

# Editorial: Got water?

## Rancho Cordova Aerojet expansion has risks

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The process of drawing the lines for the proposed city of Rancho Cordova is getting increasingly political. Predictably enough, a fundamental of sound planning simultaneously is falling by the wayside.

That planning has to do with water, and whether the boundaries of the city are in tune with the realities of water supply. A last-minute effort to add 2,600 undeveloped acres of land into the boundaries of Rancho Cordova demands a rigorous discussion about the water implications before the final political decision is made to redraw the lines.

This land is owned by Aerojet, which appears to be accelerating its development agenda for

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this land as the water picture for this corner of the county gets cloudier by the day. A plume of contaminated groundwater sits below Aerojet's lands; it has migrated over the years, making wells of neighboring water districts unusable, including wells operated by the county. This has created a legal tangle on how to replace this lost supply of water. New demand for water adds a whole new dimension of complexity.

For a new city of Rancho Cordova, the water problem would largely be somebody else's to solve. The new city council wouldn't be responsible for any water solution. That responsibility rests with the various purveyors of water that serve the city -- two private, one public. Presumably if these purveyors can't find the water, a new state law would prevent the city from approving large new developments. But another new state law also encourages this discussion to take place earlier in the planning process, with the forming of the boundaries of the new city. That is precisely where the process is now.

The decision about the city's boundaries will be made by the seven members of the Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). If voters within Rancho Cordova are to decide in November whether to form the city, LAFCO must quickly figure out the precise boundaries of that city. LAFCO faces this new debate over this Aerojet land, as well as a question of whether a future business park next to Mather Field, known as the Mather Corporate Center, is in or out of the city.

The fight over Mather has to do with whether the county or city is best suited to accelerate the site's redevelopment. With Aerojet, the question is whether county supervisors or future Rancho Cordova council members are best prepared to tackle the interlocking challenges of growth and water. New area can always be added to a city. Once the line is drawn outward, however, there's no turning back.

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