**The Astrobiology Field Laboratory**

September 26, 2006

Final report of the MEPAG Astrobiology Field Laboratory Science Steering Group (AFL-SSG)

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# Table of Contents

Table of Contents2

Membership4

1.0EXECUTIVE SUMMARY5

2.0AFL CHARTER8

2.0DEFINTIONS10

4.0INTRODUCTION12

5.0SCIENCE GOALS13

5.1 Assumptions13

5.2 Objectives16

5.2.1 Habitability16

5.2.2 Extinct or Extant Life. Abiotic or Prebiotic Material17

5.2.2.1 What techniques have been used to detect and characterize terrestrial and meteoritic biosignatures?22

5.2.2.2 What are the challenges for AFL in the search for biosignatures on Mars?23

5.3 Preservation Potential25

6.0Precursor Discoveries25

7.0Mission Site Selection26

7.1 Sediments27

7.2 Hydrothermal29

7.3 Ice33

7.4 Water38

8.0Core Mission Components39

8.1 Payload strategy40

8.2 Core Measurements and Instrumentation41

8.3 Sampling and Precision Sub sampling46

8.3.1 Obtaining a sample47

8.3.2 Sedimentary deposits:48

8.3.3 Precision sampling of a core48

8.3.4 Ice Samples49

8.3.5 Liquid and Heat extraction of organics49

8.3.6 Contamination concerns52

8.4. Time resolved Measurements52

9.0Engineering analysis of AFL core53

10.0Planetary Protection56

11.0Relationship between AFL and MSL57

12.0The Future of AFL57

13.0References59

14.0Appendix 1. Discoveries AFL must respond to.66

15.0Appendix 2 - Instrument descriptions and capabilities67

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During the course of the SSG several breakout groups were formed to answer specific issues related to our discussions. These are as follows;

AFL subcommittees

**Sedimentary sub-team**. Pan Conrad, leader.

**Hydrothermal sub-team**. David Blake, leader

**Ice sub-team**. Luther Beegle, leader

**Sample preparation sub-team**. Jan Toporski, leader

**Definitions sub-team**. Pan Conrad, leader

**Instruments sub team.** Will Brinkerhoff leader

**Water sub-team**. Jan Amend, leader

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The AFL SSG was asked to develop an analysis of a possible future mission called the **Astrobiology Field Lab**. This mission is a generic concept, consisting of a lander equipped with a major in-situ laboratory capable of making significant advancements towards MEPAG’s Goal I (“Determine if life ever arose on Mars”). In essence, the purpose of this analysis was to evaluate the question, “what is the most that can be accomplished in this area by in situ means?” In order to give the analysis team room to work, financial and timing constraints were very loose. Although at the time of convening this exercise 2013 was the closest discussed deadline and so considerations were given to what technically could be accomplished for this deadline.

The AFL SSG considered the problem at several levels:

What overall programmatic exploration strategies are needed to achieve Goal I? Results from many missions will contribute to these strategies, and a mixture of ambiguous and definitive outcomes will need to be accommodated.

What result would AFL need to deliver to make a meaningful contribution to this strategy?

What are the engineering options for configuring a landed mission that would make such a contribution?

Programmatic exploration strategies

In order to plan missions during the period 2013-1018, it is necessary to predict the state of human knowledge at that time. Although this is hard to do in detail, it is possible to reach some important generalities. First of all, habitability is the potential of an environment (and applied to either the past or the present) to sustain life. By this definition, habitability will be the integrated and accumulated knowledge of many missions and many different kinds of scientific investigations. However, as with any other potential, it will not be possible to achieve certainty unless life itself is discovered. Habitation, on the other hand, is a simple yes-no question. A key planning question, therefore, is when has the habitability potential risen high enough that a habitation test can be justified?

Although it has been generally assumed in the past that these two objectives need to be pursued sequentially, the AFL SSG has concluded that organisms and their environment together constitute a system, and each produces an effect on the other. Many kinds of investigations of this system can simultaneously provide information about both. This implies that habitability and habitation can be investigated together. This expands significantly on the current mission concept for MSL, with AFL having an expanded instrument suite dedicated more towards life detection and precision sample handling than MSL. Moreover, the process of life detection on Mars involves two sequential steps: 1). Proposing that a set of phenomenon are, or could be, biosignatures. This will constitute a working hypothesis that life is or was present. 2). Establishing that at least one of these biosignatures is definitive. This requires extensive effort and careful planning and a number measurements mutually confirming each other. Finally, we know that some kinds of scientific investigations will measure signs of both extinct and extant life without needing to distinguish between these two possibilities before launch.

Given the expected state of our knowledge about Mars during the period 2013-2018, the AFL SSG has reached three conclusions:

It is both possible and reasonable to do life detection first, then determine whether it is extinct or extant on the basis of a positive result.

Missions during this period can reasonably begin the process of life detection by characterizing potential biosignatures.

It is reasonable to set mission objectives that relate to both habitability AND habitation. It is not necessary to choose one at the expense of the other.

Finally if a definitive biosignature is located by AFL instrumentation and missions must be configured to definitively characterize that life signature. It is only by thorough study of a positive signal will skepticism be kept to a minimum and the maximum understanding of how this relates to the formation of life on earth be understood.

Engineering options

The AFL SSG has concluded that the following overall scientific objective is both achievable by AFL as early as 2013 (although 2018 was also postulated as a target from the pathways document, Figure 1), and is a significant extension of currently planned missions:

**For at least one Martian environment of high habitability potential, quantitatively investigate the geological and geochemical context, the presence of the chemical precursors of life, and the preservation potential for biosignatures, and begin/continue the process of life detection.**

By targeting an environment of high habitability potential, a response to prior discoveries is implied. Investigating the context is a reflection of the reality that our understanding of habitability will not be complete by 2013 we need to plan for more work. Understanding prebiotic chemistry is necessary to allow planetary-scale life-related predictions, especially in the contingency that life is not found in a specific experiment. Understanding preservation is key to interpreting the results of biosignature investigations, and is also critical feed-forward to future missions. Finally, life detection, as AFL SSG defines it, is a process that will take time. It is reasonable to expect that missions like AFL will play a significant role in this process, but unreasonable to expect that they will bring it to a conclusion.

