

## Newsletter 11-15

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STATEMENT FROM THE DIVISION FOR PLANETARY SCIENCES OF THE AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The Division for Planetary Sciences of the American Astronomical Society, the world's largest professional organization of planetary scientists, is following with close attention the on-going discussions within Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, and NASA over future funding for science, and for the James Webb Space Telescope. As budgetary priorities are set, it is important to consider the scientific bounty reaped by planetary missions in the last decade. NASA's extremely successful Mars rovers, followed by millions worldwide, have discovered that standing bodies of water once existed on Mars. The Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter has discovered evidence for liquid, salty water in today's climate, and mapped the distribution of clay sediments, the most likely place to find fossils, if they exist on Mars. The Cassini mission to Saturn has discovered water erupting from Saturn's moon Enceladus, imaged previously-unseen structure in the rings, and mapped oily lakes on Saturn's moon Titan. Data from other spacecraft have allowed us to map the surface and resources of Mercury, the asteroid Vesta, and our Moon. Low cost missions have even returned samples of a comet and the solar wind.

The future holds equal promise, with the expectation of extraordinary and important discoveries in upcoming missions. Investments that were made in the last decade will bear fruit this decade, including launches of a capable rover to study sedimentary rocks and Mars climate history recorded in sedimentary layers, two spacecraft to map the Moon's gravity field, a spacecraft to Pluto that will re-write the story of Kuiper Belt Objects after its 2015 flyby, and a spacecraft to study Jupiter's interior in 2016, which will tell us how our solar system evolved.

The planetary sciences community has just finished its decadal survey ("Visions and Voyages") that lays out a prioritized plan for solar system exploration from 2013 to 2022. This carefully-crafted plan is tempered by budget-conscious recommendations, including directions for several different budget scenarios. Full funding for research and analysis, missions under development, missions in flight, and technology development are the highest priorities in the planetary decadal survey. A balanced and prioritized mix of Discovery, New Frontiers, and Flagship missions is recommended. As part of our decadal survey our flagship mission options are being deliberately re-structured to reduce their cost to no more than \$2.5 billion.

The successes of NASA's planetary program depend on the support of the people of the United States. Science is a continuing investment that has payoffs for decades to come. The planetary sciences community is fully cognizant of the current budget realities. In keeping with this climate of increased fiscal prudence, our community has laid out a strategy for the future in the Decadal Survey that sets clear priorities, with an explicit set of decision making rules, depending on the budget circumstances.

**The Division for Planetary Sciences urges that in upcoming budget discussions, the clear priorities of the planetary sciences community be kept in mind and prudent investments continue to be made to support America's scientific future.**



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