



14110 - Characterizing the atmosphere of the enlarged Neptune-mass planet HAT-P-26b

Cycle: 23, Proposal Category: GO
(Availability Mode: AVAILABLE)

INVESTIGATORS

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VISITS

<i>Visit</i>	<i>Targets used in Visit</i>	<i>Configurations used in Visit</i>	<i>Orbits Used</i>	<i>Last Orbit Planner Run</i>	<i>OP Current with Visit?</i>
01	(1) HAT-P-26 CCDFLAT NONE WAVE	STIS/CCD	5	27-Apr-2016 21:03:22.0	yes
02	(1) HAT-P-26	WFC3/IR	5	27-Apr-2016 21:03:58.0	yes

10 Total Orbits Used

ABSTRACT

Using transits to obtain transmission spectra is a powerful technique to enable detailed studies of exoplanet atmospheres. The Neptune-mass exoplanet HAT-P-26b is one of a small handful of low-mass planets currently accessible to atmospheric measurements. As a large-radius Neptune-mass planet, the planet's low bulk density indicates it must have a substantial atmosphere, with a high hydrogen fraction likely. The atmosphere could have arisen from many different sources resulting in a wide range of possibilities, including ones dominated by hydrogen or heavier species such as water. As the measured mass and radius of a planet do not uniquely specify the atmospheric composition, transmission spectroscopy is the only way to further characterize its chemical makeup. The HST observations proposed here will carry out these vital initial atmospheric observations, with a broad wavelength range covering optical to near-IR sensitive to the expected atmospheric features of water, methane, sodium, potassium, and Rayleigh scattering. With only one in five low-mass exoplanets probed with HST currently showing spectral features, HAT-P-26b is one of the best current candidates likely to have large signals given its large predicted hydrogen fraction. With both optical and near-IR spectra, these observations will measure the atmospheric scale height and definitively determine if the exoplanet has an atmosphere with substantial hydrogen, as predicted by thermal evolution models. HAT-P-26b represents a bridge between the featureless spectra observed in a number of the smaller sub-Neptune/super-Earth exoplanets, and the large-amplitude features observed in hot Jupiters.

OBSERVING DESCRIPTION

With only one in five low-mass exoplanets probed with HST currently showing spectral features, HAT-P-26b is one of the best current candidates likely to have large signals given its large predicted hydrogen fraction. The HST observations proposed here will carry out these vital initial atmospheric observations, with a broad wavelength range covering optical to near-IR sensitive to the expected atmospheric features of water, methane, sodium, potassium, and Rayleigh scattering.

Our immediate scientific objectives are to:

- Characterize the Neptune-mass exoplanet HAT-P-26b by directly measuring the atmospheric scale height, distinguishing between H and metal-rich compositions
- Test the hypothesis that enlarged low-mass exoplanets have H-rich atmospheres
- Identify the expected molecular species of H₂O and CH₄
- Search for optical Rayleigh scattering signatures of hazes or clouds

Our further strategic scientific aims are to:

- Constrain the abundances of H₂O and CH₄ searching for super-solar abundances
- Probe the alkali metal and CH₄ chemistry in a warm Neptune-mass planet

Observing Strategy

We will use the STIS spectrograph to cover the optical range sensitive to Rayleigh scattering and the alkali metals Na and K, as well as the WFC3 for near-IR coverage which is strongly sensitive to water and methane features. We will repeat our successful observing strategies in which we have now perfected very high S/N optical and near-IR transiting observations with HST (PI Sing: GO-12473, GO-11572, GO-11117; e.g. Sing et al. 2015, Wakeford et al. 2013). We propose to observe HAT-P-26b with both the STIS/G750L and WFC3/G141 during one transit each, each visit consisting of five consecutive orbits (10 total). The spirit of transit observations is to attempt to gather as many spectra as possible before, during, and after a transit event, with each image as identical as possible. As a transit observation consists of measuring a drop in stellar flux during the event, identical exposures are resistant to uncertainties in flat-fielding and very high photometric precisions are possible. The first orbit is expected to have systematically low flux, as consistently observed in previous STIS and WFC3 programs. This is due to telescope thermal relaxation, will likely not be utilized in our study, and is not included in our S/N calculations. This is a well-known phenomenon, and all other similar transiting HST programs over the past 14 years have adopted this strategy, which circumvents the un-correctable systematic errors in the first orbit. During a visit, two orbits will be used to determine the baseline flux, one before and one after transit, while two occur during the transit event.

Signal-To-Noise

STIS: We will use the STIS and G750L gratings to cover the wavelength range from 5500-10200 Ang and use the 52'x2' slit to minimize slit losses. As we have done for GO-12473, we will adopt exposure times close to 279 seconds, with a sub-array size of 128 for faster readout, which will give high S/N per image as well as sufficient time sampling of the HST orbital-phase trend such that it can be modeled and removed successfully. There will not be any gaps for buffer dumps. We used the ETC to calculate the count-rate and S/N levels for HAT-P-26b with the STIS G750L grating. While the ETC error budget is dominated by photon-noise, this error estimation is realistic, as the STIS instrument has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to produce near-Poisson limited high S/N photometric light-curves (see Sing et al. 2011, 2013, 2015). For each orbit, we will take 10 exposures of 279 seconds each, with 20 second overheads. For each exposure, S/N levels per resolution element of 400 at 7500 Ang are reached for the G750L.

WFC3: The visit using the WFC3/G141 will use the same observational strategy as our program GO-12473, which uses spacial scanning mode to dramatically increase observational overheads and obtain vastly higher S/N levels. During spacial scan mode, the telescope is slowly slewed in the cross-dispersion direction while the camera is exposing. The spectra become spread out over a large pixel area of the detector, providing very high S/N levels and vastly improved duty cycles. We will use exposure times close to 90 seconds, which give S/N levels between 1,414 to 1,233 per

resolution element between 1.15 to 1.65 μm . With overheads and using subarray readouts, 27 exposures can be taken during each orbit.

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----- Additional Comments -----

STIS visits use the G750L with

Wavecal=No, as in our previous similar programs such as GO 12473 and GO 11740, such that the duty cycle and photometric precision is maximised and the thermal breathing trends can be efficiently removed, which is only possible with an uninterrupted photometric time-series.

Also as in GO 12473, the other STIS settings are set to maximize counts and reduce readout time overheads.

CR-SPLIT=NO,

Gain=4,

Sizeaxis2=128.

