



**For Immediate Release**

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**Pluto's Plight and the New Solar System**  
*Topic for Maunakea Skies March 20 at 'Imiloa*

Hilo, Hawai'i –'Imiloa Astronomy Center's "Maunakea Skies" program welcomes guest speaker Dr. Chad Trujillo from Gemini Observatory, on Saturday, March 20, at 7 p.m. to talk about *The New Solar System: the Downsizing of Pluto and New Frontiers in Our Solar System*.

In the last decade, our picture of the solar system and its outskirts has changed dramatically. Once thought to be a lonely place only inhabited by Pluto and the occasional comet, we now know that there are a vast number of icy asteroids in Pluto's neighborhood. The largest of these is Eris, sometimes called the "10th Planet" because it is larger than Pluto.

Dr. Trujillo will talk about how he helped to discover Eris, why astronomers decided to demote Pluto from its planetary status, and what it and some of its neighbors might look like when the New Horizons spacecraft visits them in 2015.

Host Richard Crowe, University of Hawai'i at Hilo professor of physics and astronomy, and one of 'Imiloa's four planetarium hosts for the Maunakea Skies programs, will also take the audience on a tour of the night time sky for March and show some of the observational highlights of the Spring night-time skies over Hawai'i, before Dr. Trujillo's talk.

Dr. Chad Trujillo is an Astronomer at Gemini Observatory in Hilo. He obtained a B.S. in Physics from MIT in 1995 and a Ph.D. in Astronomy from the University of Hawai'i in 2000. He joined Gemini in 2003 after completing work as a postdoctoral scholar at

Caltech. At Gemini, he has been involved in Adaptive Optics guiding with both natural stars and laser beacons. His recent work includes co-discovery and surface measurements of several of the largest Kuiper Belt Objects including the so-called “10th Planet” Eris, the most distant object known in the solar system. His research interests involve the outermost regions of the solar system.

The monthly “Maunakea Skies” planetarium presentations are held on the third Saturday of each month, and replaces the Center’s previous “Directors’ Lecture Series” held for the International Year of Astronomy in 2009. The format begins with the traditional tour of the night sky featuring stars, constellations and planets visible with the unaided eye. Following this a special guest presenter from one of the Maunakea observatories will share the latest research in astronomy using the true 3D stereo planetarium technology to “fly out” and explore these discoveries. Imagine traveling to planets, zipping through star clusters and nebulae, and exploring galaxies far beyond our own.

Opened in 2006, ‘Imiloa Astronomy Center celebrates both Hawaiian culture and Maunakea astronomy. Through its exhibits and program, ‘Imiloa strives to share inspiring examples of science and culture together advancing knowledge, understanding and opportunity. The Center is a part of the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo.

‘Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai‘i is located at 600 ‘Imiloa Place in Hilo, off Komohana and Nowelo Streets at the UH-Hilo Science and Technology Park. For more information, go to [www.imiloahawaii.org](http://www.imiloahawaii.org), or call (808) 969-9703.



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