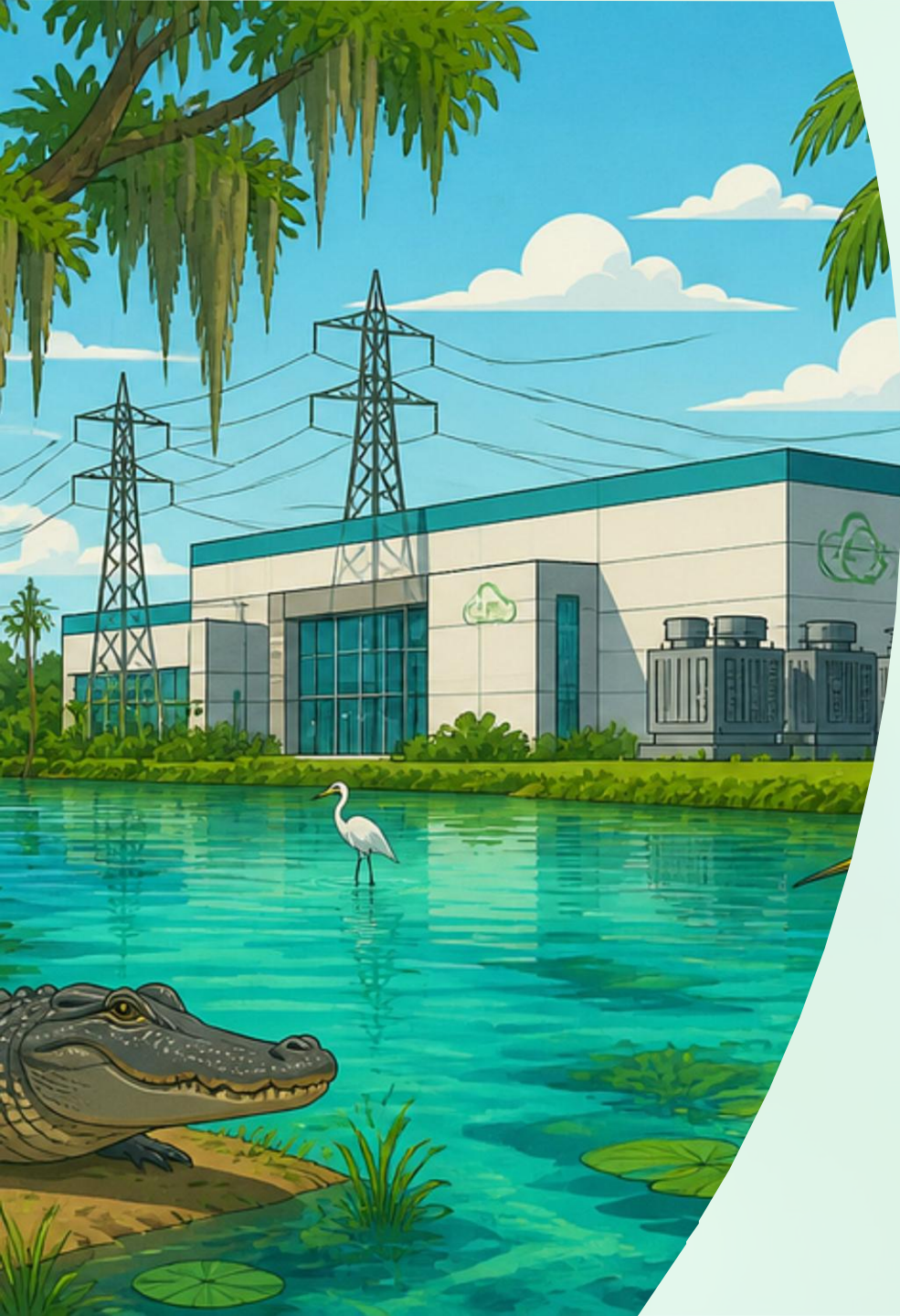




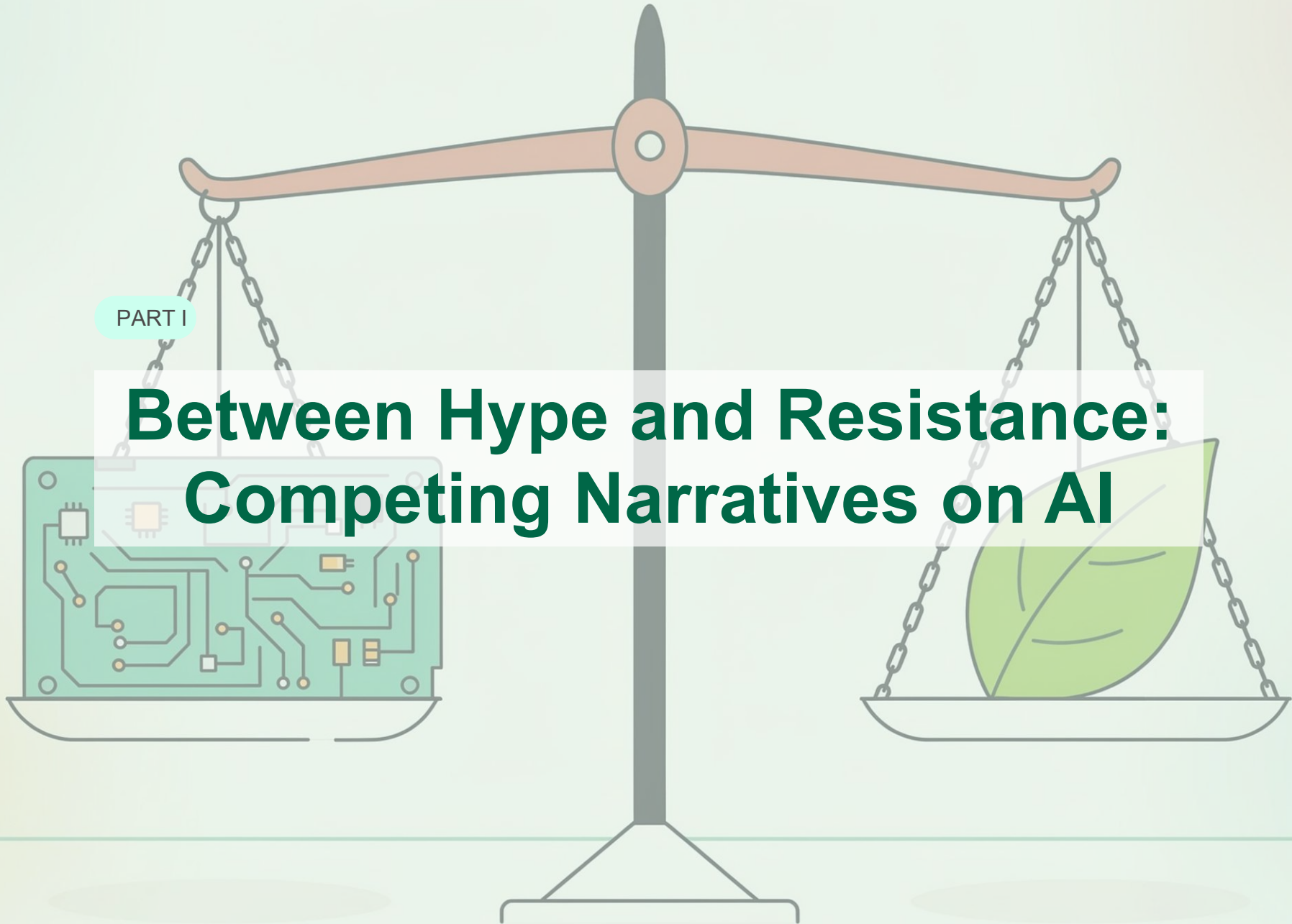
AI and the Environment: The Need for a Pragmatic Approach

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PART I

Between Hype and Resistance: Competing Narratives on AI



1. The AI Hype Perspective

Potential Benefits



Productivity & Economic Growth



Scientific & Medical Discovery



National Competitiveness

Risk of Excessive Skepticism



Delays Innovation



Loses Opportunity





2. The AI Resistance Perspective

Key Concerns



Automation & Job Loss



Corporate Power



Privacy & Surveillance



Misinformation



Bias & Discrimination



Energy & Water Use



Environmental Degradation

3. The Pragmatic Perspective



1. Accept Reality

AI is not going to disappear. It is a GPT with major infrastructure needs — Florida will participate in that growth.



