking Member,
Committee on Natural
Resources



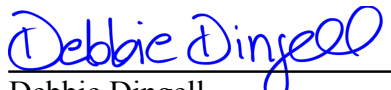
Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



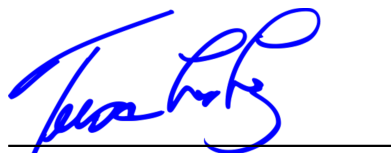
Dave Min
Member of Congress



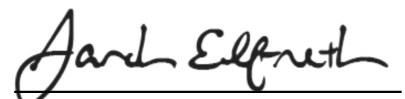
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



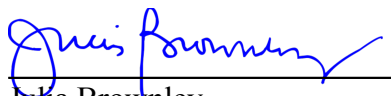
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress



Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



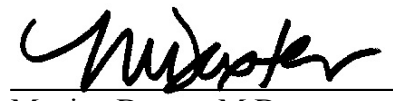
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



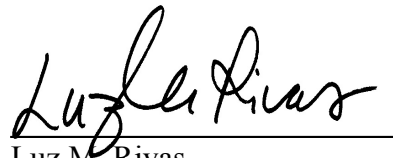
Susie Lee
Member of Congress


Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress


Maxine Dexter, M.D.
Member of Congress


Joe Neguse
Member of Congress


Luz M. Rivas
Member of Congress


Emily Randall
Member of Congress