ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROJECT
DEFENDING PUBLIC HEALTH SINCE 2012

environmentalhealthproject.org

October 17, 2026

Beaver County Organizing Summit 2026: Data Centers
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Monaca United Methodist Church, 813 Indiana Ave, Monaca, PA 15061

Keynote address by Elan Justice Pavlinich regarding data center developments in Beaver County

Good morning. My name is Elan Justice Pavlinich, communications manager of the Environmental Health Project, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization committed to defending public health from the risks of oil and gas development. I'm also a long-time community member of Beaver County. I grew up in Vanport, moved away to earn my doctorate. Now, I'm back home, where the view outside of my window is overtaken by Shell Polymers Monaca, a petrochemical facility known as the Beaver Cracker Plant. We already deal with the daily anxieties of an industry that challenges public health. But now, **Beaver County is set to host a fleet of massive data centers, whether community members want them or not.**

- In Aliquippa, Fezzik Energy and Five 9s are developing a gas-powered data center — they are pre-approved to expand their development across the property beyond their initial development phase.

- In Midland, Mawson Infrastructure has converted a former steel mill into a hyperscale data center for AI and crypto mining.

- In Big Beaver Borough, Provident Data Centers purchased the former Pitt Race Complex; they are expected to submit a proposal for Switch to develop a data center campus.

- Finally, in Shippingport, Project Phoenix is already underway as developers clear the land for up to three gas-powered, hyperscale data centers. This will be situated near the former Bruce Mansfield Power Plant, which is also undergoing renovations to generate power using fracked gas. Both facilities are located on the same riverbank as the previously mentioned Beaver Cracker Plant.

We know that data centers affect quality of life. Recent model projections indicate that U.S. data centers nationwide may cause approximately 600,000 asthma symptom cases and 1,300 premature deaths. This is estimated to result in $20 billion in public health costs. Quality of life in Beaver County will suffer.

- First, there's the light pollution. Many data centers use 24/7 exterior lighting, which can disrupt sleep cycles, increasing risk of mood and anxiety disorders, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers.

- Then there's the noise pollution. Constant, low-frequency noise can lead to annoyance, sleep disturbances, higher blood pressure, mental fatigue, tinnitus, and cardiovascular disorders.

- Next, data centers increase energy costs. Large electricity users strain the grid and can drive up prices for regular rate payers—that's working-class families paying out of pocket for industries that degrade our hometowns. The Governor's executive order, GRID, is *optional* for developers. Even when they bring their own energy, there is no guarantee it is the safest energy production for nearby communities. Nor is it a guarantee that costs will remain low and data centers will not strain an already inadequate power grid. Without strong regulations, some residential rates may increase by up to 25%. By the way, utility rates have already increased.

- Plus, data centers consume massive amounts of water, elevating the risk of drought and waterborne disease risks.

- Finally, gas-powered data centers increase greenhouse gas emissions and raise temperatures, leading to more extreme weather, power outages, and health consequences. Data centers that run on fossil fuels, including diesel backup generators, emit toxic pollution that may contribute to approximately 1,300 premature deaths per year. The data centers being developed across Beaver County *will be powered by gas*. Pollutants from these facilities will travel for miles, affecting the air quality across Beaver County.

Data centers are fossil fuel developments. They will mostly be powered with fracked gas, supplemented by diesel backup generators. Fossil fuels are not "clean" energy sources — despite marketing that brands fossil fuels as "natural" or "clean" energy. When gas is combusted for power it emits significant pollutants, such as nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, fine particulate matter, and methane, which is a greenhouse gas that is 86 times more potent at trapping heat in the atmosphere than CO_2. Gas can leak from any faulty equipment and pollute the air for miles around. These pollutants are proven harmful to human health. After years of observing trends in health outcomes near gas infrastructure, researchers have documented increased instances of asthma, cardiovascular disease, cancers, hospitalizations, and early mortality. In other words, **those who live near gas facilities, including data centers, are at a higher risk of experiencing poor health symptoms** compared to those who live elsewhere.

Some claim these construction projects will be good for the local economy. But we've seen this before. Beaver County is no stranger to promises made by industry giants that only amount to economic disappointment. Once again, the industries we currently have polluting our environment have not delivered the benefits promised to Beaver County. As a Beaver County resident, I understand concerns about economic development, but history indicates that investments in more oil and gas infrastructure, such as gas-powered data centers, will not yield a long-term, sustainable economy. **Most data centers will operate largely "autonomously, [so they do not] produce many lasting full-time jobs." This is not the path towards economic prosperity.** Air, noise, and light pollution impose health risks onto nearby communities. More pollution-based illnesses mean more doctor bills, emergency room visits, medications, and days of missed work and school. These are negative financial impacts on families and local businesses, who are already struggling with rising costs and limited opportunities.

Noise pollution. Light pollution. Air pollution. Increasing utility costs. Threats to local water sources, temperatures, and climate change. Who is most immediately affected by the health risks associated

with data centers? Not developers. Not tech billionaires. Working-class families are most immediately affected.

Working class families who are already constrained by the rising costs of groceries, healthcare, and gas. Some of these data centers aren't even up and running, but they're already ramping up anxieties in our communities. I'm worried about my Mom, who lives less than a mile from a petrochemical facility that can't seem to operate without violating emissions standards — now she's got data centers to fret over. I'm worried about my nieces playing outside amid toxic emissions. I'm second guessing my choice to live in Beaver County. And I'm losing faith in the leaders charged with protecting public health and the environment.

The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, guarantees each of us the "right to clean air, pure water, and . . . esthetic values of the environment." Look around you. Your rights are being trampled by another gas-industry boom with consequences few people fully understand.

Speaking as a frontline resident myself, we cannot wait for developers to cultivate empathy for the people most likely to suffer the health consequences of data centers. The only people who are going to save us are us. We are the last line of defense.

We must be informed. We must organize. And we must act to ensure health protective ordinances are in place before it's too late. Speak up now. Tell your local council to protect public health and the environment with strong ordinances. Collective action is the only way we will combat this juggernaut. We need every voice.

Thank you.

Elan Justice Pavlinich, communications manager
Environmental Health Project

About the Environmental Health Project

The Environmental Health Project (EHP) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit public health organization that defends public health in the face of shale gas development. EHP provides frontline communities with timely monitoring, interpretation, and guidance while engaging diverse stakeholders: health professionals, researchers, community organizers, policy makers, and others.