

Mars Exploration Science Monthly Newsletter

A publication of the Mars Program Office and the Mars Exploration Program Analysis Group (MEPAG)

Mid-March 2020

A mid-month update due to COVID-19

Mars Science News

Stressful Times and Evolving Travel Policies / Conference Statuses

The Mars Program Office staff are carefully watching the evolving concerns and policies within the COVID-19 situation, and we hope community members are able to remain healthy – physically, mentally, and emotionally – in these stressful times. Within this special mid-month newsletter, we aim to help people track the many changes in conference status and plans, and advertise replacement virtual meeting options. Additionally, some sites that may help:

- The Center for Disease Control (CDC) website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- The latest information relating to NASA planning and travel policies: <https://nasapeople.nasa.gov/coronavirus/>
- A crowd-sourced list of free resources for educators (e.g., resources for telecons and material for virtual instruction): [google doc link](#)
- Some advice about how to productively telework: <https://mobile.twitter.com/elakdawalla/status/1236749425659138048>

Virtual LPSC Townhall Replacements are Scheduled – First is **TODAY** 9am PDT

See <https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/lpsc2020/> for all information. Information for each of these events includes an email contact for submitting questions as well as a link for watching.

- Monday, March 16, 2020, 12:00–1:00 p.m. EDT: **Update on Planning for the National Academies' Decadal Survey in Planetary Science and Astrobiology**
- Tuesday, March 17, 2020, 12:00–1:00 p.m. EDT: **NASA Planetary Science Division (PSD) R&A Town Hall**
- Thursday, March 19, 2020, 1:00–3:00 p.m. EDT: **NASA Headquarters Briefing**

MEPAG Meeting 38 (April 15-17, 2020) Converted to Fully Virtual Meeting, 2nd Info. Circ. Updated

In response to community concerns and evolving policies/recommendations against travel, the April Mars Exploration Program Analysis Group (MEPAG) Meeting is converted from an in-person meeting to a fully virtual meeting. This meeting (#38) will be held over the same dates (**April 15-17, 2020**), within 8:30 am-1:00 pm PDT each day. All members of the Mars science community including our international colleagues are invited to attend.

As outlined in the updated [2nd Information Circular](#), the main foci of this MEPAG meeting remain preparation for the next Planetary Science Decadal Survey, the next steps in Mars Sample Return, and other Mars exploration plans within NASA and other space agencies. The meeting agenda continues to include many timely reports and discussion items, including:

- Major reports from HQ,
- A discussion of the MSR campaign, of Ice Mapper, and of other issues surrounding the recently released President's budget, and
- A community forum to talk about issues and findings.

Additionally, the agenda includes an opportunity to discuss community-based white paper topics. The format of this portion of the agenda is still in works, as we seek ways to mitigate the limitations of remote interaction with respect to small- and large-group discussion. See the updated 2nd Information Circular for instructions; the deadline for submission remains **March 19**.

Suggestions for how this virtual meeting can better convey information and foster participation by the community within a fully setting are welcome, and can be sent to mepagmeetingqs@jpl.nasa.gov. At this time, we are looking into Zoom and WebEx remote meeting platforms, and different agenda/discussion structures. The updated agenda will be posted by **April 1**, along with connection information.

ESA ExoMars Rover mission launch delayed to 2022

The European Space Agency (ESA) and the Roscosmos Space Corporation have decided to postpone the launch of the second ExoMars mission to study the Red Planet to 2022. This was a difficult decision to make, and we wish the mission team all the best as they work to complete tests and integration, and prepare for their new launch window (likely between August and October 2022). For the full press release, see: https://www.esa.int/Newsroom/Press_Releases/ExoMars_to_take_off_for_the_Red_Planet_in_2022.

NASA Announcements

• NASA SMD Virtual Townhall Meeting Regarding FY2021 Budget Request

NASA's Science Mission Directorate (SMD) will hold a virtual town hall meeting with Associate Administrator for Science Thomas Zurbuchen and his leadership team at **11 a.m. EDT Friday, March 20**, to discuss the President's FY 2021 budget request for the directorate and other updates. Members of the science community, academia, the media, and the public are invited to participate. Participants are encouraged to use the agency's website to hear audio of the presentation and view the slides.

