

- Determine the nature and inventory of organic carbon compounds;
- Inventory the chemical building blocks of life (carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus, and sulfur);
- Identify features that may represent the effects of biological processes;
- Investigate the chemical, isotopic, and mineralogical composition of Martian surface and near-surface geological materials;
- Interpret the processes that have formed and modified rocks and regolith;
- assess long-timescale (*i.e.*, 4-billion-year) atmospheric evolution processes; and
- Determine the present state, distribution, and cycling of water and carbon dioxide.

The proposed MSL mission would utilize a rover with advanced instrumentation to acquire significant detailed information regarding the habitability of Mars from a scientifically promising location. The mission would also fulfill NASA's strategic technology goals of increasing the mass of science payloads delivered to the surface of Mars, expanding access to higher and lower latitudes, increasing precision landing capability, and increasing traverse capability (mobility) to distances on the order of several kilometers.

Mobility is essential because evidence for past or present life on Mars will very likely not be so abundant or widespread that it will be available in the immediate vicinity of the selected landing site. Without the mobility necessary to conduct *in situ* exploration, it may not be possible to uniquely characterize a target location.

The Proposed Action (Alternative 1) consists of continuing preparations for and implementing the MSL mission to Mars. The proposed MSL rover would utilize a MMRTG as its primary source of electrical power to operate and conduct science on the surface of Mars. Under Alternative 2, NASA would discontinue preparations for the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) and implement an alternative MSL mission to Mars. The alternative MSL rover would utilize solar energy as its primary source of electrical power to operate and conduct science on the surface of Mars. With either the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) or Alternative 2, the MSL spacecraft would be launched on board an expendable launch vehicle from CCAFS, Florida during the September–November 2009 time period. Under the No Action Alternative, NASA would discontinue preparations for the MSL

mission, and the spacecraft would not be launched. With either the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) or Alternative 2, the potentially affected environment for a normal launch includes the area at and in the vicinity of the launch site, CCAFS in Florida. The environmental impacts of a normal launch of the mission for either alternative would be associated principally with the exhaust emissions from the expendable launch vehicle. These effects would include: (1) Short-term impacts on air quality within the exhaust cloud and near the launch pad, and (2) the potential for acidic deposition on the vegetation and surface water bodies at and near the launch complex.

Potential launch accidents could result in the release of some of the radioactive material on board the spacecraft. The MMRTG planned for use on the rover for the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) would use plutonium dioxide, with a radioisotope inventory of approximately 58,700 curies, to provide electrical power. For either alternative, two of the science instruments on the rover would use small quantities of radioactive material, totaling approximately two curies, for instrument calibration or science experiments.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), in cooperation with NASA, has performed a risk assessment of potential accidents for the MSL mission. This assessment used a methodology refined through applications to the Galileo, Ulysses, Cassini, Mars Exploration Rover, and New Horizons missions. DOE's risk assessment for the proposed MSL mission indicates that in the event of a launch accident the expected impacts of released radioactive material at and in the vicinity of the launch area, and on a global basis, would be small. Alternative 2 would not involve any MMRTG-associated radiological risks since an MMRTG would not be used for this mission alternative.

NASA will hold public comment meetings during which the public is invited to participate in an open exchange of information and submission of comments on the DEIS. Each public meeting will begin with an opportunity for informal discussions with project personnel, followed by a brief NASA presentation on the MSL mission, and conclude with the submission of formal comments, both written and oral. These meetings will be held on:

- September 27, 2006, from 1 p.m.–4 p.m. and 6 p.m.–9 p.m. at the Florida Solar Energy Center; H. George Carrison Auditorium; 1679 Clearlake Road, Cocoa, Florida 32922;

- October 10, 2006, from 1 p.m.–4 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill; Congressional Room A; 400 New Jersey Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20001.

Further information on the public meetings can be obtained by contacting Mark R. Dahl at the address or telephone number indicated herein, or by visiting the MSL DEIS Web site at: <http://spacescience.nasa.gov/admin/pubs/msl/index.htm>. Advanced registration for attending any of the meetings is not required.

The FEIS may be examined at the following NASA locations by contacting the pertinent Freedom of Information Office:

- (a) NASA, Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, CA 94035 (650–604–3273);
- (b) NASA, Dryden Flight Research Center, Edwards, CA 93523 (661–276–2704);
- (c) NASA, Glenn Research Center at Lewis Field, Cleveland, OH 44135 (216–433–2813);
- (d) NASA, Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, MD 20771 (301–286–4721);
- (e) NASA, Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX 77058 (281–483–8612);
- (f) NASA, Kennedy Space Center, FL 32899 (321–867–9280);
- (g) NASA, Langley Research Center, Hampton, VA 23681 (757–864–2497);
- (h) NASA, Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, AL 35812 (256–544–1837); and
- (i) NASA, Stennis Space Center, MS 39529 (228–688–2118).

Any person, organization, or governmental body or agency interested in receiving a copy of NASA's Record of Decision after it is rendered should so indicate by mail or electronic mail to Mr. Dahl at the addresses provided above.

