Settling the Eighth Continent — Three Steps to Mankind's Colonization of the Moon*

Bruce L. Cutright¹ and William A. Ambrose¹

Search and Discovery Article #70150 (2013)**
Posted October 31, 2013

*Adapted from oral presentation at AAPG Annual Convention and Exhibition, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, May 19-22, 2013
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Abstract

We are now on the threshold of not just visiting the moon, but establishing permanent self-sustaining colonies on the moon. There are three major conceptual leaps necessary in application of existing technologies to space exploration that will make this possible. Chemical rocket propulsion from Earth's surface to orbit is both expensive and limited, and this is the first hurdle that must be overcome. The second major leap must focus on available power in space once we can economically move mass to orbit. The third major paradigm shift for colonization of the moon without geographic restrictions is deployment of beamed power technology.

Access to space can be achieved if we discard our attachment to chemical rockets and recognize that nuclear thermal rockets can provide an order of magnitude improvement in performance and in launch-cost reductions. Another order of magnitude improvement can occur if we discard rockets altogether and rely on space elevators for movement of mass from Earth's surface to LEO.

Compact nuclear fission generators in the multi-megawatt range are the only near term practical source for high energy demand activities in space, such as manufacturing, mining, refining, and fuel production. A viable lunar colony must have abundant power available to produce water, breathing atmosphere and building materials from source materials that are similar to igneous rocks on earth. Solar power is not practical when it is limited by a 28 day-night lunar cycle, and the power density of solar energy is insufficient for the identified activities. Orbiting large solar arrays, manufactured in Earth or lunar orbit from materials mined from NEOs and with beamed power from these units to the lunar surface can be the transition technology between lunar surface-based compact nuclear fission power plants and ³He fusion technology. The deployment of orbiting beamed energy technology to provide power anywhere on the Lunar surface, and ultimately, the establishment of ³He fusion plants on the Lunar surface with power beamed to Lunar or earth orbit to support power demands on Earth and asteroid mining ventures in space could be a viable economic benefit to Earth's economy, linking the economic development of the Earth, NEOs, and the Lunar surface in an expanding triangle trade association that would be beneficial to all.
Selected References


Website

Settling the Eighth Continent

Energy Resources for Human Settlement in the Solar System and Earth’s Future in Space

Three Steps to Development of the Moon

Bruce L. Cutright and William A. Ambrose
Bureau of Economic Geology, University of Texas

With Acknowledgement to N. Bakhtian and A. Zorn (2009)
This AAPG Special Publication 101 is a comprehensive and integrated review of energy and mineral resources in the Solar System, including materials that can both sustain future manned expeditions and colonies in space and support Earth's energy and critical material challenges in the 21st century and beyond. ...[it], is a clear reflection of AAPG's vision of advancing the science and technology of energy, minerals and hydrocarbon resources into the future and supporting exploration and development of the ultimate frontier, beyond Earth's atmosphere.
Settling the Eighth Continent

• The Energy Industry exists and thrives on the frontier, and we, as professionals in the energy industry, explore in suspect terrain to find and develop valuable resources for our companies and our countries. The essence of our business, our expertise and our reason for being is to take calculated risks to gain a positive return.

• Why Explore the Eighth Continent?

• How shall we explore the Eighth Continent?
The Why is Economics

• Near Earth and Cis-Lunar Space is now a $4 Billion a year economy
• The Total Energy Industry segment is about $1 Trillion dollars per year worldwide
• Annual investments are in the range of $200 Billion per year
• Return on investments, for Lunar Energy, for Asteroid Mining, or for SPS Power Beaming can exceed $200 Billion in ten years or less.
What is needed to make this a reality?

• **Propulsion Systems.** We must have better methods of moving materials from Earth’s surface to orbit. (NTRs or space elevator)

• **Power in Space.** Solar power is useful, but weak and diffuse. We must have high-energy density sources of power for life support, mining and refining. (compact modular fission reactors)

• **Infrastructure for power transmission.** Excess power generation capacity becomes a marketable commodity, and beaming this power from the Moon to orbital facilities, or even to Earth’s surface is not technically excluded, and supports a self-sustaining economy. (microwave transmission is 85 % efficient, very close to long distance HV lines)
  