Proposal 14110 - HAT-P-26 G750L (01) - Charaterizing the atmosphere of the enlarged Neptune-mass planet HAT-P-26b

Visit	Proposal 14110, HAT-P-26 G750L (01), completed Thu Apr 28 01:04:03 GMT 2016 Diagnostic Status: No Diagnostics Scientific Instruments: STIS/CCD Special Requirements: SCHED 50%; Period 4.234516 D AND ZERO-PHASE HJD2455304.65122 <i>Comments: HAT-P-26. G750L. STIS visit. It is essential that the five orbits be scheduled in a coninuous block, free of the SAA.</i>					
	Fixed Targets	#	Name	Target Coordinates	Targ. Coord. Corrections	Fluxes
(1)		HAT-P-26	RA: 14 12 37.5370 (213.1564042d) Dec: +04 03 36.13 (4.06004d) Equinox: J2000	Proper Motion RA: 39.1 mas/yr Proper Motion Dec: -144.3 mas/yr Epoch of Position: 2000	V=11.76	Reference Frame: ICRS
<i>Comments: This object was generated by the targetselector and retrieved from the SIMBAD database.</i> Extended=NO						

Proposal 14110 - HAT-P-26 G750L (01) - Charaterizing the atmosphere of the enlarged Neptune-mass planet HAT-P-26b

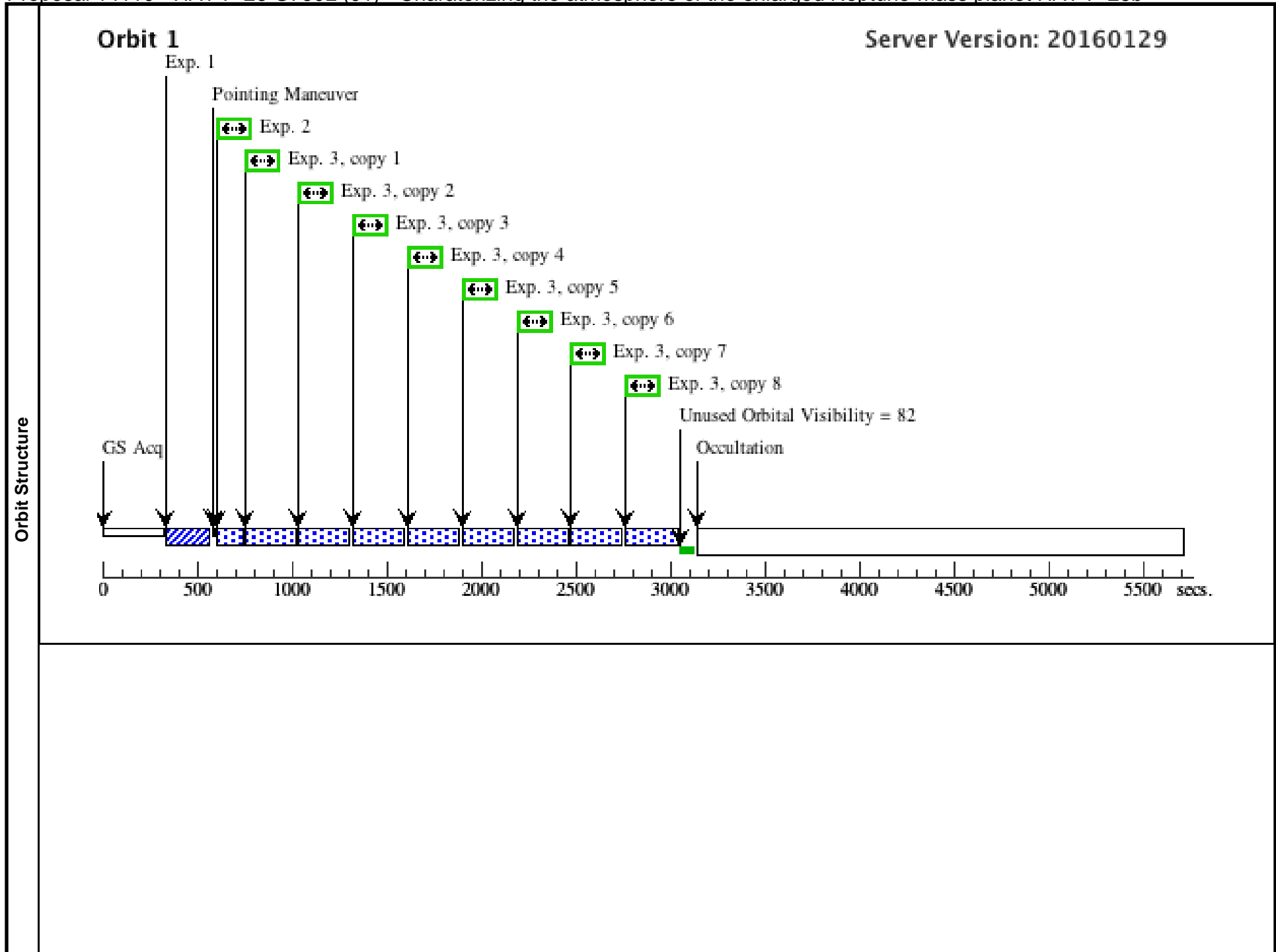
#	Label (ETC Run)	Target	Config,Mode,Aperture	Spectral Els.	Opt. Params.	Special Reqs.	Groups	Exp. Time (Total)/[Actual Dur.]	Orbit
Exposures	1	ACQ, phase constrained (STIS.im.72 0208)	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACQ, F28X50LP	MIRROR	GAIN=4	PHASE 0.9555 TO 0.9595; GS ACQ SCENARI O BASE1B3	1.5 Secs (1.5 Secs) [==>]	[1]
	2	HAT-P-26 G750L Orbit 1	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X2	G750L 7751 A	CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0; WAVECAL=NO		1 Secs (1 Secs) [==>]	[1]
	<i>Comments: Short exposure to minimize instrument systematic of first exposure in each orbit.</i>								
	3	HAT-P-26 G750L Orbit 1	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X2	G750L 7751 A	CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0; WAVECAL=NO		267 Secs X 8 (2136 Secs) [==>(Copy 1)] [==>(Copy 2)] [==>(Copy 3)] [==>(Copy 4)] [==>(Copy 5)] [==>(Copy 6)] [==>(Copy 7)] [==>(Copy 8)]	[1]
	4	HAT-P-26 G750L Orbit 2	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X2	G750L 7751 A	CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0; WAVECAL=NO		1 Secs (1 Secs) [==>]	[2]
	<i>Comments: Short exposure to minimize instrument systematic of first exposure in each orbit.</i>								
5	HAT-P-26 G750L Orbit 2	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X2	G750L 7751 A	CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0; WAVECAL=NO		267 Secs X 10 (2670 Secs) [==>(Copy 1)] [==>(Copy 2)] [==>(Copy 3)] [==>(Copy 4)] [==>(Copy 5)] [==>(Copy 6)] [==>(Copy 7)] [==>(Copy 8)] [==>(Copy 9)] [==>(Copy 10)]	[2]	
6	HAT-P-26 G750L Orbit 3	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X2	G750L 7751 A	CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0; WAVECAL=NO		1 Secs (1 Secs) [==>]	[3]	
<i>Comments: Short exposure to minimize instrument systematic of first exposure in each orbit.</i>									

