



Vera C. Rubin Observatory  
Rubin Observatory Document

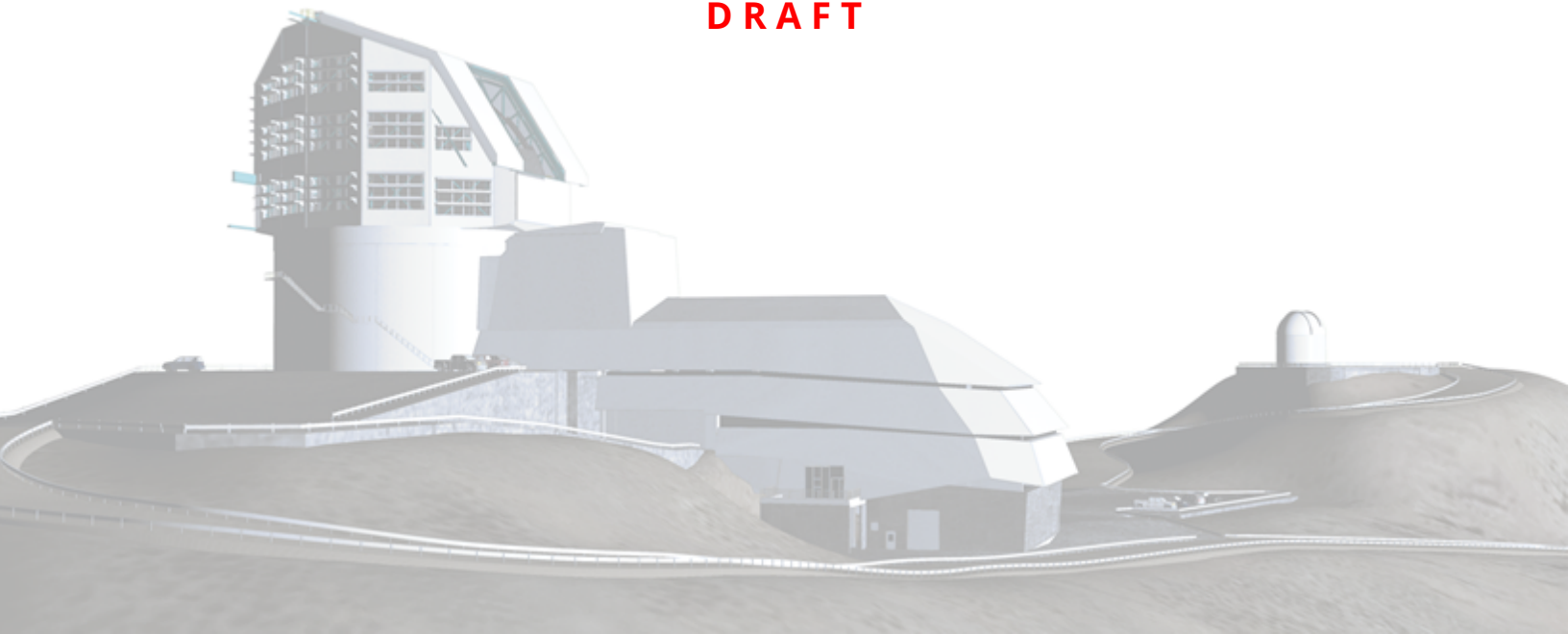
# Strategic Media Plan for Rubin Observatory First Light Release

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**DRAFT**



## Abstract

This plan is focused solely on the activities and products needed to produce significant media impact for the first image release from the newly completed Vera C. Rubin Observatory (Rubin). Compared with all the excellent preparatory work done earlier, this is a very narrow focus. The aim is to produce a succinct strategic plan which is no more than 30 pages long.

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# Strategic Media Plan for Rubin Observatory First Light Release

## 1 Context, Goals and Stakeholders for Rubin First Look (RFL) Public Announcement

- - Rubin's mission
- - RFL goals and high-level strategy for achieving them ... see section 2
- - RFL stakeholders see ??
- - intended audiences
- - caveat: this is only about RFL, not post-RFL

### 1.1 Audiences

The FL audiences are listed here in order of priority.

1. News media, national and international — engaged through communications products
2. Funding stakeholders and decision makers from the Congress and federal agencies (NSF and DOE)
3. Broad public, the science and technology-attentive public — engaged through media, websites, social media
4. Potential Rubin users and citizen scientists, educators

### 1.2 Approval process for communications products

An approval process that is efficient but complete will allow all products to be created in a timely fashion. All written and visual FL communications products will be approved following the standard process established for the momentum-building background science press releases.

