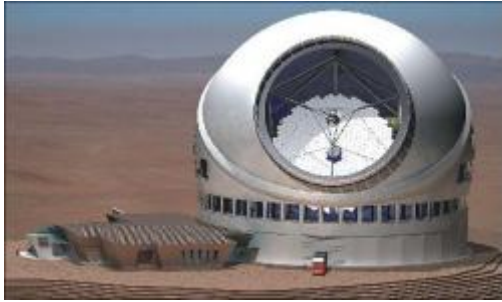


## Local News

### Thirty-Meter Telescope invites public feedback



Click Photo to Enlarge  
Above is an artist rendering of the Thirty-Meter  
Telescope. - [www.tmt.org](http://www.tmt.org)

### Effort to assess impact begins in September

*by Peter Sur*

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The planners of the world's largest optical telescope want to know what the public thinks about building it on the north slope of Mauna Kea.

A new Web site and hotline will go live Wednesday for what's being called the Thirty-Meter Telescope, so named for the diameter of its primary mirror. The 98-foot mirror will be three times the diameter of the current largest telescope, the W.M. Keck Observatory. After a globe-spanning search, the planners have narrowed the candidate sites to Mauna Kea and a mountain in Chile. The environmental assessment process has already ended for the Chilean site, and it's about to get under way in Hawaii.

TMT Site Studies Task Manager Sandra Dawson said six public meetings will be held around the Big Island in the last two weeks of September, and one meeting will be held in Honolulu. The exact schedule of those meetings has not been set, Dawson said.

Details of the meetings and ways to comment will be posted online at <http://www.tmt-hawaii.org>.

"It's going to be some FAQs about the project, and a plan to get on our mailing list," Dawson said of the Web site.

Initially, the Web site and hotline will just be a way for the public to get on the mailing list, but when the public comment period opens, people will be able to submit comments.

Dawson will move to Hilo by the end of this month and work out of an office in the Subaru Telescope headquarters, also in Hilo.

The next step in the lengthy Environmental Impact Statement process will begin Sept. 8 with the publication of an EIS preparation notice.

Only when the EIS process finishes will the TMT board of directors settle on a site. If Mauna Kea were selected, the \$1 billion project still requires approval from the Mauna Kea Management Board, the University of Hawaii Board of Regents and the Board of Land and Natural Resources.

"I think there'll be a lot of interest. It's a large project," Dawson said. "We're going to do everything we can to talk to as many people as we can."

When she sets down in Hilo, Dawson wants to be accessible to everybody, from schools to civic clubs, and various public venues.

The project's toll-free hotline, when it goes live Wednesday at 1-866-284-1716.

The Wednesday activation will coincide with the publication of an ad that TMT is running in the Hawaii Tribune-Herald and West Hawaii Today. The ad will invite people to mail their contact information to Dawson's office at 650 North Aohoku Place in Hilo to get on the mailing list.

Any proposal to add to the number of telescopes on Mauna Kea will inevitably be controversial, as the Hawaiian community regards the Pacific's tallest peak to be a sacred realm that has been desecrated in past decades by astronomers.

The astronomy community has made efforts to reach out to Hawaiians, but heavy opposition is expected for a building with a 2-acre footprint, even if it's not on Mauna Kea's summit plateau.

TMT Observatory is a partnership between the Association of Canadian Universities for Research in Astronomy, the California Institute of Technology, and the University of California.

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