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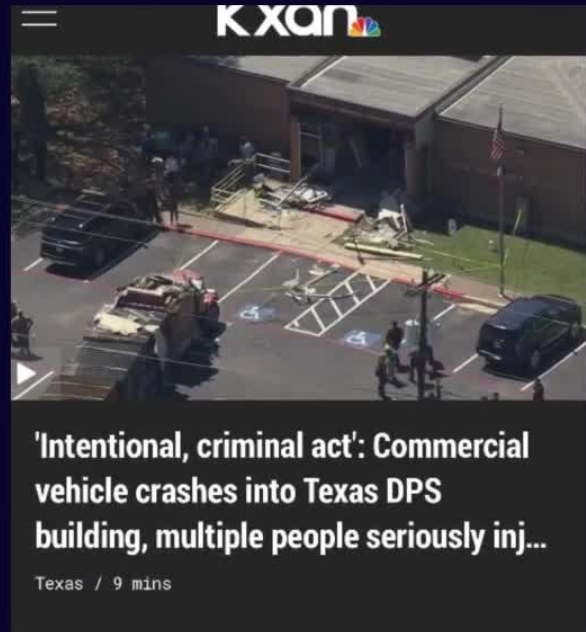
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water use by 2040, study finds

by: [Paulina Mata](#)

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TYLER, Texas (KETK) — Researchers from the University of Texas at Austin are calling for transparency in data center water use after new studies suggest the industry could potentially account for up to 9% of the state’s water usage within the next 20 years.

The white paper, “[Water Use Requirements for Data Centers in Texas](#),” examines water issues related to the state’s growing data center industry. Right now, it uses less than 1% of the state’s water, but could increase depending on the industry’s growth, the cooling technologies used and the electrical power source.

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“There’s a lot of uncertainty surrounding the water use for data centers,” Mariam Arzumanyan, a postdoctoral fellow at the Bureau of Economic Geology and a research unit of the UT Jackson School of Geosciences, said. “People don’t know the scale of how much water is going to be needed. There is not a unified understanding of the technologies used for cooling, or how much water that technology would use.”

As artificial intelligence needs grow across the country, more than 400 data centers are currently in operation or under construction in the state, with several planned for East Texas. With this growth, water use could amount to 3% to 9% of the state’s total by 2040.

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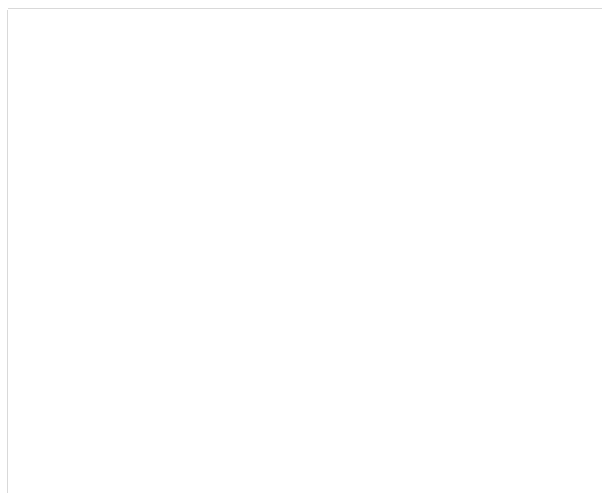


The estimates from the study, developed by the Bureau of Economic Geology’s COMPASS research consortium, include the water used on-site to cool computer servers and the water needed to generate the energy that powers the facilities.