2. Ask Better Questions

Growth $\neq$ unrestricted development. Ask: Under what conditions can AI produce broadly shared benefits?



3. Set Rules in Advance

Establish clear standards before individual projects arrive — not under political pressure.

An illustration of a data center facility. A large, long, grey building with many windows and doors is the central focus. To the left and right of the building are tall, lattice-structured power transmission towers with multiple power lines stretching across the sky. The background features rolling green hills, some evergreen trees, and a few stylized yellow clouds. In the foreground, there are more green hills and trees. A winding road leads towards the data center. A parking lot with several cars is visible to the right of the building. The overall style is clean and modern, with a muted color palette of greens, greys, and yellows.

PART II

The Sustainability Challenge: Unpacking AI's Physical Footprint

The Measurement Gap: Why We Can't See AI's True Environmental Footprint



Lack of Disclosure

Required inputs for environmental impacts (e.g., water, energy) are often not publicly disclosed by data center operators.



Opaque Data

Reliance on proprietary data from analysts limits public validation of environmental impact assessments.



Incomplete Reporting

Environmental reports often don't distinguish between AI and non-AI workloads, making specific AI impact assessment difficult.



No Firm Standards

Voluntary, inconsistent reporting prevents "apples-to-apples" comparisons and a full understanding of costs.

The Data Center Surge

#1

U.S. Leads Globally

The U.S. hosts a disproportionate share of global data-center capacity, from small colocation facilities to large campuses

