Mars Science News

Special Regions SAG Final Report now available

Eleven months ago MEPAG chartered a Science Analysis Group to update our understandings of Planetary Protection “Special Regions” on Mars. These are places on Mars (in 3-D) where terrestrial organisms are likely to replicate. The last MEPAG SAG to visit this topic (SR-SAG1) was in 2006. For the SR-SAG2, MEPAG assigned this challenging job to a relatively large committee with a mixture of expertise in Mars environmental conditions and in the limits to life as we know them on Earth. The committee’s final report has been posted on the MEPAG web site at http://mepag.nasa.gov/reports.cfm?expand=topical. The committee and the MEPAG Chair have additionally offered this report to the journal Astrobiology to improve the report’s distribution, visibility, and compactness/readability. (If the report is circulated, please reference it as in press, Astrobiology.)

This is an important topic that requires clear and concise understanding, as robotic missions planning to have direct contact with Special Regions are given planetary protection categorization (IVc), with stringent sterilization constraints on the portions of the mission contacting such regions. The avoidance of the contamination of Special Regions is also important in the planning for human missions to Mars, and this topic is discussed in the report. It is, however, important to note that MEPAG’s role in this is to prepare an analysis of the current state of knowledge and related technical issues to be considered by policy-makers (e.g., COSPAR) and not, itself, to set policy.

Organic Contamination Panel report released

In February, 2014, the Mars Exploration Program at NASA HQ chartered a community-based study team called the “Organic Contamination Panel” (OCP) to prepare an analysis of planning considerations related to the organic contamination of martian samples that may be collected by the Mars 2020 rover, recognizing that these samples may be subjected to comprehensive scientific evaluation in Earth laboratories in the future. It is understood that the requirements for the organic cleanliness of different sub-systems of the Mars 2020 rover will largely be driven by these sample-based considerations.

The OCP was led by Dr. Roger Summons (MIT) and Dr. Alex Sessions (Caltech), and included a committee of about a dozen. They have now submitted an 82-page report, along with several supporting appendices. This report has been accepted by NASA and approved for public release, and it has now been posted on the MEPAG website at http://mepag.nasa.gov/reports.cfm?expand=smd (under Mars Exploration Program Planning Documents). This report can be freely circulated, and it can be referenced using the citation on the cover sheet.

MEPAG Mailing List Updates

The Mars Program Office has recently updated the MEPAG mailing list (the one this newsletter is sent out to), including adding Mars aficionados who have attended recent MEPAG- and Mars-focused events. If you wish to withdraw from this electronic mailing list, please send an email with subject line “Unsubscribe” from your email account to mepag-removesignup@jpl.nasa.gov. To be added to this mailing list, please send an email with subject line “Subscribe” from your email account to mepag-signup@jpl.nasa.gov.
Presentations available from the Comet Siding Spring Workshops

Held August 11 and September 19

On October 19, 2014, comet C/2013 A1 (Siding Spring) will swing within 138,000 km of Mars. A workshop held August 11 reviewed some of the ongoing comet observations by Earth-based assets and preliminary plans for observations by both Earth and Mars-based assets during this historic close encounter. A second workshop, held as a virtual meeting on September 19, reviewed the latest Earth-based observations of the comet and report on the status of the Mars assets as they prepare for the comet encounter. Presentations and the archived webcast from the August 11 workshop are posted on http://cometcampaign.org/workshop.

Presentations and the archived webcast from the September 19 telecon are posted on http://mars.nasa.gov/comets/sidingspring/#webcast-agenda-20140919.

Additional information and updates about current and planned comet observations will be posted on both sites.

Near-term Due Dates (next three months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 6, 2014</td>
<td>Workshop on Volatiles in the Martian Interior Early registration deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 9, 2014</td>
<td>46th Meeting of the American Astronomical Society Division of Planetary Sciences (DPS 2014) Regular registration deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 10, 2014</td>
<td>Annual LEAG Meeting Registration deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 24, 2014</td>
<td>IEEE Aerospace Conference Paper deadline and latest possible abstract deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 31, 2014</td>
<td>Workshop on Modern Analytical Methods Applied to Earth and Planetary Sciences Advance registration deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workshop on Volatiles in the Martian Interior Advance registration deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 13, 2014</td>
<td>Venus Science Priorities Workshop for Laboratory Measurements and Instrument Definition Abstract deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 14, 2014</td>
<td>AGU Fall Meeting Pre-registration and hotel deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 1, 2014</td>
<td>IEEE Aerospace Conference Earlybird registration deadline</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5th PCL Focus Days Abstract deadline</td>
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Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 13-16, 2014</td>
<td>EANA 2014 - The 14th European Astrobiology Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.astrobiology.ac.uk/eana2014/">http://www.astrobiology.ac.uk/eana2014/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 19-22, 2014</td>
<td>Geological Society of America Annual Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vancouver, British Columbia, CANADA</td>
<td><a href="http://www.geosociety.org/meetings/2014/">http://www.geosociety.org/meetings/2014/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 19, 2014</td>
<td>Special Session - MicroMars to MegaMars: Integration of Surface and Orbital Investigations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 19, 2014</td>
<td>Comet Siding Spring closest approach to Mars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://mars.nasa.gov/comets/sidingspring">http://mars.nasa.gov/comets/sidingspring</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 22-24, 2014</td>
<td>Annual LEAG Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/leag2014/">http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/leag2014/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Fourth Quarter, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Link</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 3-5, 2014</td>
<td>Houston, TX, USA</td>
<td>Workshop on Volatiles in the Martian Interior</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/volatiles2014/">http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/volatiles2014/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 9-14, 2014</td>
<td>Tucson, AZ, USA</td>
<td>46th Meeting of the American Astronomical Society Division of Planetary Sciences (DPS 2014)</td>
<td><a href="http://aas.org/meetings/dps46">http://aas.org/meetings/dps46</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### First Quarter, 2015

