TUWaterWays

Amazon reaches Chile

No, we don't mean the giant forest somehow spread across the Andes; we're talking about the debatably equally giant international company. Amazon has announced its plan to open two new data centers in Chile. As a reminder, just a year ago it was revealed that data centers that power artificial intelligence take up a lot of water. Seriously, a LOT of water. But how does AI use water if it technically exists in the air, like Wi-Fi, cellular data or humidity? Well, while technically true, these technologies still need servers and computers to exist, which require huge amounts of energy, resulting in high temperatures. This is where water comes in. To keep the systems from overheating, data centers need cooling towers which creates the need to pump millions of gallons of water to carry out the process. To balance it out, Amazon also released their new water replenishment plan in Chile and other countries. The idea is to partner with local farmers and Kilimo, a climate-tech company, to reduce the water usage from the Maipo Basin, the main water source for Chile's capital city, Santiago. This partnership will replace flood irrigation with drip irrigation, which would save an estimated 200 million liters of water per year. Yet, as much as Amazon is publicizing the idea to conserve water by limiting farmers' activities, it has yet to detail how much water it'll be using for its own data centers.

But it's all okay because in 2022, Amazon announced it will become water positive by 2030. Although if you really think about it, it's not okay. Even though countries in Latin America are known for their water abundance, in recent years, droughts caused by many factors like El Niño, La Niña, climate change, and water consumption have reached dangerous levels. Even the historically water-rich countries are at risk. Chile is experiencing one of its worst water crises and has earned the unfortunate designation of being one of the most water stressed countries in the world, according to the World Resources Institute, fearing its water supply could run out by 2040.

Despite Chile's water stress levels, Amazon is not the only big tech company who has its eye (AI?) on Chile. Earlier this year, a court in Chile partially reversed Google's permit to build a data center over environmental concerns due to its effects on climate change and the amount of water usage the project would involve. Pretty ironic how this decision came after Google's own water sustainability pledge was announced. Not to be left behind, Microsoft and Meta are also using a similar climate strategy to Amazon, by announcing its own water pledges by 2030. And all of this sounds great. But, until all of these companies publish their own water withdrawal quantities to make sure their replenishment measurements add up, these pledges are just that – pledges.

Now, let's drive it back to the U.S. for a sec. Tucked away up in North Virginia is a little area known as Data Center Alley, which got that nickname because an estimated of 70% of the world's internet traffic travels through each day. Data centers in the U.S. used over 75 billion gallons of water last year. Data centers in the Data Center Alley region alone used around 1.85 billion gallons of water last year (up from 1.15 billion in 2019). Currently, 28.4% of Virginia is under a drought, most of which is concentrated in Northern Virginia, and experiencing a high-impact drought in 2023. Nationwide speaking, data centers now account approximately 2% of the total U.S. electricity use, and that's only expected to increase. Why Virginia? Tax incentives. Regardless of where these data centers are being built, companies should take into account to the water stress and drought reality their residents are living in. And in return, government

officials should know to stop giving away licenses when water is so scarce, that they have to decide between a data center and its own residents. It's so obvious even ChatGPT would tell ya this.

Do You Promise? [Forever ever](#)?

Yesterday, New Orleans city council passed a new ordinance regarding water billing, which will [end the Sewerage and Water Board's billing problems FOREVER](#). Well, they're hoping it will. The New Orleans S&WB has a [reputation](#) for its inaccurate billing system, resulting in many complaints from the city residents. So much so that it was proposed to hire an [independent accounting firm](#) to handle the job. The [new billing rules](#) will prohibit the use of estimated meter readings and offer customers the option for fixed bill amounts. This goes hand in hand with recent [state law](#) that mandates fixed billing to be an option. The [rules also allow](#) for an independent contractor to make sure bills are accurate before sent out, and, in the event of a dispute, a new sped up process to appeal them. City council is giving this [firm the power to make unilateral adjustments to the bills](#) after reviewing evidence provided by costumers and S&WB and allowing for appeals to be resolved via arbitration. With the promise of better billing tomorrow, forever can't come [soon enough](#).

Research Assistants [In the Summertime](#)

With the summer having just wrapped, we'd like to give a shoutout to our student research assistants who, despite the heat (and water-related dad jokes), stayed with us all [summer](#). We seriously couldn't do what we do without them, and we are a much better and well-rounded shop because of the perspectives and experiences they bring to the table. With that, help us thank these fine students:

[Ben Singer](#)- Junior at Tulane double majoring in Environmental Studies and Ecology.

[Holly Haney](#) – 2L at Tulane University School of Law / Bachelor in Psychology and English with a minor in Spanish.

[Lyla Klein](#) – Senior at Tulane double majoring in Environmental Studies and Psychology, and minoring in Business.

[McKenna Chow](#) – Junior at Tulane double majoring in Environmental Biology and Spanish.

[Navya Kolli](#) – 2L at Tulane University School of Law / Bachelor of Applied Geoscience and Political Science.

[Sonya Bierbaum](#) – Senior at Tulane double majoring in Public Health and International Development.

[Sophie Weiner](#)- Senior at Dartmouth double majoring in Psychology and History Modified with Art History.

Thank y'all for the hard and fantastic work you did [last summer](#)!

Coming Up:

[State of the Coast 2025](#)
Proposals Deadline September 23, 2024

[How to Prepare Your Wastewater Utility for Disasters; EPA Webinar](#)
September 19, 2024

[Public Meetings for the Amite River Basin Commission Master Plan](#)
Livingston Parish - Sept. 9th
St. Helena - East Feliciana – Sept. 10th
Ascension - St. James – Iberville – Sept. 16th
East Baton Rouge Parish – Sept. 18th

Water jobs:

[Policy Fellow;](#) Louisiana Public Service Commission; Southeast LA

[Visiting Professor (Clinical Assistant Professor);](#) Tulane Environmental Law Clinic; New Orleans, LA

[Wildlife Biologist/Ecologist;](#) The Water Institute, Baton Rouge LA

[Attorney-Advisor (General);](#) Department of Commerce, Silver Spring, MD

The [Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy](#) is a program of the Tulane University Law School. The Institute is dedicated to fostering a greater appreciation and understanding of the vital role that water plays in our society and of the importance of the legal and policy framework that shapes the uses and legal stewardship of water.

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