



## International Dark-Sky Association

*"... to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies"*

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### International Dark-Sky Association Launches Project to Monitor Night Skies

Tucson, AZ-- The [International Dark-Sky Association](http://www.darksky.org) is conducting the world's first systematic effort to measure light pollution.

The project, "SKYMONITOR: A Network to Monitor the State of the Night Sky at Dark Sky Sites," will construct approximately 25 durable, automated Night Sky Brightness Monitors (NSBM). These autonomous, solar-powered devices automatically record sky glow levels at regular intervals throughout the night. They will be placed at dark sky sensitive sites throughout the world. Measurements from the monitors will be sent to a central database at the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) headquarters in Tucson, AZ.

National Science Foundation grant #0901053 will fund construction of the first ten NSBMs and their placement at observatories around the country. Once the first monitors are in place, the IDA expects to expand the project by placing additional NSBMs in national parks and in other environmentally relevant areas.

Scientists will use the NSBM data gathered from these varied sites to create the world's first uniform, regulated assessment of night sky brightness. IDA scientists say the project will provide baseline figures that can be used in similar projects around the globe.

"The night sky, like air and water, is part of the natural environment and needs protection from human activities," said Donald R. Davis, a past president of IDA and principal investigator on the SKYMONITOR project. "Having scientific data on light pollution is crucial to developing sound public policy for protection of the night sky. The SKYMONITOR project will provide such data."

### IDA Offices

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Several scientific and academic groups have praised the project, which is being touted as a valuable service to U.S. astronomy and the U.S. environment. As urban centers expand, light pollution is threatening ground-based observatories around the world. The National Science Foundation, which has staunchly supported astronomical research for decades, notes that the SKYMONITOR project is the first step in developing a national platform to preserve the integrity of the world's observatories. The project also is an essential step in determining how light pollution affects wildlife and the environment.

The SKYMONITOR project will analyze the extent and severity of light pollution on a geographically wide-scale level that has never been attempted before. The measurements will enable scientists to create models of unprecedented accuracy that can explore the effects of sky glow on wildlife and ecosystems. The models and measurements also will quantify the amount of energy wasted by inefficient and unneeded lighting and will provide estimates of an area's astronomical health.

"Like the sky, the possibilities for this project appear limitless from our perspective here on the ground," Davis said.

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