

# The Long Wavelength Array

Gregory B. Taylor †

Department of Physics and Astronomy,  
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131, USA  
email: gbtaylor@unm.edu

**Abstract.** The Long Wavelength Array (LWA) will be a new, open, user-oriented astronomical instrument operating in the relatively unexplored window from 20-80 MHz near arcsecond angular resolution and milliJansky sensitivity. Operated by the University of New Mexico on behalf of the Southwest Consortium (SWC) the LWA will provide a unique training ground for the next generation of radio astronomers. Students may also put skills learned on the LWA to work in computer science, electrical engineering, and the communications industry, among others. The development of the LWA will follow a phased build which benefits from lessons learned at each phase. Four university-based Scientific Testing and Evaluation (ST&E) teams with different areas of concentration: (i) high-resolution imaging and particle acceleration; (ii) wide-field imaging and large scale structures; (iii) ionospheric physics; and (iv) radio frequency interference (RFI) suppression and transient detection will provide the feedback needed to assure that science objectives are met as the build develops. Currently in its first year of construction funding, the LWA team is working on the design for the first station (see also Ray *et al.* 2006).

**Keywords.** instrumentation: interferometers, radio continuum: general, radio lines: general

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## 1. Introduction

We are entering into a new era of exploration of the Universe at long wavelengths by a variety of new instruments including the Long Wavelength Array (LWA), LOFAR (Falcke, these proceedings), MWA (Webster *et al.*, these proceedings), FASR (Gary *et al.*, these proceedings), and others. Key science drivers that are motivating these advances include: (i) acceleration, propagation, and turbulence in the interstellar medium (ISM), including the space distribution and spectrum of Galactic cosmic rays, supernova remnants, and pulsars; (ii) the high-redshift universe, including the most distant radio galaxies and clusters – tools for understanding the earliest black holes and the cosmological evolution of dark matter and dark energy; (iii) planetary, solar, and space science, including space weather prediction and extrasolar planet searches; and (iv) the radio transient universe, including the known (e.g., SNe, GRBs) and the unknown.

Because the LWA will explore one of the last and least investigated regions of the spectrum, the potential for new discoveries, including new classes of physical phenomena, is high, and there is a strong synergy with exciting new X- and  $\gamma$ -ray measurements, e.g., for cosmic ray acceleration, transients, and galaxy clusters. Further discussion of the scientific goals of the LWA can be found in Kassim *et al.* (2005) or at the LWA web pages <<http://lwa.unm.edu>>.

† On behalf of the Southwest Consortium consisting of the University of New Mexico, the Naval Research Laboratory, the Applied Research Laboratory at the University of Texas, and the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

## 2. Current status

Construction and testing of the Long Wavelength Demonstrator Array (LWDA) is currently underway. The LWDA consists of 16 pairs of dipoles and is located a few kilometers from the center of the VLA. Lessons learned from the LWDA will feed into the design work on the first two LWA stations. The very first LWA station will eventually supplant the LWDA, and will consist of 256 dipole pairs. The site for the second LWA station is currently under study, and is likely to be located near one of the arms of the VLA. Early science should be possible with the first two stations in combination with the 74 MHz system on the VLA. The full LWA is expected to consist of 52 stations on baselines ranging from 400 m to 400 km. This will provide arcsecond level resolution and mJy level sensitivity.

An RFI survey has begun at the LWDA site. Preliminary results are encouraging, both for the environmental conditions, and for the level of self-generated RFI. While FM stations are clearly present at all times, the spectrum from 20-85 MHz is generally clean, with only narrowband signals present the majority of the time.

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## References

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