Proposal 14110 - HAT-P-26 G750L (01) - Charaterizing the atmosphere of the enlarged Neptune-mass planet HAT-P-26b

7	HAT-P-26 G750L Orbit 3	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X2	G750L 7751 A	CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0; WAVECAL=NO	267 Secs X 10 (2670 Secs) [==>(Copy 1)] [==>(Copy 2)] [==>(Copy 3)] [==>(Copy 4)] [==>(Copy 5)] [==>(Copy 6)] [==>(Copy 7)] [==>(Copy 8)] [==>(Copy 9)] [==>(Copy 10)]	[3]
8	HAT-P-26 G750L Orbit 4	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X2	G750L 7751 A	CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0; WAVECAL=NO	1 Secs (1 Secs) [==>]	[4]
<i>Comments: Short exposure to minimize instrument systematic of first exposure in each orbit.</i>							
9	HAT-P-26 G750L Orbit 4	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X2	G750L 7751 A	CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0; WAVECAL=NO	267 Secs X 10 (2670 Secs) [==>(Copy 1)] [==>(Copy 2)] [==>(Copy 3)] [==>(Copy 4)] [==>(Copy 5)] [==>(Copy 6)] [==>(Copy 7)] [==>(Copy 8)] [==>(Copy 9)] [==>(Copy 10)]	[4]
10	HAT-P-26 G750L Orbit 5	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X2	G750L 7751 A	CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0; WAVECAL=NO	1 Secs (1 Secs) [==>]	[5]
<i>Comments: Short exposure to minimize instrument systematic of first exposure in each orbit.</i>							
11	HAT-P-26 G750L Orbit 5	(1) HAT-P-26	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X2	G750L 7751 A	CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0; WAVECAL=NO	267 Secs X 10 (2670 Secs) [==>(Copy 1)] [==>(Copy 2)] [==>(Copy 3)] [==>(Copy 4)] [==>(Copy 5)] [==>(Copy 6)] [==>(Copy 7)] [==>(Copy 8)] [==>(Copy 9)] [==>(Copy 10)]	[5]

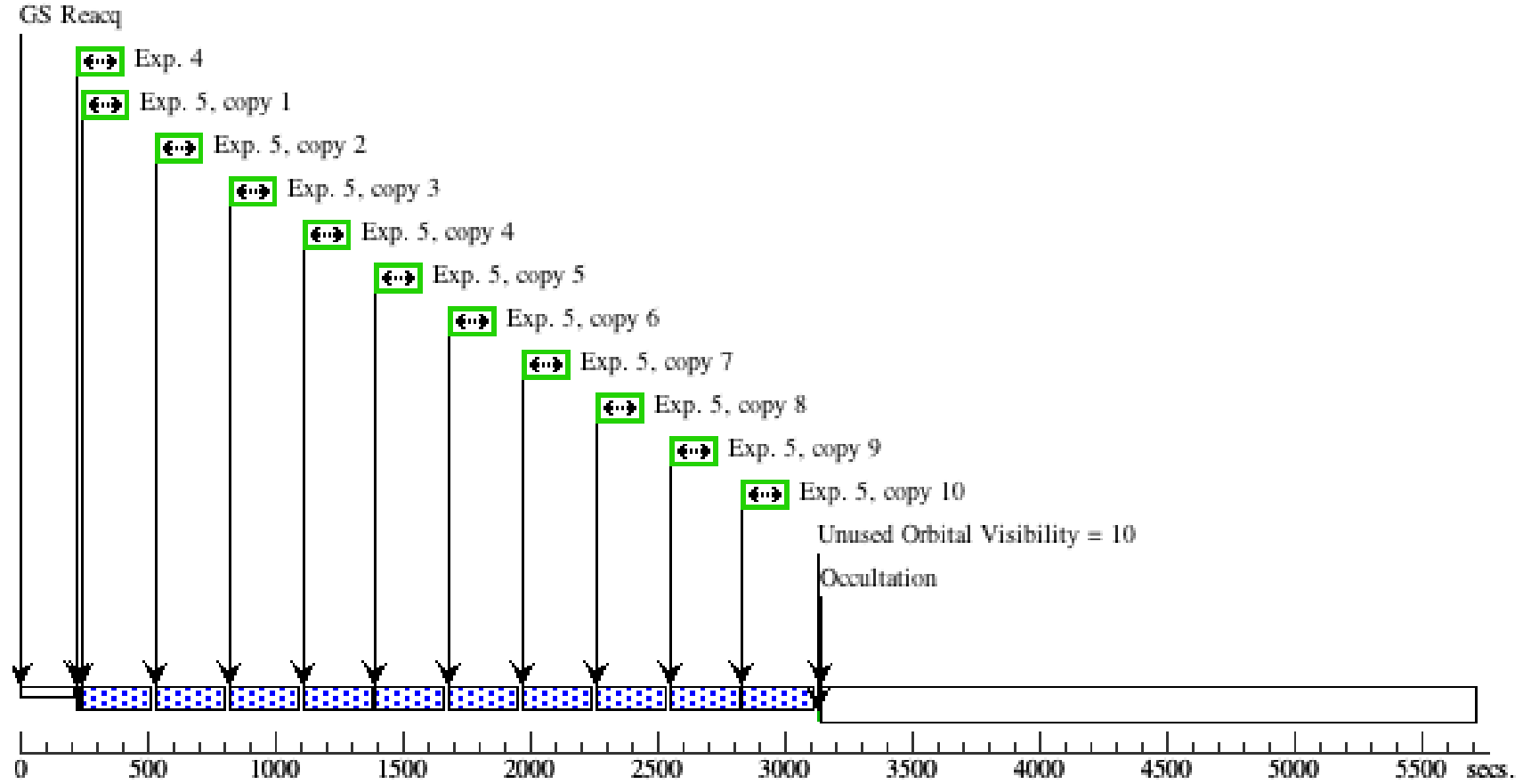
Proposal 14110 - HAT-P-26 G750L (01) - Charaterizing the atmosphere of the enlarged Neptune-mass planet HAT-P-26b