Written public input and comments on alternatives and environmental issues and concerns associated with the proposed Mars Science Laboratory mission are hereby requested.

**Olga M. Dominguez,**

*Assistant Administrator for Infrastructure and Administration.*

[FR Doc. E6–14649 Filed 9–1–06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 7510–13–P**

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## NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

### Notice of Intent To Seek Approval To Establish an Information Collection

**AGENCY:** National Science Foundation.

**ACTION:** Notice and Request for Comments.

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**SUMMARY:** In compliance with the requirement of Section 3506(c)(2)(A) of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 for opportunity for public comment on proposed data collection projects, the National Science Foundation (NSF) will publish periodic summaries of proposed projects.

Comments are invited on (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

**DATES:** Written comments on this notice must be received by November 6, 2006 to be assured of consideration.

Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR**

**COMMENTS:** Contact Suzanne Plimpton, Acting Reports Clearance Officer, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 295, Arlington, Virginia 22230; telephone 703-292-7556; or send e-mail to

[splimpto@nsf.gov](mailto:splimpto@nsf.gov). Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday. You also may obtain a copy of the date collection instrument and instructions from Ms. Hines.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

*Title of Collection:* Model Institutions for Excellence Graduates' Survey.

*OMB Approval Number:* 3145-NEW.  
*Expiration Date of Approval:* Not Applicable.

*Type of Request:* Intent to seek approval to establish an information collection for three years.

*Proposed Project:* The Division of Human Resource Development (EHR/HRD) of the National Science Foundation (NSF) has requested impact information on the Model Institutions for Excellence (MIE) Program. Jointly funded by NSF and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the MIE Program funded eight minority-service undergraduate institutions to promote under represented minority participation in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Now NSF seeks follow-up information on program graduates to determine whether or not they have continued their education in STEM graduate programs and/or STEM employment, and how the MIE program influence their decisions with respect to graduate school and employment. NSF proposed a one-time on-line survey of the 931 MIE students who received bachelor's degrees in a STEM field from one of the MIE colleges between 2002 through 2005.

*Estimate of Burden:* The Foundation estimates that, on average, 30 minutes per respondent will be required to complete the survey, for a total of 465.5 hours for all respondents. Respondents from the eight institutions that received NSF MIE support will complete this survey once.

*Respondents:* STEM graduates from MIE programs.

*Estimated Number of Responses:* 931.

*Estimates Total Annual Burden on Respondents:* 465.5 hours.

Dated: August 29, 2006.

**Suzanne Plimpton,**

*Reports Clearance Officer, National Science Foundation.*

[FR Doc. 06-7388 Filed 9-1-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 7555-01-M**

**PENSION BENEFIT GUARANTY CORPORATION**

**Request for Extension of Approval of a Collection of Information Under the Paperwork Reduction Act; Comment Request; Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Focus Groups**

**AGENCY:** Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

**ACTION:** Notice of request for extension of OMB approval.

**SUMMARY:** The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation is requesting that the Office of Management and Budget extend its approval of a collection of information under the Paperwork Reduction Act. The purpose of the information collection, which will be conducted through focus groups and surveys over a three-year period, is to help the PBGC assess the efficiency and effectiveness with which it serves its customers and to design actions to address identified problems.

**DATES:** Comments should be submitted by October 5, 2006.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments may be mailed to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs of the Office of Management and Budget, Attn: Desk Officer for Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation,

Washington, DC 20503. Copies of the request for extension (including the collection of information) may be obtained without charge by writing to the Disclosure Division of the Office of the General Counsel of PBGC at 1200 K Street, NW., 11th Floor, Washington, DC 20005-4026, or by visiting or calling (202-326-4040) the Disclosure Division during normal business hours. (TTY and TDD users may call the Federal relay service toll-free at 1-800-877-8339 and ask to be connected to 202-326-4040.)

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Thomas H. Gabriel, Attorney, Legislative and Regulatory Department, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, 1200 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20005-4026, 202-326-4024. (TTY and TDD users may call the Federal relay service toll-free at 1-800-877-8339 and ask to be connected to 202-326-4024.)

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

The PBGC is requesting that OMB extend its approval, for a three-year period, of a generic collection of information consisting of customer satisfaction focus groups and surveys (OMB No. 1212-0053; expires October 31, 2006). The information collection will further the goals of Executive Order 12862, Setting Customer Service Standards, which states the Federal Government must seek to provide "the highest quality of service delivered to customers by private organizations providing a comparable or analogous service."

The PBGC uses customer satisfaction focus groups and surveys to find out about the needs and expectations of its customers and assess how well it is meeting those needs and expectations. By keeping these avenues of communication open, the PBGC can continually improve service to its customers, including plan participants and beneficiaries, plan sponsors and their affiliates, plan administrators, pension practitioners, and others involved in the establishment, operation and termination of plans covered by the PBGC's insurance program. Because the areas of concern to the PBGC and its customers vary and may quickly change, it is important that the PBGC have the ability to evaluate customer concerns quickly by developing new vehicles for gathering information under this generic approval. The focus groups and surveys will provide important information on customer attitudes about the delivery and quality of agency services and will