## 2 Goals, design details and list of RFL products

- - key high-level messages
- - images and image-based products (only non-embargoed details)
- - additional products for varying audiences (e.g. self-contained press kit for media)

The FL images, and accompanying messages are designed to make a huge splash, with broad coverage.

They will show capability and promise for early science in a manner that deeply engages the public and encourages interest for subsequent early science releases.

They will connect familiar phenomena with the unfamiliar Rubin capabilities and create a *wow!*-effect.

The goals of the FL campaign are listed here in order of priority<sup>1</sup>.

1. Capture a high level of media attention (among mainstream media including Chilean media, as well as astronomy-focused media)
  - (a) Objective #1: Rubin images are featured “above the fold” in a major US newspaper
  - (b) Objective #2: Rubin images are featured “above the fold” in a major Chilean newspaper
  - (c) Objective #3: At least one viral post (viral = more than XXX reposts)
2. Demonstrate Rubin’s unique, substantial, and awe-inspiring science potential to the world
  - (a) Objective #1: Bob’s parents’ neighbors have heard of Rubin Observatory the day after release of first light images
  - (b) Objective #2: Media stories are still regularly being written about Rubin 6 months after release of first light images
3. Acknowledge funding organizations whose contributions made Rubin Observatory a reality

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<sup>1</sup>These are a focused subset of the RCOC goals focusing on the FL media release.

- (a) Objective #1: Funding agencies sufficiently acknowledged for their support within FL media products
- (b) Objective #2: Funding agencies credited by media

## 2.1 Main Messages about First Light and First Images

The following messages are about FL only, not Rubin in general.

The messages will adhere to the following principles:

1. Messages should focus on why this should be above the NYT fold
2. No jargon (like “system”)
3. Messages should make things as easy as possible for media (sound bites)
4. Include “familiar equivalences” that people can understand (e.g., DKIST sees solar structure the size of Texas and even the island of Manhattan)
5. Use a single name to refer to the observatory, camera and survey. Initial: NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory thereafter Rubin.
6. Refer to other names (LSST Camera, Simonyi Survey Telescope) ONLY when necessary, preferably only in the “about” section after the main release).

Primary Messages about First Images (no more than 3 maximum; short and punchy)

- This image demonstrates a new way of studying the sky...
- Key science from this image will be ....
- Today's images are just the beginning. This is a first look ...

Secondary Messages about First Images and Rubin more generally

- Rubin Observatory is a major feat of engineering

- Rubin Observatory uses innovative optics
- Rubin Observatory named after Vera C. Rubin.
- Strong role for citizen science ...
- Educational materials are ready and available in both English and Spanish
- Built by a large collection of people
- Public-private partnership

### 3 The strategy for media engagement

- - momentum building prior to RFL event
- - media engagement prior to RFL event
- - press conference
- - social networks
- - interviews
- - web presence
- - supporting hub events
- - metrics for measuring success

#### 3.1 First Light Communication Channels

Channels under our control:

- Expert interviews
- Media visits
- Press releases



- AURA/Rubin/NOIRLab/NSF/SLAC/DOE social media incl. for live streaming of the main press conference
- AURA/Rubin/NOIRLab/NSF/SLAC/DOE websites
- Auxiliary channels such as Reddit, Ted Talks etc.

*External channels:*

- Print Media - general public - newspapers, websites, etc.
- Broadcast media
- Social media
- Scientific trade publications (Sky & Telescope, Scientific American etc.)

### 3.2 Momentum-building

Momentum building activities are important to build a following of people interested in the Rubin Observatory before the first light images are released. These activities also include educating the media and the public about the scientific goals of Rubin and its amazing technical achievements.

Some momentum building activities include:

1. Press releases
  - (a) Topical press releases focusing on the various science areas and featuring prominent Rubin scientists
  - (b) Organizational press releases focusing on construction milestones
2. AAS 2025
  - (a) Exhibits and interviews at winter AAS January 2025
  - (b) Exhibits and interviews at summer AAS June 2025
  - (c) General ramp-up of (reactive) ongoing in-person Media visits to the summit.

## 4 Team Organization, Roles & Responsibilities, Schedule

- - RCOC
- - SFLcg
- - 3 WGs
- - decision making and approval process

Key stakeholders NSF, DOE, AURA, SLAC, NOIRLab, LSSTC, and AURA-O.

