



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairman Don Beyer (D-VA)
of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics

Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics Hearing:
A Review of the Decadal Strategy for Planetary Science and Astrobiology 2023-2032
May 26, 2022

Good morning and welcome to today's hearing, "*A Review of the Decadal Strategy for Planetary Science and Astrobiology 2023-2032*." Thank you to our distinguished witnesses for joining us today. We're excited to have you.

Today, we're going to hear about the vision for the future of planetary science and astrobiology over the next decade. And the vision is truly breathtaking—returning samples from Mars, sending envoys to the ice giant Uranus and Saturn's moon Enceladus, and even infusing planetary science into human exploration programs. These are just a few of the inspiring and ambitious activities organized around priority science questions that set the stage for the planetary decadal vision.

Before I continue, I want to take a moment to thank the hundreds of scientists who contributed to the decadal survey process, the committee that shepherded the survey, and, of course, the co-chairs with us today who led this once-a-decade undertaking. Decadal surveys represent an enormous effort. They must reach consensus on priorities and make hard choices about how to achieve a bold scientific vision within the realities of finite budgets. NASA, the scientific community, and Congress need and value these surveys; they keep us honest as to what is most important.

While the vision inspires, it's the hard work, taxpayer investments, and people who turn that vision into reality. For the first time, this decadal survey makes important recommendations on the state of the profession, especially diversity, equity, and inclusion. Ensuring broad access and participation in implementing this decadal is central to its success. I want to voice my strong support for breaking barriers and opening doors so that all of America's talent can be part of this exciting future in planetary science.

The United States, with our international partners, has reveled in a golden age of planetary science that has allowed us to send probes to every planet in the solar system, to send spacecraft to the surface of Mars on three separate occasions in just this last decade, and to sample the asteroid Benu. There's much more to come as NASA and the community develop missions that

will study Earth's fiery neighbor, Venus, send an orbiter to Europa, and deploy a rotorcraft on the hydrocarbon world of Titan.

As we look to the future, we can't rest on our past successes. Maintaining U.S. leadership requires that we hew to the carefully crafted strategy laid out in the decadal survey, maintain balance, manage costs, embrace innovation, and ensure a talented pipeline.

And, it's up to us in Congress to make the necessary investments. We can't afford not to, if we want this nation to lead in answering some of the most consequential questions of humanity:

Are we alone? Is there life beyond our planet? Are there near-Earth objects on a trajectory headed toward Earth? And how will human presence in deep space affect our understanding of the solar system?

I want to again thank our witnesses for being here. I am eager to hear their testimony.