INDEPENDENT RESEARCH REPORT

Who Is Building It

Virginia data center sites in the public permit record, by county, city and planning district

Companion to the version 1.0 dataset · Current through November 22, 2026

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PART ONE

Findings

1. SUMMARY

A data center leaves a record well before it runs: a state stormwater permit for the grading, an air permit for its generators, in some cases a Corps of Engineers notice for wetland fill, and a utility case for the line that will serve it. None of these records was built to track data centers. Read together, they show who is building in a county and under what permit.

This report reads them for every Virginia county and independent city. The dataset behind it holds 828 records, current through November 22, 2026, from seven public agency sources, with the author's March 2026 facility inventory alongside.[1] The 428 records drawn from state and federal permit filings and state grants are grouped into sites wherever the records themselves link one to another; the two that name no locality are not grouped.

What the record shows

- **Data center sites in the permit record: 247, in 26 counties and cities.** The count includes three that a hospital system or a bank runs for itself. Northern Virginia holds 168. The other 79 sit in 22 localities across 12 more planning districts, from Mecklenburg County on the North Carolina line to Botetourt County in the Roanoke Valley. Records join a site only where their own text links them, so one campus can appear as more than one site, and a project filed only under a code name that no record ties to a data center is not in the dataset.
- **The name on the permit is often the builder's.** Of the 131 active construction stormwater permits on data center sites in the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) list, 50 name a construction company as the operator, 15 firms in all. Another 60 name a data center company or one of its affiliates, and 21 name other parties, among them Mecklenburg County, Corporate Office Properties LP, COPT DC 11 LLC, COPT DC-12 LLC and Zebra Ventures LLC. A reader who searches the state's list for the company that will run the campus misses more than a third of the permits.
- **Holders change, and no source tested says when.** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) records the permittee when a coverage was issued. Of the 149 permits EPA and DEQ both carry, 31 were issued in 2019 and carried into the 2024 permit, and for eight of those the holder named in 2019 differs from the operator DEQ lists today. Neither agency's records, as tested, give the date a permit changed hands.
- **The state's sales tax exemption for data centers cannot be traced to a place in the published reports.** The Custom Grants report of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) carries a $140 million grant to Amazon Web Services, signed April 27, 2026, against a $50 billion investment target. Its comment says the exemption agreements for the data center sales and use tax have been signed for “the five target AWS communities.” The report does not name them.[2] The only public report on the exemption found gives statewide totals.[3]
- **Part of the record is in no source tested.** As of November 22, 2026, no source tested showed the acreage to be disturbed as stated on a stormwater registration statement or the

date a permit changed hands, and for the data center construction stormwater coverages in the dataset none named a holder before the 2019 statewide permit.

What the record cannot support

The dataset counts records, and sites built from records, in these sources on one date. It is not a census of data centers. It does not measure power or water, it carries acreage only where a source prints it, and it does not rank localities. A county with no data center site here has nothing that matched in these sources on that date, which is a narrower claim than having nothing planned.

2. WHAT THE DATASET HOLDS

Every row names its source. The state and federal permit filings and state grants make up 428 of the 828 rows: 174 stormwater and water permits from DEQ and EPA, 116 air permits from EPA, 97 filings from the state's permit tracker, 39 Corps of Engineers notices and two state grants. Another 112 rows hold 110 State Corporation Commission (SCC) cases on transmission lines, substations and large loads; two cases name two localities each and appear once for each. The author's March 2026 facility inventory adds 288 rows for 286 projects, one project naming three localities.

Records are placed by county or independent city and by planning district; Sections 6 and 7 give the rules and account for the records left unplaced. Records in the permit filings and grants are then grouped into sites, and each site carries a type: data center; enterprise data center, one a hospital, bank or other business runs for itself; utility; mitigation; road or access; filing with no site named; or state grant, which is not a permit and is not counted as a data center site. Inventory and utility-case rows are not grouped; they stand beside the sites as context.

