

New Thematic Solar System Exploration Products for Scientists and Educators Leslie Lowes¹, Alice Wessen¹, Phil Davis¹ and Marilyn Lindstrom², ¹NASA Jet Propulsion Lab (Pasadena CA) ²NASA Headquarters (Washington DC)

Introduction: The next several years are an exciting time in the exploration of the solar system. NASA and its international partners have a veritable armada of spaceships heading out the the far reaches of the solar system. We'll send the first spacecraft beyond our solar system into interstellar space. We'll launch our first mission to Pluto and the Kuiper Belt and just our second to Mercury (the first in 30 years). We'll continue our intensive exploration of Mars and begin our detailed study of Saturn and its moons. We'll visit asteroids and comets and bring home pieces of the Sun and a comet. This is truly an unprecedented period of exploration and discovery! To facilitate access to information and to provide the thematic context for these missions NASA's Solar System Exploration Program and Solar System Exploration Education Forum have developed several products.

Solar System Exploration Web Site: This newly updated web site (<http://solarsystem.nasa.gov>, see right) is the first step in the search for current information on all of these missions. It contains brief descriptions of each of the missions and the solar system bodies they will study. For more information it has direct links to all the mission web sites. It also has feature stories and special sections for educators and students.

Solar System Exploration Timeline: This timeline is a graphic representation of all the major NASA and international mission events in the 2003-2006 period. It includes, launches, encounters, prime missions, finales and sample returns. It is organized by year and by target body so that it is easy to see clusters of events such as the current batch at Mars and the distribution across the entire solar system.