Engineering options for an AFL mission

The AFL SSG has defined a landed mission that can achieve the above objective. There are multiple possible variations of what could be called “AFL”, and different scientists see these variations in different context, and with different systems of priority. However, it is possible to define an invariant base that is common to most versions, along with a discovery-responsive and competition-responsive cap. The basic landed system needs to be able to accomplish four things:

Acquire the right samples (access a place with high general habitability potential, understand preservation potential, have a high ability for scientific sample selection, capable sample acquisition system)

Know the context (Setting, mineralogy, chemistry, relationships)

ID best place on the sample (Mid-scale observations.

Precision sub-sampling (down to mm scale) for investigation by analytical suite)

At least 3 mutually confirming A/B measurements (Suites of observations by different means of the same or related phenomena will be necessary to reach definitive conclusions).

Initial engineering concepts for this mission place AFL as a COSPAR level 4B mission.

# 2.0AFL CHARTER

The AFL SSG was given the following charter.

Introduction

The Mars Program Office at NASA HQ (Code S) requests a study of the preliminary scientific options and engineering characteristics of the AFL mission. This mission was identified in the final report of the MSPSG (Mars Science Program Synthesis Group).

Starting assumptions (to be refined)

Assumptions for each mission need to be compiled separately.

Assume TBD mission must be ready to launch as early as TBD.

Science priorities will be derived from the MEPAG Goals document.

Requested Tasks:

Develop a set of candidate whole mission concepts. For each:

Define preliminary general science objectives, and science floor (the level below which the mission is not worth flying).

Identify and evaluate the primary science trades

Determine whether instruments capable of addressing the science objectives are likely to be available in time.

Landing site accessibility: Propose the size of the latitude band which needs to be held open for this mission, the landing precision, and required ability to land in rough terrain

Identify possible facility subsystems related to sample acquisition and sample preparation.

Describe the essential engineering constraints on the mission

Determine if positioning in the pathways makes a difference to the science/engineering of the mission.

Describe how the mission fits into NASA’s long-range strategic framework for the exploration of Mars

Based on the above analysis, present a prioritized set of preliminary options for consideration by NASA HQ.

Methods

The SSG is asked to conduct its business primarily by telecons, e-mail, and or web-based processes. There is enough budget to convene 1 or 2 face-to-face meetings.

Logistical support will be provided by the Mars Program Science Office.

Timing

It is expected that the team will be ready to start its deliberations in mid-November.

A mid-term telecon status check by Jim Garvin, Dan McCleese, and Bruce Jakosky is requested after the new year.

The near-final report of the AFL SSG is requested by Feb. 28, 2004.

It is expected that the results of this study will be presented to MEPAG at its June, 2004 meeting. Feedback from this discussion will be incorporated in the final report, which will be due July 31, 2004.

Report Format

It is requested that the results be presented in the form of both a PowerPoint presentation and a white paper. Additional supporting documents can be prepared as needed. After the white paper has been accepted by program management (including the MEPAG executive committee), it will be posted on a publicly accessible web site.

The report should not include any material that is a concern for ITAR (as is true of everything done by MEPAG).

Note, the bulk of this work and the draft white paper was completed by September 2004. There have been unavoidable delays to its publication. In the meantime thinking about AFL has progressed. This document reflects the thinking in September 2004. Whilst engineering and programmatic changes have occurred since then, the strength of this document lies in the science definition for the mission.

# DEFINTIONS

During the course of the AFL-SSG discussions several questions related to the MSPSG statement arose. Specifically these questions relate to the definitions of, for example, the terms habitability (or what constitutes a habitat) and biosignature. Critical questioning by the group resulted in the formation of a definitions subgroup

The following definitions were decided upon by that group. These definitions are consistent through this document and although we cannot suggest the wider community adopt these definitions it is suggested that some consensus within the MEPAG members is reached to prevent numerous iterations of this process in other reports.

Abiotic Chemistry

Mainly carbon based chemistry the speciation and composition of which has remained simple with the production of all different isomeric possibilities and show no chiral or species preferences. In this scenario complex molecules may only be kerrogenous in nature (type iv) and similar to that found in meteorites.

Biosignature

Any phenomenon produced by life (either modern or ancient). Two sub-definitions: Definitive Biosignature: A phenomenon produced exclusively by life.  Due to its unique biogenic characteristics, a definitive biosignature can be interpreted without question as having been produced by life. Potential Biosignature: A phenomenon that may have been produced by life, but for which alternate abiotic origins may also be possible.

Extant life

General reference to living or recently dead organisms which may also possess a fossil record.

Extinct life

General reference to past life (and no longer present on the planet). If evidence remains, it is ONLY fossil.

Habitability

A general term referring to the potential of an environment (past or present) to support life of any kind. In the context of planetary exploration, two further concepts are important: Indigenous habitability is the potential of a planetary environment to support life that originated on that planet, and exogenous habitability is the potential of a planetary environment to support life that originated on another planet.

Habitat

An environment (defined in time and space) that is or was occupied by life.

Life detection

The process of investigating the presence of biosignatures (including potential biosignatures). Life detection can apply to either past or present life.

