

5-25-2021

Subject: NASA's Delay of New Frontiers (NF) 5 and ramifications for the Decadal Survey

Dear colleagues,

We have entered the most intense phase of effort on the Planetary Science and Astrobiology Decadal Survey and the nearly 100 members of the Decadal Committee are working tirelessly. We are extremely grateful for all of their efforts, and we remain on-track for release of our report at the end of March 2022.

The delay of the NF-5 Announcement of Opportunity (AO), as described in the Third Community Announcement released by NASA on May 12, has substantial ramifications for the Decadal Survey. The Decadal Statement of Task charges us with developing "a comprehensive science and mission strategy" for the 2023 to 2032 decade, within which the AO release for NF-5 will now fall. However, when the Decadal Committee was populated last summer, it was with the understanding that the NF-5 mission candidates defined by the prior Decadal Survey (*Vision and Voyages for Planetary Science in the Decade 2013-2022*), and modified by subsequent NASA decisions and CAPS findings, would not be affected by this Decadal for the NF-5 call. Changing that stance now would create conflicts of interest and other problematic issues for the Survey and the community.

We take our responsibility to represent the community very seriously, and protecting the integrity of the Decadal Survey process is our highest priority. To avoid real or perceived conflicts, the Decadal Steering Committee has decided that it will retain the list of mission themes for NF-5 previously provided by NASA in their Second Community Announcement on November 5, 2020. We will continue to assess the future of the New Frontiers program and will formulate recommendations for NF-6 and beyond as originally planned.

Sincerely,

Robin Canup and Phil Christensen