
To Members of the Mars Science Working Group

From T. A. Mutch

SUBJECT: REGROUPING FOR ONE MORE TRY.

OCT 19 1978

Preamble, including some philosophizing.

Greetings. When I resigned from the Working Group in the summer of 1977, following completion of our Mars 1984 study, I hardly expected to be joining your ranks a year hence. Frankly, I debated long and hard -- with myself and with others -- before signing on again as chairman of the MSWG. The prospect of spending so much time on committee business -- somewhere between science and administration but, legitimately, neither -- is worrisome. Added to this is the uncertainty of the outcome.

I was persuaded to continue not by any assurances that this time the approval of a Mars mission seemed certain (indeed, no such assurances were offered). Instead, I was persuaded that there is widespread agreement among scientists and NASA administrators that there must be some continuing exploration of Mars. Definition of "some", the primary task of the MSWG, is exceedingly difficult.

However, if we fail to make the effort, it is doubtful that any other group will. At some point, maybe not in the near future, our studies will yield results. In the interim our efforts, at the very least, keep the issue of future Mars missions in center stage. All in all, I think it's worth a try. I hope you agree.

This Year's Plan

As Arden Albee has already written to you, this year's activities include continued planning for a Mars Sample Return Mission in addition to an independent study of a Mars Orbital Science Mission.

In support of the Sample Return Mission two working groups have been established, one in the area of Site Study and a second in the area of Sampling Strategy. These working groups met in late September, are now engaged in various types of analysis, and will meet again on December 12-13 to present the results of their analyses to JPL personnel.

An Orbital Science Group, presently being formed, will assist in definition of the orbital mission. Other groups, to be convened, will deal with issues of planetary protection and sample containment. One way or another, I expect that all members of the MSWG will be invited to participate in one or more of these group efforts.

October 11, 1978

The full MSWG still has the task of coordinating and evaluating all these separate studies. Towards that end I would like to schedule a 1 1/2 day meeting in January. A Mars Science Colloquium is being held at JPL on January 15-18. Many of you will be attending. It might be most convenient to have the MSWG and Colloquium Meetings end to end. Several possibilities are indicated on the enclosed card. Could you respond and mail it back to me?

Looking a Bit Further Downstream

As in previous years we will be trying to establish a mission strategy that gains the support of the COMPLEX (Committee on Planetary and Lunar Exploration, a Committee of the Space Science Board, established by the National Academy of Science) and SSAC (newly reconstituted committee advising Noel Hinners, Tom Young, and NASA Office of Space Science). I anticipate we will be reporting to those two committees in late Spring, although I do not presently envision the preparation of an extensive report.

The SSB/COMPLEX report on "A Strategy for Exploration of the Inner Planets" is finally available in prepublication form and should be published and generally available for our January meeting. It provides important guidance for our own deliberations. If you wish to get a prepublication copy immediately, I suggest you write Jeff Warner, currently at NASA Headquarters.

TAM:shb
Enclosure