

NASA Discovers Organic Molecules and Methane on Mars *Increases Potential for Past or Present Life on the Red Planet*

Fort Worth, TX - NASA's Curiosity rover has found new evidence that suggests Mars could have supported ancient life, as well as new evidence that relates to the search for current life on the Red Planet. On June 7, NASA announced findings of organic molecules and methane variations on Mars.

Organic molecules are the building blocks for life containing carbon and hydrogen along with oxygen, nitrogen and other elements. The discovery of these molecules in the rocks on Mars suggests that the planet may have at one point supported ancient life. However, the molecules could have been created by a non-biological process.

Curiosity also found seasonal variations of methane in the Martian atmosphere. This discovery could be indicative of current life on Mars. Though, the methane variations could also be caused by water-rock chemistry.

Director of Scientific Presentation and astronomer Dr. Morgan Rehnberg explains, "NASA's discoveries confirm how common the basic building blocks of life are in the solar system. Although they don't prove life ever existed on Mars, today is a great day for anyone excited about the thought of life out there in the cosmos. The discovery of organic molecules proves that NASA is on the right track in its studies of Mars, and the observations of methane hint at a planet far more active than we might have imagined."

If you would like to schedule an interview with Dr. Rehnberg to discuss these exciting findings, please contact acanipe@fwmsih.org.

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About the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History

The Museum was established in 1941 and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. Anchored by its rich collections, the Museum is dedicated to lifelong learning. It engages guests through creative, vibrant programs and exhibits interpreting science and the history of Texas and the Southwest. The Museum is open daily, except Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Visit www.fortworthmuseum.org for more.