The following committees are relevant to the FL release (with leads and goals):

- Rubin Celebration Organizing Committee (RCOC):
  - An overarching committee designed to assure input from all key stakeholders, and progress reporting to all stakeholders, in the context of both FL release and two dedication ceremonies (the Simonyi Survey Telescope naming ceremony and the Rubin Observatory dedication ceremony)
- System First Light Coordination Group (SFLcg), Zeljko Ivezic: the work is organized in three principal working groups, charged to design the FL content, produce it, package it for distribution, and distribute it to media and public:
  - Images WG, Steve Ritz: planning the observing strategy and processing for the FL images
  - Communications WG, Ranpal Gill
  - EPO WG, Alan Strauss/Kristen Metzger
  - SFLcg is charged to coordinate the work of these three WGs, track their progress, and report it back to the RCOC.

These committees include staff from the Rubin Construction Project, Rubin Operations, representation from all stakeholders, and include experts from AURA HQ and NOIRLab's CEE with relevant experience and expertise.

## 5 Links to detailed implementation documents

- - detailed projectized deliverable list and schedule for each WG
- - (embargoed) SFL data taking and data processing plans
- - press kit contents (including Rubin background info and main science drivers)
- - press conference organization
- - media engagement details
- - social networks strategy
- - website and other support on the day of RFL event
- - etc...

### 5.1 Spokespeople Preparation

Document: Rubin FL Media Training

It is essential to provide media training for all people who will be identified for interviews. Even if they have previous experience with the media, this training will inform them of Rubin specific messaging and topics to avoid.

1. Media training for Rubin spokespeople
2. Rubin slide deck for spokespeople and general members of the scientific community
3. Main messages and talking points

### 5.2 Social Media Campaign

Document: Social Media Strategy for First Light

In the lead up to the FL image release it is important to build and engage with the social media audience. Many of our stakeholders are active in social media in addition to consuming

traditional and new media. A campaign that tells the story of Rubin and the science it will do will get our audience excited for the FL images. A brainstorming session to create the strategy and story will be planned. Some elements include:

1. Strategy for lead up to FL press release
2. Images
3. Text - alt and main
4. Graphics
5. Videos
6. Outreach to influencers

### 5.3 Media Engagement

Engaging with the media early and often will help ensure a successful First Light images release. The goal is to make it easy for the media to gain access to “behind the scenes” information that they can use in their stories. Virtual tours and Q&A panels are a way to include those members of the media who can’t travel to the observatory in Chile. These events will also build relationships between the communications team and the media for future coverage of the observatory.

The process can be similar to NASA’s media engagement. A call to the media can be sent out via email and on social media one week before the event. Those who want to attend the tour via zoom or telephone and ask questions will need to register in advance. Those who don’t register can still view the tour via YouTube or FaceBook.

Some possible events include:

1. Virtual media tours
2. Social media days
3. Proactive in-person group media visits to the summit arranged in preselected slots with a curated experience

4. Virtual panels for Rubin Q&A
  - (a) Who: Rubin user/scientist, Rubin engineer, Rubin comms person
  - (b) Why: opportunity to ask general questions

## 5.4 General Press Kit about Rubin Observatory

Document: Rubin Media Kit Design Doc

A Rubin Press Kit is essential and is required ASAP. Its purpose is to inform the media about Rubin Observatory and provide them with all the material they need to easily write stories and social media posts about Rubin, and ultimately about the FL images. The goal of the Press Kit is to make the media's job covering Rubin as easy as possible.

Many publications no longer have dedicated science writers, so the information in the Rubin Press Kit must be ready for them to use "as is" and should be written for a non-science audience. That means the text should be free of jargon, and all science concepts must be explained. In addition, readily understandable comparisons or equivalencies are strongly recommended for the media who will be creating content for general audiences (e.g., one cell on the Sun is the size of Texas; one Rubin image is the size of 45 full moons).

The Press Kit will be a single document in PDF format.

## 5.5 First Light Press Package Components

The press package for the FL image release must be complete and easily accessible by media. The press package, along with the press kit, should provide the media covering Rubin First Light with everything they need for both traditional and social media products.

NOTE — all web servers must be prepared to accommodate high traffic.

First Light Press Package Contents The contents of the first light press release package is listed below. Also a mock-up can be seen in [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1g1XEtyx2\\_pgpcLC2sSWYDe6memaTYsjEaLmI6X6DzfiU/edit#slide=id.p](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1g1XEtyx2_pgpcLC2sSWYDe6memaTYsjEaLmI6X6DzfiU/edit#slide=id.p)this slide deck.