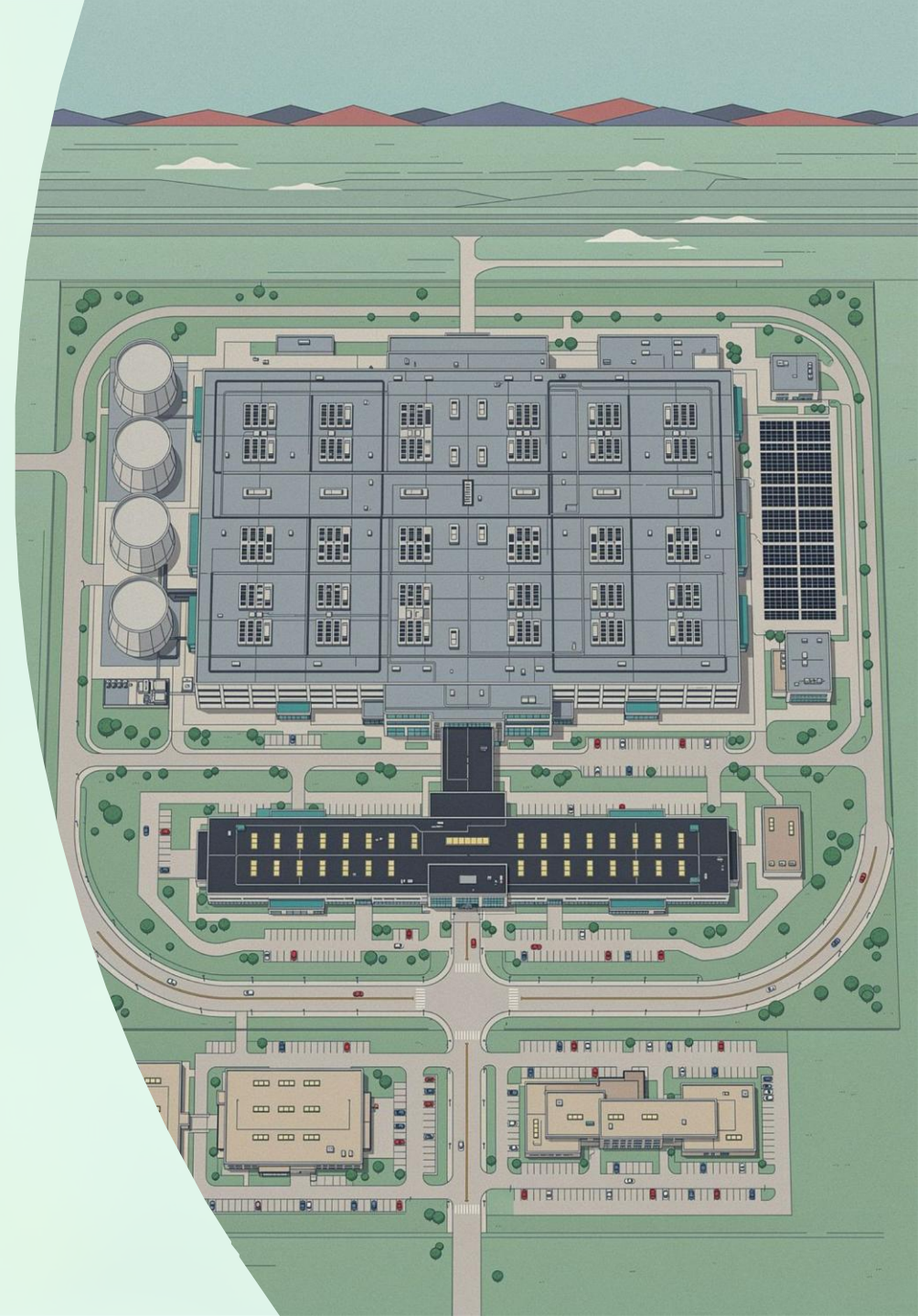
Florida Is a Growing Market

Projects of all sizes are emerging across the state

AI

AI Is Accelerating Demand

AI workloads are driving new construction and expansion of existing facilities statewide





Energy Demand and Grid Stability



Scale of Demand

AI data centers require extraordinary electricity — straining generation, transmission, distribution, and long-term grid reliability.



The Ratepayer Question

Who pays for new infrastructure?
Incremental costs must be borne by developers and investors — not shifted to ordinary residential and commercial ratepayers.



Grid Impacts

Regulators must weigh load growth trajectory, geographic concentration, reliability demands, backup generation emissions, and rapid AI workload fluctuations.



