

## Search for extraterrestrial life could be hampered by drama surrounding NASA's telescope dreams

For nearly 20 years, NASA has been planning and constructing a telescope unlike any ever built before: the James Webb Space Telescope. It will change the way scientists see the most distant galaxies and intensify the hunt for extraterrestrial life; it will answer outstanding questions about the birth and death of stars and planets. It is the future of astronomy—but it's causing trouble. JWST's high price and decade of delays could stymie the development of future telescopes, impacting the course of astronomy for the next 30 years.

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Looking even further ahead, NASA's planned successor to JWST, called the Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope (WFIRST), will observe the sky with resolution similar to Hubble's but with a far wider field of view.

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JWST's price tag has increased incrementally, from hundreds of millions of dollars to \$9.6 billion, some scientists working on its successors are uneasy. Where does the extra money come from to pay for JWST's budget overruns, and how have these delays affected public perception of these large missions?

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While Congress views astronomy research more favorably, President Trump's 2019 budget request has already suggested scrapping WFIRST.

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[T]he astronomers Gizmodo spoke with generally agree that JWST will be well worth the wait. But flagship telescopes are meant to advance significantly upon existing instruments—and improvement requires money. Scrapping or de-scoping WFIRST could further delay humanity's dream to spot life on other planets.

**Read full, original post:** [Telescope Drama Could Thwart the Hunt for Extraterrestrial Life](#)