

The Japanese Space Gravitational Wave Antenna; DECIGO

Seiji Kawamura¹, Masaki Ando², Takashi Nakamura³, Kimio Tsubono²,
Takahiro Tanaka³, Ikkoh Funaki⁴, Naoki Seto¹, Kenji Numata⁵, Shuichi Sato¹,
Kunihito Ioka⁶, Nobuyuki Kanda⁷, Takeshi Takashima⁴, Kazuhiro Agatsuma²,
Tomotada Akutsu², Tomomi Akutsu², Koh-suke Aoyanagi⁸, Koji Arai¹, Yuta
Arase², Akito Araya⁹, Hideki Asada¹⁰, Yoichi Aso¹¹, Takeshi Chiba¹², Toshikazu
Ebisuzaki¹³, Motohiro Enoki¹⁴, Yoshiharu Eriguchi¹⁵, Masa-Katsu Fujimoto¹,
Ryuichi Fujita¹⁶, Mitsuhiro Fukushima¹, Toshifumi Futamase¹⁷, Katsuhiko
Ganzu³, Tomohiro Harada¹⁸, Tatsuaki Hashimoto⁴, Kazuhiro Hayama¹⁹, Wataru
Hikida¹⁶, Yoshiaki Himemoto²⁰, Hisashi Hirabayashi²¹, Takashi Hiramatsu²,
Feng-Lei Hong²², Hideyuki Horisawa²³, Mizuhiko Hosokawa²⁴, Kiyotomo Ichiki²,
Takeshi Ikegami²², Kaiki T. Inoue²⁵, Koji Ishidoshiro², Hideki Ishihara⁷,
Takehiko Ishikawa²⁶, Hideharu Ishizaki¹, Hiroyuki Ito²⁴, Yousuke Itoh²⁷, Shogo
Kamagasako², Nobuki Kawashima²⁵, Fumiko Kawazoe²⁸, Hiroyuki Kirihara²,
Naoko Kishimoto⁴, Kenta Kiuchi⁸, Shiho Kobayashi²⁹, Kazunori Kohri³⁰,
Hiroyuki Koizumi², Yasufumi Kojima³¹, Keiko Kokeyama²⁸, Wataru
Kokuyama², Kei Kotake¹, Yoshihide Kozai³², Hideaki Kudoh², Hiroo Kunimori³³,
Hitoshi Kuninaka⁴, Kazuaki Kuroda³⁴, Kei-ichi Maeda⁸, Hideo Matsuhara⁴,
Yasushi Mino³⁵, Osamu Miyakawa³⁵, Shinji Miyoki³⁴, Mutsuko Y. Morimoto⁴,
Tomoko Morioka², Toshiyuki Morisawa³, Shigenori Moriwaki³⁶, Shinji
Mukohyama², Mitsuru Musha³⁷, Shigeo Nagano²⁴, Isao Naito³⁸, Noriyasu
Nakagawa², Kouji Nakamura¹, Hiroyuki Nakano³⁹, Kenichi Nakao⁷, Shinichi
Nakasuka², Yoshinori Nakayama⁴⁰, Erina Nishida²⁸, Kazutaka Nishiyama⁴,
Atsushi Nishizawa⁴¹, Yoshito Niwa⁴¹, Masatake Ohashi³⁴, Naoko Ohishi¹, Masashi
Ohkawa⁴², Akira Okutomi², Kouji Onozato², Kenichi Oohara⁴², Norichika Sago⁴³,
Motoyuki Saijo⁴³, Masaaki Sakagami⁴¹, Shin-ichiro Sakai⁴, Shihori Sakata²⁸,
Misao Sasaki⁴⁴, Takashi Sato⁴², Masaru Shibata¹⁵, Hisaaki Shinkai⁴⁵, Kentaro
Somiya⁴⁶, Hajime Sotani⁴⁷, Naoshi Sugiyama⁴⁸, Yudai Suwa², Hideyuki Tagoshi¹⁶,
Kakeru Takahashi², Keitaro Takahashi⁴⁴, Tadayuki Takahashi⁴, Hirotaka
Takahashi⁴⁹, Ryuichi Takahashi⁴⁸, Ryutarō Takahashi¹, Akiteru Takamori⁹,
Tadashi Takano⁴, Keisuke Taniguchi⁵⁰, Atsushi Taruya², Hiroyuki Tashiro³,
Mitsuru Tokuda⁷, Masao Tokunari², Morio Toyoshima²⁴, Shinji Tsujikawa⁵¹,
Yoshiki Tsunesada⁵², Ken-ichi Ueda³⁷, Masayoshi Utashima⁵³, Hiroshi
Yamakawa⁵⁴, Kazuhiro Yamamoto¹, Toshitaka Yamazaki¹, Jun'ichi Yokoyama²,
Chul-Moon Yoo⁴⁴, Shijun Yoshida¹⁷, Taizoh Yoshino⁵⁵