PART III

Water, Air, Land, and Public Health Impacts

1. Water Consumption

300K–5M

Gallons Per Day

Daily consumption of a single data center
— comparable to a small town

32B

Gallons

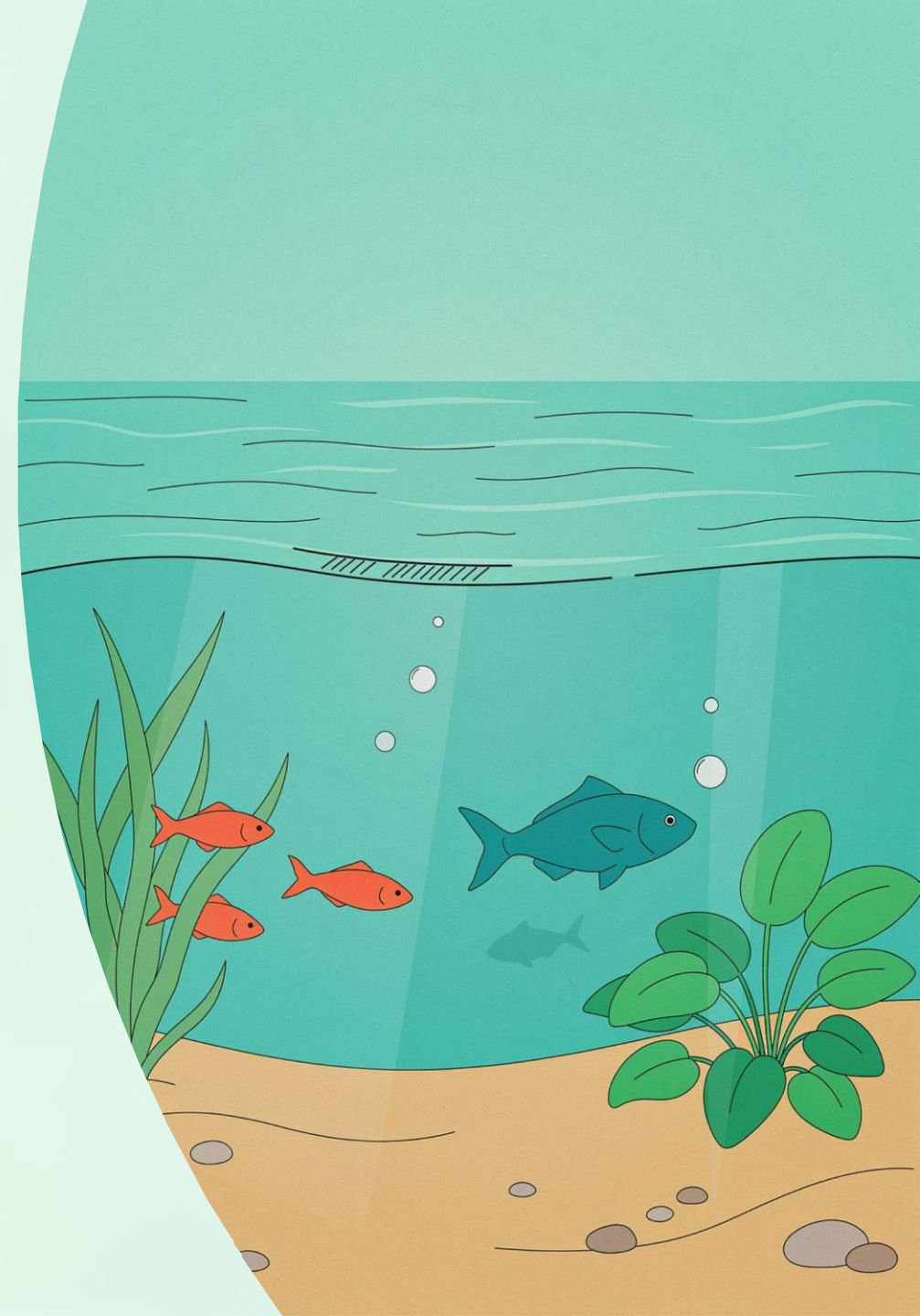
Projected annual U.S. AI data center water
demand by 2028

Massive Cooling Demands

Tripling of Direct On-Site Use

Hidden Indirect Footprint

Localized Resource Competition





2. Air Quality and Public Health

Emission Sources

On-site and backup power systems produce:



