

# Hawaii Tribune Herald

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### First, scope it out

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The proposal to build a new telescope on Mauna Kea has generated vitriolic controversy on our island. Good people, political candidates and organizations are forming opinions about the project without knowing much about the issues involved. Their concerns are legitimate, since there is a sad history of development without regard for the legitimate concerns of Hawaiian people or for the ecological sanctity of Mauna Kea. There is now a regrettable polarization between extreme elements who oppose any further development and extremists who favor almost all development.

The majority of Hawaii's people are, however, caught in the middle -- realizing that although astronomical research is exciting and good for Hawaii's image and economy, Mauna Kea is a sacred, special place, and present and future activities need to be controlled to protect both the 'aina and our cultural traditions.

I regret the fact that spokesmen for the Sierra Club (which I have been a member of for over 40 years) have already expressed opposition to the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) Project -- without ever consulting their general membership for their opinions. The Sierra Club has been at the vanguard of commendable efforts to protect Mauna Kea in the past, and may well have valid reasons to oppose this project in the future, but I plead for everyone to wait until the facts are known before making judgments!

Lots of information is about to be made available to Hawaii's citizens over the next few months. The soon-to-be-released Mauna Kea Comprehensive Management Plan will guide all future development, and has been carefully prepared by the numerous parties who have a stake in the mountain's future. An environmental impact statement to summarize the potential effects of the TMT will be prepared over the coming winter, and "scoping meetings" will be held throughout the Big Island this month to provide citizens an opportunity to voice their concerns and to ask questions about the proposal and the EIS process.

The EIS will be prepared by experts to quantitatively evaluate all aspects of environmental and cultural impact of the TMT, without bias either for or against the project. I will personally be involved to evaluate any impact on the geological uniqueness of Mauna Kea -- especially the well-preserved record of glacial activity and the interaction of fire and ice over the past few hundred thousand years. These features must be protected. Although the TMT will not be built on Mauna Kea's summit (and will not be visible from Hilo or most of our island), it could impact glacial features.

I do not know whether the benefits of the TMT will outweigh any negative impacts or not. I am neither for or against the project at this point, and urge my fellow citizens to also reserve their judgment until all the facts are known!

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Volcano

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