**Micro BioSensors (not to exclude organic chemical detection)**

Miniaturized instruments or instrument suites that are developed from technology such as Micro Electronic Machine Systems (MEMS), Micro electronic optic systems (MEOS), Microfluidics, Micro Total Analytical Systems (uTAS) or Lab-on-a-Chip (LOC).

Prebiotic Chemistry

Mainly carbon based chemistry the speciation and composition of which has a complexity and has produced a number of polymeric systems that could be used for structural, metabolic processes and information storage and retrieval.

Present life investigation

One that specifically targets living or recently dead organisms. Time resolved studies on seasonal and daily (with perhaps higher frequency) time scales may be required to confirm observations that a biosignature of present life has been detected.

Preservation Potential

The potential for a particular biosignature to survive and therefore be detected in a particular habitat.

Primary Sample

Geological material (e.g. rock, regolith, dust, atmosphere, ice) acquired from its natural setting on Mars.  Note: specific locations where data are collected by contact instruments are referred to as "targets", not samples.

Secondary Sample

Any sample derived from the primary, including splits, extracts, sub-samples, etc.

# 4.0INTRODUCTION

The primary science driver for the mission concept was to define the first Mars mission to concentrate fully on Astrobiology science goals (as defined within the recently updated Astrobiology roadmap). Therefore, to define the preliminary general science objectives, and the science floor, the level below which the mission is not worth flying. The Astrobiology Field Lab was created as a concept by the Mars Science Program Synthesis Group (MSPSG) during their Pathways planning discussions in 2002-03 and can be paraphrased as;

Generated

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source of Carbon** | **Carbon compounds. examples/comments** |
| Abiotic molecules from meteoritic / cometary influx | Amino acids, purines and pyrimidines, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, chain hydrocarbons, fatty acids, sugars and sugar derivatives. |
| Prebiotic/abiotic molecules from synthesis reaction process on Mars | Amino acids, purines and pyrimidines, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, chain hydrocarbons, fatty acids, sugars and sugar derivatives. |
| Terrestrial contaminating organics | Condensation products derived from rocket exhaust, lubricants, plasticizers, atmospheric contaminants |
| Terrestrial contaminating organisms | Whole cells, cell components (LPS, DNA, proteins, cytochromes) found on AFL itself. |
| Terrestrial like organisms – from Earth | Organisms not present on the craft measuring them, but had been previously transferred from Earth by either meteorite impact or contamination of previous spacecraft. Target molecules could include individual genes, membrane constituents, specific enzymes, and co-enzymes that would be expected to be over expressed or adapted in Martian conditions |
| Terrestrial-like organisms – evolved on Mars | Organisms that utilize terrestrial like biochemistries and have evolved on Mars Target molecules could include individual genes, membrane constituents, specific enzymes, and co-enzymes that would be expected to be over expressed or adapted in Martian conditions or organisms using metabolisms that would not be present on a space craft contaminant such as methanogens, psychrophiles endolithic survival mechanisms. |
| Non-terrestrial-like organisms | Utilizes an array of molecules for information storage, information transfer, compartmentalization and enzymatic activity that differ from those used by extant terrestrial life. Examples would be the use of novel amino acids and nucleotides or the use of novel nitrogen utilization strategies. |
| Fossil biomarkers | Detection of established terrestrial fossil biomarkers such as hopanes, archaeal lipids and steranes, for the detection of the diagenetic remains of terrestrial based life. Characterization of potential breakdown products that can be reasonably extrapolated from the detection of molecules comprising an extant Martian life form. Detection of the diagenesis products of extinct Martian organism based on carbon compositions consistent with biological fractionation of a narrow range of abiotic precursors. |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Component** | **% Total Weight (or mass C x10-13 g)** | **Number of Types** | **Preservation** |
| **Water** | 70 (NA) | 1 | Unknown in Organic and mineral phases |
| **Proteins** | 15 | ~2000 | 1000’s without protection by a mineral matrix. ~45Ma with protection?. |
| **Nucleic Acids** |  |  |  |
| DNA | 1 | 2+ | Oldest ? ~350,000 |
| RNA | 6 | (see below) | Days – Months (studies on longevity of RNA other than in clinical settings have not been performed. |
| *rRNA* | 5.5 | 3 | Days – Months |
| *tRNA* | 0.1 | ~32 | Days – Months |
| *mRNA* | 0.3 | 1000’s | Days – Months |
| *Non coding RNA* | 0.1 | 1000’s | Days – Months |
| **Polysaccharides** | ~1 | Uncounted | Chitin - 25Ma. Exopolymer sheaths ~2Ga |
| **Lipids** | 2 | ~50 | Cell wall components - Hopanes 2.7Ga |
| **Amino acids** | 0.4 | ~100 (20 main ones) | As protein diagenesis – Ma.  Chiral signal in fossils lost after ~ 1 Ma. |
| **Sugars** | ~3 | ~200 | Days to weeks (see polysaccharides) |
| **Other small organics** | 0.2 | ~200 | Porphyrins ~ 2 Ga |
| **Inorganic species (C, H, N, O, Fe, P, S etc).** | 1 (~100% dry weight) | ~20 – 30 (including inorganic complexes) | Isotopes may preserved for ? 3.5 Ga for C.  Research is continuing to define other isotope systematics for preservation of a biogenic signature. |
| **Diagenetic Macromolecular material** | Total cell breakdown products (100% dry weight of cells) | Kerrogens (4 types)  Melanoidins (100’s) | Kerrogens – ? 3.5Ga for biogenic (Type 1-3). Type 4 indicative of meteoritic input.  Melanoidins conbination of sugar and proteins, ~50 Ma. |

Generated



Generated

peat measurements be a general functionality of the surface science system, and that the decision on how and when to use it be deferred to the competitive process***.***

# 9.0Engineering analysis of AFL core

Based on input from the AFL SSG, a preliminary engineering design concept was defined so that basic mission parameters (such as mass, cost and power generation systems) could be developed. This was done so that technology developments that will be required to undertake the mission could be identified and pursued. This design concept was based upon the AFL SSG core mission requirement and included possible investigation of sedimentary, hydrothermal and liquid water regions. Other investigation (namely to ice covered and sub-surface ice regions) may require a different architecture and hence have a different mass, cost, and power generation systems. The mission architecture was defined by taking into account the measurement objectives, payload infrastructure rover mobility requirements and lander capabilities (Section 8). Given all these requirements and capabilities, a core AFL mission was developed.

