

Dear Colleagues,

The past several months have seen several changes in the leadership of the NASA's Planetary Science Division (PSD) and I want to provide an update on how we are supporting this community, now and into the future. This update is lengthy, but important for everyone in the planetary science community.

As communicated in May 2024, Dr. Lori Glaze started a six-month detail as the Acting Deputy Associate Administrator for NASA's Exploration Systems Development Mission Directorate (ESDMD). This position was recently made permanent. We are so grateful for Lori's six years of leadership in PSD and are excited for her to take on this new role where she will bring her deep background in program/project management to ESDMD. We also look forward to continuing to strengthen the ties between science and our Artemis missions with Lori in this role.

During Lori's six-month detail, we had the great fortune of having Dr. Gina DiBraccio serve in a short-term detail from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) as the Acting Director for PSD. Gina ably took on this role and we are thankful for her service to the Science Mission Directorate (SMD) and PSD. Gina has now transitioned back to her role as the Deputy Director for the Heliophysics Division at GSFC—we wish Gina well and are excited to see her NASA career continue to grow.

In addition, Eric Ianson, who served as the PSD Deputy Division Director since 2019, retired at the end of 2024. Dr. Charles Webb was selected to be the new permanent PSD Deputy Director, but as a consequence of Lori's new role, Charles began serving as the Acting PSD Director effective December 1, 2024. Charles is a seasoned leader with proven experience. He has significant SMD Executive-level experience, having served in roles in the Earth Science Division, the Joint Agency Satellite Division, and previously as the Acting Associate Director for Flight in PSD.

While Charles is the Acting PSD Director, he will have strong support in the division. As of January 1, Dr. Curt Niebur will temporarily serve as the Acting PSD Deputy Director. Curt has been with NASA since 2003, managing a variety of research and technology programs and serving as a program scientist on Europa Clipper, Cassini, the Mars Exploration Rovers, and the New Frontiers Program. He is also currently the PSD Lead Scientist for Flight Programs.

These acting roles for Charles and Curt will be short-term positions, as I am delighted to announce that I have selected Dr. Louise Prockter to fill the PSD Director position as a one-year term SES, starting Spring 2025. Within the next year, it is SMD's intention to run a full and open competition for the critical PSD Director position via USAJobs, as I shared at the Planetary Science Division Town Hall at the American Geophysical Union meeting in December.

Many of you in the planetary science community will already know Louise well. She is a planetary scientist and an internationally recognized expert in the geomorphology and

structural geology of icy satellites (Europa, Ganymede, Triton), with additional expertise in Mercury and small bodies. Louise has contributed to the advancement of several missions in NASA's Planetary Science Division, holding science leadership roles for NASA's Europa Clipper and MESSENGER missions, and a mission concept, Trident, to study Neptune's active moon Triton.

Louise has almost three decades of scientific, technical, management, and programmatic experience, primarily at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (JHU APL). She most recently served as Chief Scientist for APL's Space Exploration Sector and previously led APL's Planetary Exploration Group and Space Science and Instrumentation Branch. Louise also served as the Lunar and Planetary Institute Director from 2016 to 2020. In this role she was responsible for the scientific direction and smooth operation of the institute, which provides services to PSD, the planetary science community, and the public.

Louise's deep planetary science and organizational leadership experience uniquely qualifies her for this critical leadership position in SMD. There are multiple major challenges in PSD that require a highly experienced leader to navigate, including the future direction of Mars Sample Return, ensuring Dragonfly is ready for launch in 2028, and confirmation of NASA's contribution to the ESA Rosalind Franklin Mars rover mission. We are extremely pleased to have Louise joining our team and taking on these challenges.

Please join me in wishing Louise and Charles all the best as they transition into their new roles and also in thanking Curt. We are very excited to have these individuals in these positions, and the broadening opportunity it provides these amazing leaders to manage organizations implementing critical elements of NASA's science program.

Dr. Nicola J. Fox  
Associate Administrator for Science