  – Excess Energy Production Capacity supports energy export
  – Materials refining provides local independence, lowers costs (ISRU)
  – Energy exports, either by beamed transmission, or shipment of H₃ to Earth benefits both permanent settlements on the moon and environment benefits for Earth

  – Unique capabilities of Space
    • Vacuum manufacturing, Intellectual Property, Communications, extra-earth monitoring, robotic-automation. Defense, national objectives, real estate
Keep in mind

• It’s not that hard
• It’s not that expensive
• It does not take that long
Our capabilities, as exploration professionals, excel at understanding when enough is enough. We have proven the ion propulsion systems on Deep Space One; we have a little more work to do on the materials for Nuclear Thermal Rockets, but they are less than five years away, if we so chose.
ITS NOT THAT HARD!
How do we move from the post-1972 stagnation of the US Space Exploration Program, to an active, goal-directed space utilization program?

Courage, Innovation, opportunity and economics.
There are better ways to travel.
Pioneering achievements in rocketry came from dedicated individuals working initially without any significant government interest. This is Robert Goddard with one of his early inventions; the inset shows an early Russian club rocket.

Robert Goddard did not ask permission to test his rockets. Maybe we need to stop asking permission, and just get the job done?

Is Exploration an Illegal Act?

Pioneering achievements in rocketry came from dedicated individuals working initially without any significant government interest. This is Robert Goddard with one of his early inventions; the inset shows an early Russian club rocket.

Acta Astronautica Volume 58, Issues 6-7 2006 304 - 377

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.actaastro.2006.01.004
Companies with active space-related business: Space X, Scaled Composites, Armadillo Aerospace, Bigelow Aerospace, Plus the existing defense contractors, Lockheed-Martin, Boeing, British Aerospace among many others.

Energy Density Matters
Benefits of NTP for NEO Intercept / Human Exploration Missions

- NTP engines have negligible radioactivity at launch / simplifies handling and stage processing activities at KSC -- **Shortens prep & launch times**

- High thrust / Isp NTR uses same technologies as chemical rockets/stages (e.g., Ares-V "core" stage uses a 10 m D. ~44.5 m L Al/Li LH₂ tank)

- Short burn times (< 60 mins): rapid LEO departure & acceleration to \( V_i \)

- NTP achieves higher \( V_i \) than CP for given payload and LEO launch mass

- NTP allows a viable response / NEO intercept capability even when the detection range (\( R_D \)) is small (~1 AU or less) & response times are short

- NTP may be the only option available to deflect high velocity LPCs if \( R_D \) is limited to ~4 AU from Earth (\( T_i \sim 100 \) days, \( R_i \sim 0.54 \) AU, \( t_d \sim 2 \) weeks)

- With no payload, an expended NTP stage (~34 t) can also be used as a KE interceptor providing impact energies of ~4.8 kT for NEO deflection

- NTP can be developed in ~10 years after ATP. Small engine size (~15-25 klbₚ) could be key to reducing time, cost to develop, ground test and fly

- Small engines can be used individually or in clusters to maximize mission versatility -- for robotic science and NEO intercept & deflections, also for human Moon, Mars and NEA missions

Glenn Research Center at Lewis Field
Size Comparison of Pratt Whitney Rocketdyne RL10B-2 Chemical Engine and Different Thrust Level NTR Engines

(NTR: $T_{ex} \sim 2700$ K, $p_{ch} \sim 1000$ psia. Nozzle Area Ratio: $\varepsilon \sim 300:1$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engine</th>
<th>Fvac</th>
<th>Height (m)</th>
<th>Height (ft)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RL10B-2</td>
<td>24.75 klfb</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used on Delta IV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 klfb</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 klfb</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>6.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glenn Research Center
at Lewis Field
Table 1. Key Fusion Reaction Rates vs. Ion Temperature.