Builder-held stormwater permits that no source labels a data center are not in the public files, because a public record should not call a company's permit a data center when the permit does not. A record found by a broader search term, such as tech park, that names no data center, operator or site code enters only when it shares a printed link with a site whose records do. Individuals named in filings are withheld; companies, agencies and utilities appear as the record prints them.

How it relates to other work

A register of 146 data center maps and trackers, earlier in this series, grades what each one can and cannot show.[4] The statewide fiscal report rests on the facility inventory that this dataset carries as one layer.[5] The Entitlement Route Register and its report record how each locality approves a data center.[6,7] This dataset adds the permit-level record: which agency holds each record, and under whose name.

PART TWO

The record

3. WHERE THE SITES ARE

The 247 data center sites fall in 13 of Virginia's 21 planning districts.[8] Table 1 gives the count for each district with records, along with all records placed there and the localities they name. A locality that belongs to two districts counts in both.

Table 1. Data center sites and records by planning district, November 22, 2026

Planning district	Data center sites	All records	Localities with records
Northern Virginia	168	449	Fairfax County, Loudoun County, City of Manassas, City of Manassas Park, Prince William County
PlanRVA	20	81	Charles City County, Chesterfield County, Goochland County, Hanover County, Henrico County, New Kent County, City of Richmond
George Washington	12	53	Caroline County, City of Fredericksburg, King George County, Spotsylvania County, Stafford County
Southside	19	63	Brunswick County, Mecklenburg County
Crater	7	33	Charles City County, Chesterfield County, City of Hopewell, Prince George County, Surry County
Rappahannock-Rapidan	11	38	Culpeper County, Fauquier County, Orange County
Northern Shenandoah Valley	2	3	Frederick County, Shenandoah County
Thomas Jefferson	6	21	City of Charlottesville, Louisa County
Hampton Roads	1	9	City of Norfolk, City of Suffolk, Surry County, City of Virginia Beach
Roanoke Valley-Alleghany	3	6	Botetourt County, Roanoke County
West Piedmont	0	2	Pittsylvania County
Central Virginia	3	4	Amherst County, Appomattox County, City of Lynchburg
Commonwealth Regional	0	1	Charlotte County
New River Valley	1	2	Floyd County, Pulaski County
Central Shenandoah	1	2	City of Harrisonburg
Lenowisco	0	2	Scott County, Wise County

A locality that belongs to two planning districts counts in both, so the columns sum to more than the statewide totals.

The largest counts of data center sites by locality are Loudoun County 95, Prince William County 53, Mecklenburg County 18, Fairfax County 16, Henrico County 10, Culpeper County 8, Chesterfield County 6, Louisa County 6. Northern Virginia holds 168 of the 247 sites, about 68 percent. The 79 elsewhere sit in 22 localities, from Mecklenburg County's Microsoft campuses on the North Carolina line to the Google sites in Chesterfield and Botetourt counties.

No data center site turned up in eight districts: West Piedmont, Commonwealth Regional, Cumberland Plateau, Lenowisco, Mount Rogers, Accomack-Northampton, Middle Peninsula, Northern Neck. Records of other kinds sit in three of them: West Piedmont (two inventory rows), Commonwealth Regional (one stormwater or water permit), Lenowisco (two inventory rows). Nothing in these sources matched in the others on November 22, 2026.

Of the 247 sites, 165 rest on a single record and 82 gather two or more. Where a Northern Virginia campus holds its air permit under one name and its stormwater permit under another, at street numbers that do not match, the rules in Section 7 keep the two apart.

