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Subject: **OPAG March Newsletter**
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To: Curt (HQ-DG000) Niebur <curt.niebur@nasa.gov>
Cc: Fran Bagenal <bagenal@colorado.edu>

Dear OPAG

The FY07 budget gives us much to discuss - please make your reservations for the next OPAG meeting in Pasadena on Thursday and Friday May 4-5th. Yes, we will probably need two full days. I expect the agenda to include the following items:

Europa & other flagship missions
Setting priorities & strategies for exploration
Controlling under-costing / cost-overruns of missions
New Frontiers and Discovery mission lines
Technologies for exploration of the outer solar system
Working Group discussions
and, as suggested at the October meeting, a review of the science of primitive bodies in the light of recent and promised by upcoming missions.

Information is being added to the OPAG website - <http://www.lpi.usra.edu/opag/>

Please contact Curt Niebur (curt.niebur@nasa.gov) if you would like to be added to or removed from this OPAG list.

So - make your reservations for another lively OPAG meeting!

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OPAG Update - March 2006

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***** Next OPAG Meeting May 4-5 *****

The next OPAG meeting will be on May 4-5th, 2006 at the Westin in Pasadena (191 North Los Robles, Pasadena, California 91101). A block of 50 rooms set aside. under "NASA OPAG." To make reservations, people can contact the hotel directly at (626) 792-2727 or follow this link: <http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/StarGroupsWeb/res?id=0602245302&key=72728>.

People who stay at the Westin will get the government rate of \$104/night, and that's pretty darned good for a Westin. But we had to pull some teeth to get that rate. As a result, when people make their reservation under "NASA OPAG" (either via the link or by calling the hotel) AND when they check in, they will be told the rate is \$169/night. But the rate is actually \$104, and when people check out that is the rate that will be charged. It's confusing, but evidently the reservation desk and front desk can't be made aware of the deal we struck until people check out.

NASA is offering a limited number of travel grants to allow early career scientists to attend the OPAG meeting. These travel grants will reimburse lodging, airfare, rental car, and per diem expenses, and are available to any scientist who has received their

doctorate in the past seven years. To apply, please send a CV and a brief statement describing how you will contribute to OPAG to Curt Niebur at Curt.Niebur@nasa.gov.

***** Report on Europa Focus Group meeting Feb 27-8 *****

The Europa Focus Group, supported by the NASA Astrobiology Institute, met for a workshop at NASA-Ames Research Center February 27-28. As in previous workshops, the meeting was widely announced and was open to all who are interested in Europa. About 110 participants met at Ames where the workshop began with a series of over-view talks (Geology: Pappalardo; Tectonics-geophysics: McKinnon; Astrobiology: Baross), followed by results of a current mission design (Johnson), during which it is clear that a Europa Orbiter would have a useful lifetime of many months and would be capable of achieving the high-priority science goals. Participants then gave short oral presentations on their related work and "advertised" their posters; long breaks and an evening pizza poster session enabled discussions among the participants. On the second day, "breakout" sessions were held dealing with a) primary science objectives for Europa (building on previous studies, including work by OPAG), b) astrobiology instruments for orbiters and landers, and c) review of lander concepts.

In addition to the technical sessions, Congressman John Culberson (R, Texas 7th District and a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Science/.NASA subcommittee) attended the first half of the workshop. He is a huge fan of robotic exploration, keenly interested in Europa, and a friend of science.

Prior to the Europa Focus Group workshop, the Planetary Society organized a public forum in the same venue as the workshop, drawing on various workshop speakers. Despite fairly severe storms in the area at the time, about 250 people attended and were enthusiastic for Europa exploration.

See [Planetary Society Europa mission campaign](http://www.planetary.org/programs/projects/explore_europa/) - http://www.planetary.org/programs/projects/explore_europa/ and further documents at <http://www.lpi.usra.edu/opag/> under Missions

***** LPSC Lunch time discussion Thurs March 16th *****

"Future Outer Planet Exploration"
Immediately after the Galilean Satellites session at the LPSC meeting there will be a discussion entitled "Future Outer Planet Exploration." Torrence Johnson and Bill McKinnon will moderate a discussion of where to go from here.

***** Uranus Workshop 2nd notice *****

Uranus Pre-Equinox Workshop - Second Announcement

Workshop Purpose: Ensure a comprehensive collection of Uranus system equinoctial observations, by gathering the community of Uranus system observers, modelers, theorists, and lab experimentalists prior to the 2007 equinox to coordinate both observations and analyses.

Preliminary Agenda: See attached pdf file.

Who Should Attend: Scientists planning either to make observations of the Uranus system at equinox (including the atmosphere, **rings, and satellites**), or to conduct theoretical and/or laboratory work specifically pertinent to the Uranus system at equinox.

NOTE: RINGS AND SATELLITES ARE STILL UNDER-REPRESENTED.

Date and Location: 2-3 May 2006 at the Westin, in Pasadena, CA.
The meeting's timing and venue were selected to dovetail with the OPAG meeting on the following two days in order to minimize travel.

NOTE: URANUS WORKSHOP ATTENDEES ARE ENCOURAGED TO STAY FOR OPAG.

Next steps if interested: (1) If you have NOT already done so, please send email confirming your interest to Heidi B. Hammel (hbh@alum.mit.edu) with "uranus workshop" in the subject line, and indicate in the body of the message the aspect(s) of the Uranus system you plan to study. (2) Make your hotel reservations.

Hotel Reservations: The meeting is under "NASA OPAG" at the Westin in Pasadena (191 North Los Robles, Pasadena, CA 91101). The block covers the dates of the Uranus Workshop as well as the OPAG meeting. To make reservations, contact the hotel directly at (626) 792-2727 or follow this link:
<http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/StarGroupsWeb/res?id=0602245302&key=72728>

About the hotel rate: Some aggressive negotiations resulted in an extremely attractive Westin rate of \$104/night, equivalent to the government rate. However, both when people make their reservation under "NASA OPAG" (either via the link or by calling the hotel) AND when they check in, they will be *told* the rate is \$169/night. But the rate *is actually* \$104/night, and when people check out that is the rate that will be charged. It's confusing, but evidently the reservation and front desks can't be made aware of the deal until people check out. Further questions about hotel rates should be directed to Curt Niebur (curt.niebur@nasa.gov).

***** Congressional hearings on NASA science budget *****

On March 2nd there was hearing of the Congressional Committee on Science on the NASA science budget. Presenters were Mary Cleave (Director of NASA's Science Mission Directorate), Joseph Taylor (representing the astrophysics decadal survey), Fran Bagenal (representing heliophysics), Wes Huntress (representing planetary science) and Berrien Moore (representing Earth science).

You can find the Committee's statements and written testimony at <http://www.house.gov/science/hearings/full06/March%202/index.htm>

You can hear the webcast of the ~5 minute oral statements and extensive questions and answers <http://www.house.gov/science/webcast/index.htm>
