News Release

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Technical Announcement: Landsat 5 Anomaly

On December 18, 2009, the transmitter on Landsat 5 that sends image data to the ground encountered technical difficulties. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Landsat Flight Operations Team has extensive experience with this type of anomaly and is currently investigating the problem. There have been no Landsat 5 images acquired since December 18 and none will be collected until the anomaly is resolved. Further information should be available on or near January 11, following the testing of key electronic components.

Landsat 5, launched in 1984, had a design life of 3 years. In its nearly 26 years of operation, it has provided the global science community with over 900,000 individual scenes from the USGS archive, in addition to many from International Cooperator receiving stations worldwide, recording the effects of flooding and drought, clear cutting and re-growth of forests, environmental impacts of the Chernobyl power plant breakdown, the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and large wildfires in California and the former Soviet Union. The archive of observations derived from the Landsat 5 Thematic Mapper (TM) sensor provides the science community with a very useful base of information on global land-surface features.

Users still have access to new imagery being acquired globally by Landsat 7, and NASA and the USGS are developing the Landsat Data Continuity Mission, scheduled for launch in December 2012. All current and historical Landsat image data in the USGS archive are available electronically at no charge to the user community at EarthExplorer or the USGS Global Visualization Viewer.

For updates on the status of Landsats 5 and 7 please refer to the Landsat Missions Web site