12	WAVE	WAVE	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 52X0.2	G750L 7751 A		[==>]	[5]
<i>Comments: Explicit WAVECAL, auto-waves disabled to increase duty cycle</i>							
13	Flat	CCDFLAT	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 0.3X0.09	G750L 7751 A		[==>(Copy 1)] [==>(Copy 2)]	[5]
14	Tungsten La mp	NONE	STIS/CCD, ACCUM, 0.3X0.09	G750L 7751 A	LAMP=TUNGSTE N; CR-SPLIT=NO; GAIN=4; SIZEAXIS2=128.0	240 Secs X 4 (960 Secs) [==>(Copy 1)] [==>(Copy 2)] [==>(Copy 3)] [==>(Copy 4)]	[5]
<i>Comments: Expected peak count level = 50,000 e-</i>							



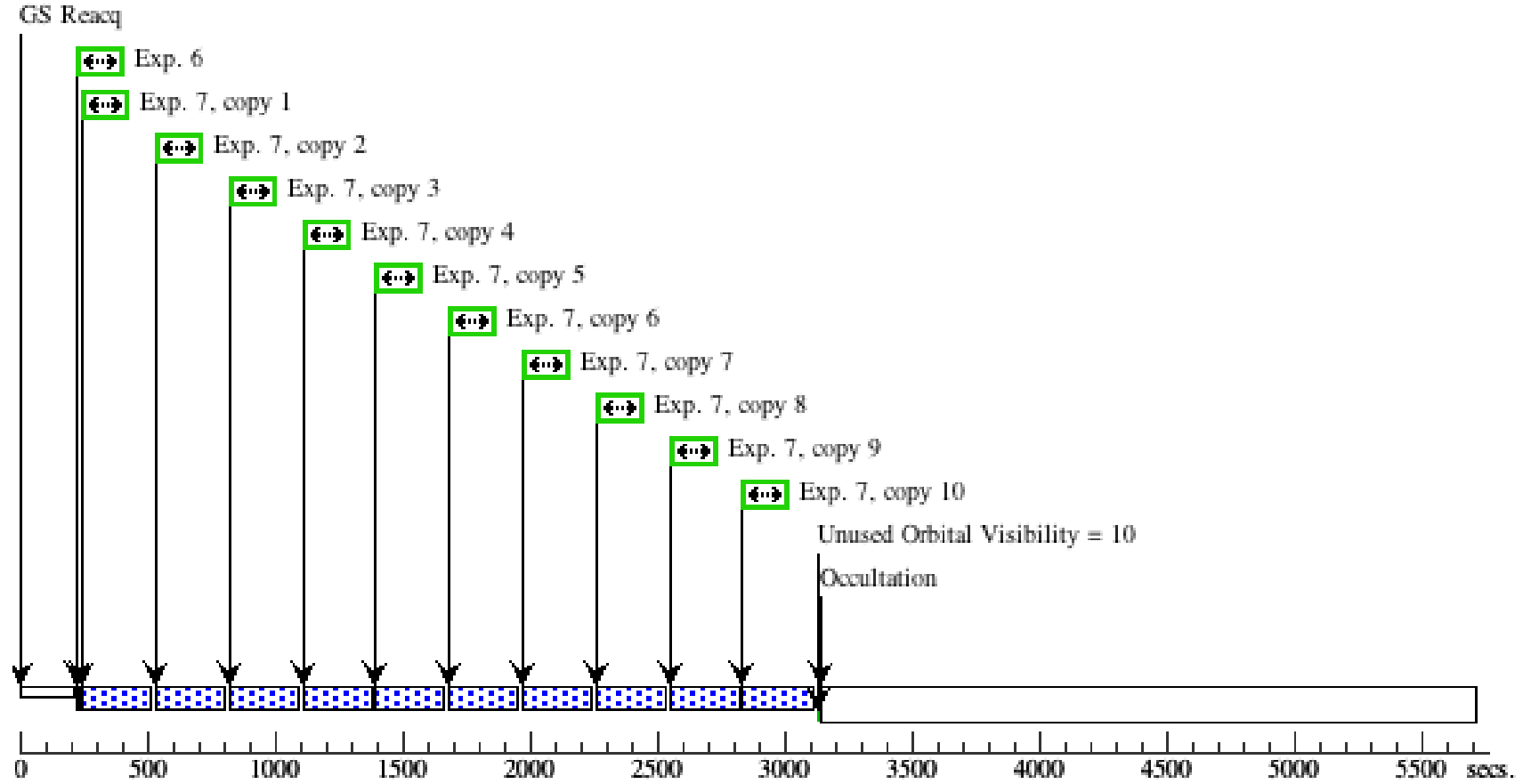
Orbit 2

Server Version: 20160129



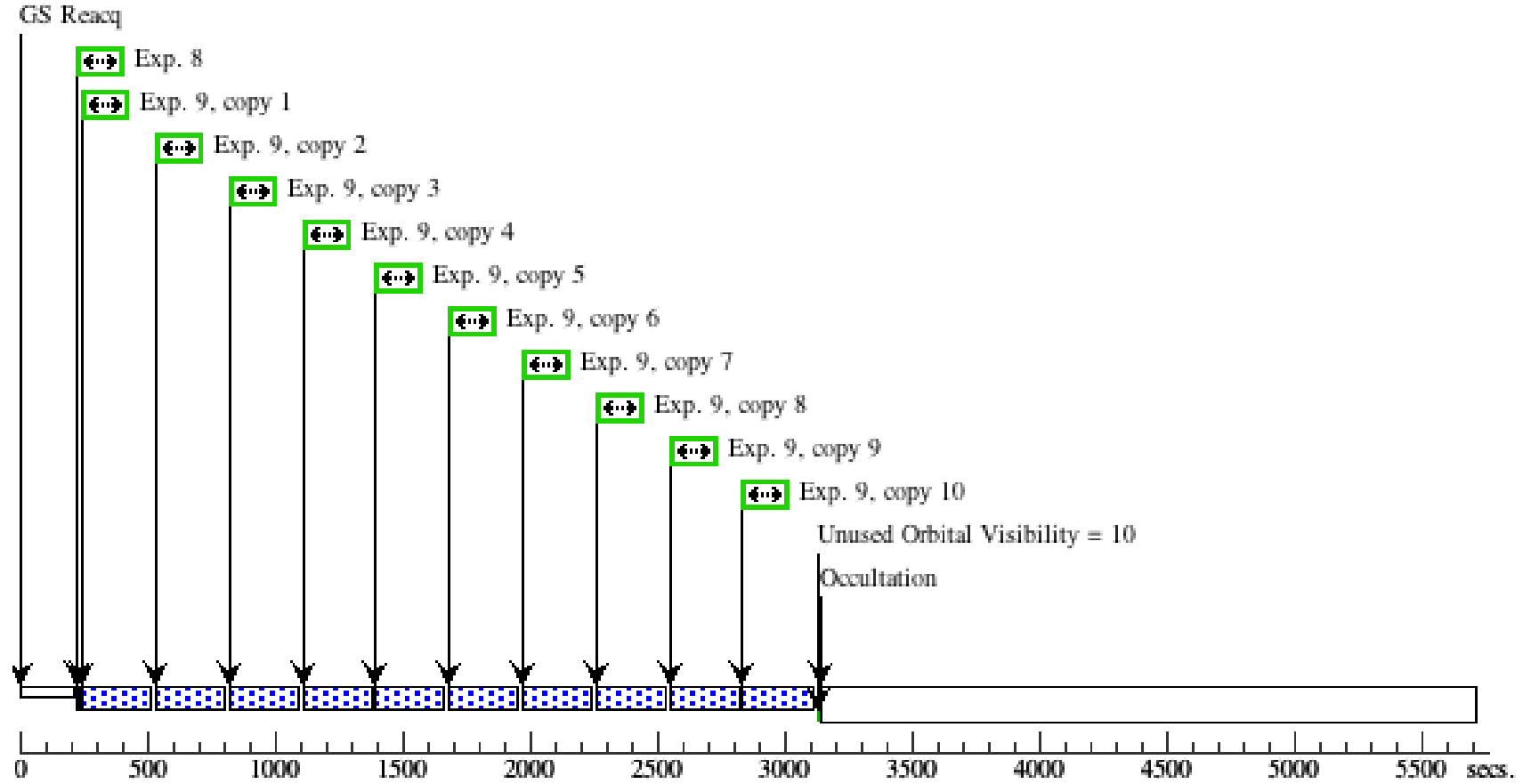
Orbit 3

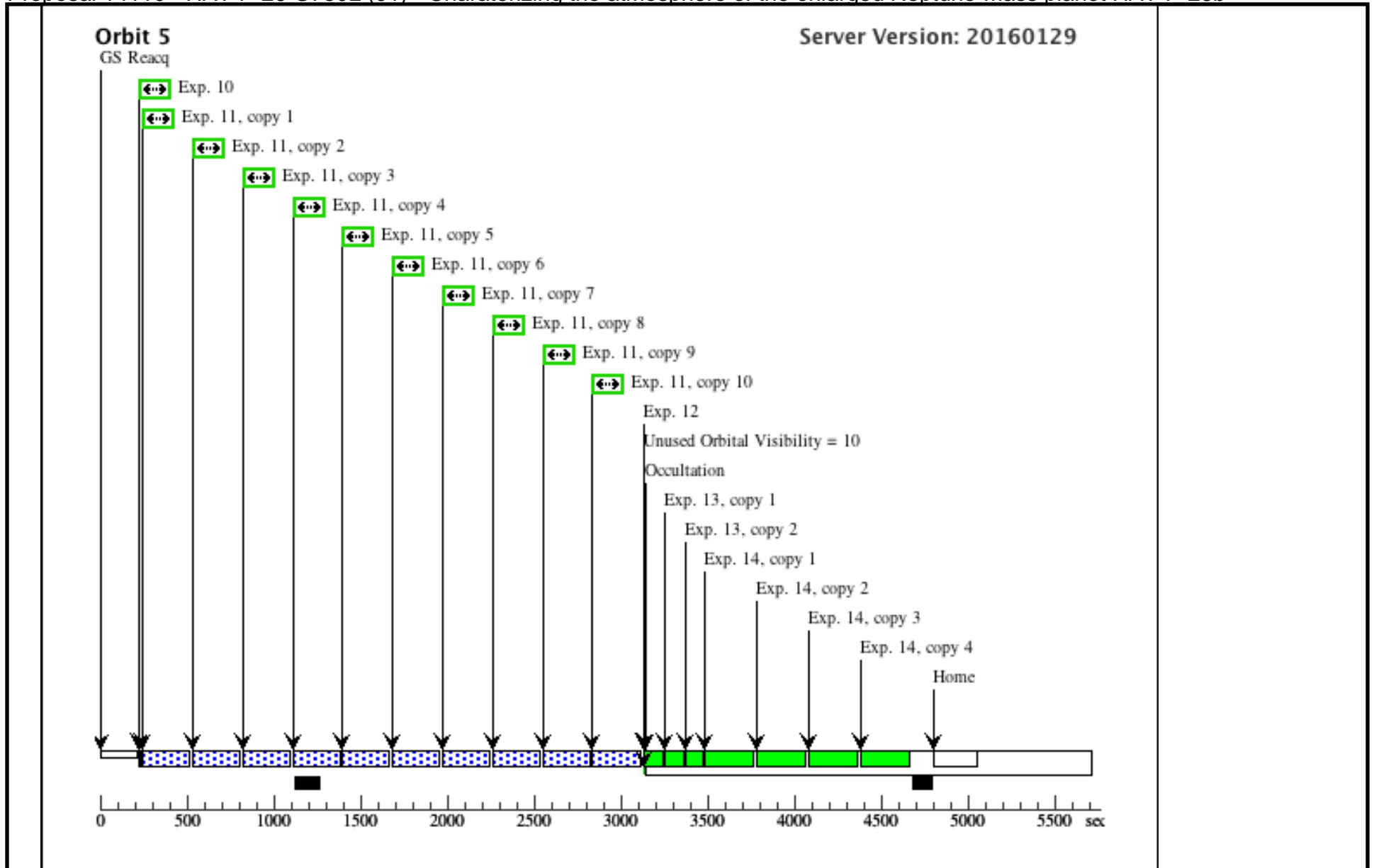
Server Version: 20160129



Orbit 4

Server Version: 20160129





Proposal 14110 - HAT-P-26 WFC3 (02) - Charaterizing the atmosphere of the enlarged Neptune-mass planet HAT-P-26b