The mission studied included 2 instruments for remote sensing placed on the main mast, 2 contact instruments located on an instrument deployment device (IDD), and 6 analytical laboratory instruments capable of analyzing samples obtained from the Martian surface for a total of 10 instruments. The analytical instruments, as well as the sample acquisition and processing infrastructure, will be able to process 25-75 physical samples (rock, regolith, and ice) for detailed analyses by both pyrloysis and wet chemistry instrumentation. Landers, Entry Descent Landing (EDL), cruise launcher, were defined in such a way to meet the mission requirements and so that costing the rover and mission could be done. In order to accomplish this, a list of generic instruments were identified so that parameters such as cost, mass, volume, and power requirements could be included in the engineering design concept. No attempt was made to identify and place individual instruments on the strawman payload (used to assess cost only) and where several instrument from different developers were identified, average mass power and volumes were used.

The engineering design concept assumed a launch in either 2013 or 2018 with a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of 6 for instruments and subsystem technologies that would have to be reached by 2009 and 2014 respectively. Functional redundancy was required on all subsystems except for the science payload, and this included the sample acquisition and processing infrastructure. Landing site availability for the AFL SSG included access to the Martian surface between: +85 to –60 so that access to both ice regions as well as a wide variety of potential Sedimentary and hydrothermal regions can also be investigated. Landing altitudes of 2.5 km or less relative to the MOLA geoid should be reached within a 10x10 km (3-sigma) landing dispersion ellipse assumed for landing. Because AFL will be assumed to be a mission to a specific site of high scientific interest, rover was designed with “Go-to” mobility capabilities of 10-15 km (linear traverse range) so most astrobiology interesting sites could be reached and explored. For data transmission between Earth and Mars, either MTO or the second generation Mars Telecom Orbiter (MTO) was assumed to be available for Mars to Earth telecom greatly increasing the amount of data that could be acquired on the mission. The collected data would be passed to Earth via 0.3 m HGA for 1024 kbps link via MTO. This design allowed for a data intensive 1-3 GBits of daily science data generation. X-Band from rover direct to Earth (DTE) would be used for back-up purposes only. Finally the main power system of the mission was assumed to be a Radioisotopic Thermal Generator (RTG) system, although solar power could also be utilized for missions that are more equatorial, and potentially shorter in duration (depending on final MER mission power results). The power systems was sized to be able to provide sufficient power with reserves for “worst case” extreme drive Sols (large rocks and slopes) and for analytical laboratory days. Based on this analysis a 4 Brick Small RPS system capable of producing 50We, or 1200WeHRS per sol in combination with a 2 x 8 Ahr-Li-Ion battery system was chosen. Because of the inefficiencies in power generation from an RPS system waste heat has to be dissipated. Therefore, A passive thermal loop system driven by the 1000Wt energy from the RTG system, in combination with electrical heaters, thermal switches, and radiators was designed for the rover for keeping the Warm Electronic Box (WEB), external actuators, and instruments at acceptable temperatures ranges. The passive thermal system on the rover would in combination also be used for dissipating energy from the RTG system the during EDL and cruise stages.

To generate the required science and analyze 25-75 samples, accommodate the selected science payload strawman and provide sufficient power, data storage, data rate, and telecom to an MTO type orbiter, the rover itself would have a mass of ~550 kg (30% reserve included). Of this ~110 kg (~20% of rover mass) would constitute the science payload (once again, depending on the exact parameters of the instruments selected through AO). Bringing such a rover to the Martian surface would require a launched mass of 2456 kg, which would demand an Atlas V521 or a Delta IV 4040 launcher. Assuming, a MER cruise stage, Viking style EDL system with a live lander, this would give an injected mass at Mars of 2174 kg, and require a 4.57 m aeroshell and two chutes during descent.

The rover assumed in this study shares heritage with MER however, final design characteristics for the 2009 MSL mission will influence this decision. The rover includes a mast for the remote sensing instrument, an IDD for the contact instruments and sample acquisition, a detailed sample handling system and an analytical laboratory suite of instruments. The six rover wheels were increased in size to 35 cm (diameter) to negotiate larger rocks and extensive Go-To requirements (as discussed below). Each wheel includes a brushless actuator, which would draw 16-25 W per wheel, and a total of 100-150W for all wheels during traverse depending on surface characteristic of the site (i.e. slop, rock distribution, surface material etc.).

The result of the costing exercise resulted in a 2013 mission cost of $ 1.55 Billion (in RY dollars) and 2018 mission cost of $ 1.78 Billion (in RY dollars). This includes ~ 200 million for instruments and infrastructure and ~ 500 million for all the rover subsystems. These numbers should be adjusted as the design for MSL becomes more set. Savings for things like built-to-print hardware and heritage in the EDL and avionics systems may result in mission savings.

