



Board of County Commissioners

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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rules adopted in 2025 limit potential sites for data centers

CHEHALIS, Wash. – Data centers are the backbone of the modern digital economy, supporting everything from cloud computing to AI, but their rapid expansion has created significant environmental and community strains. While they offer economic benefits, they are increasingly criticized for high energy and water consumption.

The Lewis County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has prioritized the protection of natural resources and rural lands by ensuring that data centers are only permitted in areas that have already been designated for industrial development.

Data centers are not allowed on lands zoned as Agricultural Resource Land, Forest Resource Land, Rural Development Districts or Open Space.

In September 2025, Lewis County adopted updates to its Comprehensive Plan and development regulations, including new provisions governing data centers. Under these regulations, data centers may only be located on properties designated as Major Industrial Development (MID) or Regional Area Industrial (RAI) on the county's official zoning map.

There are two MID areas in Lewis County:

- The TransAlta/IPAT site in Centralia, which is intended to support the transition from coal-fired power generation to other energy production and industrial uses.
- The Cardinal Glass Plant site in Winlock, which is fully developed.

There are 12 Regional Area Industrial (RAI) areas in Lewis County, including the following: Curtis Rail Yard, Baer, Williams Industrial, Ed Carlson Airfield, PSE Natural Gas Storage, Taylor Drilling, Klein Bicycle, PLS Log Yard and Morton Log Yard. Additional RAI-designated sites are identified on the county's official zoning map (<https://maps.lewiscountywa.gov/>).

While the county has established clear land-use regulations for data centers, discussions continue regarding appropriate standards and requirements related to water consumption, energy demand and other potential impacts associated with these facilities.

"Lewis County has been very deliberate in how we approach data centers. We recognize the economic opportunities they can bring, but we also have a responsibility to protect our farms, forests and rural way of life. That's why we've limited data centers to areas that have already been designated for industrial development," said Lewis County Commissioner Sean Swope. "Our goal is to provide certainty for industry while preserving the resource lands and communities that make Lewis County unique."

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