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## AGU Planetary Sciences Section NEWSLETTER #29

14 October, 2008

- 1) Fall AGU Planetary Sessions
- 2) Call for Spring General Assembly special sessions
- 3) Outer Planets Colloquium Series
- 4) AGU E/PO Committee for Planetary Sciences

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### 1) Fall AGU Planetary Session Highlights

For the Fall 2008 AGU meeting, the Planetary Sciences Section received 601 abstracts, enabling the section to schedule 26 oral sessions, with a little more than two-thirds of the presentations assigned to poster sessions. Topics range across the solar system and beyond, with an emphasis on Mars and outer solar system objects driven by analyses of exciting new observations by space missions including (but not limited to) Genesis, Venus Express, Kaguya, Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, the Mars Exploration Rovers, Mars Express, Odyssey, Cassini, Rosetta and New Horizons. In addition to the Planetary Science sessions, two particularly prominent planetary missions, Messenger and Phoenix, are covered by a series of Union sessions.

The giant outer planets and their satellites are the focus of a number of sessions, including **Outer Planet Systems: Comparisons of Processes Among the Four Giant Worlds of our Solar System**; **Planetary Rings: Observation and Theory**; and **Blowing Hot, Blowing Cold: The Diversity of Outer Planet Satellites**. Two especially interesting worlds being examined by Cassini at Saturn are the subject of **Titan at the End of the Cassini Prime Mission**, and **Focus on Enceladus**.

Ongoing observations by Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter are highlighted in a pair of sessions titled **Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter: Mars Perspectives After One Mars Year**. The tremendous amount of information collected at Mars over the past decade has stimulated ever deeper investigations of processes on that planet, and these are the subject of several sessions, such as **New Developments in the Study of Fluvial Systems on Mars**; **Geochemistry, Stratigraphy, and Evolution of Sulfates on Mars**; **Landed Measurements on Mars: Ground Truth for Orbital Data**; **Comparison of Basaltic Volcanism on the Earth and Mars**; and **Prospects for Habitability on Noachian Mars**.

This latter session reflects the intense interest in the possibility of life beyond Earth, and presentations on this topic are scattered among a number of sessions. One key aspect of such studies, recognizing evidence of biological processes in the geologic record, is examined in pair of sessions on **Organic and Inorganic Microbial Biosignatures**. Another area of wide interest is the burgeoning field of extra-solar planets. The session

on **Super-Earths** focuses on extra-solar planets of 1-10 earth-mass that likely consist primarily of solids and liquids rather than of gases, offering the opportunity for comparison with the solid objects in our solar system.

New spacecraft observations motivate focused sessions on the Moon (**Results from SELENE/Kaguya; The Dynamic Lunar Environment**), Venus (**Exploring Venus**) and asteroids (**Asteroid Studies**); see **Planetary Sciences: Moon, Mars, Genesis** for additional related studies. And sessions on **Recent Advances in Planetary Volcanology, Evolution of Planetary Atmospheres**, and **The Interaction of the Solar Wind with Unmagnetised Bodies** highlight progress in understanding these processes.

Two special lectures are sponsored by the Planetary Sciences section at 2008 Fall Meeting. The Shoemaker Lecture this year is entitled "**The Phoenix Mission Explores the Martian Arctic**"; it will be given Monday afternoon by Peter Smith, the principal investigator of the Phoenix Mission. The Whipple Lecture is associated with the Whipple Award, presented by the section to a renowned researcher in honor of his or her contributions to planetary science. Roger Phillips will give the Whipple Lecture on Thursday afternoon, to discuss "**Terrestrial Planet Geophysics**." The lecture will be followed by a session devoted to a variety of topics reflecting Roger's contributions over the years.

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## 2) Call for Spring General Assembly special sessions

The coming year's Spring meeting, now called "The Meeting of the Americas" will be a Joint Assembly of the GAC/MAC/CGU/AGU held in Toronto, Canada 24-27 May 2009. Members of the Earth and space sciences community are encouraged to propose special sessions for the 2009 Spring Meeting. You may submit a session proposal to any of the existing disciplines. Note that session proposals must focus on scientific results and/or their applications. The deadline for proposing a session is **5 November, 2008**. See:

[http://www.agu.org/meetings/ja09/program/program\\_main\\_SessionProposal.php](http://www.agu.org/meetings/ja09/program/program_main_SessionProposal.php)

for more information or to propose a special session. If you have further questions, please contact your technical program committee representative (that's me, Bruce Banerdt, [bruce.banerdt@jpl.nasa.gov](mailto:bruce.banerdt@jpl.nasa.gov)).

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## 3) Outer Planets Colloquium Series

Would your institution like a visit and colloquium presentation this Fall from an expert in outer solar system science, at no expense to you? Would you like travel support to

share your outer solar system research? Presenters and host institutions are sought for the Outer Planets Colloquium Series, a program that matches planetary scientists with university campuses and research institutions.

Participation is open to two- and four-year undergraduate colleges, and to research institutions throughout the United States. Host institutions commit to making the necessary local arrangements. Presenters are encouraged to address the needs of the next generation of scientists (graduate students, interns, and undergraduates) and to give an additional presentation that is free and open to the general public. Other interactions that increase awareness of outer solar system science may also be considered as part of the visit. These may include guest teaching a class, interacting informally with students and faculty, visiting local precollege campuses, or other outreach activities.

A range of topics is anticipated on the basis of speaker participation.

The Colloquium Series will cover the presenter's travel expenses. There will be no honorarium for the speaker.

Application details and further information may be found at:

<http://outerplanets.jpl.nasa.gov/>

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#### **4) AGU E/PO Committee for Planetary Sciences**

Dear Planetary E/PO colleagues,

Bruce Jakosky and I have been discussing initiating an AGU E/PO committee for the Planetary Sciences division, modeled on the SPA E/PO committee. The SPA E/PO committee has been an important catalyst for E/PO activities at AGU, as well as a great way for solar and space physics E/PO professionals to stay in touch. The SPA E/PO group organizes E/PO sessions at AGU, develops GIFT teacher workshops at AGU meetings, among other things. If you are going to be at AGU in December, please try to make room for a meeting to discuss this opportunity. I've set a Doodle scheduler for this event. Click on this link to indicate when you are available:

<http://www.doodle.com/m8r54rvq28sq26gn>

We will choose the time that can accommodate the most people, and I'll make sure that those of you that cannot make the meeting are kept in the loop! As always, please pass this on to any and all of your colleagues! We are interested in having both scientists and E/PO folks attend.

Submitted by Emily CoBabe-Ammann [EcoBabe@lasp.colorado.edu](mailto:EcoBabe@lasp.colorado.edu)

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For future newsletter items please contact:  
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