

Subject: [allemploy] FYI: Feb 2010 MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE ALMA PROJECT at NRAO
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MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE ALMA PROJECT at NRAO
February 2010

***** THIS FORTNIGHT*****

As you are aware, the major earthquake which struck Chile on Saturday has caused a national disaster. Everyone working with and for the ALMA Project in Chile has been personally affected. We are immensely relieved that, as far as we can ascertain at this time, there have been no serious injuries to ALMA staff and their families, although many have property damage, in some cases very severe.

The ALMA sites in the North were not affected by the earthquake. Access to the Santiago offices, which do not seem to have suffered major damage, is being restored.

We appreciate your support at this difficult time.

Thijs de Graauw

ALMA Commissioning Begins

ALMA's 2010 began auspiciously with the commencement of the commissioning and science verification tasks, using the three antennas operating at the Array Operations Site (AOS) at 5050m (16500 ft) altitude. A small ceremony was held 2010 January 22 to mark the occasion, exactly one year since first light on an ALMA antenna. The 'altiplanic winter' conditions found during many austral summers have been much less severe in recent years. The commissioning team has made good use of the time to work on commissioning correlator modes, calibration devices, line length correctors, water vapor radiometers and other equipment to ready the instrument for the call for Early Science proposals expected in about a year. Much of the testing is sequenced through 'Schedule Blocks', sets of instructions generated by the ALMA Observing Tool (OT). This is the software which users will use to submit observing proposals and, after acceptance, generate instruction blocks to execute observations. Several realistic test observations have occurred through the use of this software, including data collection from amplitude, pointing and phase calibrators as well as from target sources.

New ALMA antennas and front ends have been accepted, with two of these now operating as a test interferometer undergoing a battery of tests by the AIV (Assembly, Integration and Verification) and science teams at the Operations Support Facility (OSF) at the 2900m level. This process will lead to their joining the growing array on the Chajnantor plain soon.

Two other antennas have just been accepted (DV04 from Vertex and PM02 from Mitsubishi) and will soon be transported to the OSF for optical pointing tests, holography and then radiometric tests. This makes the total number of antennas accepted by ALMA now seven. An additional seventeen antennas are under various stages of construction in the antenna camps. New Front Ends also continue to arrive to keep up with the antenna flow. Receiver cartridges for ALMA Band 4 (2mm) and Band 8 (.6mm) have been received from NAOJ and are expected to be incorporated into dewars soon to be shipped to Chile.

At the end of February, two of the antennas at the AOS will be moved from their current location on pads with baselines of about 200m to pads that will eventually hold the 7m antennas of the Atacama Compact Array (ACA). One antenna will remain about one kilometer away in order that tests of long baselines may proceed. In about a month, all three antennas will be stationed on ACA pads and all will be supplied with power from a central source.

Special Session 'Preparing for ALMA' at the 216th AAS Meeting.

A special session, 'Preparing for ALMA' will be held at the May meeting of the American Astronomical Society on Monday, 24 May from 6-8pm. The first call for ALMA observing proposals is expected in a little less than a year, while construction continues. This Special Session will describe this Early Science opportunity and the ALMA tools and support available through the North American ALMA Science Center (NAASC). Located at the NRAO headquarters in Charlottesville, Virginia, the NAASC staff will provide accurate and timely information on ALMA observing modes and capabilities to the community, support users creating proposals with the ALMA Observing Tool, staff an electronic Help Desk, validate observers' scheduling blocks, and provide post-observation user support.

The special session will include an introduction to the major tools that users will use to prepare their observations and analyze their data, including the ALMA Observing Tool (OT) for proposal preparation and submission, the Common Astronomy Software Applications (CASA) package that will be used to reduce ALMA science data and includes an "observing simulator" task, and Splatalogue, an on-line VO-queriable spectral line database.

During Early Science, ALMA is expected to include at least 16 antennas, 4 receiver bands, baselines to .25 km, and single field interferometry. A goal is to offer baselines to 1km and single dish mapping of extended objects in continuum and spectral line modes. While Early Science will coexist with array commissioning, a portion of the available time will be allocated for science observations.

