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## NASA plans mission to redirect asteroid for study

NASA is asking the public for help in identifying asteroids suitable for study in its Asteroid Redirect Mission (ARM), with the goal of capturing an asteroid with a robotic spacecraft, redirecting it to orbit the moon, and ultimately sending astronauts to study it.

The mission aims to either fully capture an asteroid less than 10 meters in diameter or collect a sample from a larger asteroid.

NASA plans to determine which asteroid to redirect in 2018 and to launch the ARM robotic spacecraft in 2019.

The effort is an early element of the agency's Path to Mars program, with the aim of human exploration of the planet. In addition to helping NASA prepare for exploration of Mars, the agency has stated that increased asteroid research will help to ensure Earth's safety from potential asteroid impacts.

The invitation for public help and participation, called the Asteroid Grand Challenge (AGC), was announced June 2013 and is one of several Grand Challenges instigated by the President through the Office of Science and Technology Policy. These challenges aim to foster new collaborative partnerships in the promotion and advancement of numerous scientific disciplines. Other Grand Challenges include calls for new ways to treat brain disorders, improvements in solar energy production, and creation of a more affordable electric car.

Sources: NASA, Washington Post

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