

Hawaii governor says telescope-construction timeout extended

April 12 2015, by Audrey Mcavoy



This undated file artist rendering made available by the TMT Observatory Corporation shows the proposed Thirty Meter Telescope, planned to be built atop Mauna Kea, a large dormant volcano in Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii in Hawaii. Gov. David Ige said Saturday, April 11, 2015 that a nonprofit company planning to build one of the world's largest telescopes atop a mountain many Native Hawaiians consider sacred will maintain a moratorium on construction for another week. (AP Photo/TMT Observatory Corporation, File)

Hawaii Gov. David Ige said Saturday that a nonprofit company planning to build one of the world's largest telescopes atop a mountain many Native Hawaiians consider sacred will maintain a moratorium on construction for another week.

Ige initially announced what he called a timeout on [construction](#) of the Thirty Meter Telescope at Mauna Kea, a [dormant volcano](#) on the Big Island, on Tuesday after law enforcement arrested more than 30 protesters opposing the project.

As the weekend arrived, he said the company told him it will further postpone construction until April 20.

"I thank TMT for its willingness to be respectful and sensitive to all of Hawaii—its special people, its sense of place and its unique host culture," the governor said in a statement.

Kealoha Pisciotta, the president of Mauna Kea Anaina Hou and a telescope opponent, welcomed the opportunity for all sides to reflect.

"We're still not standing down. We appreciate the time to do research and consider everything—and that's a good thing," Pisciotta said.

"It's also a good thing that the aina is protected," she said, using the Hawaiian word for land. "Any time that happens is a good thing, and we welcome that."

Ige issued his statement from the town of Hilo, near Mauna Kea. He flew to Hilo on Saturday to attend the Merrie Monarch Festival, the state's biggest hula competition, said Jodi Leong, a spokeswoman.



In this April 2, 2015 file photo, Thirty Meter Telescope protesters chant after being arrested from the telescope building site on the summit of Mauna Kea in Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii in Hawaii. Gov. David Ige said Saturday, April 11, 2015 that a nonprofit company planning to build one of the world's largest telescopes atop a mountain many Native Hawaiians consider sacred will maintain a moratorium on construction for another week. (AP Photo/Hawaii Tribune-Herald, Hollyn Johnson, File)

The Thirty Meter Telescope is a California nonprofit formed by the University of California and the California Institute of Technology. Institutions in Canada, China, India and Japan signed on as partners and would receive a share of observing time. It selected Mauna Kea as the site for the observatory over Chile's Cerro Armazones mountain in 2009.

The Thirty Meter Telescope has received state construction permits and a sublease for the land from the University of Hawaii, which manages

the area at the top of the mountain.

Native Hawaiians have filed lawsuits against the project. One is pending before the state's Intermediate Court of Appeals.

Opponents recently also started demonstrating on the mountain. Last week, state and county police arrested 20 people for blocking the road to prevent construction vehicles from reaching the summit. Another 11 protesters were arrested for refusing to leave the construction site at the summit.

Scientists say Mauna Kea's summit above most clouds offers some of the world's best conditions for viewing the skies. But some Native Hawaiians believe their creation story begins atop the mountain. It's also a burial site for ancestors and a home to deities.

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