Planetary Surface Processes

Cratering Gravity **Tectonics** Volcanism Winds Fluvial Glacial Chemical weathering











Phoenix Public Release Image

Mars dust devil tracks



Wind streaks





Mars: rover track erasure



Geissler et al. (2010)

Apollo 17 Landing Site LROC NAC M168000580LR Low Periapse orbit

Moon: rover track erasure (not)

100 meters

_RV

ALSEP Equipment

Challenger Descent Stage

Geophone Rock



Challenger 3x Enlargement

Wind also erodes: Martian yardangs



SCIENCEPhotoLIBRARY

Wind also erodes: ventifacts





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Mars is the outermost terrestrial planet.

The Role of Distance from the Sun

Planets Close to the Sun

Surface is too hot for rain, snow, or ice, so little erosion occurs.

Sun

High atmospheric temperature allows gas to escape more easily..... Planets at Intermediate Distances from the Sun

Moderate surface temperatures can allow for oceans, rain, snow, and ice, leading to substantial erosion.

Gravity can more easily hold atmospheric gases.

Planets Far from the Sun

Atmosphere may exist, but gases can more easily condense..... to make surface ice.

Where is Mars's water now?

- Lost to space
- In atmosphere
- Trapped in
 - Polar caps (at surface)
 - Ground ice
 - Mineral structures in rocks

Ground Ice (and hydrated minerals): Evidence from Neutron Spectroscopy



Data from Mars Odyssey Gamma Ray Spectrometer, see for example Feldman et al. 2002

Ice revealed by impacts



Phoenix observed ice directly



Polygonal patterned ground - Phoenix



Polygonal patterned ground - HiRISE



Contraction crack formation



Melosh (2011)



Glaciers on Mars

Fastook et al. 2008





A glacier at equilibrium



Flow velocity is not uniform



Overhead view:



Glacial creep



Melosh (2011)

Cold vs. warm-based glaciers



Melosh (2011)

