

NASA, Grumman sign radar development pact

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The U.S. space agency and the Northrop Grumman Corp. signed an agreement to develop systems to explore life and climate on Earth and other planets.

Researchers from Grumman's electronic systems division and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Goddard Space Flight Center are to collaborate in developing advanced civil radar system architectures that can be leveraged into new space-based remote sensing instruments.

The new systems are expected to revolutionize the study of other planets and to provide a leap forward in helping scientists understand climate change and the carbon cycle on Earth, officials said.

"The current state of the art for measuring carbon biomass in forests involves measuring tree-trunk diameters with tape measures," said Peter Hildebrand, Goddard's lead investigator for the project. "Since forests are huge, we obviously have a sampling problem.

"If, instead, we could use an advanced radar system to measure this from space, it would greatly improve our ability to measure the changes in forest carbon biomass as the climate changes," he said.

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