NO_x

Nitrogen oxides from
combustion sources



PM2.5

Fine particulate matter harmful
to respiratory health



GHG

Greenhouse-gas emissions
from natural gas and diesel
generators

3. Land Use and Habitat



Habitat

Forest loss, fragmentation, and displacement of wildlife corridors



Wetlands

Impacts to wetlands, springs, and aquifer recharge areas



Communities

Pressure on rapidly developing exurban and flood-prone areas



Infrastructure

Road networks, transmission lines, and impervious surface expansion





4. Noise and Quality of Life



Cooling Systems

Chillers and high-volume fans running continuously



Mechanical Equipment

HVAC units, pumps, and facility ventilation



Diesel Generators

Backup power and construction equipment



Construction

Transmission lines, utility infrastructure, and site work

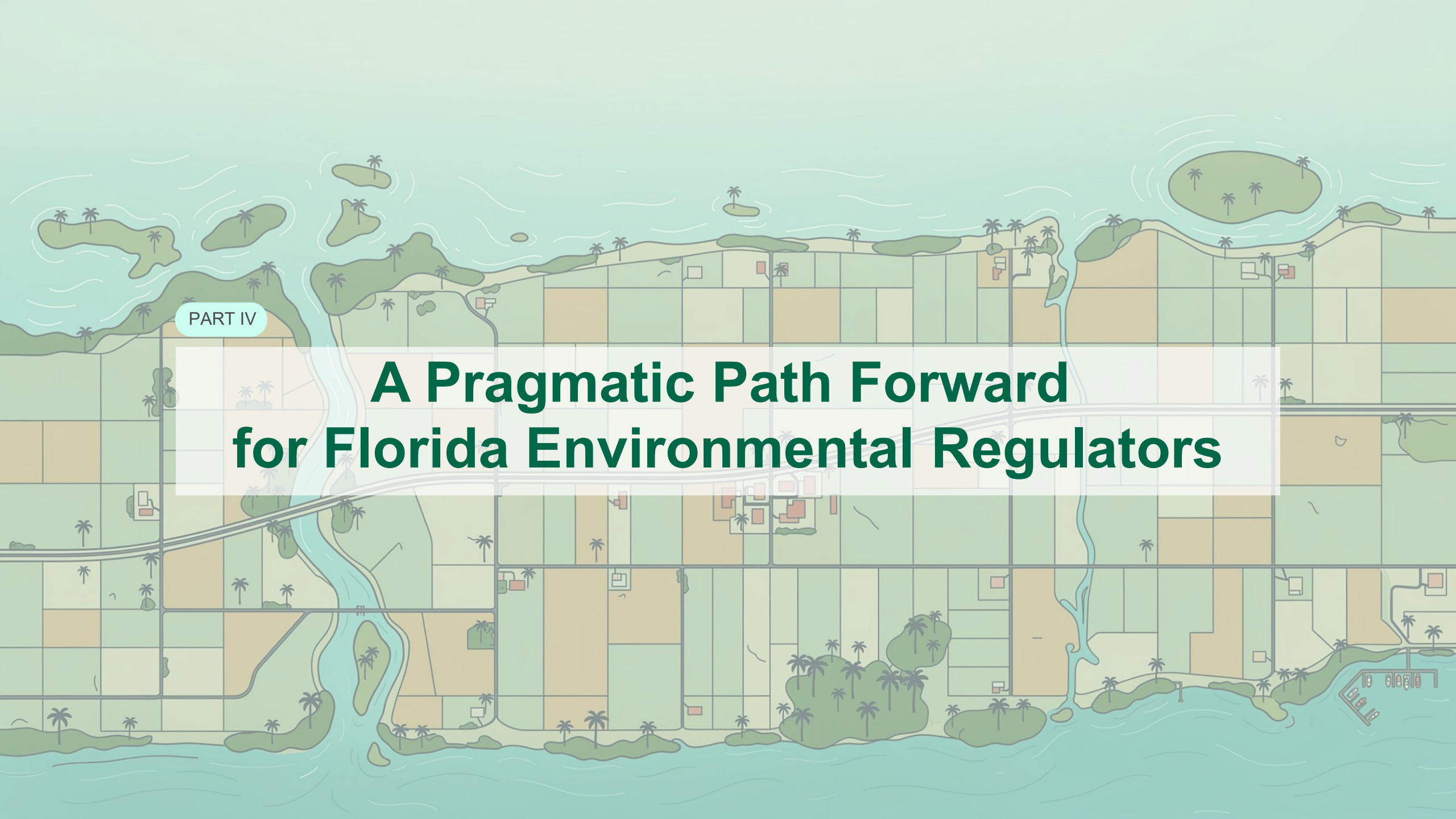


Community impacts include sleep disruption, chronic stress, reduced quality of life, and property value decline. Evaluate noise cumulatively, including nighttime operations.

