

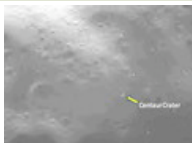


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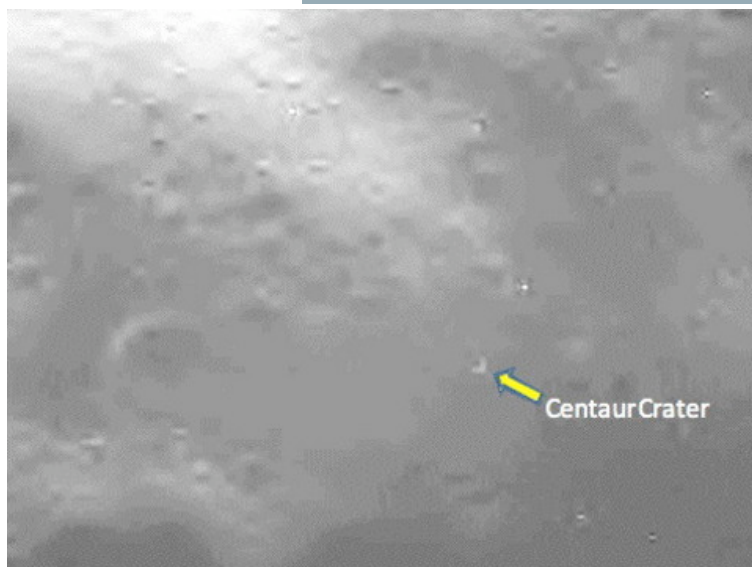
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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER ON THE MOON

Posted on Tuesday, November 17, 2009 (EST)
NASA's LCROSS mission found nearly 26 gallons of water on the moon in a part of the Cabeus crater and the exciting discovery makes the moon a logical destination for future space exploration, not just a scientific curiosity or a potential transit point for Mars exploration.

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NASA's LCROSS mission found nearly 26 gallons of water on the moon in a part of the Cabeus crater and the exciting discovery makes the moon a logical destination for future space exploration, not just a scientific curiosity or a potential transit point for Mars exploration. Seen in the image is the view of the floor of Cabeus as seen through the LCROSS near-infrared camera. The fresh crater made by the Centaur impact is indicated. Photo Credit: NASA

November 16, 2009, (Sawf News) - NASA's LCROSS mission found nearly 26 gallons of water on the moon in a part of the Cabeus crater and the exciting discovery makes the moon a logical destination for future space exploration, not just a scientific curiosity or a potential transit point for Mars exploration.

The quantity of water found is equivalent to that found in the driest of deserts on earth, says Jim Garvin, Chief Scientist at NASA Goddard research center, but considering it was found on a planet without an atmosphere, surrounded by the vacuum of space, the amount is extraordinary and has NASA excited.

NASA scientists are conservatively looking at the newly discovered water on the moon as a science resource that possibly holds clues to the origin of life on our planet, Garvin adds.

The source of the water discovered by LCROSS is yet to be determined.

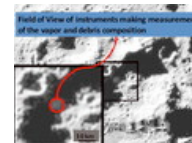
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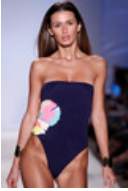
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It could have come from -cometary impacts over billions of years, solar wind interacting with chemicals in the lunar soil or yet another process that we yet don't know about.

"The point is we don't know," says Garvin. "But now we have to go and find out."

If the water that was formed or deposited is billions of years old, these polar cold traps could hold a key to the history and evolution of the solar system, much as an ice core sample taken on Earth reveals ancient data. In addition, water and other compounds represent potential resources that could sustain future lunar exploration.

At the very least, the discovery makes a compelling case for continued exploration of the moon.

Lunar rovers to determine the quantify and quality of water are the next logical step but before that scientists intend to scan the moon using the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter to determine if the permanently shadowed Cabeus crater is the "one unique place to go" for further exploration.

A team of leading scientists is now set to explore the moon using the Hubble telescope.

The LCROSS (Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite) spacecraft and a companion rocket stage made twin impacts in the Cabeus crater October 9 that created a plume of material from the bottom of a crater that has not seen sunlight in billions of years. The plume traveled at a high angle beyond the rim of Cabeus and into sunlight, while an additional curtain of debris was ejected more laterally.

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