

Talking Points for NASA Budget Conversations with Congress

- Planetary science activities provide an excellent value to the taxpayer and provide a strong return on investment
- We are in the middle of a major revolution in the understanding of the origin and evolution to the solar system and if there is life beyond Earth. This leadership is a result of strong support for planetary science by Congress, which we appreciate.
- The planetary science community came together in 2009-2010 to decide on the set of priorities for the 2013-2022 time period, identifying the most important science questions in the discipline and the most effective ways of answering those questions in a realistic way given the resources available. The Planetary Decadal survey lays out a plan for the next decade with solid community support. A mid-decadal review was recently released which concluded that NASA is executing the Planetary Decadal survey's plan well.
- Advocate continuing to find synergies between robotic and human exploration, including basic understanding of targets such as Moon, Mars, and cis-Lunar space.
- Several moons of the outer solar system including Europa and Enceladus likely have water oceans and the “ingredients” required for life. By exploring these worlds, we can address one of the most important questions in all of science: Is there life beyond Earth?
- In direct response to the planetary Decadal Survey, the present planetary flagship missions have taken the first steps toward returning samples from Mars and exploring Jupiter’s moon Europa within a cost-constrained planetary program, and we encourage this cost-effective management to continue.
- Planetary science discoveries are a major motivation for students pursuing the Science, Engineering, Technology, and Mathematics (STEM) careers that propels the U.S. forward.
- As new mission projects are trending toward decreasing the support of science coinvestigator FTEs the health of Research & Analysis grants provided by both NASA and NSF increases to a vitally important level for maintaining the highly capable work force of our nation's planetary scientists, yet the overall level of these funds is flat or decreasing and not compensating for the transitions from older missions.
- NASA has historically worked closely with our international partners to development joint missions that lower the overall cost to US taxpayers while substantially increasing the science output of these missions. We encourage future collaborations for missions of all scales to maximize future science return while fostering strong ties between science communities globally.
- Additional priorities for planetary exploration include maintaining options for telecommunications infrastructure at Mars, ensuring the Deep Space Network fully operational well into the long lifetimes of planned outer solar system missions, keeping up the pace of production for plutonium 238, and continued investments in technology development.
- Innovative technologies developed for space have broader utility and impact that benefits all of society.

Footer

- [Reports](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [History](#)



- [Bylaws](#)
- [Giving](#)

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