Thu Apr 28 01:04:04 GMT 2016

Visit	<p>Proposal 14110, HAT-P-26 WFC3 (02), implementation</p> <p>Diagnostic Status: No Diagnostics</p> <p>Scientific Instruments: WFC3/IR</p> <p>Special Requirements: Period 4.2345005277 D AND ZERO-PHASE HJD2456363.277385</p> <p><i>Comments: WFC3 IR transit of HAT-P-26. It is essential that the five orbits be scheduled in a coninuous block, free of the SAA.</i></p> <p><i>We will use the spacial scanning mode to lengthen the spectrum along the slit during the exposures, to avoid saturation on relatively long exposures. This mode greatly increases the efficiency.</i></p>												
	Fixed Targets	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>#</th> <th>Name</th> <th>Target Coordinates</th> <th>Targ. Coord. Corrections</th> <th>Fluxes</th> <th>Miscellaneous</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>(1)</td> <td>HAT-P-26</td> <td>RA: 14 12 37.5370 (213.1564042d) Dec: +04 03 36.13 (4.06004d) Equinox: J2000</td> <td>Proper Motion RA: 39.1 mas/yr Proper Motion Dec: -144.3 mas/yr Epoch of Position: 2000</td> <td>V=11.76</td> <td>Reference Frame: ICRS</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Comments: This object was generated by the targetselector and retrieved from the SIMBAD database.</i></p> <p><i>Extended=NO</i></p>	#	Name	Target Coordinates	Targ. Coord. Corrections	Fluxes	Miscellaneous	(1)	HAT-P-26	RA: 14 12 37.5370 (213.1564042d) Dec: +04 03 36.13 (4.06004d) Equinox: J2000	Proper Motion RA: 39.1 mas/yr Proper Motion Dec: -144.3 mas/yr Epoch of Position: 2000	V=11.76
#	Name	Target Coordinates	Targ. Coord. Corrections	Fluxes	Miscellaneous								
(1)	HAT-P-26	RA: 14 12 37.5370 (213.1564042d) Dec: +04 03 36.13 (4.06004d) Equinox: J2000	Proper Motion RA: 39.1 mas/yr Proper Motion Dec: -144.3 mas/yr Epoch of Position: 2000	V=11.76	Reference Frame: ICRS								

Proposal 14110 - HAT-P-26 WFC3 (02) - Charaterizing the atmosphere of the enlarged Neptune-mass planet HAT-P-26b

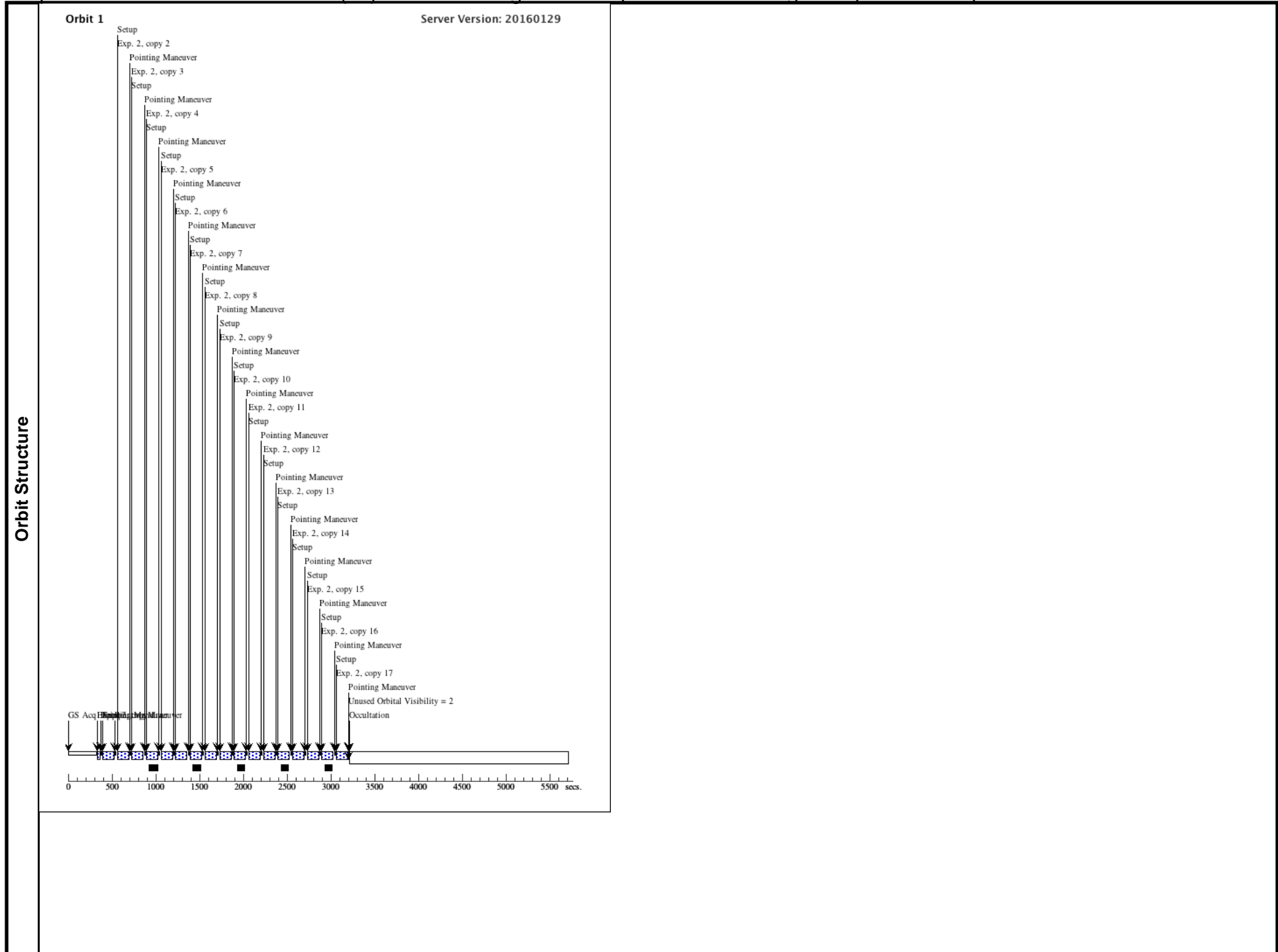
#	Label (ETC Run)	Target	Config,Mode,Aperture	Spectral Els.	Opt. Params.	Special Reqs.	Groups	Exp. Time (Total)/[Actual Dur.]	Orbit
1	HAT-P-26 WFC3, phase constrained (WFC3IR.im.719990)	(1) HAT-P-26	WFC3/IR, MULTIACCUM, GRISM256	F130N	SAMP-SEQ=RAPID ; NSAMP=7	PHASE 0.9540 TO 0 .9595		1.944705 Secs (1.945 Secs)	
								[==>]	[1]
<p><i>Comments: Direct image for wavelegnth calibration. Phase constrained so transit occurs between 2nd and 3rd contact.</i></p>									

