

March 3, 2026

Urbana City Council Meeting
Champaign County Community Center – 1512 S US Hwy 68

RE: Potential Impacts to Cedar Bog National Natural Landmark

Good evening Councilmembers,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight. My name is Nathan Johnson, Senior Attorney for the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund. The OEC Action Fund is a (c)(4) public interest advocacy organization. Our vision is a clean, healthy Ohio where democracy empowers all communities to thrive in harmony with the environment. We work in a bipartisan nature with local, state, and federal governments to realize this vision.

The OEC Action Fund respectfully requests that Council place a moratorium on any data-center related project approvals until the safety of Cedar Bog National Natural Landmark is assured. Robust scientific and hydrogeologic analysis must be undertaken and the safety of Cedar Bog must be clearly demonstrated before any hyper-scale building project could be responsibly approved.

House Bill 646, sponsored by Republican Representatives Gary Click and Kelli Deeter, and co-sponsored by Urbana’s State Representative Tim Barhorst, is rapidly proceeding through the Ohio House of Representatives, passing the committee vote earlier this week. The legislation would establish a comprehensive statewide study commission on the impacts that data centers have on our communities, development, clean water, energy demand, and other unintended impacts. It would be a mistake for this body to approve a new data center, especially given the unique environmentally sensitive location, before the findings of this commission can be understood, and before adequate site-specific hydrogeologic and environmental analyses have been completed.

Ohio has lost well over 90 percent of our wetlands. Cedar Bog is no ordinary wetland. And we cannot afford to lose it.

Cedar Bog is nationally significant – a formally designated National Natural Landmark. This local, state, and national treasure has been here for thousands of years. A single wrong decision could destroy it forever.



Cedar Bog is Ohio's first state-designated nature preserve. As the Ohio History Connection website states: "If nature preserves got grades, Cedar Bog would merit an A+." Cedar Bog boasts more plant biodiversity than any other place in the entire state of Ohio. The Bog, which is actually a fen, is a sensitive ecosystem. It depends entirely on the continuous flow of clean, cool groundwater throughout the year. This point cannot be said enough, so I will repeat myself: Cedar Bog is completely dependent on its source of groundwater. If something happens to the groundwater -- if the volume decreases or if the temperature increases, we will lose Cedar Bog and its biodiversity.

Large "hyperscale" data centers use enough energy to power entire cities and can use more than 365 million gallons of water per year. That is more water than 12,000 Americans use in a year. Any city council presented with a facility of this nature – proposed to be in close proximity to a National Natural Landmark like Cedar Bog -- should demand solid answers to a host of important questions. Some of those questions include:

- Where will the project get its water supply?
- Is the water source the same as that feeding Cedar Bog?
- How much water will be withdrawn?
- How much water will be withdrawn per day?
- How will wastewater discharges be handled?
- Will there be discharges to groundwater?
- And of course, in this case, will Cedar Bog be harmed?

These questions must be answered.

The loss of Cedar Bog would be the loss of Ohio's number one botanical biodiversity hotspot. It would mean the loss of National Natural Landmark status. No one wants to be responsible for a loss of this magnitude and notoriety. A data center moratorium will provide Council with the space and time needed to get clear answers to these vital questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Nathan Johnson
Senior Attorney, Land & Water
Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund