



# Telescope promotes economic diversity

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## THE ISSUE

An environmental study for a proposed telescope on Mauna Kea is being conducted.

If past experience is any indication, siting a new telescope on Mauna Kea will undoubtedly be a contentious issue. The mountain's delicate ecosystem, hosting rare species of plants and insects, and its regard among Hawaiians as a sacred space has brought no shortage of lawsuits and disapproval for other astronomy projects on the mountain.

However, before outright rejection of the proposed Thirty Meter Telescope, the Hawaii island community and the wider public should find ways by which to maintain and build a valuable high-tech industry while protecting the significant cultural and environmental attributes of Mauna Kea.

An environmental study for the \$1 billion facility is being conducted by the University of Hawaii with public meetings on Hawaii and in Honolulu through this week. The telescope will be built by TMT Observatory Corp., representing the California Institute of Technology, the University of California and a group of Canadian universities. It would be, by far, the largest on Mauna Kea, but located below the summit.

Mindful of previous controversy, proponents are suggesting mitigation measures such as scholarships. Though that's fine, a more far-reaching agenda that could expand the technological components of the project to benefit the island would be better received.

What form that would take should be considered by the university, educators, the scientific community and businesses. They should be mindful that other places, including Chile, are ready to accept the telescope.

Hawaii badly needs a diversity of industries to survive the economic storms to which tourism is so vulnerable and though astronomy is but a small segment, an economy built of small parts will be better able to withstand the fluctuations of fortune.