In order to meet the mobility requirements for AFL, the mass of the rover and the potential investigation site are taken into account. One requirement for AFL is to investigate a site(s) that are most likely to have high astrobiology interest. This requirement can mean traverses of up to 10’s of km depending on landing ellipse constraints such that the rover design for longer traverses in Mars terrains must be taken into consideration. In addition, the AFL payload will be much bigger than MER with a scaled rover and hence the wheel contact area has to grow from the 25 cm wheel diameter on MER to accommodate low surface pressure for minimizing wheel sinkage. There are some basic assumptions we can make based upon Mars geology and the proposed investigation sites, such that the mission requirements (see section 8.0) can be accomplished and \ a reasonable preliminary design can be created from which approximate mission costs can be estimated. It needs to be pointed out here that this preliminary analysis is by no means a complete engineering analysis, but it is designed to show approximate system requirements for planning of total mission costs as well as mobility potential for site selection. Finally, with this analysis a decision on the level of required precision (or pinpoint) landing can be made so that investment in technology development for AFL can be carefully planned.

Figure 6. A schematic diagram of how AFL may look



Technology development to fulfill science and engineering goals is summarized in Table 6.

can be seen from Table 6 significant development of critical enabling technology should begin as soon as possible, especially for 2013 launch.

As with all other JPL Rovers, AFL’s drive train subsystem was assumed to be a 6-wheel design. Each wheel has two motors: one turning the wheel, the other steering the wheel. All motors are brushless and 2, 4 or 6 wheels can be driven at a time depending on the terrain. Each wheel consumes approximately 8 W in stand-by mode and about 18 W when driving, making the drive train subsystem the largest power consumer (when operating) on AFL. Additionally, a maximum slope tolerance 30o is assumed due to both current design configurations and projected technology advancement. We have assumed that the technology for continuous drive and autonomous hazard avoidance will be developed and eventually will undergo flight qualification so it can be utilized on AFL. The wheel diameter to be chosen will be large enough to avoid typical Martian hazards (i.e. surface rocks) so that linear odometer distance can be maximized while being small enough to minimize mass and power (which is related to wheel size).

Table 6. Summary of necessary technology for AFL, in particular highlighting instrument development in critical areas as defined by the AFL team. This is not to exclude established technologies from development but merely highlights other critical technologies that should be further developed.

# 10.0Planetary Protection

The different variants of AFL may end up in any of three Planetary Protection classifications.

Category IVb is applied to missions that investigate extant Martian life forms. This may include AFL-Liquid Water and AFL-Ice (depending on the instruments).

Category IVc is applied to missions that access Mars “special regions”. This would include AFL-Liquid Water, AFL-Ice, and perhaps other AFL versions, depending on landing site.

Category IVa is applied to landed missions other than the above. This could apply to AFL-Sedimentary and AFL-Hydrothermal (depending on landing site).

To achieve maximum flexibility, mission engineering should be planned assuming IVb, and de-scoping, if appropriate, can take place from there. The four variants of AFL will have very different implications for Planetary Protection and therefore must be reviewed on a case by case basis.

It is noted that many developing technologies are available for contamination monitoring, decontamination and space craft cleanliness issues. These technologies should be vigorously pursued. In particular the following;

Low temperature sterilization techniques such as microwave plasma and other plasma ashing techniques,

Radiation sterilization technologies for whole space craft as well as ‘hot-spot’ removal.

Real time non culture based systems for monitoring amount and types of bioburden.

Providing of a suitable mineralogical bio and organic clean sample blank for proofing critical sample handling pathways and

It should be noted that several of the analytical techniques mentioned in the AFL instrument section cannot undergo heat sterilization. Protocols that either ensure that instruments are delivered cleaned to the level of the space craft and integrated to the craft after heat sterilization, for the use of cooling loops to keep critical instruments cool during sterilization (obviously the previous point would apply here) or alternatives to heat sterilization must be put in place for these technologies to fly.

# 11.0Relationship between AFL and MSL

AFL will depend on the following heritage from MSL.

Precision landing using a novel (non airbag) landing system

The use of RTG technology

The use of remote, contact and analytical suites of instruments

Crude sample processing to be used but improved on AFL

2.AFL will differ from MSL in the following essential respects:

Advanced sample preparation system.

Precision sub-sampling is an advanced sample management step that will allow a scientific focus on meso- to micro-scale discoveries of enhanced astrobiological interest. This will allow a much higher capacity to investigate specific anomalous features.

Liquid extraction. For advanced studies of carbon chemistry, more efficient sample extraction (and instrument delivery) methods are needed.

Better and miniaturized organic molecule and life-detection related instruments.

Greater interplay between

Precision landing, hazard tolerance/avoidance, go-to mobility.

–Will give us the ability to follow-up on specific discoveries, including in “interesting” terrain.

# 12.0The Future of AFL

It is suggested that the SSG reconvene at a later date to

Respond to discovery to hone mission concepts for site selection

Review sample handling and instrumentation choices and feed-forward to a possible sample return mission

Respond to shifting of the AFL timeline from 2013 to 2018, this would include revisiting the instrument choices based on comments from the SSG as to the use of instruments currently in development but of such a low TRL that it could not feature in the 2013 timeframe example include high vacuum and high voltage instrumentation such as electron microscopy, or photoelectron spectroscopy.

In the past, there was competition between in-situ and sample return mission concepts and there was a question as to whether the AFL was to fly before MSR or after. The current schedule envisions an AFL flight as early as 2016 and an MSR some time after 2020.

The advantages of flying in-situ missions first are that they are relatively low cost compared to MSR (although the costly infrastructure put in place for an initial MSR would not be needed for follow up missions) and there are no issues of sample degradation, sample amount, sterilization, quarantine or ‘off nominal’ delivery to earth.

In addition, the strength of in-situ missions is their ability to assess multiple samples over a spatially diverse area without degradation of the samples. AFL will aid in the identification of sample types for future return missions. This may even include aiding sample caching for a future MSR mission, although that would necessitate a further assessment of precision landing of an MSR mission.

A point to remember is that if / once detected life on Mars should be characterized in its entirety for similarity to earth life, evolution and biochemistry (if viable). Therefore both AFL and MSR must be considered necessary tools to be used at the right time to answer science questions within the foreseeable realms of technology..

