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Currents

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[Dire Budget Projections from NSF AST: Your Input Needed \(Continued\)](#): The community comment period for the [NSF/AST Portfolio Review](#) will **close on 31 January**. NOAO urges all concerned members of our community to write in to the Portfolio Review Committee and make known their views on how the ground-based OIR community can best meet the severe budgetary challenges we face. Importantly, even if you have already [commented at our website](#), please write directly to the committee at astportfolio@nsf.gov. Every voice counts, so please take action now!

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Dire Budget Projections from NSF AST: Your Input Needed (Continued)

As described in a [previous issue of Currents](#), the anticipated NSF/AST budget for the coming years is much less than forecast for the 2010 Decadal Survey. Consequently, the US astronomy community must make difficult choices in planning for its future. In order to enable community discussion on this topic, we previously created a [website for open discussion](#) and summarized in the [last issue of Currents](#) some common themes that have emerged in that forum.

In parallel with these developments, NSF/AST has asked its Portfolio Review Committee to recommend to NSF/AST how its support for existing facilities, programs, and activities should be balanced against community aspirations for future facilities given the budget limitations. The Portfolio Review encompasses all AST-supported facilities (e.g., NOAO, Gemini, NSO, LSST, NRAO, ALMA, Arecibo, URO), programs (e.g., individual grants, TSIP, ATI, Mid-Scale Projects), and other activities.

We urge you, as members of the ground-based OIR community, to share your priorities for the NSF/AST budget by writing directly to the Portfolio Review Committee. A [document recently released by NSF/AST](#) provides an overview of the process and addresses frequently asked questions. Further details are provided at the [Portfolio Review website](#).

The NSF/AST document makes clear that the only channel for direct community input to the Portfolio Review is via email to astportfolio@nsf.gov. As comments previously received at [our website](#) are, therefore, not considered input to the Portfolio Review Committee or to NSF, please forward your comments directly to astportfolio@nsf.gov. NOAO will summarize the comments it has already received in a white paper that we will submit to the Portfolio Review. However, the five-page

limit on submissions makes it impossible to capture your views in detail, so our submission will be a poor substitute for your direct input.

If you have previously considered commenting but have not yet done so, please take action now. Every response is valuable. **The deadline for comments is 31 January.**

We welcome any comments or questions you may have about this request. Please write to currents@noao.edu.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Is the NOAO budget situation really dire? I've heard this kind of talk before.

A: There is a *very real* possibility of drastic changes in the landscape of ground-based OIR astronomy. These include the possibility of closing major NOAO facilities or terminating other major NOAO activities among other scenarios for a significant redistribution of NSF/AST resources.

Q: Do I need to write in? I think others can better express my views.

A: Please write in to the Portfolio Review. Every voice counts, and many voices saying the same thing sends a strong message.

Q: I already commented at the NOAO website on this issue. Do I need to write again?

A: To give your views the consideration they deserve, it is important to write to the Portfolio Review directly even if you have already [written to our website](#). E-mail sent to astportfolio@nsf.gov is the *only* channel for direct community input to the Portfolio Review. Recent guidance from NSF explicitly states that the Portfolio Review Committee is not obligated to read the comments at our website, and neither is the website being monitored by NSF.

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Contact Us

Did something interesting, inspiring, or surprising happen on a recent observing run? Please tell us about it! Is there a topic that you would like to see covered in a future *Currents*? If you are planning a regional astronomy meeting or department internal symposium, would you like someone from NOAO to give a presentation on our new program? Please contact us at currents@noao.edu. We look forward to hearing from you!

Currents is a sparkplug for communication between NOAO and our community. It provides updates—and solicits community input—on NOAO observing opportunities and NOAO programs and policies on a more rapid timescale than is possible with the *NOAO Newsletter*.

NOAO is the national center for ground-based nighttime astronomy in the United States and is operated by the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA), Inc. under cooperative agreement with the National Science Foundation.

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