This image mosaic of Eros is labeled with proposed names for most of the asteroid’s larger features.
This simple cylindrical map projection of an Eros image mosaic is labeled with proposed names for most of the asteroid’s larger features. Because the images in the mosaic cover an irregularly shaped object viewed under greatly varying lighting geometries, the image boundaries cannot be perfectly matched. The names give those studying the asteroid a consistent “geography” for reference. The theme of the names is famous historical and fictional lovers from a sampling of different cultures. The name of the largest feature, Himeros, comes from Greek mythology. Himeros, an attendant of the god Eros, personifies the longing of love.

**NEAR Mission**

As the first launch in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s (NASA) Discovery Program, the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous (NEAR) mission is setting the stage for asteroidal exploration and forming a base of knowledge that will be the framework for future asteroid missions. The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (JHU/APL) designed and built the NEAR Shoemaker spacecraft and manages the mission for NASA. The Mission Team is drawn internationally from universities, government agencies and private industry.

Launched February 17, 1996, NEAR Shoemaker began its orbital mission at asteroid 433 Eros on February 14, 2000. From May through August 2000, the spacecraft traveled in a circular orbit at a radius of 31 miles (50 kilometers) from the center of Eros. It was then boosted to a higher orbit to view Eros from the direction of the sun. In late December 2000, NEAR Shoemaker will descend to a 22-mile (35-kilometer) orbit and operate at that altitude or lower for the remainder of the mission. By February 2001, the NEAR mission will provide the first comprehensive data on the physical geology, composition and geophysics of an asteroid.

For more information visit the NEAR Web site: [http://near.jhuapl.edu](http://near.jhuapl.edu).