



**The Sacramento Bee**  
*Life. Captured daily.*

## Public input sought on Aerojet cleanup

### A proposed pact between the firm and government agencies details removal of pollutants.

October 21, 2001

Section: NEIGHBORS

Page: N5

By Sekhar Padmanabhan  
Neighbors Staff Writer

--The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the state seek comment on an agreement they reached with **Aerojet** for cleanup of soil and groundwater contamination.

The modified consent decree - which clarifies a pact made in 1989 - will allow officials to divide the **Aerojet** facility into several smaller parts for easier cleanup. It also gives direction on land-use planning, water sources and funding plans.

Charles Berrey, a Superfund site manager whose purview includes **Aerojet**, said Monday that "no data have been generated" to suggest that the cleanup will occur in less than the previously estimated 240 years.

**Aerojet** officials, however, dispute the 240-year estimate, saying technological improvements will speed the process.

Berrey added that the main plume of contamination - west of **Aerojet** - has not progressed much since his agency began holding public meetings on **Aerojet** last December.

Two meetings are scheduled to discuss the decree:

\* At 7 p.m. Tuesday during a gathering of the Community Advisory Group on **Aerojet** Superfund Issues at 10361 Rockingham Drive in Lincoln Village.

\* At 6:30 p.m. Nov. 8 at the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, 3443 Routier Road, also in Lincoln Village.

This summer, in a 70-page "record of decision," the EPA chose to treat the contamination with extraction wells, under the least expensive alternative overall among seven presented to the public.

The decree spells out what will be done by the federal and state governments, **Aerojet**, and its parent company, GenCorp, to comply with the record of decision. It will legally guarantee cleanup money and provide an alternative water supply to replace sources west of **Aerojet** that were - or could be - fouled

due to the company's past chemical discharge practices. This could include a new well at Rossmoor Bar Park on the American River Parkway in Rancho Cordova.

GenCorp spokeswoman Rosemary Younts said she hopes the community will support the agreement. "I think there are very significant improvements (in this)," she said. "It does more than remove 3,200 acres of clean land from the Superfund (list), it improves the Superfund process."

Younts said that by breaking up the site into smaller "operable units," the decree will enable **Aerojet** to "focus on the worst portion first, and clean that."

She said it also stipulates that GenCorp would pay cleanup costs of up to \$10 million per year, up to a total of \$75 million, should **Aerojet** become unable to fund the cleanup.

**Aerojet** would submit an annual list of cleanup projects for EPA approval, and if necessary, GenCorp could pay for cleanup as well. **Aerojet** also would pay "certain fees and judgments" against state agencies resulting from future lawsuits over property removed from the Superfund list, as well as remain responsible for investigating groundwater contamination under the land removed from the list.

In addition, **Aerojet** could transfer or develop land removed from the list "with some limited (federal) EPA and state review."

However, according to an EPA statement, "any development proposal would have to pass through the normal local planning and review process, including input from the public."

New development would require a drinking water source, which the EPA says could come from surplus amounts from **Aerojet** plant operations. "But if development requires more water than **Aerojet** has available," the statement says, "**Aerojet** would have to find new supplies."

They might include:

- \* New water-supply wells.
- \* Contracts with nearby water purveyors.
- \* Reuse of water discharged from **Aerojet** treatment plants.

The California Department of Health Services would have to approve any reuse of treated groundwater for drinking purposes in new development.

**Aerojet** also may be able to discharge treated water to waterways that eventually would flow to the American River or Lake Natoma. The company could then withdraw water from the American River or the Folsom South Canal below the point where it discharged water and use that amount for new development.

**Aerojet** officials said last month that they are pleased that 3,200 acres near U.S. 50 will be removed from the Superfund list. The land served as a buffer area - never used for **Aerojet** operations - and, according to the company, never should have been listed.

Company officials added that the property is suitable - and already zoned - for office, commercial and light-industrial development.

But Janis Heple, chairwoman of the community advisory group, said Monday that she personally is "a little concerned" about the possibility of land being removed from federal purview.

"If the land is taken out from under Superfund, then it is going to be up to the community to lobby at the local level," Heple said. "It appears things have been looked at, but it may be up to a contractor (if something is found), depending on what's put in place."

Deed restrictions will bar landowners from tapping groundwater, in an effort to prevent contact with

polluted groundwater and underground soil vapor.

Sekhar Padmanabhan can be reached at (916) 348-2759 or [spadmanabhan@sacbee.com](mailto:spadmanabhan@sacbee.com).

All content © The Sacramento Bee and may not be republished without permission.

Send comments or questions to [NewsLibrary](#)