

For Immediate Release
June 26, 1997

Contact: Randolph Harrison
202-225-3601

CAPPS LEADS EFFORT THAT ENSURES FULL FUNDING FOR MISSION TO PLANET EARTH

Washington, D.C. -- U.S. Representative Walter Capps (D-Santa Barbara) today announced that NASA's vitally important Mission to Planet Earth (MTPE) program has been fully funded by a key House Appropriations subcommittee. Critical components of the program are made at the Hughes Remote Sensing Center in Goleta.

"I'm very pleased that the Appropriations Subcommittee has fully funded Mission to Planet Earth," said Capps. "This is a very important program that will expand our knowledge of our earth and its incredibly complex environmental systems."

Capps was the leader of a bipartisan group of Science Committee members calling for \$1.4173 billion in MTPE funding for Fiscal Year 1998. In a letter to the Subcommittee that Capps authored, the group pointed out critical economic and environmental benefits of Mission to Planet Earth and urged the subcommittee to fully fund the program.

Earlier this year, a Capps amendment to the NASA authorization bill restored a \$200 million cut to the program. NASA had said that the \$200 million cut would have severely disrupted the program, causing harmful delays in several of the satellites that make critical atmospheric measurements.

Started during the Bush Administration, Mission to Planet Earth is NASA's component of the Federal government's multibillion dollar Global Change Research Program that will analyze changes in global climate and determine how those changes can be monitored and predicted. The information gathered from MTPE will have uses for a wide range of purposes, including long range planning for the insurance, disaster management, forestry, agriculture and fishing industries. MTPE will have daily applications as well, for example, helping farmers to anticipate irrigation and harvesting needs, and disease control and pest eradication requirements.

MTPE consists of three basic components: a series of 9 satellites, the first is scheduled for launch next year, that will gather 24 environmental measurements over an 18 year period; a ground-based data management system to handle the flow of scientific data and the satellites' flight information system; and a team of over 1,000 scientists and engineers at universities (including UCSB), private organizations and federal agencies to analyze and interpret the data.

"MTPE's ability to accurately monitor and predict long term climate variability will allow us to anticipate changes in weather patterns. This ability will benefit large sectors of our economy -- including such diverse industries as agriculture, financial services, insurance and disaster management," Capps stated. "Increasing our ability to predict with accuracy droughts, floods, and other cataclysmic natural events will reap huge benefits in lives and dollars."