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Dr. Michael A. Meyer
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Program Scientist, Mars Science Laboratory Program
NASA Headquarters
300 E. Street, SW
Washington, DC 20546

June 15, 2010

Dear Michael,

On May 11, 2010, the MSL Landing Site Steering Committee chairs summarized, in a letter to the MSL Project and NASA Headquarters, the Committee recommendation that neither of the 5th candidate sites (Northeast Syrtis and East Margaritifer) be added to the four existing MSL landing site candidates. This recommendation was largely due to their preliminary assessment of the engineering and safety challenges, although the committee viewed the site at Northeast Syrtis to be scientifically compelling for MSL and future missions.

Upon discussion with the Steering Committee chairs, the MSL Project engaged in an additional focused study of the safety impact at Northeast Syrtis of proposed small reductions in landing ellipse size and optimal re-centering of that ellipse. Those studies indicated there likely would be only minimal improvement in the safety assessment of that site given expected MSL engineering capabilities. Therefore, the MSL Project accepts the recommendation of the Steering Committee to add neither additional site to the existing MSL landing site candidate list of Holden, Gale, Mawrth, and Eberswalde. We thank the community, Steering Committee, and MSL Project staff for their efforts to locate additional compelling sites and assess their engineering characteristics and safety.

On behalf of the Mars Science Laboratory Project,

Michael Watkins, MSL Mission Manager
John Grotzinger, MSL Project Scientist
Ashwin Vasavada, MSL Deputy Project Scientist

(submitted electronically without signature)