\[
\begin{align*}
D + ^3\text{He} & \rightarrow p (14.68 \text{ MeV}) + ^4\text{He} (3.67 \text{ MeV}) \\
D + ^7\text{T} & \rightarrow n (14.07 \text{ MeV}) + ^4\text{He} (3.52 \text{ MeV}) \\
D + ^3\text{D} & \rightarrow n (2.45 \text{ MeV}) + ^3\text{He} (0.82 \text{ MeV}) \\
& \quad \rightarrow p (3.02 \text{ MeV}) + ^3\text{He} (0.82 \text{ MeV}) (50\%) \\
& \quad \rightarrow p (3.02 \text{ MeV}) + ^3\text{He} (0.82 \text{ MeV}) + ^3\text{He} (0.82 \text{ MeV}) (50\%) \\
p + ^{11}\text{B} & \rightarrow 3 ^4\text{He} (8.68 \text{ MeV}) \\
^3\text{He} + ^3\text{He} & \rightarrow 2p + ^4\text{He} (12.86 \text{ MeV})
\end{align*}
\]
Figure 4. One-way trip time for the same payload fraction comparison of fusion, nuclear-thermal, and chemical propulsion.\textsuperscript{17}
If there is a concern regarding NTR technology, then, consider the current research related to Space Elevators. We are at most, two decades away from materials that have the capabilities of supporting a + 130GPa support structure over 150-40,000 kilometers long.
BACK TO THE MOON?
Businesses actively engaged in preparing for space resource exploration and exploitation

1. **Planetary Resources**  
   (Focus on near earth asteroids)

2. **Shackleton Energy Company**  
   (Focus on mining the Moon)

3. **Stott Space, Inc.**  
   (Focus on Near Earth Asteroids)

Are these the next Exxon, Chevron and Shell companies of the World?

### Estimated Value of a Typical 1 Kilometer Diameter M Class Asteroid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Value if sold at today's market price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semiconductors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Phosphorous (P)</td>
<td>1.24E+08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gallium (Ga)</td>
<td>4.98E+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germanium (Ge)</td>
<td>3.45E+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arsenic (As)</td>
<td>1.29E+07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selenium (Se)</td>
<td>3.15E+09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indium (In)</td>
<td>3.97E+08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antimony (Sb)</td>
<td>4.11E+05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tellurium (Te)</td>
<td>1.13E+08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Platinum and Precious Metals</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruthenium (Ru)</td>
<td>1.46E+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhodium (Rh)</td>
<td>6.61E+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palladium (Pd)</td>
<td>5.52E+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver (Ag)</td>
<td>7.59E+08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhenium (Re)</td>
<td>1.98E+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osmium (Os)</td>
<td>2.25E+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iridium (Ir)</td>
<td>1.13E+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platinum (Pt)</td>
<td>3.33E+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold (Au)</td>
<td>3.89E+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Important Metals</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper (Cu)</td>
<td>1.60E+09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobalt (Co)</td>
<td>1.71E+11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Titanium (Ti)</td>
<td>1.35E+09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chromium (Cr)</td>
<td>8.64E+09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nickel (Ni)</td>
<td>1.55E+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molybdenum (Mo)</td>
<td>4.32E+05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6.20E+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>$6.2 trillion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estimated Value of a Typical 1 Kilometer Diameter M Class Asteroid

### Lunar Soil Composition

- **Oxygen**: 42%
- **Silicon**: 21%
- **Iron**: 13%
- **Other**: 3%
- **Calcium**: 8%
- **Magnesium**: 6%
- **Aluminum**: 7%

**Composition of Mars Soils from Viking Landing Sites (Carr, et al., 1984)**

- **SiO₂**: 44.70%
- **Al₂O₃**: 18.20%
- **Fe₂O₃**: 5.60%
- **MgO**: 8.30%
- **K₂O**: 2.30%
- **Na₂O**: 2.70%
- **CaO**: 0.30%
- **TiO₂**: 0.90%
- **SO₃**: 0.90%
- **Cl**: 0.70%
- **Sr**: 0.00%
- **Y**: 0.00%
- **Zr**: 0.00%
Rare Earth Elements, Helium-3 and Thorium Content of Lunar Regolith

Spudis, P. Ambrose, W.
# Lunar Resources

(Courtesy of Ambrose, W.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Helium-3</strong></td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Mature regolith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hydrogen</strong></td>
<td>Propellant, water</td>
<td>Mature regolith, poles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oxygen</strong></td>
<td>Propellant, air/water</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nitrogen, carbon</strong></td>
<td>Food and plastics</td>
<td>Breccias/regolith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metals/bulk regolith</strong></td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Regolith, mare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>Moon base</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titanium</td>
<td>Shielding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluminum</td>
<td>Roads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solar power facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Space Solar Power Technology Demonstration For Lunar Polar Applications