¹ National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, Mitaka, Tokyo, 181-8588, Japan

² The University of Tokyo, Bunkyo, Tokyo, 113-0033, Japan

³ Kyoto University, Kyoto, Kyoto, 606-8502, Japan

⁴ Institute of Space and Astronautical Science, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, Sagami-hara, Kanagawa, 229-8510, Japan

⁵ NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, MD 20771, USA

⁶ High Energy Accelerator Research Organization, Tsukuba, Ibaraki, 305-0801, Japan

- ⁷ Osaka City University, Osaka, Osaka, 558-8585, Japan
- ⁸ Waseda University, Shinjuku, Tokyo, 169-8555, Japan
- ⁹ Earthquake Research Institute, The University of Tokyo, Bunkyo, Tokyo, 113-0032, Japan
- ¹⁰ Hirosaki University, Hirosaki, Aomori, 036-8560, Japan
- ¹¹ Columbia University, New York, NY 10027, USA
- ¹² Nihon University, Setagaya, Tokyo, 156-8550, Japan
- ¹³ RIKEN, Wako, Saitama, 351-0198, Japan
- ¹⁴ Tokyo Keizai University, Kokubunji, Tokyo, 185-8502, Japan
- ¹⁵ The University of Tokyo, Meguro, Tokyo, 153-8902, Japan
- ¹⁶ Osaka University, Toyonaka, Osaka, 560-0043, Japan
- ¹⁷ Tohoku University, Sendai, Miyagi, 980-8578, Japan
- ¹⁸ Rikkyo University, Toshima, Tokyo, 171-8501, Japan
- ¹⁹ University of Texas, Brownsville, Texas, 78520, USA
- ²⁰ Shibaura Institute of Technology, Saitama, Saitama, 337-8570, Japan
- ²¹ Space Educations Center, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, Sagami-hara, Kanagawa, 229-8510, Japan
- ²² National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, Tsukuba, Ibaraki, 305-8563, Japan
- ²³ Tokai University, Hiratsuka, Kanagawa, 259-1292, Japan
- ²⁴ National Institute of Information and Communications Technology, Koganei, Tokyo, 184-8795, Japan
- ²⁵ Kinki University, Higashi-Osaka, Osaka, 577-8502, Japan
- ²⁶ Institute of Space and Astronautical Science, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, Tsukuba, Ibaraki, 305-8505, Japan
- ²⁷ University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI 53201-0413, USA
- ²⁸ Ochanomizu University, Bunkyo, Tokyo, 112-8610, Japan
- ²⁹ Astrophysics Research Institute, Liverpool John Moores University, Egerton Wharf, Birkenhead L41 1LD, UK
- ³⁰ Lancaster University, LA1 4YB, UK
- ³¹ Hiroshima University, Higashi-hiroshima, Hiroshima, 739-8526, Japan
- ³² Gunma Astronomical Observatory, Agatsuma, Gunma, 377-0702, Japan
- ³³ National Institute of Information and Communications Technology, Bunkyo, Tokyo, 113-0001, Japan
- ³⁴ Institute for Cosmic Ray Research, The University of Tokyo, Kashiwa, Chiba, 277-8582, Japan
- ³⁵ California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, CA 91125, USA
- ³⁶ The University of Tokyo, Kashiwa, Chiba, 277-8561, Japan
- ³⁷ Institute for Laser Science, The University of Electro-Communications, Chofu, Tokyo, 182-8585, Japan
- ³⁸ Numakage, Saitama, Saitama, 336-0027, Japan
- ³⁹ Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY 14623, USA
- ⁴⁰ National Defense Academy, Yokosuka, Kanagawa, 239-8686, Japan
- ⁴¹ Kyoto University, Kyoto, Kyoto, 606-8501, Japan
- ⁴² Niigata University, Niigata, Niigata, 950-2181, Japan
- ⁴³ University of Southampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, UK
- ⁴⁴ Yukawa Institute for Theoretical Physics, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Kyoto, 606-8502, Japan
- ⁴⁵ Osaka Institute of Technology, Hirakata, Osaka, 573-0196, Japan
- ⁴⁶ Albert Einstein Institute, Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics, D-14476 Potsdam, Germany