Several aspects of both the sample handling capabilities for AFL and the choice of instrumentation will allow the further development of robotic tools to explore elsewhere in the solar system e.g. Europa. This instrumentation although initially geared for the detection of life would upon the successful accomplishment of this task be needed to be further developed to characterize that life in whatever form. It will not be enough to ask was/is there life there, the next logical step is how did it arise, how is it different from earth life and why? It is only by taking this step will we able to understand truly the processes of abiotic / prebiotic / biotic chemistry in the solar system.

Note, the bulk of this work and the draft white paper was completed by September 2004. There have been unavoidable delays to its publication. In the meantime thinking about AFL has progressed. This document reflects the thinking in September 2004. Whilst engineering and programmatic changes have occurred since then, the strength of this document lies in the science definition for the mission.

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# 14.0Appendix 1. Discoveries AFL must respond to.

Table 7 Summarizes crucial science discoveries that may also directly affect AFL mission, potential follow up questions and measurements

Generated

# 15.0Appendix 2 - Instrument descriptions and capabilities

In this table, a number of techniques were suggested by AFL SSG members as potentially applicable to one or more identified measurement objectives. This list is not meant to be comprehensive or definitive, but rather to illustrate the kinds of information that would enable instrument development efforts in general to connect to the specific needs of AFL. As such the table does not identify all aspects of each technique, but only those that were discussed in a preliminary analysis of the desired measurements on AFL. The first and second columns identify the technique and the type of measurement(s) with which it is typically associated (Data/Signatures Sought). The third column explicitly lists the most likely AFL measurement requirement that the technique addresses (see Section 7.0). In this way, techniques applicable to a given measurement of interest, or more generally to a mission objective (see Figure 5), can be found by examining those rows containing the category (1-5) desired. This column is meant to serve as an example template, so all potential uses of each technique are not identified. The next three columns indicate the most likely associated tier(s) for the technique, corresponding to the recommended division as discussed above.

The following thirteen columns provide data for *example* implementations of the technique where useful specifications of the sample analyzed and typical instrument parameters could be identified. Given sample data include: 1. the physical form *as acquired or as extracted/analyzed* – solid (s), liquid (l), or gas (g); 2. the type of material from which it is obtained and/or delivered to the instrument; 3. the type of sample preparation required and/or desired (see key); and 4. the typical size or mass of sample, additionally indicating where a technique looks only at the surface of a solid sample rather than the bulk. The first three columns of the Example Technique Characteristics section provide some of the key distances involved: the standoff, the field-of-view (FOV) or spot size, and the scale of the heterogeneity probed, if appropriate. The heterogeneity is indicated by the structures (e.g., layers or grains) that can be individually analyzed with the method’s FOV or spot size. For example, a Hand Lens instrument might look at individual mineral grains and similar size structures within a mm-cm FOV from a standoff focal length of a cm or so. In this example it is the imaging resolution, not the FOV, that determines the smallest structures observable, and that additional data is found in the resolution column. On the other hand, for a laser mass spectrometer, the spot size does roughly determine the spatial resolution of analysis – a spot size below 100 microns could enable analyses of mineral phases on the mm scale; what is then found in the resolution column is in fact the mass resolution, since that is how the term is used for that method. Further, the Mass Range column gives the typical range of molecular weights that are accessible with a given mass spectrometric method.

