

Waikoloa Dry Forest Initiative Summary

Mission: To protect, promote, and restore native Hawaiian dry forests.

Category: Environmental preservation and education

Contact: Jen Lawson, Executive Director

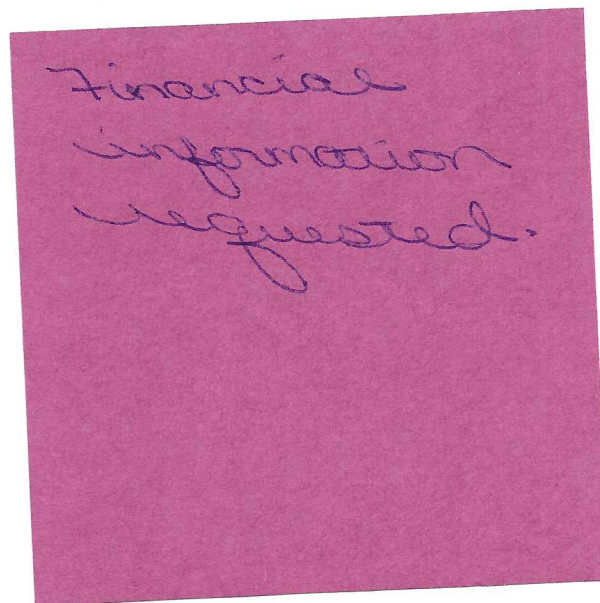
Address: P.O. Box 384087, Waikoloa, HI 96738

Grant History: N/A

2022 Request:	\$unspecified for general operating support
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Notes:

- Founded in 2011.
- Plants trees, removes invasive species, and educates about dry forest land management.
- Waikoloa Dry Forest Preserve is a 275 acre conservation area.
- Wildfire in 2021 was largest in history and caused by non-native grasses overtaking native plants and becoming fuel.
- Provides educational programming to 2000 people each year.
- Future Forests teaches 40 students in 4-5th grade each year.



WAIKŌLOA
DRY FOREST
INITIATIVE

Dorcy Hawaiian Foundation
81 East Seventh Street, Suite 125
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: Request for Support for Waikōloa Dry Forest Initiative

Aloha,

Thank you for the opportunity to partner with the Dorcy Foundation. I have included a short introduction to the Waikōloa Dry Forest Initiative and our work here on Hawai'i Island. In this narrative, you'll also find an outline of our 2022 program goals that we'd love your support in achieving.

We are grateful for the Dorcy Foundation's ongoing support of the protection of native plants and the educational programs that are so important to this work here in Hawai'i. We feel that the Waikōloa Dry Forest Initiative's work is aligned with Mr. Dorcy's interests and the Foundation's charitable giving. I hope you enjoy learning more about the forest that we hold so dear.

If I can provide more detailed information about any of the initiatives that the foundation is interesting in supporting or learning more about, I would be happy to do so. Financial reports are also available if reviewers would like to learn more about our finances. I have also included a short summary of our 2021 program accomplishments for your review.

Thanks, again for this opportunity and your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jen Lawson
Executive Director
Waikōloa Dry Forest Initiative
(808) 494-2208

Request for Support for Waikōloa Dry Forest Initiative EIN# 45-2689264

The Waikōloa Dry Forest Initiative (WDFI) was founded in 2011 to protect, promote, and restore native Hawaiian dry forest, a critically endangered ecosystem that once dominated the leeward sides of the Hawaiian Islands and is home to a diverse community of plants, and animals. WDFI has made steady progress toward this mission over the past ten years by engaging the community and implementing evidence-based forest restoration techniques. Today, we have a force of volunteers, advocates, and partners that help us achieve our mission and expand our reach into classrooms, and public spaces. With information, opportunity, and leadership, our community has placed a priority on conservation of our native forests and become central to the challenging work of restoring our dryland forest.