4. WHO HOLDS THE PERMITS

A construction stormwater permit is required before grading starts on a site above the state's size threshold. Its holder is whoever signs the registration as operator, which can be the general contractor rather than the company that will own or run the building.[9]

Of the 131 active permits on data center sites in DEQ's list, 50 name a construction company, 15 firms in all, among them E.E. Reed Construction, HITT Contracting, Whiting-Turner, DPR Construction, Clark Construction, Turner Construction, Skanska and Clayco. Another 60 name a data center company or an affiliate, often a single-purpose company named for the site. The other 21 name other parties, among them Mecklenburg County, Corporate Office Properties LP, COPT DC 11 LLC, COPT DC-12 LLC and Zebra Ventures LLC. The split rests on the operator's name as printed: a name containing Construction or Contracting counts as a construction company, as do four builders named without those words, Skanska USA Building, Clayco, The Weitz Company and Team Fishel. A name containing data center, data ctr, data bank or data hub, or one of the operator names listed in the codebook, counts as a data center company. The dataset carries the split in its holder kind column.

EPA's Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) adds a second name for most of the DEQ-listed permits: the permittee when the coverage was issued.[10] DEQ lists the operator now. Of the 150 DEQ-listed permits in the dataset, 149 carry both names, and 31 of those were issued in 2019 and carried into the 2024 permit, so EPA's name is the 2019 holder. Table 2 lists the eight of those where the two names differ. Names that differ only in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, truncation or a letter suffix are not counted as different.

Table 2. Permits whose 2019 holder differs from today's operator

Permit	Locality	Holder named in 2019 (EPA ECHO)	Operator today (DEQ)
VAR10P913	Loudoun County	AREP Beaumeade LLC	C1 Beaumeade LLC
VAR10O169	Loudoun County	Amazon Data Services Inc	HITT Contracting, Inc.
VAR10J072	Loudoun County	Clune Construction Company LP	QTS Investment Properties Ashburn, LLC
VAR10T165	Mecklenburg County	Ames Construction Inc	HITT Contracting, Inc.
VAR10S447	Mecklenburg County	Glover Construction Co, Inc	Skanska USA Building Inc
VAR10O602	Mecklenburg County	Walbridge Aldinger LLC	The Weitz Company
VAR10S103	Mecklenburg County	Ames Construction Inc	HITT Contracting Inc
VAR10P531	Prince William County	Ashburn Acquisition Co LLC	QTS Manassas I DC4, LLC

The changes run in more than one direction. In Mecklenburg County four permits passed to a construction company: Ames Construction to HITT twice, Glover Construction to Skanska, Walbridge Aldinger to Weitz. In Loudoun County one went from a data center company, Amazon Data Services, to HITT, one from Clune Construction to a QTS company, and one from AREP Beaumeade LLC to C1 Beaumeade LLC. In Prince William County one went from an acquisition company to a QTS company. Neither agency's records, as tested, give the date of the change, and the dataset records none.

EPA also holds 24 permits on sites in the dataset that are not on DEQ's active construction list. Of these, 18 are construction stormwater coverages: 12 are marked terminated and keep the holder and project names of work that has ended, and six are shown in EPA's file as continued from 2019. The other six are water permits of other kinds, which that list does not cover.

5. WHAT THE INCENTIVE REPORTS SHOW

VEDP publishes performance reports on the state's grant programs each fall, as of June 30.[11] The 2026 editions of the Opportunity Fund, Major Eligible Employer, Virginia Economic Development Investment Grant and Virginia Investment Partnership reports carry no data center row. The 2025 Opportunity Fund post-performance report listed one: a $1.5 million grant to Microsoft in Mecklenburg County, project 2018-140262, marked as meeting its targets. It does not appear in the 2026 edition.[12]

The 2026 Custom Grants report carries the largest data center commitment in these records. Project 2022-142442 is a $140 million grant to Amazon Web Services, with the memorandum signed April 27, 2026, a performance date of December 31, 2040, a target of 1,500 jobs and a capital investment target of $50 billion. Nothing had been paid as of June 30. The locality column reads “Multiple,” and the comment says the exemption agreements for the data center sales and use tax have been signed for “the five target AWS communities.”[2] The report names none of them, so the dataset carries the grant without a locality.