Finally, the remaining columns provide a correlation of where a technique would be applied in support of various *discovery-responsive measurements* by AFL that would be called for following the discoveries listed in Appendix 2. This separate correlation, beyond the technique-to-measurement requirement-to-mission objective logical chain, permits a greater flexibility and responsiveness of the AFL concept to specific scenarios that may develop from current Mars missions and over the next several years.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 8- Techniques Suggested for AFL by SSG Members** | | | | | | | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Measurement Tier | | | Example Target/Sample Information | | |  | Example Technique Characteristics (instrument implementation) where appropriate | | | | | | | |  | Discovery/Follow-up per Table 7 | | | |  |  |  |
| Technique | Data/ Signatures Sought | Mmnt Reqts Addessed (Section 7) | Remote Sensing/Standoff | Contact or Close Range | Analytical Lab | Physical Form (Solid, Gas, Liquid) | Example Origin/Host Material | Processing Required/ (Desired) | Sample Mass/ Volume | Distance to Target | Size of Area Probed/ FOV | Target Feature Scale | Selectivity | Detection Limits | Resolution | Precision | Mass Range | Other | Recent Surface Water | Hydrous Mineral Phases | Organic Molecules | Sedimen. Structures | Sedimen. Rocks | Evidence for Fossil Life | Microbes |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| stereo optical imaging | identify targets, evidence of weathering, sedimentation, alteration, etc. | A | x |  |  |  | sedimentary rocks/ structures | n |  | 1m - 10+km | 10cm - 1+km |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 6 |  | 1,2,3,4 | 4 | 1,2,3,6,8 | 3 |
|  | identify surface samples | A |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 10-100 m | 1-10 m | 10cm-1m |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | identify distant sedimentary outcrops | A |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 km | 10-100 m | 1-10 cm |  |  | 10 cm @ 1 km | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| VIS/NIR Spectroscopy | surface mineralogy, texture | B | x | x |  | s | rocks, fines | n (abr) |  | cm - m |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| mini TES | mineralogy | B | x |  |  | s |  | n (abr) |  | m - km |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 |  |  |
| long focal length imaging | identify distant sedimentary outcrops | A | x |  |  |  |  | n |  | 10m - km | cm-10m | cm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| laser ranging | distance to target | A | x |  |  |  | boulders, vertical faces | n |  | 100m - km | cm spot |  |  |  | cm @ 100 m | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LIBS | elemental composition | B | x |  |  | s | boulders, slopes | n |  | 1 - 25m | mm - cm spot |  | low (l absorb.) | ppmw |  | ~ 10% | elements | laser ablation | | 2,4 |  |  | 2,5 | 3 |  |
| ground penetrating radar | ice, H2O, other | B, C | x |  |  | s | subsurface | n |  | m - 10s m |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| seismic sounding | ice, H2O, other | B, C | x | x |  | s | subsurface | n |  | 100's m - km |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| neutron spectroscopy | ice, hydrated minerals | B | x | x |  |  | drill cores, fines | n (acq) |  | 10's cm - m's |  |  | high | variable <%-% | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| gamma ray spectroscopy | elemental composition | B | x | x |  |  | any | n |  | 10's cm - m's |  |  | med | variable <%-% | |  |  |  | 5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| x-ray spectroscopy | elemental composition | B, E2 |  | x |  |  | any | n (acq) |  | cm | cm+ |  | med | variable <%-% | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Raman spectroscopy | mineralogy, some geochemical/organic | B, E | x | x |  |  | rocks | n (abr) |  | cm - m | cm+ |  | med |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1,5 | 1,4 |  | 2 | 1 |  |
| micro-Raman spectroscopy | mineralogy, some geochemical/organic | B,D,E |  | x | x |  | rock chips | n (acq, abr) | | mm - cm | < mm |  | med |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1,5 | 1,4 |  | 2 | 1 |  |
| micro-LIBS | elemental composition | B,D |  | x | x | s | rocks, chips | acq,pos |  | mm - cm | < mm |  | low (l absorb.) | |  |  |  |  |  | 2,4 |  |  | 2,5 | 3 |  |
| hand-lens-scale imaging | phase texture/identity | D |  | x |  | s |  | n (abr) |  | cm - m's | 0.1-10 mm | grains |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| optical microscopy | fine morphology | D,E |  | x | x | s |  | n (abr) |  | mm - cm | 0.001-1 mm | subgrain |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 2 |  |  | 1,2,3,6,8 |  |
| confocal microscopy |  | D,E |  |  | x | s |  |  |  | mm | 0.001-1 mm | subgrain |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 2 |  |  | 1,2,3,6,8 |  |
| near-field microscopy | very high res imaging | D,E |  |  | x | s | flat chip | acq, pos |  |  |  | subgrain |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mossbauer | Fe-bearing mineralogy | B |  | x | x | s |  |  |  | mm - cm |  | avg |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fe-NMR |  | B |  | x |  | s |  |  |  | mm - cm |  |  | high |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| XRD/XRF | mineralogy | B,D |  |  | x | s | drill cores, fines | acq, pow | mg's | 0 | whole sample | avg or grains | |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 |  |  | 1,5 |  |  |
| FTIR | mineralogy, some geochemical/organic | B |  |  | x | s |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1,5 | 1,4,6 |  | 2,5 | 3 | 4 |
| VCD |  |  |  |  | x | s |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| deep UV fluorescence | organics: identity, oxidation state, … | B,D,E |  | x | x | s |  | n (abr) | surface? | mm - m |  | grain scale+ | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 |  |  | 3 |  |
| pyrolysis/GCMS | organic and some mineralogical/inorganic composition; isotopes | B,E |  |  | x | s,g,l |  | acq, pos, vac | mg-10's mg | 0 | whole sample | avg | low |  |  |  |  |  | 4 |  | 1,5 |  | 5 |  |  |
| chemical derivatization | less-tractable organics | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | liq |  | 0 | whole sample | avg |  |  |  |  |  |  | 4 |  | 1,4,7 |  | 5 |  |  |
| isotope ratio MS (IRMS) | C and other isotopes for bio-fractionation, age dating | E2 |  |  | x | s,l |  | acq, pos, vac | | 0 | whole sample | avg |  |  |  |  |  |  | 2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | compound-specific IRMS using sampling selectivity | E2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | whole sample | avg | cmpd isolated w/pyr, GC,or other proc. | | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| chiral GC | enantiomeric excess (ee) | E3 |  |  | x | s,g,l |  | acq, pos, gas | | 0 | whole sample | avg |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 3 |  |  |  |  |
