**Mars Science Laboratory/Curiosity National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

NASA’s Mars Science Laboratory mission set down a large, mobile laboratory — the rover Curiosity — at Gale Crater, using precision landing technology that made one of Mars’ most intriguing regions a viable destination for the first time. Within the first eight months of a 23-month primary mission, Curiosity met its major objective of finding evidence of a past environment well suited to supporting microbial life. The rover studies the geology and environment of selected areas in the crater and analyzes samples drilled from rocks or scooped from the ground.

Curiosity carries the most advanced payload of scientific gear ever used on Mars’ surface, a payload more than 10 times as massive as those of earlier Mars rovers. Its assignment: Investigate whether conditions have been favorable for microbial life and for preserving clues in the rocks about possible past life. More than 400 scientists from around the world participate in the science operations.