

\$300M telescope renamed to honor late Sen. Inouye's decades of service

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The Advanced Technology Solar Telescope, or ATST, more than a year into construction atop Haleakala, has been renamed the Daniel K. Inouye Solar Telescope on the eve of the one-year anniversary of the Hawaii senator's death.

"Over five decades of national public service, Senator Inouye was a strong proponent of American science and innovation," said Cora Marrett, acting director of the National Science Foundation, on Monday. "This remarkable facility in his beloved state of Hawaii will expand our knowledge and advance our nation's scientific leadership over many decades to come."

The \$300 million telescope is a joint project of the National Science Foundation, the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy and the University of Hawaii.

"When completed in 2019, the Inouye telescope will be the world's premier ground-based solar observatory - more powerful than any other in the world," said a news release about the renaming of the telescope.

The Inouye telescope will look into how the sun works and also protect the nation's communication and weather satellites and power grids, the news release said. More specifically, the 4-meter aperture telescope will allow astronomers to see more clearly sunspots, flares and other solar activity.

"Befitting the legacy of Senator Inouye, the telescope will be pivotal in training the next generation of solar physicists and instrument builders as it hosts undergraduate and graduate opportunities and imparts curriculum development for local schools," the news release said.

Inouye, a decorated World War II combat soldier, took office as a U.S. senator from Hawaii in 1963 and served in the office until his death Dec. 17, 2012, at age 88.

"The senator is such an impressive figure (in Hawaii and across the nation) . . . in his push for science and education," said telescope project manager Joseph McMullin on Monday.

Work on the the 14-story-tall telescope on the 18-acre Haleakala High Altitude Observatories site, also known as Science City, began in November 2012. Excavation at the site is almost complete; the utility building is up, said Mike Maberry of the University of Hawaii Institute for Astronomy.

"The focus over the last several months has been on the development of the forms and concrete structures" on which the rotating laboratory and telescope will sit, said McMullin. That work should be completed by the end of next month.

The subsequent phases of the seven-year construction and installation process will include putting up the steel dome for the telescope and installing the pieces of the telescope, the optical system and scientific instruments - according to "rigorous requirements," said McMullin.

Installation has to be precise in order to deliver the promised technical performance, he said.

About two years down the road, those going up Crater Road may see trucks carrying loads that will take up the entire road. McMullin said a traffic plan has been worked out with Haleakala National Park to minimize disruptions. He added that telescope builders have reduced the delivery size of some components to ease the traffic issue.

The wide loads will halt traffic in both directions, only while it passes a section of road. Once passed, traffic will continue as normal, McMullin said.

The Inouye telescope does not have the support of everyone in the community. In fact, a group opposing the telescope, Kilakila 'O Haleakala, won a state Supreme Court decision last week. The high court ruled that for a conservation permit granted Dec. 1, 2010, by the state Board of Land and Natural Resources "a contested case hearing should have been held, as required by law and properly requested by Kilakila 'O Haleakala." The high court remanded the case back to Circuit Court.

However, the BLNR voted in 2012 to grant a conservation use permit for the telescope that included a contested case hearing. Based on that permit, the National Science Foundation, which owns the telescope, and UH broke ground and continue to build the telescope.

An attorney for the Native Hawaiian Legal Corp. said that the question of whether construction on the telescope can continue based on the 2012 permit could be further litigated and affected by how the Circuit Court rules.

Attorney David Kimo Frankel said Friday that "it remains to be seen" whether the 2012 permit supersedes the one granted two years earlier.