- Craters are COLD: -300F (-200C)
- Frost/Snow after Lunar Impacts
- Good for Future Human Uses
- Good for Rocket Propellants
Well-Developed Terrestrial Technology Gives Access to $\sim 10^9$ kg of Lunar $^3$He

- Bucket-wheel excavators
- Bulk heating
- Heat pipes
- Conveyor belt

- 33 kg $^3$He/year
- $\sim 600$ tonnes volatiles/year
- 556 km$^2$/year
- $v = 23$ m/h
We are already operating ROVs on Mars, why not on the Moon? Light Speed Constraints must be overcome by having humans on site
Human Exploration of Mars is necessary, for now. You can’t send a computer to do a human’s job. Yet.
We need to keep in mind the hardships that our ancestors faced when first arriving in the New World.
Permanent habitations will be efficient and comfortable. They will be the new permanent home for the explorationists in our societies.
Fireball Streaking over Russia
This photograph of the meteor streaking through the sky above Chelyabinsk, Russia, on Feb. 15, 2013, was taken by a local, M. Ahmetvaleev. The small asteroid was about 56 to 66 feet (17 to 20 meters) wide.

Image Credit: Copyright M. Ahmetvaleev
ASTEROIDS
...are nature's way of asking:

"How's that space program coming along?"
Significant attention has been directed toward mining the asteroids recently, but we have known of their value for more than 75 years.
THE SPACE ECONOMY: A MODERN DAY GOLD RUSH
Asteroid Mining Will Create A Trillion-Dollar Industry

As our population grows we need to find a sustainable supply of natural resources to fuel exploration in space and prosperity on Earth.

Platinum-rich Asteroid
Could contain more Platinum Group Metals than what's been mined on Earth in all of history.

More Asteroids Discovered Near Earth Everyday
1,100
1,000
800
800

Near-Infinite Supply of Precious Resources
Nearly 16 kg found every year

Platinum and Precious Metals

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Uses of Water in Space

7.9 trillion

Asteroid mining will open a trillion-dollar industry and provide a near-infinite supply of Platinum Group Metals and water to support our growth both on this planet and off.
The Sooners, the California Gold Rush, the attraction of Yukon Gold have all been motivating factors for “pushing the envelope” and seeking new opportunities.
Captain James Cook
Depart August 26th, 1768.
Return July 13th, 1771;
Travel time, nearly 3 years

World Trade Routes 19th Century
It's not that hard, it doesn't cost that much, and it doesn't take that long.

So, while we are in space, let's beam power back home, to earth orbit, or to earth's surface. The benefits are substantial, and the economics are competitive.

Sources:
* Forbes estimates Olympics at $15 billion http://onforb.es/6TUFU
* New York Times reports Curiosity cost $2.5 billion http://nyti.ms/MYhcCw
•“Sun-Tower” Design based on NASA Fresh Look Study

• Transmitter Diameter: 500 meters

• Vertical “Backbone” Length: 15.3 km (gravity gradient)

• Identical Satellite Elements: 355 segments (solar arrays)

• Autonomous Segment Ops:
  1) Solar Electric Propulsion from Low Earth Orbit
  2) System Assembly in Geostationary orbit

• Large Rectenna Receivers: Power production on Earth
Fig. 9. ‘European Sail Tower SPS’ transportation scenario (DLR), not to scale.
Japan Space Agency (JAXA) is aggressively working on Space-based Solar Power Stations.

FIG. 7: JAXA L-SPS system diagram. (source: JAXA)
Installed Cost ≈ Range $1,000 to $2,700 /KW
Production (wholesale) Cost ≈ $0.05-0.07 /KWhr

(Glaser, P. 1993)
(Seboldt, W. 2004, Criswell, 2013)
Keep in mind

- It’s not that hard
- It’s not that expensive
- It does not take that long
• The most successful commercial space applications, such as satellite communications, remote monitoring, direct-to-home TV and satellite radio, have been successful not because they’re space-based, but because they provide a service that is better and/or less expensive than competing options.

• Space-based mining and power generation are cost-competitive now, lacking only our courage to develop propulsion systems to take us to space. And, once there, why return, when all the resources necessary are already there.
AAPG Memoir 101 *Energy Resources for Human Settlement in the Solar System and Earth’s Future in Space* defined the opportunities, we, as energy and exploration professionals, have before us as we move from admiring space to occupying space.
Good Luck in your new adventures