



# Astronomical League

## Mountain Area Research Section

### Colorado Summit Agenda

In the Spring of 2006, three Colorado Front Range AL member clubs decided it would be a good idea to get together and discuss topics of common concern. Several of these issues revolve around policies of the AL regarding membership, and AL goals that extend to the regional and local levels. This meeting is the first of a series of meetings designed to develop resources common to Colorado and later to the entire MARS region.

The narrative contained in this agenda is intended to raise these topics to a MARS regional awareness level, and to spur discussion and development of these and other issues. Since there was short notice for this, and the timing – during the summer months is not the best, getting ideas herded onto paper seems like the best starting point. This agenda should be viewed as raising questions and not a document that reflects hard policy.

DAS is preparing for ALCON 2006, the MARS website was determined to be defunct. A new website has been created 'AL-MARS.org' to facilitate MARS activities and communication at the national level.

- Get the AL/MARS issues straight to take to ALCON 2006.
- How to handle the \$5/member relaxation of AL dues.
- AL, and our role in AL and the region (issues for August AL national convention in Dallas)
- Building the MARS regional web-site back (al-mars.org)
- Colorado Astronomy Day -- a special day set aside in fall when the weather is better in Colorado for astronomy outreach. This at the start of the school year, rather than the end.
- Meeting member's needs
- Recruiting new members, supporting the old hands
- Leadership development
- Sharing of resources (DAS Dark sky site)
- Dark sky sites, and light pollution
- Major Star parties
- Outreach, star parties and Astronomy day activities advertising, and getting the word out.
- Communication, FRAC, links on websites, newsletter exchange, etc.
- Regional Amateur/Community Observatories
- Telescope oriented Business and poor equipment being pushed by national companies.

## ***AL/MARS Issues***

Develop the list of issues for ALCON 2006.

### ***\$5 AL Member fees***

The AL is allowing individuals to be members of several clubs, but only be a member through one club. The \$5 is to be collected from the individual once, making bookkeeping a problem. DAS and BASS have decided to charge one price for dues, and to make a contribution for each of its members regardless of the AL policy. This becomes a local club policy, and one may choose to join at full membership level or not. Since DAS and BASS support the AL, we expect our members to do the same.

Are the numbers of people in AL inflated?

How do ALCONs report member participation for certificates, as this materially impacts our fund-raising efforts. (Using AL certificates awarded to members and reported at the national website, to demonstrate activity.)

### ***AL/MARS Role in Region***

DAS has a view that it can develop community science programs and provide resources to the community in the form of star-parties, DVD lectures, and a website with links to valuable resources. DAS is preparing a section of its website (resurrecting its DFILES section) where members publish journal level articles about amateur astronomy and space science.

Astronomy Club in a Box, a starter kit for kid clubs.

What are other roles to address?

### ***MARS Website***

The new website is in place, and needs input from each society. A link with the club's logo will be nice, a brief one paragraph description of the society even nicer. Contact information for all society officers, board members, committee chairs and program coordinators, ALCONs, etc needs to appear in one place on each club's site. 'About' is the customary web topic.

### ***Local Astronomy Days***

The National Astronomy Day, around April, falls in a bad climatic time for Colorado.

Astronomy as a basis for science learning is discounted in the Colorado Scholastic Aptitude Tests (CSAP test to meet federally mandated no-child left behind). To this end, DAS has requested and received permission for a Colorado Astronomy Day several years ago, and have been holding the event each year. This is being elevated to make it an official day, to correspond to earliest first quarter moon between the Weekend after Labor Day and the end of October.

Promote this idea, where each state holds an event that suits its needs best, with support from AL National.

### ***Meeting Members Needs***

The DAS has been in existence for 57 years, and introductory certificates do not meet most of our needs. An advanced AL certificate program is needed to bridge basic observers (schooled by AL observing certificates) into pro/am collaboration. This is under way at DAS.

## ***Recruiting New Members***

Kids Clubs need to be started by Kids, it feeds into their Vitae for college admission and scholarships. How do AL member societies play a role in fostering new clubs?

New member support at National Level.

## ***Leadership Development***

Leadership development for AL and within each new society.  
Developing leadership

## ***Sharing Resources***

The University of Denver owns the Historic Chamberlin Observatory and allows DAS to use the facility to host public events. These include twice weekly lecture/scope viewing events, a once-per-month Open House, and special celestial events. DAS is offering to share this resource with other societies, in the effort to promote astronomy in general.

## ***Dark Sky Sites and Issues***

Light pollution is flooding metropolitan areas, and extending light domes far beyond past boundaries. DAS maintains a Dark Sky site, that is being significantly effected by development in Fort Collins, and Denver SMSA as it builds towards the airport.

Identification of dark sky sites, cooperation in acquiring and maintaining dark sites around the state. DAS DS Site in Deer Trail, Pawnee Grass Lands, and Haswell Site (DSES).

## ***Major Star Parties***

DAS does not offer a major star party (RMSS, Fox Park, Texas, OK scale.) Since the summer is filled, we mooch off of other parties. How do we collaborate to make these events even better? Private Club parties, with small parties and good resources extends beyond ability to meet costs (BASS Alpine Research Station \$800/weekend).

## ***Outreach***

DAS holds approximately 140 outreach activities each year, and this is about the limit of our ability to serve the community in the traditional fashion. DAS is exploring a teach the teacher format to promote astronomy in local education, and to develop program resources, scope loaner programs, etc. Bringing people to Chamberlin exceeds capacity outside of normally scheduled Tuesday/Thursday setting.

Hispanic program development has been raised by Dr. Robert Stencel, University of Denver.

Public School science is a major concern in the region, where it is felt that outreach can promote better learning outcomes. What is AL/MARS prepared to do to support these initiatives at national and regional level.

## ***Communication***

FRAC (Front Range Astronomy Connection), AL-MARS.org at regional level. Feeding into the scholarships.

## ***Regional Amateur/Community Observatories***

There are several regional community oriented observatories that may serve as recourses. These include Sommors Bausch in Boulder with CU support, Chamberlin Observatory with DU support, the Little Thompson Observatory in Berthoud Colorado, an observatory in Kremlin, and Gunnison. This list needs to be developed and promoted at least on the MARS website.

## ***Poor Equipment Being Pushed by National Companies.***

DAS has seen too many disappointed people, discouraged from joining amateur astronomy due to bad experiences with cheap telescopes, promoted by national companies. What position do we want to take with regard to this?

## ***Conclusion***

A second meeting is being planned for 9 September, to avoid school starts, the moon and winter weather. A conference call capabilities are desired to allow remote people to participate. This may not happen, but watch this space.

A full report of this activity will be forwarded, and posted on AL-MARS.org site to start the debate!

Notes: