

Riess. That was more than enough to show that SN1997ff was a type Ia supernova in a galaxy over 10 billion light-years away. And it was brighter than it would have been if either dust or evolution were responsible for the apparent dimming.

Does this supernova prove that the universe is filled with dark energy? Cosmologists say they would like to see a few more examples before they decide. "Extraordinary results require extraordinary scrutiny," Turner says. But at the least, the discovery of SN1997ff gives cosmologists a useful new tool. "The way to understand the nature of dark energy is by studying supernovae like this one," says Turner, "and this discovery shows that they are out there."

—MARK SINCELL

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VENICE PRESERVATION

Climate Change Data Prompt New Review

TRIESTE, ITALY—The Italian government has put another hurdle in the way of a controversial plan to control the flooding of Venice. Last month, the government sent the plan—which has been under development for almost 30 years—back for reworking under its water authority in Venice. The move leaves open the question of exactly what will be done.

On 15 March, the Council of Ministers agreed that the city's proposed \$2 billion mobile floodgate scheme, called MOSE (Modulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico, or experimental electromechanical module), should be reviewed once again to factor in potential rises in sea level caused by global climate change (*Science*, 25 August 2000, p. 1301). The ministers also directed that MOSE should be integrated with small-scale measures such as raising pavement levels.

The review is expected to begin immedi-

ately. But details remain unresolved, as does the role of the Consorzio Venezia Nuova, which has designed and assessed the project and is also expected to lead construction of the floodgates.

Willer Bordon, head of the Environment Ministry (which has opposed MOSE in its present form), emphasizes that the review is not a green light for MOSE itself. Nerio Nesi, head of the Ministry of Public Works—which has backed the project and will oversee the review—is more positive. "Venice needs [both] MOSE and the small-scale measures," he says. "The MOSE project only needs updating in view of the predicted changes in climate."

The idea for MOSE arose after a 2-meter flood in 1966. Its central feature is a system of inflatable mobile barriers that would close off the three lagoon outlets when tides exceed 1 meter. Planning began in the 1970s, and the project was finally endorsed in 1998 by the Veneto region, as well as an international panel. The ministries of environment and cultural heritage rejected the assessment, however, but the Veneto Court annulled their decree last July.

With two ministries warring over the project, the issue was handed over to the Council of Ministers to resolve. Last month's decision comes 10 weeks after a deadline set last year and 2 months before general elections.

Members of environmental groups, who say that MOSE could turn the ecosystem into a "stinking marsh," worry that projected global warming will exacerbate the problems by requiring greater use of the floodgates. Instead, they pin their hopes on such small-scale operations as raising pavement, which is already under way, and proposals to reconfigure the port outlets, strengthen the shorelines, and rebuild the quays. Officials for the Green Party say that such projects could reduce the effective tide level by up to 40 cm, safeguarding the lagoon for the next 50 years and permitting a reanalysis of MOSE that is based on more recent scientific findings.

Nesi says that the planning effort should be completed within "a few months." Bordon and the environmentalists hope for a formal reassessment of MOSE's environmental impact then, before the Council of Ministers takes final action. In the meantime, the European Community is looking into

whether the Consorzio's role in the project represents an infraction of community regulations on open competition.

—SUSAN BIGGIN

Susan Biggin writes from Trieste, Italy.

BUSH APPOINTMENT

Venture Capitalist to Lead Science Panel

The Bush Administration has made its biggest science-related job appointment so far. President George W. Bush last week named Floyd Kvamme, a former computer industry executive and Republican stalwart, to lead his science advisory panel. The post of presidential science adviser, a full-time



Insider. Floyd Kvamme is likely to have Bush's ear on S&T issues.

position typically held by a prominent scientist from academia, remains empty.

Kvamme, 62, is a partner in the California venture capital firm of Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, which provided early backing for such prominent high-tech companies as Genentech and America Online. He becomes co-chair of the President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST), a volunteer panel stocked with prominent researchers and industry chiefs whose other co-chair is the science adviser, who also heads the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. PCAST meets periodically to offer its thoughts on hot science policy topics, although past presidents, including Bill Clinton, have paid scant attention to the group.

In naming Kvamme on 28 March, Bush said that "science and technology have never been more essential to the defense of the nation and the health of our economy." He called Kvamme "a risk taker" who "knows the players." Kvamme's background includes stints at computer giants Apple and National Semiconductor. He is an electrical engineer by training.



Slogging along. The government orders another look at how best to keep Venetians high and dry.

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