Debra Shepherd, NRAO

The ALMA Test Facility in retrospect

The ALMA Test Facility (ATF) is located at the Very Large Array site just outside of Socorro, New Mexico. The ATF is composed of two prototype antennas working as single dishes and in interferometric mode. The ATF has been functioning as test and development platform for several years and for the past year it has been operating as a mini-observatory. Software development is generally scheduled during the day, operators and commissioning astronomers work during the night to verify software, hardware and develop commissioning procedures. The ATF will close on December 20th, 2008 when ALMA activities are ramping up strongly. I will discuss the ATF, what was done and the benefits to the ALMA project to have this separate operational facility.