

# NASA Selects Team To Build Lunar Lander

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NASA's Deputy Associate Administrator for the Exploration Systems Mission Directorate Doug Cooke announced Friday the selection of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Ala., and Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md., to lead a team in the development of a lunar lander spacecraft.

The lander is tentatively planned for launch as early as 2010. It will demonstrate the ability for precision landings at targeted locations on the moon; evaluate landing zone environment; and determine if lunar resources can support a sustained human presence.

"This mission will have as a primary objective to determine whether there is water-ice in the permanently dark areas within craters in the moon's polar regions. The existence of water-ice has important implications in living off the land when we return with human explorers," Cooke said.

"The lunar lander will test critical automated descent and precision landing capabilities needed for human landings, including surface hazard avoidance during landing. The discoveries from this mission and the data it collects will play a vital role in humans returning to the moon and living there for extended periods," he added.

The Robotic Lunar Exploration Program (RLEP) program is intended to provide a series of robotic missions to support human exploration.

The lunar lander spacecraft is the second RLEP mission. The Lunar

Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) is the first mission developed under the RLEP. The LRO is being built at Goddard and is scheduled for launch in 2008. The orbiter will carry six instruments that will map and photograph the lunar surface, search for surface ice deposits, and investigate space radiation.

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