- ⁴⁷ Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, 54124, Greece
⁴⁸ Nagoya University, Nagoya, Aichi, 464-8602, Japan
⁴⁹ Nagaoka University of Technology, Nagaoka, Niigata, 940-2188, Japan
⁵⁰ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL 61801, USA
⁵¹ Gunma National College of Technology, Maebashi, Gunma, 371-8530, Japan
⁵² Tokyo Institute of Technology, Ookayama, Meguro-ku, Tokyo, 152-8550, Japan
⁵³ Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, Tsukuba, Ibaraki, 305-8505, Japan
⁵⁴ Research Institute for Sustainable Humanosphere, Kyoto University, Uji, Kyoto, 611-0011
⁵⁵ Nakamura-minami, Nerima, Tokyo, 176-0025, Japan
* Paper presented at the conference by Seiji Kawamura

E-mail address: seiji.kawamura@nao.ac.jp

Abstract. DECI-hertz Interferometer Gravitational wave Observatory (DECIGO) is the future Japanese space gravitational wave antenna. DECIGO is expected to open a new window of observation for gravitational wave astronomy especially between 0.1 Hz and 10 Hz, revealing various mysteries of the universe such as dark energy, formation mechanism of supermassive black holes, and inflation of the universe. The pre-conceptual design of DECIGO consists of three drag-free spacecraft, whose relative displacements are measured by a differential Fabry–Perot Michelson interferometer. We plan to launch two missions, DECIGO pathfinder and pre-DECIGO first and finally DECIGO in 2024.

1. Space gravitational wave antenna DECIGO

DECIGO is the future Japanese space gravitational wave antenna. It stands for DECI-hertz Interferometer Gravitational wave Observatory [1][2]. The objectives of DECIGO are to detect gravitational waves from various kinds of sources mainly between 0.1 Hz and 10 Hz and open a new window of observation for gravitational wave astronomy.

DECIGO will bridge the frequency gap between LISA [3] and terrestrial detectors such as LCGT [4]. It can play a role of follow-up for LISA by observing inspiral sources that have moved above the LISA band, and can also play a role of predictor for terrestrial detectors by observing inspiral sources that have not yet moved into the terrestrial detector band.

DECIGO can reach an extremely good sensitivity. This is because the confusion limiting noise caused by irresolvable gravitational wave signals from many compact binaries is expected to be very low above 0.1 Hz [5].

2. Pre-conceptual design of DECIGO

As shown in Fig. 1, the pre-conceptual design of DECIGO consists of three drag-free spacecraft, whose relative displacements are measured by a differential Fabry–Perot (FP) Michelson interferometer. The arm length was chosen to be 1,000 km in order to realize a finesse of 10 with a 1 m diameter mirror and 0.5 μm laser light. The mass of the mirror is 100 kg and the laser power is 10 W. Three sets of such interferometers sharing the mirrors as arm cavities comprise one cluster of DECIGO. The constellation of DECIGO is composed of four clusters of DECIGO located separately in the heliocentric orbit with two of them nearly at the same position.

The FP configuration requires the distance between two mirrors, thus, the distance between two spacecraft to be constant during continuous operations. This makes DECIGO very different from a possible counterpart with the transponder-type detector (e.g. LISA), where the spacecraft, which are much farther apart, are freely falling according to their local gravitational field. We adopted the FP configuration because it can provide a better shot-noise-limited sensitivity than the transponder configuration due to the enhanced gravitational wave signals.

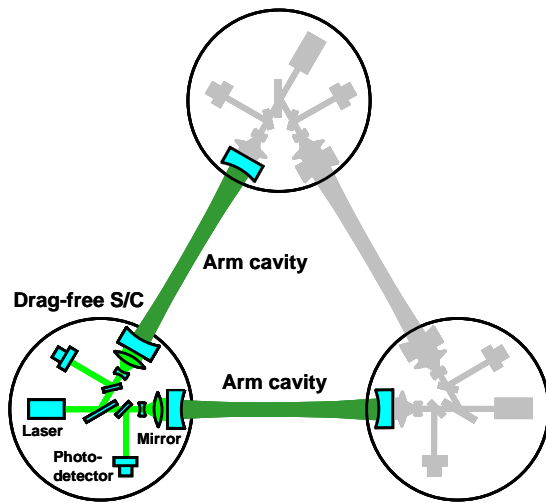


Fig. 1. Pre-conceptual design of DECIGO.

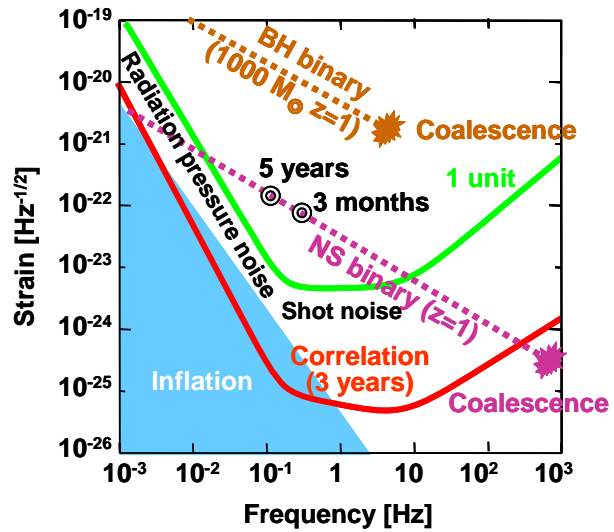


Fig. 2. Sensitivity goal of DECIGO and expected gravitational wave signals.