The lowland dry forests of Hawai'i were historically a widespread, diverse, and important ecosystem to Hawaii's people and native species. Occurring in areas that typically receive 10-50 inches of rainfall per year, a unique and specially adapted composition of plants and animals occur here. Unfortunately, our tropical dryland forests have been severely degraded over the past two centuries and it is estimated that now, less than 5% of the original forest remains. With the devastation of this ecosystem we have witnessed species extinctions, the spread of invasive species, an increase in damaging wildfire, erosion of our soils, and accumulation of this sediment on our coral reefs. We have also lost the knowledge and deep connection that people living in the drylands once had, and required, to sustain themselves in places with scarce water. Over the past ten years, WDFI has made steady progress toward the restoration of this ecosystem in our region, but there is an urgent need to continue this work, expand protected areas, and educate our community about the importance of the dryland forest, the species within them, and the services that they provide.

WDFI has a small, effective staff that carries out our initiatives and programs. WDFI includes one part-time and three full-time staff members and a seven-member volunteer Board of Directors. Our team is driven, passionate, talented, and dedicated to our mission, our place, and our community. Together, we achieve ambitious land management goals and provide robust educational programming for area youth and adults. Our staff and leadership have been successful in engaging and mobilizing our community which has resulted in the protection of 275-acres of dryland forest habitat, the planting of more than 15,000 native trees, and the rehabilitation of 70 acres within the Waikōloa Dry Forest Preserve. With a combination of effective threat mitigation, and intensive management, our team has transformed the landscape in Waikōloa for the betterment of our native species and our people. Our leadership has brought natural resources conservation into focus in our region and has led to partnerships in stewarding this special place. WDFI has become an important stakeholder and resource in our community and a hub for conservation and education serving a region with few opportunities to engage in and environmental education, and mālama 'āina, or caring for the land. While we work to support conservation in the broader community, most of our work is centered on the Waikōloa Dry Forest Preserve.

The Waikōloa Dry Forest Preserve is a 275-acre conservation area that is located on private land, owned by the community in Waikōloa Village and leased by WDFI for the purpose of

reforestation. Here, a 3.5-mile ungulate exclusion fence protects some of the last remaining native forest, ancient trees, and a growing restoration project, from non-native animals such as feral goats, sheep, pigs, and even donkeys. These feral animals have established large populations and are a constant threat to native ecosystems that evolved without them. By excluding these animals, our forest can recover and new seedlings can grow. The preserve is also protected by a series of fire fuel-breaks that are essentially areas where non-native grasses have been removed to create a buffer between a potential wildfire and the preserve. Wildfire has become a significant issue in our region as invasive, fire-adapted grasses, have displaced native ecosystems. As this grass dries out in the summer months, there is ample fuel to carry wildfire, burning native forests, and allowing grass to spread more widely. This grass-fire cycle was exacerbated in 2021 as our region saw the largest wildfire in our state's history. Fire mitigation is an important part of our work in the preserve and includes invasive grass-removal and the establishment of more fire-resilient native plant communities. By controlling and mitigating threats, we are able to proceed with reforestation work. Our team collects seeds, propagates seedlings, spreads native seed, and plants roughly 2,000 trees in the forest preserve each year. In tough, rocky terrain, this is a difficult task and but it has been tremendously successful. When you enter the preserve today, you can see the results of 55 acres of native planting where beautiful plants are flowering, making seeds, and reproducing on their own.

The preserve is a beautiful and inspiring place located in close proximity to the town, local schools, and resorts which makes the area easily accessed and highly visible. Our strategy to protecting this land and rehabilitating the forest has always included the surrounding community and we have also focused on involving students and volunteers from the broader public. With this strategy, we leverage the support, interest, and desire to help in our community to further our forest conservation initiatives, plant more native trees, expand the cumulative impact of our work replanting Hawaii's dryland forest, and grow an informed and aware community. Each year, we engage more than 2,000 people with direct educational programs and reach many more through virtual opportunities, special events, print, and social media. Community outreach is essential to building relationships, keeping the public engaged in our conservation work, and creating a sustainable revenue source to support our ongoing efforts. We have been really fortunate to have such a receptive and supportive community, and we are proud of the many partnerships that we have formed over the past 10 years that have connected businesses, educators, residents, visitors, and students to the native dryland forest.

