

## **On the Solar System Exploration Division's 1991 Strategic Plan: Letter Report**

Committee on Planetary and Lunar Exploration,  
National Research Council

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## On the Solar System Exploration Division's 1991 Strategic Plan

*On January 14, 1992, Committee on Planetary and Lunar Exploration Chair Larry W. Esposito sent the following letter to Dr. Wesley T. Huntress, Jr., director of NASA's Solar System Exploration Division.*

At the September 26, 1991, meeting between the Space Studies Board committee chairs and NASA division managers, you requested that the Committee on Planetary and Lunar Exploration (COMPLEX) review the Solar System Exploration Division's 1991 strategic plan. The committee conducted that review at its October 28-29 meeting.

COMPLEX finds this plan to be clearly written, well articulated, scientifically rich, and broadly consistent with the recommended strategies of the Space Studies Board, where they exist. With regard to the exploration of the outer planets, however, COMPLEX has not yet established science strategies for the study of Neptune and Pluto. When the committee's last strategy for the outer planets was published in 1986, [1](#) too little was known about these planets to give reasoned advice. Therefore, the committee cannot comment on the congruence with previous recommendations in this area. Nevertheless, COMPLEX is now beginning a cross-cutting study to devise an integrated strategy for all planetary exploration and to recommend priorities for activities in the next decade. You can be assured that the merits of the study of Neptune and Pluto will receive significant discussion.

COMPLEX endorses the prominent emphasis given in the strategic plan to research and analysis as part of a program for planetary exploration. This emphasis is entirely consistent with the committee's past recommendations, [2](#) and we support your efforts to protect this important element.

COMPLEX has read with interest your preliminary description of the new Discovery Program for rapid, inexpensive missions. As noted in previous COMPLEX reports, the committee strongly endorses this philosophy. [3](#) COMPLEX anticipates reviewing your plans for implementing this new line of missions when the program reaches a sufficient level of definition.

If we can be of further assistance, do not hesitate to call on us.

1. SSB, *A Strategy for Exploration of the Outer Planets: 1986-1996*, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1986.

2. SSB, *Assessment of Solar System Exploration Program 1991*, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1991, p. 31.

3. Ibid., pp. 30-31.