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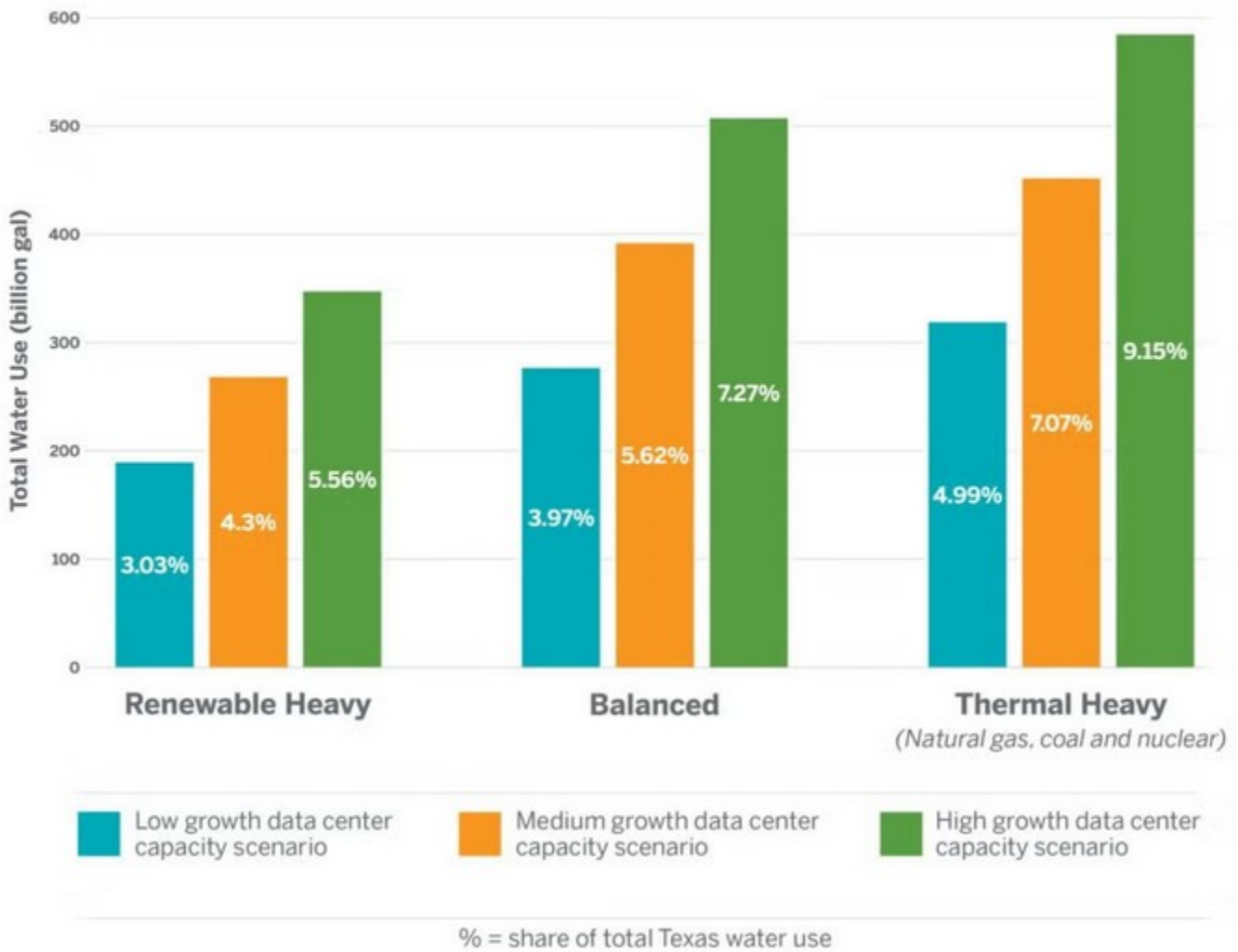
“The latter is significant because data centers use a lot of power, and much of the state’s power production comes from natural gas, coal or nuclear energy, which themselves consume significant volumes of water for cooling — about 5% of the state’s water use,” UT Austin said in a press release.

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2040 Projected Data Center Water Use in Texas

By ERCOT Grid Fuel Mix Scenario



Courtesy of UT Jackson School of Geosciences

The white paper also includes policy recommendations for water use and emerging data centers. Researchers said a planning framework is vital as Texas water is governed by several entities — from cities and private suppliers to river authorities and the state.

Texas is giving data centers more than \$1 billion in tax breaks each year



of the state.

- Create integrated planning frameworks that combine hydrologic projections, grid capacity models, land-use constraints and permitting processes.

COMPASS is actively working with industry representatives and state and municipal officials to develop a “consistent framework to discuss and analyze water issues related to data centers,” the press release said.

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