- To view the presentation and slides, go to: <http://www.nasa.gov/live>
- To ask a question, participants can go to: <https://arc.cnf.io/sessions/s6mw#!/dashboard>
- For NASA's Fiscal Year 2021 request, visit: <https://www.nasa.gov/budget>

• As shared in the last newsletter: Planetary Science Advisory Committee (PAC) Nominations

The Planetary Science Advisory Committee (PAC) supports the advisory needs of the Planetary Science Division (PSD), the Science Mission Directorate (SMD) and other mission directorates as required, and the NASA Administrator. The advisory scope of the PAC includes all aspects of NASA's planetary science program, including scientific research; considerations of the development of near-term enabling technologies, systems, and computing and information management capabilities; and developments with the potential to provide long-term improvements in future mission operational systems. Responsibility for biological planetary protection is outside the purview of the PAC. NASA's PSD is extending the invitation for nominations for service on the PAC. Interested members of the community are invited to review the charter and to submit nominations (including self-nominations) for consideration to fill vacancies on the Committee.

- For application instructions: <http://planetarynews.org/nasa/20200109-PACnominations.pdf>; the deadline to submit nomination materials is **March 31, 2020**.
- For more information about PAC: <https://science.nasa.gov/nac/science-advisory-committees/pac>.

Planetary Science Decadal Survey preparation

As shared in the last newsletter:

- The Planetary Science and Astrobiology Decadal Survey 2023-2032 Task Statement is available on the NASEM Decadal Survey Website: https://sites.nationalacademies.org/SSB/SSB_198165.
- General information and resources for the MEPAG community are posted to the MEPAG website: https://mepag.jpl.nasa.gov/DecadalSurvey/Info_PlanetaryDS2020_MEPAG.pdf.
- A few forums are available to facilitate advertisement of white paper topics, so as to foster community collaboration within preparation for the next Planetary Science Decadal Survey. All members of the Mars community are encouraged to view or add information to any/all of these sites.
 - LPI has a [centralized site](#) for advertisement of white paper ideas within all areas of planetary science. Posting a white paper topic idea to the LPI site enables one to reach the broader planetary community, and we recommend that Mars community members post white paper topics to that site and review that site regularly.
 - The **AAS Division of Planetary Sciences (DPS)** has set up a [Decadal Survey Information Hub](#). This site contains links to AG-specific sites, as well as a place to advertise white paper topics related to the "State of the Community."
 - **MEPAG** has kept their [google spreadsheet](#) open to facilitate collaboration and communication regarding community-generated white papers. It contains tabs to help people find additional authors for a white paper topic, volunteer to assist with a white paper topic, or share a relevant resource with the community.

MER Data Catalog Survey

The goal of the Mars Exploration Rovers (MER) Data Catalog Project is to make it easy and simple for researchers who were not members of the MER team (as well as the general public) to discover and use Spirit and Opportunity data. To that end, the Project members are conducting a survey to find out what features potential users would like to see in the catalog. The survey can be taken at: <http://www.merdatacatalog.com/survey>, and will be open **through April 2020**. This link can be shared with anyone who might want to use MER data, including but not limited to Mars-focused and non-Mars-focused planetary scientists, Earth scientists, high school teachers, undergraduates, engineers, and people who work at museums.

Near-term Due Dates (next three months)

Due	Conference
March 19	MEPAG – White Paper Concept Submission Deadline
March 27	Planetary Science Informatics and Data Analytics 2020 Conference – Registration Deadline
April 1	MEPAG – Community Forum Topic Suggestion Deadline
April 3	The Planetary CubeSats/SmallSats Symposium – Abstract Deadline
April 13	6th International Planetary Dunes Workshop – Early Registration Deadline
April 16	2020 Annual Meeting of Planetary Geologic Mappers
April 16	Mercury 2020, Current and future science of the innermost planet – Abstract Deadline
April 28	6th International Planetary Dunes Workshop – Registration Deadline
May 1	7th Mars Atmosphere Modelling and Observations conference – [Updated] Abstract Deadline
May 5	17th International Planetary Probe Workshop – Early Registration Deadline
May 12	Asia Oceania Geosciences Conference 2020 – [Updated] Early Registration Deadline
May 13	Europlanet Science Congress – Abstract Deadline
May 15	Planetary Science Informatics and Data Analytics 2020 Conference – Registration Deadline
May 16	43rd COSPAR Scientific Assembly – Early Registration Deadline
May 21	11th Planetary Crater Consortium Meeting – Abstract Deadline