As we continue to make progress towards our vision of a thriving, native forest, sustained and cared for by our people, we continue to grow our community, too. Our major priorities include 1) Preventing further loss of native dryland forest species in the region of Waikōloa, 2) Promoting the expansion and diversity of dryland forest communities, and 3) Increasing environmental awareness and appreciation for dryland forest ecosystem. These priorities have led to overlapping initiatives and programs for adults and children that bring new people to the forest to learn each month. By providing experiential learning opportunities, including passive hikes, intensive workshops, and volunteer workdays, we are inspiring people to connect to the land in a very meaningful way. They learn through experience which results in a deeper understanding, and empowers people to do something more to help protect the environment. We truly believe that

education and opportunity can lead to action, and so far, this model has been incredibly successful in our forest. Moving forward, we plan to continue and refine our educational programs and expand our forest restoration work.

. Some of our 2022 program objectives include:

- Planting 1,200 native plants in an expanded highly-managed forest restoration area with the help of many volunteers. This includes the removal of invasive species, propagation of seedlings, installation of waterlines, coordination of volunteers, and planting.
- Preparing and planting 5 acres with a new management strategy that will greatly expand the number of native plants in the preserve and require less, long-term intensive management by our team. These resiliency acres are located in inaccessible areas and will require that we increase our short-term capacity to do the weed removal and planting needed by hiring laborers and foresters.
- Collect and prepare millions of native seeds for restoration use, long-term storage, and post-fire reclamation. We are one of very few organizations amassing high quantities of native seeds for emergency or restoration use and we are committed to providing these seeds to partners who need them, such as in the case of wildfire.
- Continuing our after-school program, **Future Foresters**, currently serving 40 students in grades 4-5 each week throughout the school year. This after-school program is one of very few offered to our local youth and the only recurring place-based curriculum for kids in our region. Continuation includes 32 weeks of curriculum and 128 field trips to the forest and other natural areas in our region.
- Hosting an educational biocultural talk-story series supported by the Hawai'i Tourism Authority. This will be a unique series of lectures that take place in the forest preserve. This will allow adults and older youth to learn from some of our island's experts within the context of a beautiful native plant restoration site.
- Offering 15 free interpretive hikes through the preserve to the public. These tours reach tourists as well as local residents and are a great way to learn about native plants and experience the dryland forest in the evening hours which are cooler, and feature beautiful sunsets.
- Coordinating 24 public volunteer service days which will focus on tree planting, and native seed collection. Our volunteer force consists of families, retirees, residents, and visitors and they are responsible for planting most of the native trees that have been reintroduced in the forest preserve.
- Providing 15-25 field trips to student groups that immerse participants in nature, teach them about the lowland dry forest, and empower them to be part of the solution through volunteer work. We currently work with our local elementary and middle schools and also host school groups visiting from other islands as well as the mainland.
- Hosting virtual and in-person events for our community to enjoy nature, and learn about conservation issues. We aim to empower people with knowledge and provide opportunities for them to do something meaningful to steward the environment.

These program objectives will help us achieve our mission, expand native forest, and reach a diverse audience with educational programs that we hope inspire and activate our community. Our programs are necessary to protect the local native ecosystem, important to the people that live in our region, and are having a positive impact well beyond our immediate forest and community. As a stakeholder and resource in the community, it is imperative that Waikōloa Dry Forest Initiative continue our programs and work. We sincerely hope that the Dorcy Foundation will join us in this work by becoming a funder and partner and we welcome the opportunity to share more of our work with you over the upcoming year. Thank you so much for your consideration.