



Farpoint Observatory
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Dear Dr. Tim Spahr,

The NorthEast Kansas Amateur Astronomer's League, Inc. owns and operates Farpoint Observatory on the grounds of Mission Valley High school near Eskridge, Ks. The principal activity of the observatory for the last two decades has been to observe and report on asteroids with a primary emphasis on Near Earth Objects. Since awarded a NASA NEO follow-up program grant in 2004 we have turned in 9318, observations of Near Earth Objects. We were also fortunate to have discovered a periodic comet in late 1999, initially labeled 1999 X1. It was later permanently designated Comet P/176 (Hug-Bell).

Our Tombaugh Reflector telescope was originally brought online in 2005 and has recently undergone some changes. With the exchange of the primary mirror from a 0.7meter F/5.5 to a new 0.7 meter F/3.0 mirror allowing for a wider FOV but more importantly doubling the number of usable nights due to reducing the telescope tube length to just over 2.3 meter from an earlier 4.3 meter wind catching length. The wind resistance was cut sufficiently to allow observations even in wind as high as 12 mph. The original length of OTA restricted use of the telescope to just 6 mph.

The telescopes reduced length and a new CMOS camera with a very high (near 90%) Q. E. and a pixel size of 3.76 with useful imaging dimensions of 36mm x 25 mm provides a bit over 1 degree FOV diagonally. Thanks to a previous Shoemaker NEO grant provided by the Planetary Society each member of FAST can access and remotely control the Tombaugh Telescope.

WE have a team of NEKAAL member observers called FAST (Farpoint Asteroid Search Team)

Gary Hug Principal Investigator

David Cromer Lead Observer

Russell Valentine I.T. Specialist

Dr. Douglas Goodin Science Advisor

Recently an event occurred while we David Cromer was actively imaging NEO's when he noticed an alert sent by David Rankin of G96 about a possible small impactor requiring more observations. David Cromer then swung the Tombaugh Telescope to the predicted area and picked up the small (<1 meter) object just a little over an hour after G96 picked up the object. Because the observations by FAST resulted in a significant parallax measurement, it allowed a much more accurate estimate of where/when the impactor would strike the earth. It ended up becoming a large bolide exploding above the US / Canadian border.