Upcoming Conferences

- Note that for civil servants and those under contract with NASA, foreign and NASA-sponsored conferences generally need to be forecasted via NCTS. Forecasting to NCTS is usually due 60 days in advance for domestic meetings. If you are unsure whether an event is a conference or not, or when the forecasting deadline may be, please consult with your NASA Center conference forecasting/travel unit.
- We have noted conference changes we are aware of – but the situation is rapidly evolving. If we show a conference as still happening (especially through May), it is advisable to check the website and/or confirm with conference organizers.
- VM = virtual meeting.

First Quarter 2020		
Cancelled	March 16-20, 2020 The Woodlands, TX, USA	51st Lunar and Planetary Science Conference https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/lpsc2020/ see webpage or 1 st newsletter announcement about virtual townhalls
New!	March 16, 2020 Virtual Meeting	(LPSC replacement) Virtual Townhall: Update on Planning for the National Academies' Decadal Survey in Planetary Science and Astrobiology https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/lpsc2020/
New!	March 17, 2020 Virtual Meeting	(LPSC replacement) Virtual Townhall: NASA Planetary Science Division (PSD) R&A https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/lpsc2020/
New!	March 19, 2020 Virtual Meeting	(LPSC replacement) Virtual Townhall: NASA Headquarters Briefing https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/lpsc2020/
New!	March 20, 2020 Virtual Meeting	Virtual Townhall: NASA SMD Meeting Regarding FY2021 Budget Request http://www.nasa.gov/live
Postponed [TBD]	March 31-April 2, 2020 Phoenix, AZ, USA	Preventing Harassment in Science: Building a community of Practice Toward Meaningful Change https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/anti-harassment2020/organizers/

Second Quarter, 2020		
Postponed [TBD]	April 14-16, 2020 Boulder, CO, USA	Titan Through Time Workshop V https://www.titanthroughtime.org/
Converted to VM	April 15-17, 2020 Virtual Meeting	MEPAG Meeting #38 NCTS# 41124-20 https://mepag.jpl.nasa.gov/meetings.cfm
	April 20-23, 2020 Seattle, WA, USA	ASCE Earth & Space Conference Symposium 2: Exploration and Utilization of Extra-Terrestrial Bodies https://www.earthspaceconference.org/symposium-2
Postponed to 2021	April 20-24, 2020 Canary Islands, Spain	Biennial European Astrobiology Conference (BEACON) http://europeanastrobiology.eu/BEACON2020/index.html
Cancelled	April 21-22, 2020 Suitland, MD, USA	Improving Space Operations Workshop (ISOW 2020) https://isow.space.swri.edu/