The exemption works differently. A data center signs a memorandum of understanding with VEDP before using it,[13] but the public report found on its use is a biennial report from the Department of Taxation that gives statewide totals.[3] No public source tested lists the exemption by company or by locality.

PART THREE

Method

6. SOURCES

Table 3 gives each source: the seven agency sources, the author's inventory and the planning district directory, with what each adds, when it was read and what it leaves out. The state and federal sources were read on November 22, 2026.[9,10,14,15,16,11,8] The permit tracker covers DEQ, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) filings. The inventory is as of March 2026.

Table 3. Sources

Source	What it gives	Read	Limits
DEQ Active Construction Stormwater Permit List	Active construction stormwater coverages (VAR10): permit number, current operator, project name, address, locality, effective date	Full list exported November 22, 2026 (6,048 rows)	Active coverages only; no acreage; the effective date of a coverage carried over from 2019 is the 2024 reissuance
EPA ECHO, Clean Water Act	Stormwater and water permits, including ended coverages; county; permittee when the coverage was issued; issue and termination dates	Statewide file downloaded November 22, 2026 (18,873 facilities); ECHO dates the underlying ICIS-NPDES extract November 13, 2026	No acreage or transfer dates; status can lag DEQ
EPA ECHO, Clean Air Act	Air permits, including generator fleets at operating campuses; facility name and street address	Statewide file downloaded November 22, 2026 (10,321 facilities)	A campus appears once it holds an air permit
Virginia Permit Transparency	DEQ, VDOT and VMRC filings: applicant, agent, facility, locality, program, status, date received	Full table exported November 22, 2026 (28,422 rows)	Depth varies by program; the table changes daily
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Norfolk District public notices	Notices for projects that need a federal wetland or stream permit; summaries with applicant, site, acreage or impacts	Notices for 2022 through November 19, 2026, read November 22, 2026	Only projects with federal wetland or stream impacts
State Corporation Commission dockets	Transmission, substation and large-load cases	Case index read November 22, 2026; 110 utility cases from 2018 to 2026 selected	Captions often name a line or substation, not a locality
VEDP incentive reports	State grants with company, locality, targets and results	Program reports as of June 30, 2026, and the Opportunity Fund post-performance report as of June 30, 2025, read November 22, 2026	The data center sales and use tax exemption appears in the reports found only as statewide totals
Project inventory (author)	Known Virginia facilities and projects, including proposed, rejected and withdrawn	As of March 2026: 286 projects in 288 rows (a project naming three localities has a row for each)	Not refreshed against later local actions
VAPDC directory	Planning district membership	Read November 22, 2026	Overlapping memberships kept as printed

A record enters the dataset when it names a data center, a data center operator or a data center site code, or when it is a water permit held by a data center operator. A utility case from 2018 to 2026 enters when an electric utility's or cooperative's caption names transmission or electric facilities, a substation or switching station, a kV line, a delivery point, a data center, a large load or a hyperscale energy affiliate. Records are placed by the locality they print. Where a stormwater record gives a city but no county, it is placed in the county EPA gives most often for that city, and one record with no locality at all, VAR10V837, is placed in Culpeper County because its street address matches an EPA air permit there. Two Stafford Technology Campus permits that ECHO places in Spotsylvania County are placed in Stafford County, whose stormwater program

DEQ lists them under. One inventory row names no locality and is not placed. Utility cases are placed only when the caption names the locality or a published volume places the case: 18 by caption and six by an earlier volume in the series.[17] Of the other 86, 69 are listed without a locality and 17 are statewide rate and policy cases.

7. FROM RECORDS TO SITES

Records are grouped into one site only where their own text links them: the same site code within one locality where no record names a different operator, the same street address, the same project or campus name, the same Corps or VMRC notice number, or the same named company. Each group in the dataset states which link joined it. A record with no such link is its own site. Utility-held permits are kept out of data center sites, even at a data center's address. Utility work held by a builder or operator, such as a substation, stays in a campus's site when its records link to the campus, and otherwise stands as its own utility site. A Corps notice and the AWS grant carry no locality and are not grouped.

