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| **Radiocommunication Study Groups** |  |
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| DRAFT REVISION OF RECOMMENDATION ITU-R RA.1417 | |
| A radio-quiet zone in the vicinity of the L2 Sun-Earth Lagrange point | |

(1999)

Summary

The L2 Lagrange point or L2 point, some 1 500 000 km from the Earth, provides a radio-quiet environment and stable orbits that are used for space-based radio astronomy and space research service (passive) missions. This revision provides timely information on such use and reiterates the importance of preserving the radio-quiet environment of the L2 point as a basis for future space-based radio astronomy missions.

DRAFT REVISION OF RECOMMENDATION ITU-R RA.1417

**A radio-quiet zone in the vicinity of the L2 Sun-Earth Lagrange point**

Scope

The L2 Sun-Earth Lagrange point or L2 point, some 1 500 000 km from the Earth, provides a radio quiet environment and stable orbits that are used for space-based radio astronomy and space research service (passive) missions. Some such missions are currently using the L2 point, and more are planned. This Recommendation provides timely supporting information and reiterates the importance of preserving the radio-quiet environment of the L2 point as a basis for future space-based radio astronomy missions.

The ITU Radiocommunication Assembly,

considering

*a)* that radio astronomy observations from space offer important advantages owing to the absence of atmospheric attenuation and scattering and the possibility of using very long interferometer baselines between antennas;

*b)* that the low levels of spectral power flux-density in the vicinity of the L2 point (see Annex 1) from transmitters operating on the Earth and in space between the Earth and the geostationary orbit permit highly sensitive radio astronomy observations;

*c)* that quasi-stable orbits having radii up to about 250 000 km exist in the vicinity of the L2 point;

*d)* that it is desirable for space-based radio astronomy stations in the vicinity of the L2 point to be able to observe at all radio frequencies, in order to exploit the full scientific potential of the L2 point;

*e)* that viewed from the L2 point almost all sources of radio interference will lie within a cone no more than 3.2 across as determined by the apparent diameter of the geostationary orbit,

recognizing

that space-based radio astronomy missions are currently operating in the vicinity of the L2 point and that future missions are being planned (see Annex 2),

further recognizing

*a)* that Earth-space and space-Earth transmissions to/from the vicinity of the L2 point are needed to control, communicate and relay data from space-based radio astronomy missions operating in the vicinity of the L2 point;

*b)* that space research service missions, including space research (passive), not conducting radio astronomy observations may receive and transmit in the space-Earth or space-space directions either in transit or while operating in the vicinity of and beyond the L2 point;

*c)* that specific frequency allocations have been made to the space research service for the purposes of controlling, communicating and relaying data from space missions,

recommends

1 that administrations should note the scientific importance of the L2 Lagrange point of the Sun-Earth system and take all practicable steps to maintain the radio-quiet environment in its vicinity;

2 that administrations, in making frequency assignments that may affect missions operating near the L2 point, should protect a volume of space of radius 250 000 km centred about the L2 point as a coordination zone of low electromagnetic emission, where all radio transmissions originating in and passing through the zone are confined to frequency bands allocated to the space research service for the purpose of controlling, communicating and relaying data transmissions;

3 that administrations should mutually coordinate activities involving use of the L2 point so as to minimize interference to radio astronomy observations or space research (passive) missions in its vicinity.

Annex 1

Vicinity of the L2 Sun-Earth Lagrange point

The L2 Lagrange point of the Sun-Earth system lies 1.5 million kilometres from the Earth, in the anti-solar direction, on a line joining the barycentres of the Earth and Sun. There is an area around the L2 point where objects will execute orbits that are stable for long periods of time, and are suitable for long-term space missions (see Fig. 1).



Figure 1

Annex 2

TABLE 1

Space-based radio astronomy missions operating or planned for   
operation near the L2 Sun-Earth Lagrange point

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mission/operator aperture | Type of mission observing mode | Dates of operation | Observing frequency bands (GHz) |
| MAP/NASA 1.4m × 1.6 m | Single dish continuum imaging of the cosmic microwave background  Continuum | 2001-2009 | 18-96 |
| PLANCK/ESA  1.5 m × 1.9 m | Single dish continuum imaging of the cosmic microwave background  Continuum | 2009-2012 | 30 ± 3  44 ± 4.4 70 ± 7 100 ± 10 150 ± 28 217 ± 40 353 ± 65.5 545 ± 101 857 ± 158.5 |
| Herschel/ESA 3.5 m | Single dish radio astronomy  Spectral line and continuum | 2009-2013 | 490-642 640-802 800-962   960-1 122 1 120-1 250 1 600-1 800 2 400-2 600 |
| Millimetron/ ROSKOSMOS 12 m | Single dish radio astronomy and space very long baseline inter­ferometry (sVLBI)Spectral line and continuum | 2015-2030 | 18-4 800 |
| SPICA/JAXA 3.5 m | Single dish radio astronomy/spectral line and continuum | 2018 | 1 500-10 000 |

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