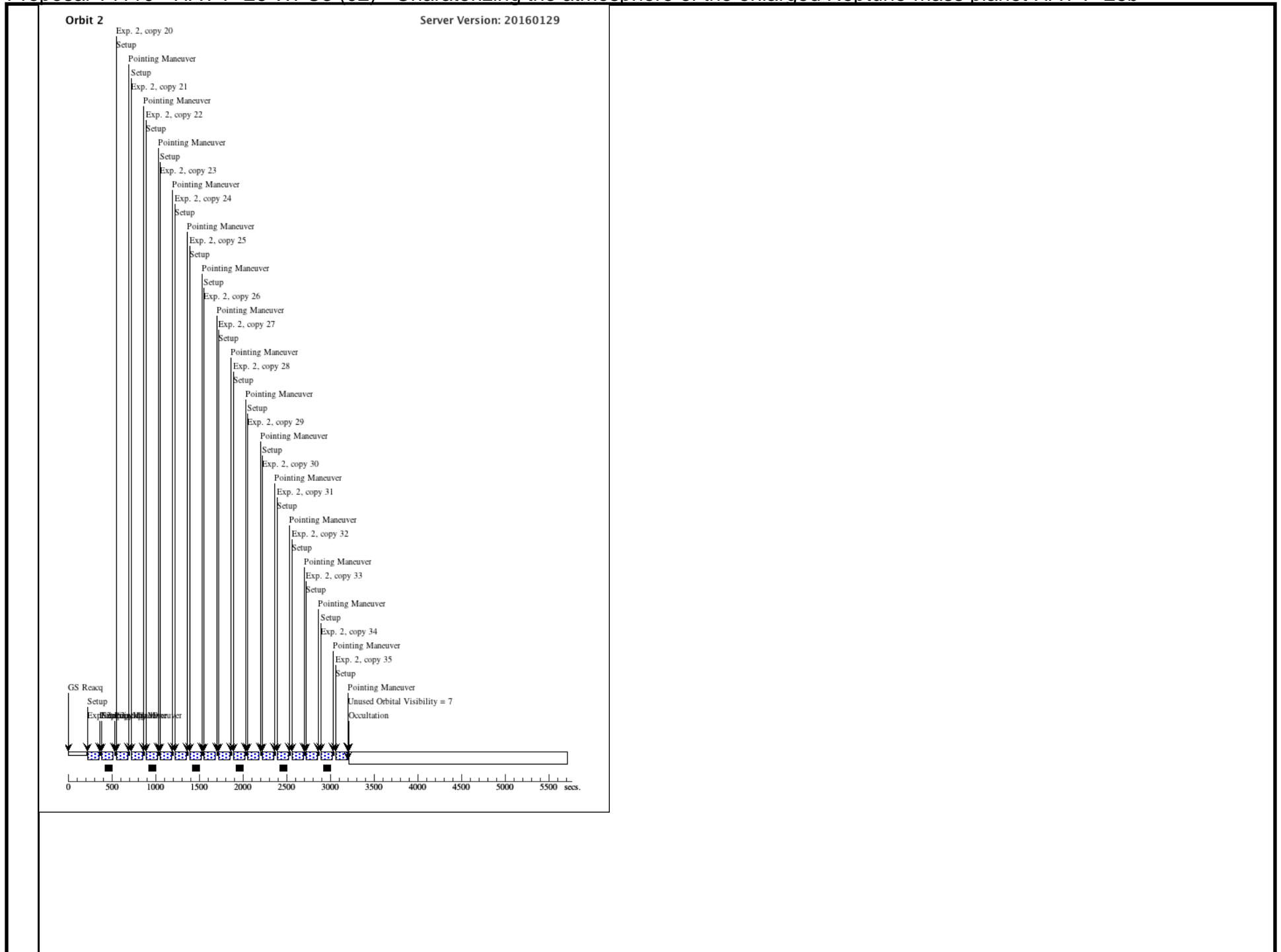
Exposures

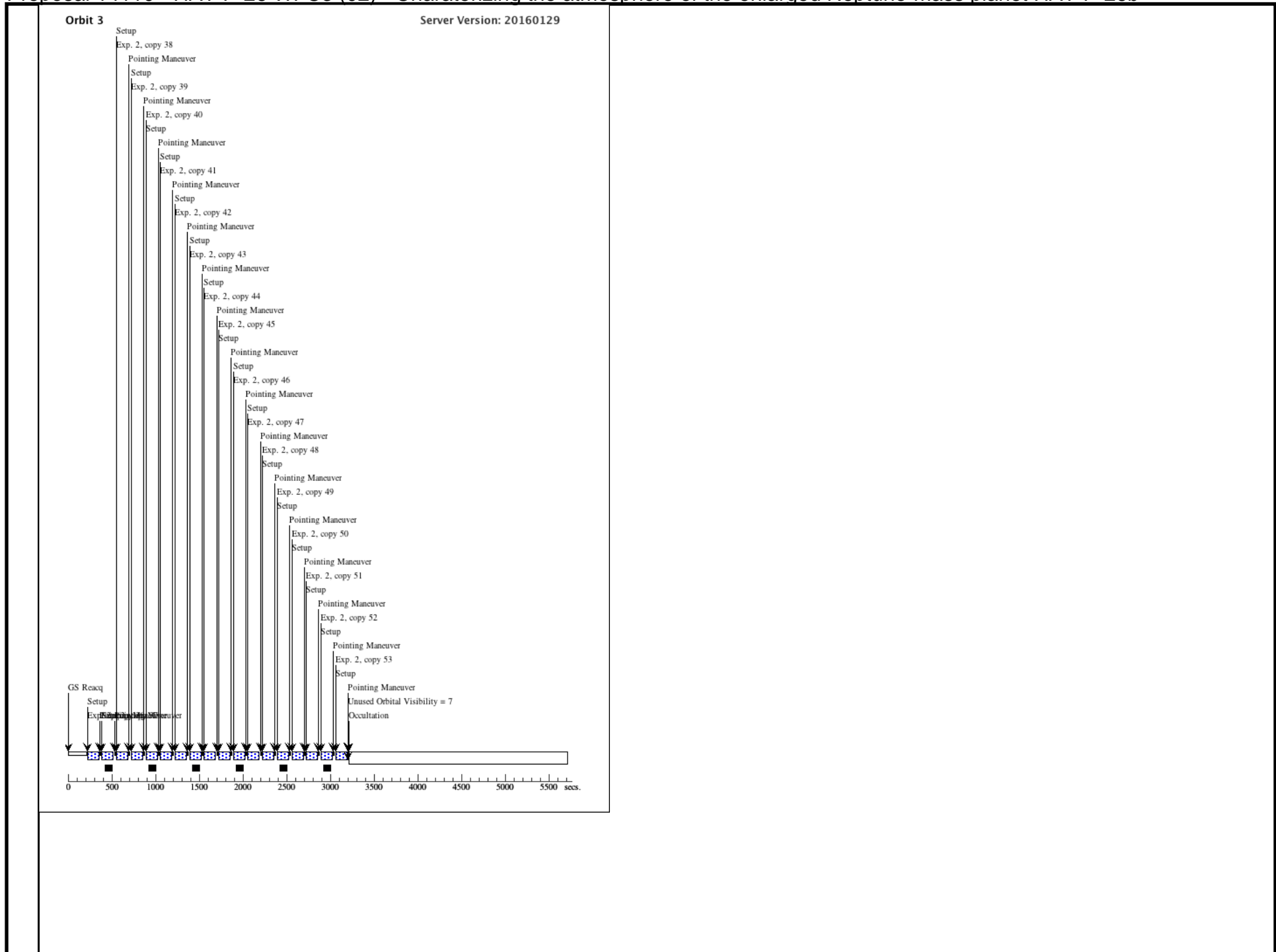
	<p>[==>(Copy 36)] [==>(Copy 37)] [==>(Copy 38)] [==>(Copy 39)] [==>(Copy 40)] [==>(Copy 41)] [==>(Copy 42)] [==>(Copy 43)] [==>(Copy 44)] [==>(Copy 45)] [==>(Copy 46)] [==>(Copy 47)] [==>(Copy 48)] [==>(Copy 49)] [==>(Copy 50)] [==>(Copy 51)] [==>(Copy 52)] [==>(Copy 53)]</p>	<p>[3]</p>
	<p>[==>(Copy 54)] [==>(Copy 55)] [==>(Copy 56)] [==>(Copy 57)] [==>(Copy 58)] [==>(Copy 59)] [==>(Copy 60)] [==>(Copy 61)] [==>(Copy 62)] [==>(Copy 63)] [==>(Copy 64)] [==>(Copy 65)] [==>(Copy 66)] [==>(Copy 67)] [==>(Copy 68)] [==>(Copy 69)] [==>(Copy 70)] [==>(Copy 71)]</p>	<p>[4]</p>

