

RESOLUTION REGARDING DATA CENTERS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

At the meeting of the board of the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy, on February 12, 2025, the following resolution was proposed and approved by the board:

WHEREAS, the mission of the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy is “We protect the lands and waters you love, forever”;

WHEREAS, Virginia is home to more than 200 data centers, with many more proposed in the coming years;

WHEREAS, data centers are very large consumers of electricity, and peak electric load in Virginia is forecast to double by 2040 in large part due to data centers;

WHEREAS, most of the increased electric demand will be met through the burning of fossil fuels, adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere and accelerating global warming;

WHEREAS, data centers require tremendous quantities of water, which in rural Virginia threatens to overwhelm small municipal water systems and poses negative impacts on stream and impoundment levels, and groundwater;

WHEREAS, Virginia is experiencing more frequent and more severe droughts;

WHEREAS, data centers are often proposed to be located in rural communities, where land is relatively inexpensive and where county governments are promised lucrative tax revenue;

WHEREAS, data centers are often proposed on important agricultural and forestry lands, taking these lands out of such uses and converting them to industrial uses;

WHEREAS, loss of farmland is rampant in Virginia, with nearly a half-million acres of land taken out of agricultural use from 2017 to 2022;

WHEREAS 10 percent of all Virginia farms ceased operation in the same time period;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy recommends the following:

THAT localities in the Conservancy’s service regions adopt policies regarding data center siting, energy requirements and water use before considering applications for rezoning of rural land to accommodate data center construction;

THAT such local policies prioritize the preservation of important farm and forest land, wildlife habitat, water resources, and the rural character of the community;

THAT data centers be located only in commercial and industrial districts, such as industrial parks, that cluster and minimize impacts on the rural community; and

THAT the Virginia General Assembly adopt legislation, and Virginia state government agencies formulate policies, which increase transparency of information on data centers, establish state oversight in addition to local approvals, protect families and businesses from bearing the brunt of construction as well as decommissioning costs, and provide incentives for efficiency and clean energy use.

Signed,



President of the Board