PACE AC Telecon Summary

30 March 2017

This was a special telecon in that we had four representatives from Headquarters with us on the line, as well as Jeremy and Bryan Franz, representing the Project. The HQ representatives were Paula, Hal, Betsy and Woody. The first 45 minutes of the telecon were devoted to HQ personnel answering the question of, “What does it mean that the PACE mission was omitted from the President’s blueprint budget?”, and then some follow up questions stemming from this basic idea.

Here are some highlights.

1. FY17 budget has not changed. All of our funding continues, and all of our obligations for this funding, as a Science Team and as individual PIs continue to hold. We need to complete our work.
2. The President’s budget that was released is an incomplete summary of the Executive Branch’s proposed budget. The complete budget will be presented to Congress, likely in mid-May. There is a long road and many steps from this preliminary version to a final budget passed by Congress. It is Congress’s constitutional mandate to appropriate funding for the Executive branch. The Executive Branch’s budget is more like a guideline, not a final document. Given that, still to have the words, “terminating the following missions”, gives a very bad signal.
3. The Headquarters staff is prepared to defend the mission. They have been asked by Congressional staffers for specific information to which they have responded. The questions have mostly been about the impacts of losing the mission. Main points are: fisheries, water quality, science, continuation of 30 year data record, public health and safety, and jobs.
4. The worst thing we could do is to slow down our work or change direction. The most important things we can do in a professional capacity is to transmit our excitement about the PACE mission through casual conversations, talks, reports, papers. Be specific about what PACE can do that makes PACE unique. The web site is receiving a lot of traffic. Make sure the site represents the most current science and results. Aerosol and Cloud sections need updating. Share our most current research with Jeremy, Brian Cairns and Antonio so that they can incorporate our work into their presentations.
5. The other thing we can do is to exercise our rights as citizens, and to let our Congressional delegation know about PACE.
6. Betsy told a story about OCO-3 that was funded in 2014. Not funded in 2015. During 2015, they used their unused resources from 2014 to proceed with an orderly shut down. Then in 2016 they were funded again. So… if PACE is truly worthwhile, it will transcend this set back.
7. If you are asked about PACE’s future, respond in the way that you are most comfortable. That could be focusing on the science, on what we know and not on the unknown. But it could also be paraphrasing the things said here. This is public. It can be talked about, with a caveat for civil servants who need to be a little careful. They should follow the guidelines offered by management at their own Centers.
8. Proposals that have been submitted to other calls, but linking someway to PACE should still be viable with their relevancy to NASA’s overall mission. Note the Glory example. The Science Team continued until the end of the funding cycle even though the launch failed.
9. The RFP for procurement of a PACE polarimeter will not be issued. Instead there are negotiations with the Indian Space Agency for a contributed polarimeter. If negotiations with ISRO fall through, there will not be time to procure a polarimeter stateside, and therefore, there will be no PACE polarimeter.

After this discussion with HQ, Anthony Davis presented his most recent work on retrieving height and depth of an elevated aerosol layer. In summary, this was an incremental advancement from the slides that he posted for the January ST meeting. He has gone back and adjusted some assumptions and methodology. The result is similar. OCI alone will be able to retrieve aerosol layer height, but not thickness over a dark surface and likely over turbid water as well. Adding MAP is the only way to retrieve aerosol layer thickness. Anthony’s slides will be uploaded with this narrative summary.