

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Calling Planet Earth - Space Outreach to the General Public (6)

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LESSONS LEARNT ABOUT PUBLIC INTEREST IN ANALOGUE TEST SITE MISSIONS

Abstract

During early 2013 the German Aerospace Center (DLR) participated in a simulated Mars mission at the Mars Desert Research Station (MDRS) in Utah, USA. The author has been a member of Crew 125, also known as the International Lunar Exploration Working Group's (ILEWG) EuroMoonMars B mission. While launching with a small article on DLR's website, the press attention for this mission grew significantly in the weeks after the simulated trip to Mars. In this paper the media coverage of this research stay at MDRS is described and it is investigated how the apparent interest of the public in human spaceflight missions can and should be increased by improving awareness of analogue test site operations and missions and increasing the coverage of a human and emotional side rather than an exclusively technical point of view for such missions. The costs involved in EuroMoonMars B are related to the media outcome to show that for a humble investment, public interest can be triggered. The author describes further how enhancing analogue test site utilization helps increase public support and also is a legit way of justifying spendings on human missions to other planets. It is also suggested to involve the public more in comparable analogue missions to increase the understanding and support for human exploration efforts.