Adrian Russell will be leaving the NRAO to take up a new position as Director of Programmes for the European Southern Observatory (ESO) in Garching, Germany on 1 July, 2010. While we will miss Adrian, we are sure in his new role he will continue to benefit ALMA, and will help to strengthen the relationship between NRAO and ESO. -Fred K. Y. Lo

Mark McKinnon, the current Project Manager for the EVLA, has agreed to take over from Adrian Russell as the North American ALMA Project Manager. Mark will be assuming his ALMA duties as soon as practical so that he can overlap with Adrian over the next several months and ensure a smooth transition. The Joint ALMA Observatory Director and Project Manager have endorsed this new appointment, as well as the National Science Foundation and Associated Universities, Inc.

At the beginning of the month President Obama presented the administration's FY2011 budget. The FY 2011 Budget Request for the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) is \$13.91 million, which represents the tenth year of an eleven-year project totaling an estimated \$499.26 million.

Funding for ALMA operations increases by \$5.93 million to a total operations budget of \$23.50 million consistent with the planned ramp-up of operations.

Please see the current issue of the Joint ALMA Observatory Newsletter,

January 2010

<http://www.almaobservatory.org/en/newsroom/newsletter/179-newsletter-4>

Past issues of this Calendar may be viewed at

<http://www.cv.nrao.edu/~awootten/mmailcal/ALMACalendars.html>

General Happenings

Photos of activity may be found at NRAO eNews:

<http://www.nrao.edu/news/newsletters/>

NTC: From an announcement from Fred K. Y. Lo: "...the organization of the North American (NA) ALMA Front End Integrated Product Team (FE IPT) will transition after the Front End Critical Design Review on 19 February.

At that time, primary responsibility for the FE IPT will transfer from John Webber to Skip Thacker and Bill Randolph. Kamaljeet Saini will become the Deputy FE IPT Leader, concentrating on intra and inter-IPT systems integration. John will continue in his NRAO roles as Director of the Central Development Laboratory and ALMA NA Correlator IPT Leader, Eric Bryerton will assume responsibility for the FE Local Oscillator (LO) production group formerly headed by Skip.

SCO: Several new astronomers have joined the Commissioning and Science Verification (CSV) and Division of Science Operations (DSO) teams in Santiago.

Eric Villard, Lance Simms, Daniel Fulla and Diah Gunawam have joined the CSV team and Stephane Leon and Tommy Wiklind have joined the DSO team.

DAILY CALENDAR (Times EDT/EST) see

<https://wikio.nrao.edu/bin/view/ALMA/AlmaCalendar>

Feb 17-19 ALMA Front End CDR NRAO

Mar 9-10 ALMA Science Advisory Committee f2f meeting NAOJ

***** TECHNICAL NEWS *****

***** ALSO OF INTEREST *****

A new CALL FOR PROPOSALS for IRAM telescopes is available at the web page :

<http://www.iram.fr/GENERAL/calls/s10/s10.pdf>

The deadline for proposal submission is : 18 March 2010 at 17:00 CEST (UT+1 hour), and the opening of proposal the submission facility will be 25 February 2010

Following the direction of the SMA steering committee, the CfA SMA Time Allocation Committee (TAC) solicits proposals for observations in the 230, 345, 400, and 690 GHz bands for the period 2010 May 16 - 2010 Nov 15. The deadline for submitting proposals is 2010 March 11 (16:00 EST = 11:00 HST). In addition, large (legacy) proposals must be preceded by a brief "Notice of Intent" by 2010 March 4, 16:00 EST. See:

<http://sma1.sma.hawaii.edu/call.html>

Please send information for upcoming calendars by Friday evening of the preceding biweekly period to Jennifer Neighbours or Al Wootten via e-mail (jneighbo at nrao.edu or awootten at nrao.edu).

The calendar will be issued between late Friday and sometime on Monday by e-mail to all NRAO scientific staff members and anyone else interested. A specific mailing list, alma-info, has been created for anyone wishing to receive it.

Past issues are available at

<http://www.cv.nrao.edu/~awootten/mmailcal/ALMACalendars.html>

Allemploy mailing list

Allemploy@listmgr.cv.nrao.edu

<http://listmgr.cv.nrao.edu/mailman/listinfo/allemploy>