

Future Prospects for NASA's Gamma Ray Astronomy Program

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The Gamma Ray Astrophysics Program Working Group (GRAPWG) is an ad-hoc committee formed by NASA to provide recommendations about the future of gamma-ray astrophysics. The group had a series of meetings in 1996-97 leading to a report in April 1997 and another series in 1998-99 leading to a report in July 1999. The highest priority recommendations of the first report was for a next generation high energy gamma-ray mission called GLAST to follow on the successes of EGRET. Other major-mission recommendations were for focusing hard x-rays and nuclear line & MeV continuum astrophysics. In the MIDEX and SMEX categories the priorities were for gamma-ray burst and hard x-ray survey missions. These recommendations are now partially fulfilled with the GLAST mission and Constellation-X mission (with a hard x-ray focusing instrument) in definition phase and the Swift gamma-ray burst MIDEX in Phase A. The GRAPWG recommendations for the future beyond these missions are contained in the July 1999 report and will be presented. Also presented will be the status of the current NASA strategic planning process.