

Telescope Dispute

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A giant telescope will be built on Mauna Kea, a dormant Hawaiian volcano that some people consider sacred.

Hawaii governor David Ige announced on June 20 that construction of the telescope had been approved. It's called the Thirty Meter Telescope, or TMT. It will be the largest telescope in the northern hemisphere. Construction is expected to begin this summer.

The TMT will allow scientists to see faraway parts of the universe. Their observations could help researchers understand how the universe was formed.

But the telescope is controversial. Mauna Kea is the highest point in Hawaii. The volcano holds religious importance for many Native Hawaiians. Activists say construction will dishonor sacred grounds.

Kealoha Pisciotta is a Native Hawaiian activist. "These are places of worship and the places where we lay our offering and our prayer," she told the AP.

Astronomers say Mauna Kea is one of the best places on Earth to build a telescope. There are several smaller telescopes there already. As part of the plan to build the TMT, five of them will be torn down.

Plans for the TMT were first proposed in 2009. The project has been locked in a legal battle ever since. Last year, the Hawaii Supreme Court ruled that plans for the telescope could continue.

"This decision of the Hawaiian Supreme Court is the law of the land, and it should be respected," Governor Ige said. "We will proceed in a way that respects the people, place, and culture that make Hawaii unique."

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