1/2-day VM & Postponed	April 28-30, 2020 Pasadena, CA, USA	2020 In Situ Science & Instrumentation Workshop for Europa and Ocean Worlds https://www.europa-insitu.caltech.edu
Postponed [TBD]	April 28-30, 2020 Denver, CO, USA	Lunar Surface Science Workshop http://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/lunarsurface2020
	May 3-8, 2020 Les Houches, France	Workshop Mars V https://www.cosmos.esa.int/web/planet-mars-5/home
Postponed to 2021	May 3-8, 2020 Vienna, Austrian	EGU General Assembly https://www.egu2020.eu/
Postponed to Aug 2020	May 6-8, 2020 August 19-21, 2020 Saint-Hubert, Quebec	Women in Space 2020 http://www.womeninspacecon.com/
Postponed to 2021 [TBC]	May 12-15, 2020 Alamosa, CO, USA	6th International Planetary Dunes Workshop https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/dunes2020/
	May 12-14, 2020 Washington, DC, USA	Human to Mars Summit https://www.exploremars.org/
Changed to a VM	May 12-14, 2020 Padua, Italy	8th European Lunar Symposium (ELS) https://els2020.arc.nasa.gov/
	June 2-4, 2020 Orleans, France	Mercury 2020, Current and future science of the innermost planet https://mercury2020.ias.u-psud.fr/main_1st.php
	June 8-11, 2020 Paris, France	7th Mars Atmosphere Modelling and Observations Conference http://www-mars.lmd.jussieu.fr/paris2020/
	June 16-18, 2020 Washington, DC, USA	2020 Annual Meeting of Planetary Geologic Mappers https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/pgm2020/
	June 22-24, 2020 Villanueva de la Cañada, Spain	Planetary Science Informatics and Data Analytics 2020 Conference https://www.cosmos.esa.int/web/psida-2020
New!	June 25-26, 2020 Greenbelt, MD	Planetary CubeSats/SmallSats Symposia https://cubesats.gsfc.nasa.gov/symposium.html
	June 28- July 4, 2020 Hongcheon, Korea	Asia Oceania Geosciences Conference 2020 http://www.asiaoceania.org/aogs2020/public.asp?page=home.html

Third-Fourth Quarter, 2020		
	July, 2020	Launch window for the UAE EMM orbiter (Hope)
	July 17-August 5, 2020	Launch window for the NASA Mars 2020 rover
	August 5-7, 2020 Honolulu, HI, USA	11th Planetary Crater Consortium Meeting https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/crater2020/
	August 9-14, 2020 Glasgow, Scotland	83rd Annual Meteoritical Society Meeting (METSOC 2020) https://www.metsoc2020.com/
	August 15-22, 2020 Sydney, Australia	43rd COSPAR Scientific Assembly NCTS 35724-20 https://www.cospar-assembly.org/
	September 14-18, 2020 Tokyo, Japan	NASA Astrobiology Graduate Conference (AbGradCon) http://abgradcon.org
	September 27- October 2, 2020 Granada, Spain	Europlanet Science Congress https://www.epsc2020.eu/
	October 5-8, 2020 Houston, TX, USA	Martian Enigmas 2020 https://www.hou.usra.edu/meetings/martianenigmas2020/
	October 25-28, 2020 Montreal, Québec, Canada	GSA Annual Meeting https://community.geosociety.org/gsa2020/home
	November 18-20, 2020 Tokyo, Japan	5th International Workshop on Instrumentation for Planetary Missions 2020 https://www2.rikkyo.ac.jp/web/ipm2020/
New!	December 7-11, 2020 San Francisco, CA	AGU Fall Meeting https://www.agu.org/fall-meeting

Seasons on Mars

	MY35	MY36	MY37
Start of Northern Spring / L _s 0	03/23/2019	02/07/2021	12/26/2022
Start of Northern Summer / L _s 90	10/08/2019	08/25/2021	07/13/2023
Start of Northern Autumn / L _s 180	04/08/2020	02/24/2022	01/24/2024
Start of Northern Winter / L _s 270	09/02/2020	07/21/2022	06/07/2024

Special holidays to consider when scheduling conferences/workshops/meetings

Good Friday	4/10/20	4/2/2021	04/15/2022	4/7/2023
Rosh Hashanah	9/19/20	9/7/2021	09/26/2022	9/16/2023
Yom Kippur	9/28/20	9/16/2021	10/05/2022	9/25/2023
(Note that Jewish holidays start at sundown the previous evening)				
Thanksgiving Day, Canada	10/12/20	10/11/2021	10/10/2022	10/9/2023
Thanksgiving Day, U.S.	11/26/20	11/25/2021	11/24/2022	11/24/2023
Christmas Day	12/25/20	12/25/2021	12/25/2022	12/25/2023

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Please send Mars Community Announcements and calendar items for inclusion in next month's newsletter to:

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This newsletter (and all previous months') is also posted on the MEPAG website: <http://mepag.jpl.nasa.gov>

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