- **New!**
  - **January 27-28, 2015**
    - Hampton, VA, USA
    - The Venus Instrument and Laboratory Measurements Workshop
    - [http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/venustech2015/](http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/venustech2015/)
  - **February 11-12, 2015**
    - Location TBA
    - Mars Express Science Working Team Meeting
    - For more information, contact Håkan Svedhem: [hsvedhem@esa.int](mailto:hsvedhem@esa.int)
  - **March 7-14, 2015**
    - Big Sky, MT, USA
    - IEEE Aerospace Conference
    - [http://www.aeroconf.org/](http://www.aeroconf.org/)
    - Abstracts deadline has been extended (no specific deadline given, but no later than the paper submission deadline: October 24, 2014).
  - **March 16-20, 2015**
    - The Woodlands, TX, USA
    - 46th Lunar and Planetary Science Conference
    - [http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/lpsc2015/](http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/lpsc2015/)

### Second-Fourth Quarter, 2015

- **New!**
  - **April 12-17, 2015**
    - Vienna, AUSTRIA
    - European Geosciences Union General Assembly 2015
  - **April 28-29, 2015**
    - Wacltberg, GERMANY
    - 5th PCL Focus Days 2015
    - [http://workshops.fhr.fraunhofer.de/pclfocusdays/](http://workshops.fhr.fraunhofer.de/pclfocusdays/)
  - **May 5-7, 2015**
    - Washington, DC, USA
    - Humans to Mars Summit
    - [http://h2m.exploremars.org/](http://h2m.exploremars.org/)
  - **May 19-22, 2015**
    - Boise, ID, USA
    - 4th International Planetary Dunes Workshop
    - [http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/dunes2015/](http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/dunes2015/)
  - **May 19-22, 2015**
    - Laural, MD, USA
    - Workshop on Issues in Crater Studies and the Dating of Planetary Surfaces
    - [http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/craterstats2015/](http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/craterstats2015/)
  - **May 26-27, 2015**
    - London, UK
    - iCubeSat 2015: 4th Interplanetary CubeSat Workshop
    - [http://iCubeSat.org](http://iCubeSat.org)
  - **New!**
    - **June 15-19, 2015**
      - Cologne, GERMANY
      - 12th International Planetary Probe Workshop (IPPW-12)
**Seasons on Mars**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MY32</th>
<th>MY33</th>
<th>MY34</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start of Northern Spring / Ls 0</td>
<td>7/31/2013</td>
<td>6/18/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start of Northern Summer / Ls 90</td>
<td>2/15/2014</td>
<td>1/03/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start of Northern Autumn / Ls 180</td>
<td>8/17/2014</td>
<td>7/04/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start of Northern Winter / Ls 270</td>
<td>1/11/2015</td>
<td>11/28/2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special holidays to consider when scheduling conferences/workshops/meetings**

- **Good Friday**
  - 2014: 4/18/2014
  - 2016: 4/6/2016
  - 2017: 4/14/2017

- **Rosh Hashanah**
  - 2014: 9/25/2014
  - 2015: 9/14/2015
  - 2016: 9/16/2016
  - 2017: 9/20/2017

- **Yom Kippur**
  - 2014: 10/4/2014
  - 2015: 9/23/2015
  - 2016: 9/25/2016
  - 2017: 9/29/2017

(Nota that Jewish holidays start at sundown the previous evening)

- **Thanksgiving Day, U.S.**
  - 2014: 11/27/2014
  - 2015: 11/26/2015
  - 2016: 11/22/2016

- **Thanksgiving Day, Canada**
  - 2014: 10/13/2014
  - 2015: 10/12/2015
  - 2016: 10/8/2016
  - 2017: 10/9/2017

- **Christmas Day**
  - 2014: 12/25/2014
  - 2015: 12/25/2015
  - 2016: 12/25/2016
  - 2017: 12/25/2017

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Please send your Mars Community Announcements and calendar items for inclusion in next month’s email to:

- Carla de la Paz at paz@jpl.nasa.gov, 818-354-3160.

All announcements listed in this newsletter will be posted on the MEPAG website, available at:

http://mepag.jpl.nasa.gov