The rule joins records only on a link printed in the records themselves, and that costs accuracy. A campus filed under unrelated names appears as more than one site. A project filed only under a code name that no record ties to a data center is missing from the count. Neither error can be sized from these sources.

Table 4. Sites by type, November 22, 2026

Site type	Sites
Data center	244
Enterprise data center	3
Utility	17
Mitigation	2
Road or access	3
Filing with no site named	6
State grant	1

8. WHAT NO SOURCE TESTED SHOWS

As of November 22, 2026, no source tested showed the acreage to be disturbed as stated on a stormwater registration statement. The statement asks for the total site area and the area to be disturbed, and it is filed with whichever authority reviews the project's stormwater plan: DEQ, or the county, city or town that runs its own program.[18] No source tested showed the date a permit changed hands, and for the data center construction stormwater coverages in the dataset none named a holder before the 2019 statewide permit. Registration statements sit with the authority that received them, and none of the sources tested posts them.

9. UPDATES AND VERSIONS

The author checks every agency source monthly. When a check finds new or changed records, a new version is deposited with a new “Current through” date, no more than once a month. When it finds none, the “Current through” date moves forward in the Zenodo record's notes and the files keep the date of their own build. A full source audit re-pulls every agency source in full at

least once a quarter, and “Last full source audit” gives its date. This report is revised with each quarterly audit, or sooner when a finding it states changes. For version 1.0 both dates are November 22, 2026; the inventory keeps its March 2026 date. The concept DOI resolves to the latest version.

NOTES

1. Tommy N. Turner, *Who Is Building It: Virginia Data Center Sites in the Public Permit Record (dataset)*, version 1.0, current through November 22, 2026. DOI 10.5281/zenodo.24447222. Every count in this report is computed from its files.
2. Virginia Economic Development Partnership, “Status report on Custom Grants projects - Inception through present,” as of June 30, 2026, project 2022-142442, vedp.org/incentives-reporting.
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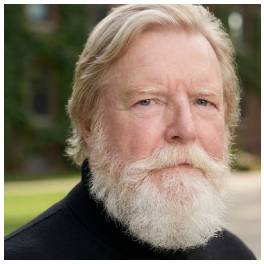
17. Tommy N. Turner, *Concentrated Benefit, Dispersed Burden*, version 1.3, note 19. Zenodo. doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21895588.
18. Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, General VPDES Permit for Discharges of Stormwater from Construction Activities (VAR10), Registration Statement 2024, section II.C, ris.dls.virginia.gov/uploads/9VAC25/forms/.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tommy N. Turner is an independent researcher on land use, grid and local government policy, based in Williamsburg and Christiansburg, Virginia. He is the author of the Virginia Data Center Series: 51 reports, case studies and datasets, built from public records, on the data center buildout in Virginia, Georgia and Tennessee. He writes From the Record, a column for RTO Insider.

This report belongs to that series. Its counts are rows in a deposited dataset, and each row names the record it rests on.

His work also appears in Planetizen, Cardinal News and Virginia Mercury, and his op-eds have run in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, The Virginian-Pilot and Daily Press, The Virginia Gazette and The Roanoke Times.

Roughly three decades in corporate banking, banking technology and consulting preceded the research, including two years of corporate banking at Wachovia and seventeen years running banking systems through ownership transitions at Logica, Misys and Zoot Enterprises. He holds an MBA in Finance from Emory University's Goizueta Business School, a BBA in Accounting and Economics from the University of West Georgia, and a Higher Education Teaching Certificate from Harvard's Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. Since July 2026, Turner has served on the advisory board of Data Centers and the Southern Energy Buildout: Implications for Electricity Costs, Energy Transition, and Energy Justice, a three-year Sloan Foundation-funded study at Emory University. This report is independent, self-funded work and is not part of that study.

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