



JAN 25 1999

The Honorable Neal Lane
Assistant to the President for Science and Technology
Executive Office of the President
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Dr. Lane:

As the Landsat Program Management Team, we are pleased to report that the Landsat 7 satellite is now scheduled for launch in April 1999. We also wish to inform you of an intended change in the Landsat Program Management structure, which may require revision of the governing decision directive for this important program.

The Landsat 7 satellite, including the Enhanced Thematic Mapper Plus (ETM+), has successfully completed instrument-level and fully integrated spacecraft-level thermal vacuum testing at the spacecraft manufacturer's facility. The ground data systems, including the mission operations center and the science data handling facilities, are nearly operational and are supporting the satellite in end-to-end tests. In addition, Landsat 5 continues to provide valuable data after more than 14 years of operation, and so it is highly likely that the 26-year Landsat data stream will continue without a gap.

As the Landsat 7 program recovers from its technical difficulties of last year, the Landsat 7 management team has addressed anticipated funding shortfalls due to the delay. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has funded additional development costs, but the prelaunch operations costs have been an issue. Further, the management team has sought a means to ensure that postlaunch operations are secured by a stable source of funds.

The management team has reached consensus on a way to resolve these issues that involves a transition to a new operational arrangement. Under this new arrangement, the Department of the Interior's U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) will assume long-term management responsibility for Landsat 7 operations.

In 1994, the Presidential Decision Directive / NSTC-3 assigned the responsibility for management of Landsat 7 operations to the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), with the proviso that NOAA would seek to offset the operations costs through the retention of data sales revenues and international ground station access fees. Responsibility for continuing the Landsat archive remained with the USGS.

Since that time, NOAA has worked closely with NASA and USGS in the development of the Landsat 7 system and has gained Department of State approval to negotiate and conclude agreements with international ground stations to provide them with data direct from the spacecraft. Despite the diligence of the NOAA team in preparing a business plan for Landsat 7 mission management, it has become apparent that NOAA will not be acquiring appropriated funds to ensure a stable basis for pre- and postlaunch operations. While contributing its technical experience with operational satellite systems, NOAA has found itself financially reliant upon its projected revenues to cover all anticipated operations costs during the mission.

In response to this situation, USGS has proposed to supplement the income from the international ground station network and from data sales with a reallocation of its appropriated funds necessary to offset the costs of Landsat 7 ground system operations. This strategy remains consistent with the Presidential Decision Directive, and the Landsat Program Management Team has concluded that the USGS strategy best serves the long-term interests of the Program.

Our intent is that USGS assume complete responsibility for management and operations of the Landsat 7 ground system elements to be installed and operated at the USGS' EROS Data Center (EDC). In addition, the USGS is prepared to assume responsibility for the Landsat Mission Management Office and its associated oversight functions in FY 1999.

NASA will retain responsibility for the Landsat 7 Mission Operations Center until FY 2001, when the USGS expects to secure appropriations for mission operations. In addition, NASA will be responsible for all operating costs associated with any launch delay after April 1999.

Starting immediately after a successful postlaunch checkout period (nominally 60 days), the USGS will seek to offset ground system operational costs at EDC through the use of access fees from international ground stations and/or the sale of data products at the cost of fulfilling user requests. If EDC costs cannot be fully offset in this manner, the USGS is prepared to direct reasonable funds to cover any shortfall. The USGS is also prepared to request appropriated funds for the long-term management responsibility to

begin FY 2001, and to work with the Department of the Interior to ensure continuous operation of this valuable land resources observation program.

The transition of responsibilities will take place by January 31, 1999, or as soon thereafter as practicable on a schedule agreed to by USGS, NOAA, and NASA. Our three agencies have developed and approved a transition plan for transfer of responsibilities, which includes the transfer of contract administration for continuing the Landsat 5 operations.

In the interim, we request your assistance in making any appropriate changes to the Presidential Decision Directive needed to implement this new management approach.

Sincerely,



Daniel S. Goldin
Administrator
National Aeronautics and
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Charles G. Groat
Director
U.S. Geological Survey

D. James Baker
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and Atmosphere
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