

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

FY 2012 Budget Request to Congress



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About the Cover

Microbe vs., Mineral — Life and Death Struggle in the Desert

Credit: Michael P. Zach, University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point

Although the bursts of rainbow colors in this photograph are mesmerizing, microbes fight for their lives in the background. Chemist Michael P. Zach of the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, snapped this image of a salt sample he collected in a hot, arid valley near Death Valley National Park in California. He crushed the salt, placed it under a microscope slide and added a drop of water. Suddenly, a slew of microbes came to life as the salt crystals dissolved. Then when the water started evaporating, he took a picture. The colors come from light passing through the growing crystals, which act like prisms. This image received an Honorable Mention in the 2009 International Science and Engineering Visualization Challenge sponsored by NSF and the journal *Science*.

For more information see: www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/scivis/winners_2009.jsp

