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**Subject:** [asapmembers] Arecibo Science Advocacy Partnership: January 2014 Member Newsletter & Proposal Opportunity  
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**To:** asapmembers@areciboscience.org  
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## Arecibo Science Advocacy Partnership



Dear ASAP Member,

Last year finished with a worrying bang. Only a day after our December 2013 Newsletter was sent to you, the NSF Astronomy Division published a "[Dear Colleague](#)" letter outlining various "options" for "divestment" that included both NRAO's Robert Byrd Telescope (GBT) at Green Bank and "on a somewhat longer timescale" Arecibo (at the end of the current Cooperative Agreement in 2016) as well as a number of other facilities.

Clearly, from an NSF perspective under the current government disfunction, facilities funding has reached a crisis point. The ASAP Board has met to consider responses to this latest circumstance, and we will keep you informed about what further we are taking in subsequent newsletters.

*More immediately, we are writing to encourage you to prepare science proposals for the March 1, 2014 [Arecibo deadline](#). We have realized that many people do not know that the proposal pressure on AO has somewhat decreased recently—owing largely to completion of several of the surveys that have often dominated the scheduling. Time is thus available in all three science areas that the Observatory supports, aeronomy, radio astronomy and planetary astronomy. Please also share this information with colleagues who may not know about this opportunity.*

Furthermore, the ASAP Board has decided to offer assistance as possible to new (or returning) users in the preparation of their proposals. This ASAP community help is not intended to replace the specific expertise of the NAIC staff, but rather to supplement it given their more than full responsibilities. Therefore, if you would like to have help or advice in the runup to submitting on March 1, please consult the "Mentoring" tab on the ASAP website or email [secretary@areciboscience.org](mailto:secretary@areciboscience.org) for referral to an appropriate person in your science area. Moreover, we are hoping that a number of ASAP members will volunteer to share their expertise as well. So, if you are a current AO user and would be willing to give some assistance to a new AO user, please also send a message to the secretary above.

Additionally, we were sorry to learn that NAIC Directory Bob Kerr has been taken ill and will be away from Arecibo until at least the end of January. We wish him a speedy and full recovery.

Also, several minor and one moderate (M 6.4) earthquake have struck AO in the last two weeks (e.g., [USGS report on one](#)) with deep (~50-km) epicenters in the Puertorican Trench north of the island. The January 13th quake was sufficiently severe to have caused some damage at the Observatory, and Astronomy Directory Fernando Camilo sent a message to users indicating that the Observatory would be closed to both users and visitors until the extent of the damage could be determined. Consulting engineers from Ammann & Whitney in New York were called and assisted the staff in inspecting the telescope over the last weekend. It seems that the damage is confined to perhaps 8 broken strands in one of the main cables from Tower 8 to the triangle. The cable in question is the "short" cable that was spliced in 1962 because it was delivered short the foundry. It then seems that the structure is now judged to be stable, but the safety factor remains too low to permit any telescope motion. We hear that Platform Engineer Filipe Soberal has designed a reinforcement for the cable and that the repairs will begin immediately.

Finally, [ASAP membership](#) has taken a significant jump following the 50th Anniversary Celebration and Symposium. However, it is still far below the 250-300 needed to help

protect the Observatory over the coming few years. ***So, if you care about Arecibo, please help find and recruit new ASAP members.*** Graduate students (or even undergraduates actively involved in AO work) members are welcome, and at this point financial support is less important than growing ASAP numbers. If every current member brought in just one new ASAP member, the above goal would be met.

The [Membership Brochure](#) is available for download. ***Please*** then help us build the ASAP membership! Please send this letter to your friends and associates and tell them about the ASAP website: <http://areciboscience.org/>.

Please also write the Board with your suggestions and comments. The Board is very eager to have your suggestions both on how best to protect AO as well as on the structure and goals of the new ASAP!

With sincere thanks and regards,  
The ASAP Board

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