HQ Responses to Findings from 6th SBAG Meeting

Small Bodies Assessment Group (SBAG)
7th Formal Meeting
Pasadena, CA
July 10-11, 2012

Comments on Findings from SBAG-6

Finding 1

The SBAG is pleased that the PDS Small Bodies Node is developing an interface to search the numerous and diverse data sets related to small bodies. The Data Ferret has a nice interface for returning information about data on individually identified objects. At present, this is limited primarily to asteroid data and needs to include its comet data holdings. The ability to conduct more sophisticated SQL-type queries is very desired, as is a means of intelligently sifting through large volumes of imaging, spectral and other data accumulated by spacecraft for individual objects (e.g., Eros, Hartley 2, and in the near future Vesta) – perhaps using tools similar to those available for searching data on Mars and the Moon. We request regular updates on these tools at our SBAG meetings.

Comments: NASA HQ PSD is also pleased with this development and encourages any enhancements to PDS that will make the data archive more accessible to the scientific community.

Comments on Findings from SBAG-6

Finding 2

The B612 initiative to build a largely privately funded NEO survey telescope is potentially exciting. However, before NASA invests any of its limited resources in supporting this venture, there should be an external peer review of the mission design to ensure that it will satisfy NASA needs, which need to be articulated first, and that those needs are cost-effectively addressed. If the level of needed investment by PSD is equivalent to a Discovery MoO or Discovery mission, then such support should be sought through open competition from those programs.

Comments: The Space Act Agreement with B612 for the Sentinel project was signed 19 June 2012. Incorporated in the SAA are gates and milestones at which the progress of the project will be reviewed and assessed for continued benefit to NASA and the NEO community. A NASA Technical Consulting Team has been established of NASA engineers and NEO science community representatives to assist NASA in performing these assessments and providing feedback to B612 on the project's progress and capability. Science members are Paul Abell, Don Yeomans (or Steve Chesley) and Tim Spahr.

Comments on Findings from SBAG-6

Finding 3

Any contribution of instruments or sampling systems by NASA to the ESA Marco Polo mission should be subject to open competition among potential providers.

Comments: If the ESA Marco Polo mission is approved to enter a formulation phase, NASA will determine the appropriate level of participation by the agency and mechanisms for that participation. NASA SMD/PSD always prefers a competitive process for award of science projects unless there is a clear and compelling reason for an alternate approach, in which case it will always be coordinated with the Planetary Science Subcommittee.