

Fermi User's Group (FUG) Telecon

December 5, 2008

Present: Josh Grindlay (chair), Matthew Baring, Buell Januzi, Henric Krawczynski, Luigi Piro, Scott Ransom, Pat Slane, Alicia Soderberg, Reshmi Mukherjee

Ex Officio Members: Ilana Harrus, Julie McEnery, Chip Meegan Chris Shrader, Lynn Cominsky, Dave Thompson

Staff: Sandy Barnes

Meeting called to order 11:30 am

Chris Shrader began with an update on David Band's health

Update from NASA HQ: Ilana Harrus noted that the NRA release had occurred and that the Fermi Cycle-2 schedule was established. Cycle-2 proposals are due March 6, 2009 as previously discussed.

Julie McEnery provided a report on the mission status. The continued operational success of the mission was noted, and in that context the outstanding work of the Flight Operations Team (FOT) was acknowledged. The data capture rate was noted as being near perfect, at 99.999%!

Quarterly trending meetings were implemented in addition to the weekly ones, to assess the longer-term behavior of the observatory. The first such meeting was on 3 December. Prior to that meeting, all the major subsystems held individual peer reviews to ensure we are trending all the right quantities and to assess how the observatory is doing. Sustaining engineering is now set up, things are going very well. Recent tests have shown that we can increase bandwidth for burst alert telemetry by a factor of two. This will facilitate more rapid alerts and increased flexibility.

A plan for proposal preparation workshops was discussed. Assistance with arrangements for a Boston area session was offered (by Josh and Pat). Venues would resemble last years workshops, but with greater emphasis on data analysis opportunities. Reshmi asked: how are the workshops announced? (It was noted that these are local each of the selected four sites, and not advertised beyond those geographical areas).

Julie outlined plans for the Fermi presence at the AAS meeting. Two oral sessions, a poster session and an invited talk are scheduled. A press conference is anticipated. Many early results will be announced at the meeting. The next Fermi Symposium plans were also mentioned; dates are firm (Nov. 2-5, 2009), and meeting is in Washington, but precise venue is yet to be finalized. (post-meeting, the venue was finalized: the meeting

will be held at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill) . Formation of the SOC, a website, and mass e-mailings are imminent (the dates were already announced in a previous mass Fermi/GLAST email).

The Einstein fellowship program, in particular the review process, was brought up. Discussion was deferred to later in the meeting.

Julie presented the LAT news (substituting for Peter). Calibration activities are scheduled for 12/11 (~h 6 hrs total). About ½ of this activity will result in data useful for scientific purposes. The reminder entails non-standard configurations and those data will be avoided in science analysis.

Chip Meegan reported on the GBM status. GIOC operations are nominal. A flaw with on board trigger algorithm has been fixed. A joint GBM-LAT paper on GRB080916C was submitted to Science. The Huntsville GRB Symposium went well.

Chris reported on the SSC status and schedule. The software freeze occurred in mid-November, and internal testing – mainly cross-platform validation at present – is underway. More detailed testing by the SSC staff will commence about mid month. Early uses will likely entail observation simulations, so emphasis will be placed on the pertinent tools and documentation.

NRA support materials are in place, but updated calibration files need to be installed for the sensitivity/exposure calculation tools. These are expected to appear this week. New RPS forms (as per the FUG discussions of last September) are being tested internally, and will be ready to install shortly.

The LAT high-level (ASP light curve) database has been online for several months. A web interface, which can be used as an alternative to Browse (but does not replace Browse) has been implemented internally, and will be made public shortly. A LAT GRB web page (modeled on the Swift one) has been implemented. It was noted that the GBM archive is currently incomplete. Chip noted that the BGO calibrations have been problematic, but that this is now progressing. The SSC and GIOC have been in close communications.

Josh asked about the FSSC presence at the January AAS; Chris noted that a booth is planned, where NRA-related materials and information will be disseminated and staff members will be available for discussions. Josh (and others) inquired about software demonstrations. Chris suggested that some “canned” examples, notably of observations simulations, can be prepared and presented, but that the full tool suite would still be one month from release.

Henric (and Luigi later) asked about the possibility of posting LAT data for flaring sources. Julie reminded the FUG of the long-standing data release policies and noted inherent technical difficulties for identifying flaring sources reliably.

Henric also inquired about the possibility of increasing the sampling rates and reducing the latency of the LAT light curve products. Julie noted that the latencies may be reduced as greater experience is gained, but that regarding the public release there is no added delay. LAT team plans to provide supplemental summary information. Chris notes that the SSC will post these on the web site.

Josh asked how many ATELS have resulted from Fermi monitoring? (12 as of the date of the phonecall)

Henric inquired about the LAT absolute flux calibration; Julie: 10-30% in general, 30% for the ASP products.

Henric: can the current calibration information be posted? There already is a "caveats" page associated with the database, and information is in there.

Luigi asked if LAT GRB upper limits could be posted. Julie explained that the procedure for UL determination was not mature at this stage.

Josh (and others) asked whether sample Fermi viewgraph slides be posted on a web site for FUG members (or others) to use in scientific talks? Lynn noted that the outreach site has useful information already, but in the form of powerpoint slides.

The Einstein fellowship program was then discussed. Josh mentioned that although the committee representation for Fermi was already set for this year, suggestions for members for next year would be welcomed from FUG (and could be passed along by Ilana to Nancy Evans at SAO, who organizes the committee).

The next meeting date was set at our last meeting and remains: Friday 2/6/2009 at GSFC. Josh asked for suggestions in advance for Agenda items.