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Planetary protection for sustainable space exploration

Theme issue organized and edited by Karen Olsson-Francis, Athena Coustenis, Peter Doran, Petra Rettberg, Niklas Hedman & Jean-Claude Worms.

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About this issue

Planetary protection has recently gained increased attention from the broader scientific community, primarily driven by the rise of new spacefaring nations and the expanding role of private and commercial entities in space exploration. In response to these evolving dynamics, the COSPAR Planetary Protection Policy is being refined to accommodate these more complex and ambitious missions. This theme issue highlights the need for a transparent approach for planetary protection, where international collaboration is actively pursued, including the sharing of best practices and fostering collaboration among stakeholders to help ensure that space exploration benefits future generations.

The issue is based on the contributions presented at the Inaugural International COSPAR (Committee on Space Research) Planetary Protection Week held in London on April 2024 and at other COSPAR Planetary Protection Meetings.

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The Royal Society
6 – 9 Carlton House Terrace
London
SW1Y 5AG
T +44 20 7451 2500
W royalsociety.org
E philtransa@royalsociety.org

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Image: The ExoMars (Rosalind Franklin) Rover being checked during integration activities inside the Bio CleanFacility at Airbus Stevenage (UK). Credit: Airbus.

Planetary protection for safe and sustainable space exploration

Karen Olsson-Francis *et al.*

The COSPAR panel on planetary protection and the COSPAR policy on planetary protection: an overview of governance and activities

Niklas Hedman *et al.*

Testing the hypothesis, 'planetary protection is expensive' from the ESA perspective

Silvio Sinibaldi & Albert Haldemann

Proposed updates to the COSPAR planetary protection policy for missions to icy worlds

Peter Doran *et al.*

Habitability and exchange processes on the Jovian moons: implications for planetary protection measures

Gabriel Tobie *et al.*

Survival limits of psychrotolerant microorganisms with relevance for planetary protection of the icy moons

Tommaso Zaccaria, Kristina Beblo-Vranesevic, Marien I de Jonge, Mihai G Netea & Petra Rettberg

Planetary protection considerations for Dragonfly at Titan

Ralph D Lorenz, Shannon MacKenzie, Mihaela Ballarotto, Kenneth Hibbard & Elizabeth P Turtle

Isolator/glovebox technical challenges for the curation of samples returned from Mars

John MC Holt *et al.*

An ensemble binning approach to identify functional diversity in cleanroom environments

Michael C Macey, Alexander Mahnert, Ben P Stephens, Ezgi Kucukkilic-Stephens & Karen Olsson-Francis

Co-enrichment of Ce and organics in microbe-like structures at the deep-sea ferromanganese crust surface

Ayaka Tokumaru *et al.*