

OPINION LETTERS

Letter: North Dakota deserves a say in its future — Not a data center invasion

"The future of our land and resources should be determined by those who live here, not dictated by corporations seeking profit at our expense.," writes Chair Curt Stofferahn.

Opinion by Curt Stofferahn

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My family's deep ties to the Dakota Resource Council date back to the early 1980s. With DRC's support, my father and brother, alongside other landowners, successfully fought against the proposed high voltage power line from Manitoba to Nebraska, proving there was insufficient demand for electricity. In the late 1980s, we again banded together with DRC to resist the Over the Horizon Backscatter Central Radar System, a relic of the Cold War that would have disrupted our farmland. These experiences instilled in me the belief that North Dakotans can push back against powerful interests.

For nearly 50 years, DRC has empowered communities to stand up against corporations and policymakers threatening our land, water, and livelihoods. In the 1970s, as coal development surged, landowners organized through DRC to combat reckless mining practices. Their advocacy led to a landmark state law on coal mining and reclamation, which influenced federal legislation. This fight was rooted in the protection of property rights, as energy companies often owned the mineral rights beneath farmers' fields, disrupting the lives of surface owners.

During the Bakken oil boom, DRC continued its mission, advocating for responsible development, stronger environmental protections, and fair treatment for surface owners. More recently, DRC took a stand against [Summit Carbon Solutions](#) and its plans for a hazardous CO₂ pipeline, which sought to use eminent domain to take private land for profit. Together with landowners, DRC affirmed that no corporation should have more rights than those who live and work the land.

Currently, DRC is fighting against the proposed siting of a massive 12,500-cow dairy in Abercrombie. Residents are worried about the potential impacts on their water supply, community dynamics, and the erosion of local control over large-scale developments.

Now we face a new threat: the aggressive push to site [enormous data centers](#) across our state. These projects pose risks of draining water resources, straining our energy infrastructure, and altering community landscapes without meaningful public input. In Harwood, a community near Fargo, residents are already grappling with a \$3 billion artificial intelligence data center imposed upon them without their consent.

This pattern of exploitation by outside corporate interests must end. DRC believes that North Dakotans deserve a voice in decisions affecting their communities and their property. Transparency, accountability, and respect are essential. The future of our land and resources should be determined by those who live here, not dictated by corporations seeking profit at our expense.

Just as our neighbors in Cogswell once united, we must stand together to defend our property rights and shape a future that benefits all North Dakotans, not just external entities. We need to collaborate with communities to mitigate the impacts of data centers and enact strong laws that protect residents and property owners while allowing for responsible economic development.

Curt Stofferahn, Fargo, is chair of the Dakota Resource Council.