

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to take advantage of an opportunity to propose new candidate landing sites for the 2011 Mars Science Laboratory (MSL) mission. Addition of any new site to the list of four currently under consideration (Eberswalde crater, Gale crater, Holden crater, and Mawrth Vallis) will require both mineralogic and morphologic evidence demonstrating a compelling argument that it is at least as promising as the sites currently being evaluated. Moreover, the engineering or safety aspects of any candidate site must eventually be shown (by the MSL Project) to equal or exceed those of the four sites under consideration. Interpretations of the science potential of new candidate sites must be mature and would ideally be peer-reviewed and published prior to formal addition as a new candidate site.

Consideration of new candidate sites requires preparation of an abstract that includes detailed information on the location and nature of the site. Specific requirements for proposing a new site and associated science and engineering criteria that must be included/discussed can be found in the abstract template posted at: <http://marsoweb.nas.nasa.gov/landingsites/> and <http://webgis.wr.usgs.gov/msl>. Abstracts describing new sites should be submitted via e-mail to John Grant (grantj@si.edu) and Matt Golombek (matthew.p.golombek@jpl.nasa.gov). New candidate sites must be proposed by October 31, 2009 to be considered.

We anticipate that an initial review for compliance to site requirements will be completed in early fall and that targets for initial imaging by MRO (or additional imaging if some MRO data already exists) will be submitted soon thereafter. These MRO data (HiIRSE, CRISM, and CTX) will be made available to persons proposing candidate sites to permit more comprehensive evaluation of their merit over the winter of 2009/2010. A review of remaining candidate sites in May of 2110 is anticipated and will likely involve presentations to the Landing Site Steering Committee and the MSL Project Science Group. This schedule is driven by Project requirements for initial assessment of any new candidate sites and the desire to obtain additional MRO data of any site added to the list under consideration in time for broader community discussion during the 4th Workshop in September, 2010.

We look forward to the continuing participation of the science community in MSL landing site activities and hope that you will consider and propose any new candidate sites which might help to maximize the science done by MSL.

Regards,

John Grant and Matt Golombek
Co-Chairs, Mars Landing Site Steering Committee