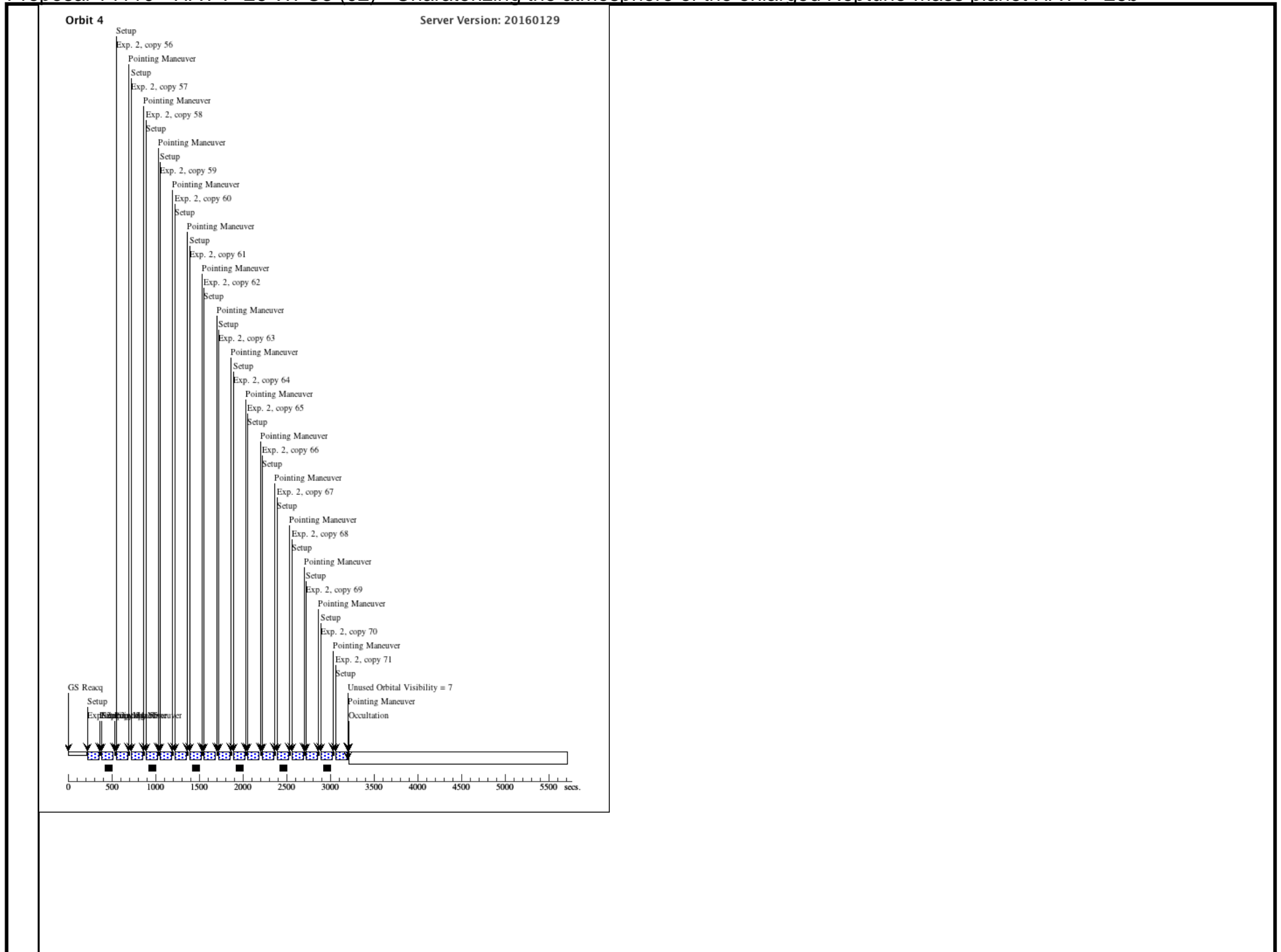
Proposal 14110 - HAT-P-26 WFC3 (02) - Charaterizing the atmosphere of the enlarged Neptune-mass planet HAT-P-26b

		[==>(Copy 72)] [==>(Copy 73)] [==>(Copy 74)] [==>(Copy 75)] [==>(Copy 76)] [==>(Copy 77)] [==>(Copy 78)] [==>(Copy 79)] [==>(Copy 80)] [==>(Copy 81)] [==>(Copy 82)] [==>(Copy 83)] [==>(Copy 84)] [==>(Copy 85)] [==>(Copy 86)] [==>(Copy 87)] [==>(Copy 88)] [==>(Copy 89)]	[5]
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Proposal 14110 - HAT-P-26 WFC3 (02) - Charaterizing the atmosphere of the enlarged Neptune-mass planet HAT-P-26b

