Frequently Asked Questions

Stratos Project Area

Overview

What is the project?

The Stratos Project Area is an energy and technology infrastructure initiative in western Box Elder County designed to strengthen national security and Utah's long-term economic competitiveness. Approved by the MIDA Board of Directors and the Box Elder County Commission, the project supports the development of a large-scale data and energy campus that will help power artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and mission-critical defense operations.

How big is the proposed data center?

While the entire project area encompasses 40,000 acres, most of the acres will remain undeveloped. The different types of power generation contemplated for the data center have different footprints. For example, solar will require a larger footprint than natural gas. The actual data center footprint will be a fraction of the size of the MIDA project area. The majority of the remaining acreage will remain as open space, allowing for wildlife corridors, continued grazing, and significant distance from the Great Salt Lake. Salt Lake City is closer to the Great Salt Lake than the proposed data center.

What are the project benefits?

The project is expected to bring significant private investment, generate long-term local and state revenue, support thousands of construction jobs and permanent careers, and fund needed public infrastructure.

Process and Governance

What has been approved related to the creation of the Stratos Project Area?

On April 24, 2026, the Military Installation Development Authority (MIDA) Board of Directors approved the creation of the Stratos Project Area in western Box Elder County. On May 4, the Box Elder County Commission approved an interlocal agreement and a resolution to agree to the new MIDA project area.

Did these votes approve the full project within the project area?

No. This is just the beginning of a multi-step process in collaboration with Box Elder County and stakeholders across Utah. Development is expected to occur in phases over multiple years, with

further planning, infrastructure coordination, state regulatory permitting processes, and community engagement. MIDA will also create a Design Review Committee, as seen in other MIDA project areas, that will be largely represented by Box Elder County expert staff and a local landowner. DRC meetings are public.

What studies and approvals are still required before construction can begin?
Multiple state agencies will provide oversight and review, including:

- The Division of Air Quality will evaluate projected air pollutant emissions and mandate specific control techniques.
- The Division of Drinking Water will review drinking water systems and ensure they are physically separate from water used for cooling, fire protection, or power generation. Source approval, facilities, certified operators, and reporting will ensure public health and safety.
- The Division of Water Quality requires permits for all surface water and groundwater discharges to waters of the state, including the Great Salt Lake.
- The Division of Water Rights evaluates water availability and received a water right change application on March 25. However, it was withdrawn on May 6. The applicant has indicated the intent to refile and provide more information. Every water rights application follows the same legal process, which includes a 20-day public comment period.
- The Division of Wildlife Resources can review potential impacts and provide recommendations to minimize and/or mitigate impacts to wildlife once a formal plan is submitted. Typically, for projects on public land, that process is conducted through the Resource Development Coordinating Committee, a state-level committee that serves as a "clearinghouse" for projects or policies that affect Utah's public lands and natural resources.

Will there be more opportunities for public input on the state permitting approvals?
Yes, there will be opportunities for public comment as the project moves through state review and permitting. For example:

- Every water right change application submitted to the Division of Water Rights has a 20-day public comment period.
- No "Notice of Intent" has been submitted to the Division of Air Quality, but a draft permit will be subject to a 30-day public comment period and a public hearing if requested.
- At the Division of Water Quality, there are multiple permit possibilities that would require a rigorous public notice process to ensure community awareness and involvement.

Why is MIDA involved in creating this project area?

The Undersecretary of the Air Force asked MIDA to find locations for independent energy and computing power because supporting energy resilience, computing power and data storage is critical for defense operations. The MIDA Stratos Project Area supports federal Executive Orders addressing national energy resilience and the development of critical infrastructure.

How can the public, as well as local officials and county staff, stay involved in future decisions about the project?

Development is expected to occur in phases over multiple years, with further planning, infrastructure coordination, state regulatory permitting processes, and community engagement. MIDA will also create a Design Review Committee, as seen in other MIDA project areas, that will be largely represented by Box Elder County expert staff and a local landowner. DRC meetings are public.

Water and Environmental Impact

Don't data centers use a lot of water?

Historically, data centers relied on evaporative cooling systems and grid-connected power sources that could indirectly require significant water. New technology is more water-efficient. This project is fundamentally different and would use a closed-loop chilling system combined with dry (air-based) cooling. There is no continuous water draw.

What is a closed-loop system?

- Cooling fluid circulates entirely within sealed piping and equipment
- It is never exposed to the outside environment
- It is not consumed during operation
- It is reused continuously

Water is only used for:

- Initial system fill (one-time)
- Minor maintenance

Where will the water come from?

The development team is purchasing water from private landowners. It will not come from the Great Salt Lake. The systems use only existing water rights attached to private property, which means the project will have lower net consumption than current agricultural or ranching use. This reduction in

water use will create a net benefit to the Great Salt Lake watershed. Additionally, the advanced closed-loop system will result in less net consumption compared to traditional data center operations.

Will this project affect the Great Salt Lake or local groundwater?
The water for this project will not come from the Great Salt Lake and is not new water. It is currently used for agricultural irrigation and comes from the water rights of the property owners from whom they are acquiring the land.

Because the cooling systems reuse water internally, ongoing water demand at the campus is projected to be similar to that of a large office complex, with most water use limited to everyday needs such as restrooms, sinks, and employee facilities.

The Division of Water Quality requires a permit for all surface water and groundwater discharges to waters of the state, including the Great Salt Lake. This is the primary mechanism for pollution prevention.

Will the project be on the lake's edge?
Proximity to the lake is an important consideration and will be mitigated. The nearest data center to the lake would be about 10 miles away, separated by an expansive stretch of open space. For comparison, Salt Lake City is closer to the Great Salt Lake than the proposed data center.

What air quality, water rights, and environmental reviews are still required?
The project developer is required to comply with all state approvals and permits. As with any project, significant studies, approvals, and permits are needed, including air quality, water quality, and drinking water permits from the Department of Environmental Quality and water rights approvals from the Department of Natural Resources.

Energy and Infrastructure

Will the project draw from the existing grid or generate its own power?
The development will produce all power on site; it is stand-alone power that will not add pressure to the grid.

Will this raise power bills for Utah residents?
No. A newly constructed on-site power generation plant will independently power the campus.

Economic Impact and Community Benefits

What benefits would Box Elder County residents receive?

At full build-out, the developer has committed to a projected 2,000 permanent jobs in skilled trade, logistics, IT, and administrative positions to county residents. It will also provide thousands of construction jobs over a ten-year period.

Tax revenues can be used at the county's discretion to support infrastructure and community needs, including local schools. All public infrastructure for the project area will be paid for by the developer, not county taxpayers.

During and after construction, land will be leased back to local ranchers for grazing.

What benefits would Box Elder County receive?

In the initial phases, the county is expected to receive $30 million in new revenues annually.
At full build-out, that could increase to $108 million annually from the energy and data center complex alone. Because the project will add jobs to the county's economy, it will also expand the county's broader tax base.

The developer has also committed $16.2 million in upfront funding to offset initial impacts on the county budget for essential services such as law enforcement and fire.

How will this impact agriculture in the area?

Most of the project area is currently used for seasonal livestock grazing, not crop production. Much of the land is difficult to farm and supports only limited agricultural use today.

The project developer has indicated that grazing can continue in many areas as infrastructure is phased in, and large portions of the site are expected to remain open even at full buildout.