

Teachers to learn about Mars-Earth science

Eighteen middle school and high school U.S. science teachers will soon depart for Alaska for a Mars exploration and polar science research experience.

The teachers, selected from more than 500 applicants to join the June 23 Phoenix Mars Mission team, will perform scientific investigations in the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory's permafrost tunnel and at University of Alaska-Fairbanks research labs.

Their goal is to explore new ways of bringing current polar research into their classrooms, NASA officials said. The teachers will receive training for classroom activities relating to Mars and polar sciences that they can share with students, other teachers and their local communities.

They will learn about frozen ground, polar processes, climate change, glaciers, polar ice, astrobiology and arctic environments both on Earth and Mars from prominent scientists in those fields, said Peter Smith, the Phoenix Mission principal investigator and senior research scientist at the University of Alaska's Lunar and Planetary Laboratory.

The first in NASA's "Scout" program, the Phoenix Mars Lander will launch in August 2007 for a May 2008 landing on a mission to search for clues about the history of water and potential for habitat to support life on Mars.

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