

Hawaii



Meet the seller



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Robin Van Niekerk & Tatyana Cerullo
Kōkua Sun Care
Honolulu, HI

When Hawaii became the first state to ban sunscreens made with oxybenzone and octinoxate to protect coral reefs in 2018, it was good timing for husband-and-wife team Robin Van Niekerk and Tatyana Cerullo. The small business owners had just launched Kōkua Sun Care, selling marine-safe sun care products.

As longtime water sports enthusiasts, they understood the need for healthy, reef-safe sunscreens that could support an active lifestyle. The entrepreneurs believed the sunscreen market was missing a viable alternative. “We tried other natural sunscreens, but they were hard to apply and they left the skin feeling greasy and sticky,” said Cerullo.

After several years of development, Cerullo and Van Niekerk created a unique zinc-based sunscreen that provides high water resistance, doesn't sting the eyes, and protects from UVA and UVB rays. Their products use Hawaiian-grown, antioxidant-rich ingredients that nourish and protect the skin while supporting the local economy.

Kōkua Sun Care quickly became popular across the Hawaiian Islands and favored by the swim, triathlon, and surfing communities. The couple wanted to expand beyond the island shorelines and chose Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) for its ease and scalability. However, they were worried it would be difficult due to their sunscreen’s specific requirements.

“The Amazon support folks were so helpful,” said Van Niekerk. “They researched our situation and then walked me through completing the specific certificates I needed.” Kōkua Sun Care’s products were approved for FBA the next day, allowing the company to go from selling locally to selling nationally overnight.

As Cerullo explained, “There’s a difference between just selling on Amazon and being able to offer customers fast, free shipping with Fulfillment by Amazon. For a small island-based business like ours, it’s make or break.” With FBA, Kōkua’s products can be received by some customers same-day, compared to the previous five- to seven-day delivery time.

The name “Kōkua” means giving with aloha in Hawaiian, and the entrepreneurs behind the company take this seriously. They are true advocates for the marine environment they love, believing that choosing a reef-safe sunscreen is “the easiest way people can positively impact our beautiful oceans.”

Independent Sellers

1,000

There are more than 1,000 independent sellers in Hawaii selling in Amazon’s store.

Average Annual Sales

\$70,000

In Hawaii, average annual sales per independent seller was more than \$70,000.

Items Sold

4 million

Independent sellers in Hawaii sold more than 4 million items in 2023.