Core Questions

- Where should data centers be located?
- Under what environmental conditions?
- Who bears the costs?
- Who receives the benefits?
- What information must be disclosed?
- What safeguards are required before development proceeds?





PART IV

A Pragmatic Path Forward for Florida Environmental Regulators

1. Understand the Regulatory Context

SB 484: Effective July 1, 2026



Protects Ratepayers

- Prohibits utilities from passing data center costs, including electricity, onto residential and small business customers.
- Requires large-scale users to pay their full cost of service.



Empowers Local Communities

- Preserves local authority over zoning, permitting, and land use decisions.
- Allows communities to set stricter standards or deny projects based on local needs.



Increases Transparency & Security

- Requires public disclosure of data center development deals after exemption periods.
- Establishes clear legal definitions to prevent loopholes in regulation.



Strengthens Infrastructure & Environmental Standards

- Creates a dedicated permitting process for large-scale data centers.
- Allows for the use of reclaimed water as part of the permitting requirements.



2. Accept Reality, But Shape It

Growth is Coming

Florida will see substantial data-center development — the question is how, not whether.

Resistance Alone Won't Work

Stopping all development is neither realistic nor necessarily desirable.

Aim for Better, Not Less

The goal is smarter, more responsible development — not simply more or less of it.



URBAN PLANNING MAP

3. Establish Clear, Predictable Siting Standards



Statewide Criteria

Develop criteria for evaluating major data-center projects



Predictable Rules

Give developers clear rules before land acquisition and construction



Measurable Thresholds

Evaluate projects on environmental standards, not political discretion



4. Require Site-Specific Environmental Analysis

Water

- Site-specific risk assessment & long-term projections
- Drought contingency plans
- Preference for reclaimed/non-potable water

Energy

- Electricity demand forecasts & grid infrastructure
- Cost allocation analysis
- Grid-reliability review

Air

- Public-health analysis for fossil-fuel generation
- Comprehensive emissions inventory
- Cumulative air-quality assessment

Land

- Full development-footprint analysis
- Alternatives analysis for sensitive areas
- Protection of wetlands, habitat & recharge zones

Noise

- Baseline acoustic measurements pre-construction
- Continuous operational & nighttime limits
- Required mitigation & ongoing monitoring

5. Create a Florida Data Center Siting Framework

Green Sites

Development generally appropriate

- Adequate water & grid capacity
- Low environmental sensitivity
- Compatible land use
- Minimal community impacts

Yellow Sites

Development possible with conditions

- Development possible with mitigation
- Additional environmental analysis required
- Specific conditions on water, energy, noise, or land use

Red Sites

Development presumptively inappropriate

- Significant water stress
- Critical aquifer or ecological concerns
- Severe grid constraints
- High cumulative pollution burden

Environmental Regulators *Are* AI Regulators

Siting Authority

Environmental agencies determine where AI infrastructure can be built.

Water & Pollution Limits

They set binding limits on consumption and emissions.

Grid Governance

They shape how AI infrastructure interacts with the electric grid.

AI Policy *Is* Environmental Policy

AI governance extends beyond technology agencies and legislatures.



From Resistance vs. Hype to Pragmatism

✗ "Build Everything"

Any restriction on AI infrastructure is anti-progress.

✗ "Build Nothing"

AI development should be stopped or severely curtailed.

✓ The Pragmatic Alternative

- Build where appropriate
- Require transparency
- Price externalities
- Protect communities
- Incentivize cleaner technology
- Establish predictable standards

Conclusion: Shared Prosperity or Shared Risk?

Key Takeaways

AI infrastructure is not environmentally consequence-free

Public opposition reflects legitimate questions about who benefits, who pays, and who decides

Florida can establish clear rules before the largest wave of development arrives

Environmental regulation can enable sustainable technological growth

Final Message

The choice is not between AI progress and environmental protection. The challenge is to build an AI economy in which technological progress and environmental stewardship reinforce rather than undermine one another.

Pragmatic AI means accepting the technology while refusing to accept its externalities as inevitable.



Thank you! Questions?



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