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Data Center

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed RB Inyokern Data Center project in Inyokern, California. While the project is being marketed as an economic opportunity, the long-term environmental and infrastructure impacts on the Indian Wells Valley and surrounding rural communities raise serious concerns that cannot be ignored.

Inyokern is a small desert community with fewer than 1,000 residents located within an already water-stressed region that depends heavily on groundwater. The Indian Wells Valley groundwater basin has faced years of overdraft, adjudication disputes, and increasing concern over long-term water sustainability. (SJV Water)

Despite claims by project proponents that the facility would use "minimal" water, the project's own materials acknowledge the use of hybrid cooling towers and water-cooled chillers, along with plans for an on-site groundwater well. (SJV Water) Even relatively modest annual water demand becomes significant in a rural desert basin where residents, agriculture, and existing industries are already competing for a declining resource.

Research and reporting across California and the western United States increasingly show that data centers place substantial burdens on local water and energy systems, particularly in drought-prone regions. Studies estimate that large AI-focused data centers can consume millions of liters of water per day depending on cooling methods and indirect energy demands. (Wikipedia) Experts have also warned that a majority of newly constructed data centers are being built in areas already experiencing high water stress, including California deserts and rural communities with limited infrastructure. (California Coastkeeper Alliance)

Beyond water concerns, residents have already voiced fears regarding increased air pollution, diesel backup generation, noise, heat generation, rising utility costs, and the industrialization of a rural community that lacks the infrastructure to absorb a project of this scale. (KERO 23 ABC News Bakersfield) The proposed project includes 44 diesel backup generators capable of producing nearly 99 megawatts of power. (SJV Water) For a quiet rural valley already dealing with air quality and resource limitations, this represents a major industrial intrusion.

Promises of jobs and tax revenue should not outweigh the long-term risks to groundwater sustainability, public health, and community character. Rural desert communities should not become sacrifice zones for the rapid expansion of AI infrastructure simply because they are sparsely populated and politically easier to target.

I respectfully urge you and the Kern County Board of Supervisors to oppose this project unless and until comprehensive independent environmental review, groundwater impact analysis, and enforceable protections for local residents are completed. The people of Inyokern and the Indian Wells Valley deserve transparency, accountability, and protection of their limited natural resources.

Please stand with the residents of Eastern Kern County in protecting our water, environment, and rural way of life.

Sincerely,

Kim Kelly
Kern County Resident