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Outer Planets Assessment Group - Update - August 2006

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Planetary Science Division Director and Deputy positions open at NASA HQ

NASA is currently conducting a search for a new Director and Deputy Director for the Planetary Science Division at NASA Headquarters in Washington, DC. As you all know, properly staffing these two positions is critical to ensuring that the R&A programs and missions we all care so deeply about are managed properly. The positions are summarized below, and you may view additional information on these positions and submit your resume at <http://www.usajobs.com>. Simply enter the vacancy number as the "Keyword Search." Resumes may be submitted until August 24, 2006.

Director, Planetary Sciences Division (Vacancy # : HQ06S0158)
The Director is responsible for establishing policy and objectives of a national program in planetary science, directing the planning and implementation of the program with the desires of the scientific community and NASA, and formulating and managing budget, policy, priority and strategic planning of flight and research and analysis programs for the planetary science program.

Deputy Director, Planetary Sciences Division (Vacancy # : HQ06S0143)
The Deputy Director is responsible for assessing program performance in engineering development, certification and operation of flight hardware and ground systems, to acquire scientific data for the national planetary science program; identifying and resolving institutional, technical, operational, and management issues for planetary science missions; participating in the formulation of new programs; and assessing technical progress and evaluating risks to optimize science output.

The acting (detailed) Planetary Science Division Director starting on August 14 is Jim Green from GSFC. A short biography is at the website below. He is a magnetospheric physicist.
<http://ssdoo.gsfc.nasa.gov/staff/bios/jgreen>

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Planetary Science Subcommittee of the NASA Advisory Committee

The PSS met on July 6-7, 2006. The primary charge of the committee was to plan for the conference on lunar science that Jack Schmitt (NAC Chair) has planned for Feb/Mar 2007. PSS also considered various issues related to budget and strategic planning for planetary science at NASA. The meeting report is posted at the OPAG website:

http://www.lpi.usra.edu/opag/7_06_report.pdf

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Enceladus workshop and AGU special session

Inaugural Meeting of the Enceladus Focus Group

We are planning to hold our first meeting in conjunction with the meeting of the Division of Planetary Sciences (of the AAS) in Pasadena, California. I am expecting the meeting to be workshop style, with presentations on the science of Enceladus, as well as discussions of designs for missions to return to Enceladus, whether these are stand-alone missions or missions that combine the deployment of devices to Enceladus and Titan. In fact, there is a large group of interns (about 20 of them) who are studying a landed mission to Enceladus as part of the NASA Academy at Goddard, and some of these individuals will likely be in attendance at this inaugural meeting to present their work. I am allowing the possibility of having a meeting that lasts all day, if necessary.

At the moment, the best date looks to be the Sunday before the official start of the meeting: ie, October 8, 2006. However, to proceed any further, I will need to know how many people are serious about traveling to Pasadena to attend the EncFG meeting, and how many are likely to show up on Sunday, assuming the EncFG meeting takes place then. This will guide us in selecting the proper sized room.

Also, if the meeting is held at the same venue as the DPS, then registration for the DPS will be required (though we are looking into possibly holding the meeting elsewhere in Pasadena.) And note: we can provide no funds whatsoever for people to either travel to the meeting, or register for the DPS.

enceladusfocus mailing list - enceladusfocus@ciclops.org
Subscription: Send email to majordomo@ciclops.org
In the body of the email: subscribe enceladusfocus

AGU special session - P04: Enceladus: Water, Warmth, Organics. . .and Life?

(<http://www.agu.org/meetings/fm06/?content=search&show=detail&sessid=186>)

This session will be devoted to the Saturnian moon, Enceladus, the recent inference from the Cassini mission that it houses a habitable environment beneath its south pole, and discussion of future spaceflight missions to the moon that could investigate this exciting possibility. Presentations will be invited that (1) summarize the recent Cassini results pertaining to the presence of organics, excess heat and liquid water on Enceladus, (2) review the most current realistic interior and thermal models matching Cassini observations, and (3) describe the physical and chemical conditions required for life and how Enceladus may be both promising and unique in this regard. Contributed talks will be sought that focus on the observed, inferred, and/or modelled characteristics of Enceladus that best address its astrobiological potential. Presentations describing design scenarios for future landed missions to Enceladus will also be welcome.

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OPAG Scientific Goals and Pathways document

<http://www.lpi.usra.edu/opag/>

The OPAG Steering Group has written a document (July 2006) that sets out the scientific goals for exploration of the outer solar system and pathways for achieving these goals. It is 35 pages (i.e. much shorter than the Survey and Roadmap - each over 140 pages) and we have included lots of color graphics which we hope convey the excitement and value of exploring the outer solar system. But basically it is a policy document and we present findings aimed at NASA's Solar System Exploration Division and the Planetary Science Subcommittee of the NAC, the official advisory body to NASA.

Next OPAG meeting - Tucson, AZ - November 7-8th.
