Proposed Cuts to NASA Budget

In Andrew Lawler's article "GOP plans would reshuffle science" (News & Comment, 19 May, p. 964), the following statement appears concerning proposed cuts to the budget of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA): "About $2.7 billion would come out of the $8 billion Earth Observing System [EOS], [Congressman] Walker said, through changes in the way the agency distributes the data." This statement mixes two budget figures and obscures the real impact of such a cut. In reality, there would be much less data to distribute.

The President's fiscal year (FY) 1996 budget request for the entire Mission to Planet Earth program (MTPE), (of which EOS is the largest part), plans $7.3 billion in spending for the period FY 1996–2000. Of this amount, $2 billion is tied to current contractual commitments, including those for spacecraft being prepared for launch in the next 2 years. This means that, of the $5.3 billion remaining, a $2.7-billion cut would result in the loss of 51% of the MTPE program, and 79% of the EOS program, if the entire cut were absorbed by EOS. Cuts of this magnitude imply elimination of whole spacecraft, instrument sets, and scientific programs, not "changes in the way the Agency distributes the data."

Let us be clear: a $2.7-billion cut would devastate this carefully constructed scientific program. The impacts would ripple far beyond the period FY 1996–2000. The price would be an indefinite delay in our understanding of the Earth as an integrated system and in attendant advances in long-range weather forecasting, natural disaster reduction, and agriculture and natural resources management.

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German Funding for *Sonne* Expedition

In the Random Samples piece about our cruise to the Foundation Seamount chain "Major undersea volcano chain sighted" (12 May, p. 809), we and our funding agency, the German Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Forschung und Technologie, feel that it was not made clear that the cruise of the ship *Sonne* was fully financed, to the tune of some 3 million deutsche marks, by the German government and was led by the University of Kiel. In a time of tight funding, it is important for all of us that public money be seen to be spent correctly and fruitfully.

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Corrections and Clarifications

The Random Samples item "The mosquito and the marigold" (12 May, p. 809) incorrectly suggested that a team of scientists in India first characterized phototoxins in marigolds that kill mosquito larvae. In fact, they were originally discovered in the early 1980s in Canada by investigators at the University of British Columbia [see J. T. Arnason, B. J. R. PhilogÅne, P. Morand, K. Imrie, B. Hasspieler, A. E. R. Downe, "Naturally occurring and synthetic thiophenes as insecticides," *American Chemical Society Symposium Series* **387**, 164 (1989)].

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