

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration



**NASA Office of JPL  
Management and Oversight**  
4800 Oak Grove Drive  
Pasadena, CA 91109-8099

June 1, 2023

Reply to Attn of: NASA Office of JPL  
Management and Oversight

**Memorandum for:** Federal, State, and Local Public Agencies  
Interested Parties  
Members of the Public

**Subject:** NASA Mars Sample Return Campaign – Notice of Availability of the Final  
Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Executive Order 12114, *Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions*; the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA implementing regulations (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500–1508), NASA's procedures for implementing NEPA (14 CFR Subpart 1216.3), and Department of the Air Force (DAF) procedures for implementing NEPA in 32 CFR Part 989, NASA announces the availability of the Mars Sample Return (MSR) Campaign Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Final PEIS). The Final PEIS and other informational materials are available at: <https://www.nasa.gov/feature/nepa-mars-sample-return-campaign>. Hard copies of the Final PEIS will also be made available at local public libraries, at the locations identified on the website. ***Libraries in receipt of the Final PEIS should display the document for public access until the close of business on July 3, 2022.***

Cooperating agencies for this effort include: the DAF for Hill Air Force Base, Utah, and Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida; the Department of the Army for Dugway Proving Ground, Utah; the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

NASA, in coordination with the European Space Agency, proposes to conduct a campaign to retrieve samples from Mars and transport them to Earth. A scientifically selected set of samples (i.e., Martian rocks, regolith, and atmosphere), acquired and cached on the surface of Mars by the Perseverance rover, would be returned to Earth for scientific analysis and research. The proposed sample landing location is the DAF-managed Utah Test and Training Range, with additional activities potentially occurring on the U.S. Army's Dugway Proving Ground. The Final PEIS provides information and analysis related to the potential environmental impacts associated with this proposed action.

The proposed action and a no action alternative were evaluated in the Final PEIS. Under the no action alternative, the MSR Campaign would not be undertaken and investigation of Mars

as a planetary system would be severely constrained due to the cost and complexity of sending into space (and operating) science instruments capable of conducting the appropriate level of sample analysis in space or on Mars where *in situ* analyses could be performed. The environmental resource areas analyzed in the Final PEIS include health and safety, cultural resources, hazardous materials and waste, soils and geology, biological resources, water resources, air quality and climate, land use, socioeconomics, environmental justice/protection of children, noise, and infrastructure. No significant adverse impacts were identified in the Final PEIS.

Comments and stakeholder input received within the Draft PEIS comment period were considered during the development of the Final PEIS. NASA released the Draft PEIS for comment from November 4, 2022, through December 19, 2022. During the 45-day review and comment period, NASA held two virtual and two in-person public meetings (one in Wendover, UT and the other in Salt Lake City, UT). Appendix B, *Public and Agency Involvement*, provides details on substantive comments received during the comment period and public meetings, as well as NASA responses to those comments. All comments received on the Draft EIS are available in their entirety on the MSR Campaign Docket at <https://www.regulations.gov/document/NASA-2022-0002-0175>.

The official notice of availability for the Final PEIS will appear in the Federal Register on June 2, 2023 (docket number NASA-2022-0002). NASA will document its decision regarding alternative implementation in a Record of Decision (ROD), which would be signed no sooner than July 3, 2023, after the 30-day mandatory Final PEIS waiting period as required by 40 CFR 1506.11(b)(2).

For further information, please contact: Steve Slaten, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, by electronic mail at [Mars-sample-return-nepa@lists.nasa.gov](mailto:Mars-sample-return-nepa@lists.nasa.gov) or by telephone at 202-358-0016. For questions regarding viewing the docket, please call Docket Operations, telephone: 202-366-9317 or 202-366-9826.

Sincerely,



Steve Slaten  
NASA MSR PEIS Project Manager  
NASA Office of JPL Management and Oversight