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NASA TAKES STUDENTS ON AN EARTH TREK

GREENBELT, Md. - Students from all over the world will gather to participate in the Odyssey of the Mind's 30th World Finals, a creative problem-solving competition, at the Iowa State University, Ames, Ia., May 27 through May 30. These students have advanced from competitions held earlier in the year at the local, regional, state or country levels and will now compete for the Odyssey's top awards.

NASA's Earth Observing System Project Science Office provided a grant to develop one of the long-term problems for this year's competitions. In the problem, "Earth Trek," student teams design and build a small vehicle that will visit four locations. The locations will be different places within one or more team-determined environment, such as rain forests, beaches, and mountain ranges. Each time the vehicle leaves one of their locations, it must look different and it will appear to be with a group of vehicles that are traveling together. The team's performance will be based on the visits to the locations, the environments, and the changes in appearance of the vehicle. The goal of this problem is to increase awareness of how our environment is changing and the impacts of these changes at both large and small scales.

NASA will also host activities at the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals. One of NASA's featured activities includes the Earth Science E-Theatre. It is a dynamic theater-style presentation that presents Earth observations and visualizations in high-definition format. The spectacular visualizations presented in the context on global climate change are derived from data acquired using NASA Earth science satellites. In addition, animations of satellite launch deployments and orbital mapping to highlight aspects of Earth observations from space are also presented.

Odyssey of the Mind is a natural partnership with NASA, whose Earth Science missions and research efforts seek to understand how the Earth is changing and the consequences for life and societies," according to Dr. Steven Platnick, Earth Observing System Senior Project Scientist at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md. "Imagination, creativity, and team work are the essential elements of NASA's success. Odyssey of the Mind challenges student involvement in these areas as teams seek to understand scientific principles and explore solutions through sound engineering. NASA's goal of developing a deeper understanding and awareness of Earth system processes and the impact of human activity is enabled by teaching the world's students to think 'outside the box' so as to one day help solve complex environmental problems."

Over the past year, NASA has supported Odyssey's preliminary competitions by posting Earth science information on a special web site. Web links were provided to assist students in developing solutions to problems facing the Earth.

A section of NASA's Earth Observatory website serves as a portal to many teacher and student learning modules. They include: The Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change; Investigating the Climate System with NASA's Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission satellite (including rain, wind, clouds, energy and weather); Exploring the Environment (a coral reef lesson); Teachearth.com, resources for teachers; and "Virtual Vacationland." Virtual Vacationland is a resource tool for locating and using Earth Science data and information on the Internet.

NASA expects to reach nearly two million students, parents, teachers, and coaches around the world through its sponsorship of Odyssey of the Mind problems, stimulating interest and learning about Earth system science among all ages.

The Odyssey of the Mind program, founded in 1978, is an international educational program that promotes team effort and creative problem-solving for students from kindergarten through college. Thousands of teams from throughout the U.S. and other countries participate in the program, including Canada, China, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Poland, Singapore, and Uzbekistan.

For more information and images, visit:

http://www.nasa.gov/vision/earth/everydaylife/odyssey_mind.html

To access the Odyssey of the Mind official Web site, visit:

<http://www.odysseyofthemind.com>

For information about NASA's Odyssey of the Mind "Earth Trek" challenge, access:

<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/odysseyofthemind/>