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Lunar Ice Reported

From: **Brian Cuthbertson** <brianc@fc.net>
 Date: Fri, 20 Feb 1998 12:55:00 -0600 (CST)
 Fwd Date: Fri, 20 Feb 1998 15:53:40 -0500
 Subject: Lunar Ice Reported

The following was found by one of our local astronomical society members ...

Reuters

HOUSTON (Feb. 20) - A NASA satellite sent into space last month may have found water frozen on the surface of the moon, the Houston Chronicle reported on Thursday.

If the findings were confirmed, the water could provide a vital resource for human space explorers, the newspaper said.

It said the possible findings had come back from the Lunar Prospector satellite circling 60 miles above the moon after launch from Cape Canaveral in Florida on Jan. 6.

Alan Binder, chief scientist for the mission, would not confirm or deny the reports for the Chronicle, but said, "We are getting fairly certain of our findings."

He said there were rumors among planetary scientists that "tons of water" had been found, but also that none was discovered.

"The only advice I can give you is don't believe the rumors either way," Binder said.

The \$63 million satellite was sent to the moon in part to search the lunar poles for ice deposits thought to be the remnants of comets. The presence of ice was suggested by astronomers in the 1960s and rekindled in 1994 when a Pentagon satellite found unconfirmed evidence of ice in a crater at the moon's south pole.

Apollo astronauts who went to the moon on flights from 1969 to 1972 did not see ice, but those missions were in equatorial regions where the deposits were unlikely to be.

NASA scientists envision using moon ice to make rocket fuel for spacecraft shuttling to Earth or more distant destinations, and for human consumption.

The 4-foot-tall, 650-pound Lunar Prospector is equipped with instruments designed to detect as little as a cup of water in a cubic yard of lunar soil.

Binder said NASA was being "very cautious" about its findings and would not announce them until they were certain.

The space agency has been enveloped in controversy since August 1996 when its scientists said they had found fossil evidence of ancient bacterial life in a Martian meteorite. The claim remains in dispute.

REUTERS 06:47 02-20-98

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html references:

<http://lunar.arc.nasa.gov/>

<http://www.chron.com/cgi-bin/auth/story.mpl/content/chronicle/page1/98/02/19/moon.2-0.html>

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