The FP configuration requires an additional system beyond that of an ordinary drag-free system. In the ordinary drag-free system, the outer spacecraft simply follows the motion of the mirror inside. However, in the FP configuration, the distance between the mirrors should be kept constant, which requires that one of the two mirrors should be controlled with the other mirror as a reference. As a result, the reference mirror dictates the motion of the other mirror by the FP interferometer control system as well as both spacecraft by the drag-free control system. It should be also noted that the FP interferometer control signals, which include gravitational wave signals, are not contaminated by the noisy drag-free control signals.

The lock acquisition of the FP arm cavity is a challenging task. In a ground-based interferometer, the relative motion of the two mirrors of a cavity is small enough to acquire lock of the cavity without much difficulty because the suspension systems of the mirrors are virtually connected to the ground at zero frequency. However, the relative motion of the two spacecraft in space is expected to be much higher. Therefore, we need an additional system that detects the relative motion of the mirrors, and gradually reduces it by actuating the mirrors. Once the relative motion of the mirrors is suppressed well enough, the lock acquisition of the FP cavity will be straightforward.

3. Sensitivity goal of DECIGO and science obtained by DECIGO

The ideal sensitivity of DECIGO is limited only by quantum noise, as shown in Fig. 2. The sensitivity is limited by the radiation pressure noise below 0.15 Hz, and it has an f^{-2} frequency dependence. The shot noise limits the sensitivity above 0.15 Hz. It is flat up to 7.5 Hz, and above 7.5 Hz it increases in proportion with frequency because of the signal cancellation in the arm cavities.

In order to realize the sensitivity goal of DECIGO, all the practical noise should be suppressed well below this level. This imposes stringent requirements for the subsystems of DECIGO. We anticipate that extremely rigorous investigations are required to attain the requirements especially in the acceleration noise and frequency noise.

Nevertheless, accomplishing the sensitivity goal of DECIGO will ensure a variety of fruitful sciences to be obtained.

(1) Characterization of dark energy

DECIGO can detect gravitational waves coming from neutron star binaries at $z=1$ for five years prior to coalescences. It is expected that within this range about 7,000 neutron star binaries will coalesce every year. Therefore, DECIGO will detect gravitational waves coming from a large number

of neutron star binaries at the same time. By analyzing the waveforms of these gravitational wave signals precisely, it is possible to determine the acceleration of the expansion of the universe [1]. The acceleration of the expansion of the universe can be also measured by finding host galaxies of each binary and determining their red shifts optically [6]. This will lead to better characterization of dark energy.

(2) Formation mechanism of supermassive black holes in the center of galaxies

DECIGO can detect gravitational waves coming from coalescences of intermediate-mass black hole binaries with an extremely high fidelity. For example the coalescences of black hole binaries of 1,000 solar masses at $z=1$ give a signal to noise ratio of 6,000. This will make it possible to collect numerous data about the relationship between the mass of the black holes and the frequency of the coalescences, which will reveal the formation mechanism of supermassive black holes in the center of galaxies.

(3) Verification and characterization of inflation

DECIGO can detect stochastic background corresponding to $\Omega_{\text{GW}}=2\times 10^{-16}$ by correlating the data from the two clusters of DECIGO for three years. According to the standard inflation model, it is expected that we could detect gravitational waves produced at the inflation period of the universe with DECIGO. This is extremely significant because gravitational waves are the only means which make it possible to directly observe the inflation of the universe.

While the inflation background is the primary target for the correlation analysis with the two clusters, it would be important to carefully design the system so that we can disclose various aspects of stochastic gravitational wave backgrounds. One of the interesting measures from fundamental physics is the Stokes V parameter. This parameter characterizes the asymmetry of the amplitudes of the right- and left-handed waves, and it is a powerful measure to probe violation of parity symmetry that interchanges the two circular-polarization modes. By slightly adjusting the relative configuration of the two clusters, we can set sensitivity to the Stokes V parameter [7].

4. Roadmap to DECIGO

DECIGO pathfinder (DPF) and pre-DECIGO will be launched before DECIGO. DPF will test the key technologies with one spacecraft. We expect that it will be launched in 2012. Pre-DECIGO is supposed to detect gravitational waves with minimum specifications. We hope that it will be launched in 2018. Finally it is expected that DECIGO will be launched in 2024 to open a new window of observation for gravitational wave astronomy.

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