1. Press release copy text
2. Images (in multiple formats)
3. Videos (in multiple formats, incl. fulldome)
  - (a) Zooms
  - (b) Pans
  - (c) Dynamic videos (for instance RR Lyrae variables<sup>2</sup>)
  - (d) Video explainer, e.g.
    - i. #SLAC-Explains
    - ii. CosmoView
    - iii. Reels
4. Image captions
5. Alt text
6. Video captions
7. Curated social-media-ready assets (graphics prepared for each platform, hashtags, etc)
8. Background photos and videos.
  - (a) Three archives of high-end background images and videos have been set up
  - (b) Also, it will be planned to have photographers on site to document the weeks of the FL observations.
9. Contact list of media-trained cadre of scientists and engineers for interviews on specific topics
10. Links to
  - (a) Background image and video galleries (well organized with multiple resolutions) with explainer videos, scientist interviews, SLAC camera videos etc.:
    - i. Rubinobs.org (<https://rubin.canto.com/v/gallery/album/HDSNU?display=curatedView&viewIn> 2)
    - ii. NOIRLab.org (image archive, video archive)
    - iii. Slac

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<sup>2</sup>Example: <https://www.eso.org/public/videos/eso1636a/>

- (b) “About Rubin” press kit PDF (see above)
- (c) Sonification product
- (d) Data in the Rubin science archive

## 5.6 First Light Embargo policy

Following the Information Sharing during Commissioning Bechtol & on behalf of the Rubin Observatory Project Science Team (SITCOMTN-076).

To ensure the confidentiality and integrity of sensitive information within our collaboration prior to the official public FL release, the following embargo policy is in effect.

All AURA and SLAC staff as well as Rubin community members working on observations, data management, EPO, communications etc. shall adhere to the following rules of confidentiality.

All specific information about FL imaging products is deemed confidential until the embargo expires at the time of the FL press release. Specific information about FL images and targets can only be shared with the people involved in the FL campaign. Nothing specific about FL shall be shared outside, including on social media. General information about FL can be shared with the community, for instance at PCW. E.g. “The First Light observations will be taken over a 3-week period currently slated to start x March 2025. Several targets will be observed depending on their visibility at the time of observation, and their suitability to demonstrate various aspects of Rubin Observatory. Several committees consisting of experts are working on different aspects of First Light, in order to maximize the press and social media visibility.”

The Rubin Construction Director will maintain the list of personnel with access. A subset of staff working on the press release images will be the only ones who are granted access to image products.

Access to embargoed information is limited to essential personnel only. Secure methods for sharing information will be applied (e.g., encrypted emails, access controlled documents etc). All embargoed documents and images will be marked with “CONFIDENTIAL”.

Embargoed information shall not be printed unless absolutely necessary. Any printed mate-

rials shall be stored in locked and secure locations. Printed materials should be disposed via secure shredding methods after the embargo period.

All media inquiries should be directed to the designated media liaisons. No staff or community members shall provide comments or information about FL to colleagues or to the media before the embargo lift date.

All suspected or actual breaches of this policy should be immediately reported to Rubin Construction Director. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary actions, including termination of access to the FL project.

The Rubin Construction Director is responsible for enforcing this policy and ensuring compliance.

Exceptions to this policy can only be granted by the Rubin Construction Director in writing and after informing the SFLcg.

## A References

[SITCOMTN-076], Bechtol, K., on behalf of the Rubin Observatory Project Science Team, S.R., 2024, Information Sharing during Commissioning, URL <https://sitcomtn-076.lsst.io/>, Vera C. Rubin Observatory Commissioning Technical Note SITCOMTN-076

## B Acronyms

Acronym	Description
AAS	American Astronomical Society
ASAP	As Soon As Possible
AURA	Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy
CEE	Communications, Education, and Engagement
DKIST	Daniel K. Inouye Solar Telescope



DOE	Department of Energy
EPO	Education and Public Outreach
HQ	Head Quarters
LSST	Legacy Survey of Space and Time (formerly Large Synoptic Survey Telescope)
LSSTC	LSST Corporation
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NOIRLab	NSF's National Optical-Infrared Astronomy Research Laboratory; <a href="https://noirlab.edu">https://noirlab.edu</a>
NSF	National Science Foundation
NYT	New York Times
OPS	Operations
PCW	Project Community Workshop
PDF	Portable Document Format
RCOC	Rubin Celebration Organizing Committee
RTN	Rubin Technical Note
SLAC	SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory
US	United States
WG	Working Group