

Gary Kowalski

Like most other Americans, people in New Mexico are not clamoring for more AI data centers, massive projects whose costs are obvious and immediate and whose benefits (aside from enriching the billionaires who own and control the tech companies) are hypothetical and down the road. Project Jupiter is going to produce around 25 billion pounds of CO2 every year, roughly twelve times the emissions from the entire city of Las Cruces. It will emit large quantities of methane, an even more potent greenhouse gas. In our desert state, which has been in severe drought for years, it will require vast amounts of water for coolants. Its effect on climate warming will mean New Mexico becomes at ever higher risk of wildfires in a fire season that never ends. Burning forests reduces air quality. So the costs to the environment are obvious, while the benefits of a future economy driven by AI are dubious. AI is already sabotaging young people's education, from elementary school through the university level. It threatens to lead to massive unemployment. As it blurs the distinction between reality and "virtual reality," our political life and news reporting are endangered. Not to mention the very real risk that AI may lead to human extinction.

So what's to like about Project Jupiter? It makes a very few people very wealthy. It's a bad bargain for New Mexico, however, a bad bargain for America, and a bad bargain for our planet.