

FreshWater Accountability Project: Letter to the Editor – Toledo Blade

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Public Benefit? What Benefit?

Public comments needed to the Ohio Power Siting Board ASAP before a polluting power plant to serve a huge data center in Wood County is fast-tracked for approval!

The massive hyperscale AI data center being built in Northwest Ohio has been a secret for a long time. Most people living in the region had no idea that “Project Accordion” being assembled by the shell company, Liames LLC, was for Meta with elected officials signing non-disclosure agreements and arrangements made to give a [75% tax abatement for 15 years](#) to the project – why? With very few jobs offered and the potential to increase electrical and water rates along with the loss of more farm land to add to Ohio’s growing data center boom ([which some say is a bubble](#)), there are no environmental benefits and little economic benefit as well (except to the owners).

Despite widespread public opposition to the fast-tracking of approvals [for water discharges from data centers](#), our Ohio “representatives” are now attempting to fast-track yet another major polluter at the site. The [Will-Power LLC’s Apollo Generating Station is an expansion project of Williams](#) who built the controversial Nexus pipeline which was allowed to seize public property through eminent domain and continues to try to avoid paying promised property taxes. Although the initial comment period for Apollo has expired (which was only 10 days), people can still submit comments to the Ohio Power Siting Board at its [File a Comment](#) link, referencing case number [25-0973-EL-BLN](#)

Apollo is a large 350 MW natural gas fired power plant which will occupy another 150 acres, [potentially burning fracked gas](#) which has its own set of harms from water destruction and toxic, radioactive waste production. This huge, 350 MW power plant for only Meta’s benefit is projected to emit 2,475,581 TONS of greenhouse gases and 920.16 TONS of criteria air pollutants yearly, making it a Title V major air polluter. [The Ohio Power Siting Board is supposed to receive a full report on the Apollo facility by January 27, with accelerated, automatic approval slated for early February if the voting Board members allow it.](#) This means the public must step in again to provide the oversight and demand the protections and accountability that the regulators and elected officials are not.

While these massive projects take advantage of secrecy and the government’s support to quickly permit and build massive data centers using Large Language Models (LLM) to mine the internet and cloud data for the advancement of military, industrial and private purposes,

growing numbers of people are questioning the [public benefit](#). More people are objecting to the lack of information about the cumulative impacts of [the water and](#) electrical demands.

Apollo will be built if a single Ohio Power Siting Board member does not find significant concerns and request further review. That is why it is important now to urge the OPSB board members to take a closer look the cumulative air and water impacts from the pollution from the entire facility.

This is just one of many proposed power plants, including nuclear, that are being proposed to solely benefit data centers, which will create even more radioactive pollution and waste from fracking and the mining, processing and deployment of more nuclear power. It is important that as many comments as possible are sent to the OPSB to demand an extension of the approval process to give the public the opportunity to learn important details and lodge important concerns that could be overlooked in the Wild West of the AI gold rush, such as:

1. Apollo is eligible for a [huge sales tax break in Ohio](#) with legislation passed that even the legislators were not aware with implications that Ohio taxpayers will continue to subsidize large projects incentivized by state and federal governments with the externalized costs of pollution and water impacts without the revenue that should be generated.
2. Ozone action days are already a problem in NW Ohio with [Wood County being given a "C" grade, and Lucas County an "F" for air quality by the American Lung Association](#). We do not need more large polluters to be built, especially when only to serve a single private project.
3. [Williams' Nexus pipeline owes millions in back Ohio taxes](#) – all taxes must be paid in full before Williams can build more pipelines or generating facilities in Ohio.
4. Data center electrical demands are expected to increase gas-generation [pollution and electrical rates](#) in the regions in which they are built. No more hyperscale data centers and their associated polluting natural gas generating stations should be permitted until cumulative impacts to Ohio's watersheds and airsheds are studied.
5. Two years of drought means that Ohio must not allow large water users to be permitted until a full water balance study is done. With [land subsiding already](#) in Ohio because of droughts, and future [competition for the remaining water resources](#) are predicted.
6. ["This is not just about water. Modeling by researchers affiliated with the California Institute of Technology suggests that air pollution associated with data center growth could contribute to approximately 1,300 premature deaths annually nationwide by 2030, with an estimated public health burden approaching \\$20 billion."](#)

7. Dilution is not the solution to pollution, but Ohio's water is already at extreme risk, not only because of droughts, but because of the huge cumulative, consumptive extraction and destruction of Ohio's water by other large users such as fracking. Data centers, which can evaporate up to 80% of the water withdrawn for cooling add to water stress. Additionally, evaporation concentrates existing pollutants in water extracted for data centers, with the data centers themselves discharging additional concentrated toxic chemicals [such as PFAS or "forever chemicals,"](#) into water bodies like the Maumee River that are important drinking water sources.
8. These huge projects are permitted using "segmentation," which means no one is looking at the collective, cumulative impacts of the entire project – air permits, wastewater discharge permits, pipeline permits, construction permits, etc. which do not consider the pollution impacts in entirety. Segmentation allows polluters to operate next to each other, cumulatively and detrimentally impacting local environment and public health. More segmented permitting will be done for the OEPA air permits and for the two 16" diameter pipelines needed to feed the Apollo generating station.

Many people wonder why the AI Data Center ["house of cards"](#) is even being built. Your comments are important to raise questions and demand answers that our elected representatives have not. THANK YOU for writing to the OPSB to oppose the fast-tracking of Apollo and to demand better protections for Ohio so that the full costs of data center development are not paid by Ohioans in their costs for water, electricity, and even in their [healthcare!](#)