

The Long Dry Season: Science Funding in the US

The outlook for science funding in the United States is bleak. Fiscal constraints on the US government are extreme and there is little chance that there will be funding growth for astronomy or planetary science research in the coming five years. I will discuss the details of the situation, its root causes and the basic funding process in the US. Although the situation is grim, there are opportunities for scientists in the US---supported by well-informed international colleagues---to impact this situation for the better. The US Congress is ultimately responsible for appropriating funds and the open and annual appropriations process allows interested constituents the opportunity to advocate for their particular projects. The so-called Decadal Surveys, produced by the astrophysics, planetary science and heliophysics communities in the US (under the auspices of the National Research Council / National Academies of Science) are our best tools for motivating our political leaders as they represent community consensus on the highest priority needs for government expenditures. Scientists are not helpless outsiders in the US appropriations process, but they are not as active as other constituencies. I will close by providing some easy ways the science community can work with Congress to ensure the best possible funding for the science projects we collectively pursue.