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NATIONAL SPACE SOCIETY  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E.  
Suite 200  
Washington, D.C. 20003  
202/543-1900  
202/546-4189 fax

## NATIONAL SPACE SOCIETY HAILS REPORTED DISCOVERY OF WATER ON MARS

Washington, D.C. - "The reported discovery of accessible water ice in great quantities on Mars by NASA's Mars Odyssey spacecraft is an event of historic importance," said Jeffrey Liss, Senior Vice President of the National Space Society. "Not only does this scientific result explain one of the major mysteries about Mars, but it is a discovery of inconceivable importance in facilitating the human settlement of Mars," he continued.

Finding water on Mars is significant because water is necessary to support human settlement on Mars. Water is needed for drinking, washing, and growing food, and also as a source of rocket fuel and electrical power.

Marianne Dyson, author of Space Station Science and a Director of the National Space Society says, "The space shuttle combines hydrogen and oxygen in its engines to produce the thrust that gets it into orbit. It also uses hydrogen and oxygen to produce all the electrical power onboard. Vehicles that travel to Mars will need these elements to reach the Red Planet, but will no longer have to carry the extra mass for long stays on the surface or for the return trip to Earth. This should significantly reduce the cost of long-term exploration of Mars.

"The Mars Pathfinder has already shown that sunlight on the surface of Mars is sufficient to produce electrical power. That power can be used to split Martian water into hydrogen and oxygen during the day. During the night, the two elements can be recombined in fuel cells, such as are used on the space shuttle, to create electrical power and water as a byproduct. The water can then be split again during the day -creating a continuous power system using existing and well-known technology. Water has also been proven to be the very best shield against radiation that may be harmful to life on the surface of Mars. With water on Mars, we have what we need to grow food, create and store energy, and protect ourselves from radiation".

"Because large sources of water are now known to be available, the exploration and settlement of Mars will not be nearly as difficult as some people had feared."

The National Space Society is the most active international grassroots space advocacy organization. The Society promotes the exploration and settlement of space. Its more than 25,000 members and 50 chapters worldwide promote social, political, economic, and technical change to attain that goal. The organization is headquartered in Washington, D.C. To learn more about NSS and its activities visit [www.nss.org](http://www.nss.org) or call Alison Schutt at (202) 543-1900.