

**Mars ROCKS! in North Dakota, Solar System Ambassador Program in North Dakota.** C.R. Milford<sup>1</sup>, M. Marek<sup>2</sup>, <sup>1</sup>NASA/JPL, North Dakota Solar System Ambassador Program 6374 Gateway Dr. Grand Forks, ND 58203 [chris\\_milford@und.nodak.edu](mailto:chris_milford@und.nodak.edu) & University of North Dakota, Department of Geology Grand Forks, ND 58201, <sup>2</sup>Sacred Heart High School, 200 Third St. NW. East Grand Forks, MN 56721.

**Introduction:** Mars is Rock'n in the Midwest! With a total of 5 currently running space missions exploring the red planet, what can teachers locally do to bring Mars into the classroom and capitalize on free and low-cost resources to teach Earth Science in terms of Mars? The NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador is one such resource that Earth science teachers in the region can utilize. Currently only one Solar System Ambassador exists in the whole state of North Dakota.

North Dakota is a rural state with the majority of its population concentrated on the eastern fringes which include the cities of Grand Forks and Fargo. The ruralness of the rest of the state provide a interesting challenge for any outreach program especially the solar system ambassador program.

To combat this challenge the Solar System Ambassador program has enlisted the aid of the world wide web. The North Dakota Solar System Ambassador web site [1] was created to provide a means of communication between teachers and the sole Solar System Ambassador in North Dakota. The North Dakota Solar System Ambassador web page is a place where educators can communicate with the ambassador and schedule site visits. Additionally, the site is the front door to a set of on-line curriculum focusing on comparative planetary geology of Mars and Earth.

Sets of curricular materials have been created which cover various topics in planetary geology including impact, aeolian, tectonic, volcanism, alluvial, glacial processes and mineralogy. Meeting state standards these curricula were based on material gained from 2002 and 2003 LPI summer educator workshop field-trips. These hands-on inquiry based set of materials will continue to be tested by 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade earth science teachers within the North Dakota Solar System Ambassador outreach area.

Utilizing a University of North Dakota on-line distance learning webtool called HTMLez [2] these curriculum sets can be combined with on-line interaction between classrooms, educators and the Solar System Ambassador. HTMLez allows classes to log on and download or view the presentation and then interact with the instructor or ambassador directly through internet relay chat. These on-line tools allow the Solar System Ambassador to service many communities and school districts around the state.

This poster display will illustrate the efforts that the North Dakota Solar System Ambassador program and

show some of our results using the on-line curriculum that has been developed in cooperation between formal and informal educators.

**References:**

- [1] [http://www.freewebs.com/marvinrover\\_nd](http://www.freewebs.com/marvinrover_nd)
- [2] <http://learn.ereo.und.edu>