**Communitas Award Application**

*Kealakekua Mountain Reserve:*

*Creating the Largest Reforestation Initiative in the State of Hawaii*

**Introduction**

As the leader in the global aromatherapy and essential oils market, doTERRA has set out with the bold commitment to source 100% pure essential oils from around the world. Since day one, doTERRA has pursued a legacy of positive impact, championing people and the environment. Through industry-leading responsible sourcing practices, doTERRA maintains the highest levels of quality, purity, and sustainability by partnering with growers around the world through our Co-Impact Sourcing model.

Since its founding, doTERRA has made a commitment to be a steward of the earth, ensuring that natural resources will be available for generations to come. If doTERRA cannot source an essential oil sustainably, we simply don’t source it at all. One example of this can be found in the company’s sourcing of Hawaiian Sandalwood.

As doTERRA grew, we realized that if we wanted to continue offering Hawaiian Sandalwood, we would have to sustainably source it ourselves. In 2018, doTERRA created the Kealakekua Mountain Reserve (KMR) as a wholly-owned subsidiary of doTERRA. This almost 10,000-acre reserve on the Island of Hawai’i was established to conserve and protect the native forest and undertake an ambitious reforestation effort to rebuild and regenerate this delicate ecosystem.

**History**

Among the other successful crops that are grown in Hawaii, the native ‘Iliahi (Sandalwood) trees have long been prized for their beautiful aroma and unique properties. Shortly following European contact, the Sandalwood trade boomed. The significant revenue generated by the trade caused substantial exploitation of native Hawaiians. The Hawaiian natives were forced to harvest the Sandalwood under extremely difficult conditions.

In addition to the overharvesting of Sandalwood in the Kealakekua region, for the 150 years before doTERRA acquired the land, the Kealakekua Mountain Reserve served as a cattle ranch. The cattle grazing and the logging that took place there hindered the health of the region’s native forests.

Being mindful of the past and wanting to participate in a redefined future for growing Hawaiian native trees, doTERRA established the Kealakekua Mountain Reserve. Working with the State of Hawaii and other specialists, we developed a forest management plan that has turned into the largest reforestation effort in Hawaii’s history.

**The Plan**

To regenerate the lush forests native to the region, doTERRA first had to establish a proper land management plan. To re-establish an environment in which ‘Iliahi (Sandalwood) and other native trees and plants can flourish, the conservation plan specifies that no living 'Iliahi (Sandalwood) trees may be gathered for distillation, which will allow healthy existing trees to grow fully to maturity before they are harvested at the appropriate time and under sustainable tree management practices. We understand that it will take decades to see sustainable progress and we are dedicated to a plan of longevity.

Kealakekua Mountain Reserve (KMR) is also involved in research efforts on different aspects of ‘Iliahi growth and regeneration conducted by the Tropical Hardwood Tree and Reiteration Center–a partnership between Purdue University and the University of Hawai’i. Working closely with doTERRA and KMR, Hiki Ola is a nonprofit organization dedicated to native Hawaiian forest engagement and education. It has been recognized by USDA as an effective organization improving social equity in West Hawaii, as well as by the Natural Resources Conservation Services and local Soil and Water Conservation District as a leader in conservation. doTERRA is proud to support community initiatives by both partnering with and learning from local leaders. Hiki Ola currently leases 115 acres on KMR to run environmental and cultural educational programming with public schools within three miles of KMR. Hiki Ola primarily works with students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to provide stewardship and educational opportunities, career exploration, and increased accessibility to the large private mountain landscape and reserve.

**Progress**

Since its establishment in 2018, Kealakekua Mountain Reserve (KMR) has:

* Planted 344,726 trees (106,702 of them were planted in 2022).
* Collected only dead or damaged trees for essential oil production, allowing healthy sandalwood trees to grow to full maturity.
* Planted 120 trees for every tree harvested.
* Participated in three groundbreaking research studies related to Hawaiian Sandalwood conducted by a PhD student living on-site.

Future goals include:

* Plant 1 million trees at the KMR reserve by 2030.
* Develop a plan to reach carbon neutrality via insetting and offsetting.
* Facilitate engagement with 1,000 visitors on the Kealakekua Mountain Reserve by teaching the history of ‘Iliahi and visitors’ role in environmental and cultural preservation.
* Increase awareness of other native Hawaiian species including Naio and Koa trees; the latter are the host trees for ‘Iliahi tree growth.