

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The previous PAC Charter expired on June 12, 2021, but PSD was not informed of this until after the June 14 PAC meeting. The meeting, therefore, was not an official PAC meeting, and the minutes and findings from it are unofficial.

The following comments address the discussion points that arose from the public meeting held on June 14, 2021.

PAC Virtual Meeting 14 June 2021 Discussion Points

Planetary Data Ecosystem Independent Review Board

The PAC appreciates the efforts of the Planetary Data Ecosystem (PDE) Independent Review Board (IRB) and applauds PSD for its efforts to initiate and formalize a Planetary Data Ecosystem. The PAC recognizes that in order for a PDE to be fully implemented, supported, and maintained, additional resources and funding will be required. Specifically, the PAC acknowledges that funding will need to be provided to the planetary science community so that members of the community can properly participate in a fully realized PDE. The PAC understands that funding is limited and therefore encourages PSD to further engage other divisions to leverage as many financial and technical resources as possible to support the PDE now and into the future.

Research & Analysis Funding

The additional funding available for R&A funding this year is excellent news. While not fixing the very low selection rates in most planetary R&A programs, it has prevented the cancellation of a number of calls. However, the PAC notes that this is a one-time increase in the budget. In order to improve selection rates, the PAC encourages NASA to request additional support for R&A in future budget requests. The PAC requests clarification on the use of NASA funds by principal investigators for community service, particularly for review panels.

Mars missions' community involvement

The PAC was very happy to hear about the appointment of Dr. Meenakshi Wadhwa as the Mars Sample Return (MSR) Program Scientist. The PAC also appreciated the continued updating from PSD and MEP about the MSR campaign and Mars Ice Mapper (MIM) orbiter concepts. However, for both concepts many questions remain open about science community involvement, which is important to ensure the best science can be accomplished. The PAC refers back to the March 2021 meeting Findings and asks for a further update on those points. In particular, the PAC looks forward to hearing more about the formation of an International Recon/Science Measurement Definition Team for MIM and a Campaign Science Group for MSR - or other such groups that aim to increase community opportunity for input, and utilize the broad community expertise in definition of these concepts. The PAC recommends that the process for deciding which samples to return and assessing whether a particular sample meets Decadal science objectives should be open to the scientific community. The PAC also requests information on why an additional rover is needed in addition to Perseverance, as this will increase the cost and complexity of MSR.

Apophis

The asteroid 99942 Apophis will make a very close flyby of the Earth in 2029 – inside the orbit of geostationary satellites – making it a useful target for detailed study of a small body. Apophis poses no chance of impact in 2029 on its current trajectory. The PAC recommends that NASA set up a study team to investigate how to maximize the scientific return of this close approach without disturbing the object or perturbing its orbit.

Closed captioning

The PAC greatly appreciates that closed captioning was made available at the June meeting as this increases the accessibility of the meeting. The PAC encourages NASA to make closed captioning available for all public, virtual NASA meetings, and to help standardize this practice within the science community.