| circular dichroism | enantiomeric excess (ee) | E3 |  |  | x |  |  |  |  | 0 |  | avg |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 3 |  |  |  |  |
| liquid chromatography (LC) | organics, ee | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | liq |  | 0 | whole sample | avg |  |  |  |  |  |  | 4 |  | 1,3,5 |  | 5 |  |  |
| 2D GCMS/TOF-MS | organic and some mineralogical/inorganic composition; isotopes | B,E |  |  | x | s,g,l | rocks/cores, fines | acq, pos, vac | 10's mg | 0 | whole sample | avg | low |  |  |  | ~1E3-1E5+ | | 4 |  | 1,5 |  | 5 |  |  |
| electrospray ionization MS (ESI/IMS/CIT-MS) | | E |  |  | x | s,g,l |  | acq, pos, vac | g's | 0 | whole sample | avg | low |  | Dm/m 1E2-1E3+ | |  | contact w/ fluidized sample | | |  |  |  |  |  |
| laser ablation TOF-MS | local elemental/isotopic composition | B,D |  |  | x | s | rock chips, fines | acq, pos, vac | surface | 0 | 10mm - 1 mm | grain scale+ | low (l absorb.) | ppbw-ppmw | Dm/m 1E2-1E3 | 5-25% | ~ 300 |  | 4 | 2,4 |  |  | 2,5 | 1,3 |  |
| LD/MALDI-TOF MS | high-MW organics; some inorganic molecules | D,E |  |  | x | s | rock chips, fines | acq, pos, vac (pow, liq) | surface/prep film | 0 | 100mm - 1 mm | grain scale+ | med (l absorb.) | fmol-pmol | Dm/m 1E3-1E4 | | ~1E3-1E5+ | |  |  | 1,2,4,7 |  |  | 3 | 4 |
| REMPI-MS/RIMS | organics, elements (trace) | E |  |  | x | s |  | acq, pos, vac | | 0 | 10mm - 1 mm |  | very high (l absorb.) | s. atom - pmol | Dm/m 1E2-1E4 | | ~ 1E3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| AP-MALDI-MS (TOFMS or ITMS) | organic, inorganic molec. | D,E |  | x | x | s | rocks, ices | vac | surface | mm | 10mm - 1 mm | grain scale+ | med (l absorb.) | fmol-nmol | Dm/m 1E3-1E4+ | | ~ 1E3-1E5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| electrospray TOF-MS | high-MW organics | E |  |  | x | s,l | rocks/cores, fines | acq, liq, pos, vac | | 0 | whole sample | avg | med |  | Dm/m 1E2-1E4 | | ~1E4-1E5+ | |  |  | 1,2,7 |  |  | 3 | 4 |
| TOF-SIMS | chemical imaging | B,E |  |  | x | s | rock chips | acq, pos, vac | surface | 0 | 50nm-50mm | sub-grain+ | low |  | Dm/m 1E3-1E4 | | ~1E3-1E4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ICP-MS | trace elements | B |  |  | x | s,g,l | rock chips, fines | acq, pos, vac, gas | | 0 | whole sample | avg or grains | low | pptw-ppbw | Dm/m 1E3+ | 0.1-10% | ~ 300 |  | 2,4 |  | 1,3,5 |  | 5 |  |  |
| TIMS | isotope ratios (~IRMS) | B,E2 |  |  | x | s |  | acq, pos, vac | | 0 | whole sample | avg | low | pptw-ppbw | Dm/m 1E3+ | 0.1-1% | ~ 300 |  | 2 |  | 5 |  |  |  |  |
| AFM | nanoscale imaging | D, E3 |  |  | x | s | flat chip | acq, pos | chips |  | 1nm-1mm | sub-micron | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| TEM/SEM | nanoscale imaging | D |  |  | x | s | flat chip | acq, pos, vac | chips |  | 1nm-1mm | sub-micron | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | image microbes in ice cores | D,E3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| XPS | chemical comp. and bond state | B,C |  |  | x | s,l |  | vac | 100's mg |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Auger spectroscopy | bond state of elements | B,C |  |  |  | s,l |  | vac | 100's mg |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| amino-acid sensors (eg MOD) | detection of amino acids | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | acq | 100's mg |  | whole sample |  | high |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1,3 |  |  |  |  |
| oxidant sensors | detection of oxidants | C |  |  | x | s,l |  | Acq, dry | 100's mg |  | whole sample |  | high |  | per sample weight | |  |  |  |  | 6 |  |  |  |  |
| bio-assay chip lab |  | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | liq | 100's mg | 0 | whole sample |  | high | pptw | per sample weight | | Kda |  |  |  | 7 |  |  | 1,5,6 | 1,5,6 |
| micro-array sensors |  | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | Liq | 100's mg |  | whole sample |  | high | pptw | per sample weight | | Kda |  |  |  | 7 |  |  | 1,5,6 | 1,5,6 |
| MORD |  |  |  |  | x | s |  |  | 100's mg | 0 | whole sample |  | high |  | per sample weight | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| fluorescence staining | organics | E |  | x | x | s,l |  | Liq | 100's mg |  | whole sample | avg | high | single cell | per sample weight | |  |  |  |  | 7 |  |  |  |  |
|  | SYBR gold, SYTO, DAPI nucleic acid stains for counting microbes | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | Liq | 100's mg |  | whole sample |  | Medium | single cell | per sample weight | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1.5.6 |
|  | CTC, tetrazolium salt redox stains for individual cells | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | Liq | 100's mg |  | whole sample |  | Medium | Single cell | per sample weight | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1,5,6 |
| isotopic labelling | 14CO2 or 3H for total population activity | E |  |  | x | s,g,l |  | Lig | 100's mg |  | whole sample | avg | medium | single cell | per sample weight | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1,5,6 |
| flow-cytometry |  | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | liq | 100's mg |  | whole sample | avg | medium | single cell | per sample weight | |  | If have required media | | |  |  |  |  | 1,5,6 |
| culturing/cell-growth assays |  | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | liq | 100's mg |  | whole sample | avg | high | single cell | per sample weight | |  | If have required media | | |  |  |  |  | 1,5,6 |
| ATP and LAL enzyme assays |  | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | liq | 100's mg |  | whole sample | avg | high | pptw | per sample weight | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1,5,6 |
| DNA extraction/PCR |  | E |  |  | x | s,l |  | liq | 100's mg |  | whole sample | avg | high | 100 cells | per sample weight | |  | with correct primers | | |  |  |  |  | 5,6 |
| capillary electrophoresis (CE) |  | E |  |  | x | s,l |  |  | 100's mg |  | whole sample | avg | high | pptw | per sample weight | |  |  |  |  | 7 |  |  |  | 1,5,6 |
| microcalorimetry |  |  |  |  | x |  |  |  | 100's mg |  | whole sample | avg | medium | pptw | per sample weight | |  |  |  |  | 7 |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **KEY:** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| n - can be operated with no sample acquisition/processing | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| abr - abrasion to remove surface layers | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| acq - sample acquisition from host matl (via whatever means) | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| pow - powdering of solid sample | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| pos - sample positioning (e.g., manipulation to oven, point of focus or extraction) | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| vac - vacuum processing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| liq - liquid processing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| gas - gas processing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |