Sites in Reuse
Aerojet General Corp. Superfund Site

Highway 50 and Hazel Avenue, Rancho Cordova, California 95670

Images from left to right: On-the-ground view of facility solar panels and the facility under construction.

Site Size: 5,900 acres
Current Site Uses: A 40-acre solar energy facility, as well as commercial, industrial and agricultural uses. Additional redevelopment opportunities exist at the site.
Future Reuse Plans: Mixed-use residential development with public transit access, as well as commercial and light industrial uses.

INTRODUCTION

At a 40-acre facility near Sacramento, 22 solar arrays track the course of the sun, generating 6 megawatts of power. The solar facility is the largest single-site industrial system in California and one of the largest single-site industrial installations in the United States. This facility is also remarkable for two other reasons. First, it illustrates the dramatic growth of grid-connected, utility-scale photovoltaic systems across the United States. Second, the solar facility is located on the Aerojet General Corp. Superfund site, a former rocket propulsion development and testing facility. EPA listed the site on the Superfund program's National Priorities List in 1983.

Aerojet's solar farm is one of the latest and largest in a series of renewable energy facilities sited on current and former contaminated lands nationwide. Aerojet installed the solar farm to help power the site's extensive groundwater remediation program, reducing the company's carbon footprint and improving energy usage as part of parent company GenCorp's Sustainability Initiative. The facility also restores the land to beneficial use as an energy-producing environmental asset.

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD: THE REUSE PLANNING PROCESS

Aerojet and its subsidiaries have researched, designed and made rocket engines and chemicals on site since 1953. Aerojet's previous disposal and operating practices led to soil and groundwater contamination. Aerojet treats contaminated groundwater and prevents it from spreading to nearby areas using extraction wells. Aerojet continues to explore methods to clean up soil and groundwater contamination.

By early 2008, Aerojet had spent several years preparing thousands of acres for redevelopment as part of its Easton development plan, a mixed-use project designed in accordance with smart growth principles. A large portion of the site had been selected for this development project based on its proximity to surrounding communities and available infrastructure, with mixed uses and sustainability as key project criteria.

As the company turned its attention to more remote parts of the property, renewable energy quickly became a leading possibility. "We asked how we could turn it into something that would benefit both [Aerojet] and

Aerial view of the site's solar facility.

the community," said Ronald Samborsky, the company's former vice-president of renewable energy and sustainability. "We use a significant amount of energy to pump and treat groundwater as part of the site's remedy and were interested in reducing our energy costs. We were also looking for a way to reduce the environmental footprint of powering the site's remedy."

By late 2008, Aerojet had established public-sector partnerships with EPA, state regulators and the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, building a solid foundation for the project. Aerojet then selected a local solar energy developer – Solar Power, Inc. – to help make the project a reality. With all site agreements and financing in place, facility construction began in mid-2009. Construction of the 3.6-megawatt system finished and the system went live in November 2009. A second 2.4-megawatt system went live in 2010, for a total of 6 megawatts produced on site.

Looking back, Aerojet's groundbreaking solar project was guided and spurred by a spirit of innovation, creativity and exploration; coordination with public and private sector partners; technical, legal and financing expertise; and supportive state and federal policies and incentives. The outcome was the successful development of the Aerojet solar facility.

Today, the solar facility is part of a mix of site uses. Aerojet continues to use some areas for industrial operations. Some site areas are leased for use as rangeland for livestock grazing. Tenants also use areas for office, commercial and light industrial activities. Future reuse plans for other parts of the site include mixed-use development with residential, commercial and industrial areas.

Disclaimer: EPA does not warrant that the property is suitable for any particular use. Prospective purchasers must contact the property owner for sale potential.

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