



# visit mendocino county

## 2014–2015 annual report







# letter from the president

## what a long strange trip it's been!

Visit Mendocino County (VMC) has had a full year of successful marketing and transition as well as some political upheaval. What was to be a smooth transition to a stronger governance structure and more effective marketing turned into a period where our contract and funding were cancelled (and shortly thereafter reinstated) and a governance study, funded by both the Mendocino County Lodging Association (MCLA) and the Mendocino County Promotional Alliance (MCPA), thrown to the wayside. What was to be a year of strong focus in improving policies and procedures turned into a year of “wait and see” and of being “saved,” thankfully, by the County itself.

What amazes me the most is VMC's ability to continue to market the county to millions of potential visitors from around the globe regardless of any internal politics and turmoil. VMC was still able to implement its marketing plan – one that is much improved from past plans thanks to a marketing study that was followed point by point, producing results we can all be excited about and proud of.

Visit Mendocino County has been able to do what no other destination marketing organization has been able to in Mendocino County throughout its history. We have united the travel and tourism community behind a unified message—a unified voice bringing the numbers of visitors to our county to an all-time high. VMC has become known as THE source for all things tourism in the county. In such a diverse county, this is no easy task and is something that could only be accomplished by working together.

So much gratitude exists for the dozens of business owners and community members who have put in countless hours over the past decade working to establish and continuously improve our destination marketing efforts. So many people believe in our mission and our goals. It is this dedication that has helped to make our tourism economy the strongest ever recorded.

A new chapter is beginning with destination marketing. We have built a strong foundation and the future is bright. I am hopeful the new board of the Mendocino County Tourism Commission will take advantage of what we have created. I wish the tourism community the best of luck and am confident both residents of and visitors to the county will benefit from the hard work of the past decade and what we have established together.

With much gratitude and wishing you all much success,

Scott Schneider

President & CEO, Visit Mendocino County, Inc.





# 2014 –15 marketing plan



## goals

Increase overall demand for overnight visitation (leisure and group) during key times of the year in an effort to raise revenues, employment and taxes in Mendocino County

## objectives

1. Continue to effectively position Mendocino County as one of California's premier leisure destinations.
2. Educate consumers on the different coastal and inland experiences that can be found within the county.
3. Increase marketing focus to key lifestyle and passion segments including outdoor/recreation, wine, food and romance.
4. Increase the role of technology and digital marketing efforts in order to broaden the reach and increase effectiveness.
5. Develop and implement a marketing dashboard that tracks key indicators for the destination and VMC, and distribute that information in an effort to educate and support the tourism industry.
6. Implement research that tracks the effectiveness of the VMC website and the influence it has on persuading visitors to visit Mendocino County.

# advertising & paid media

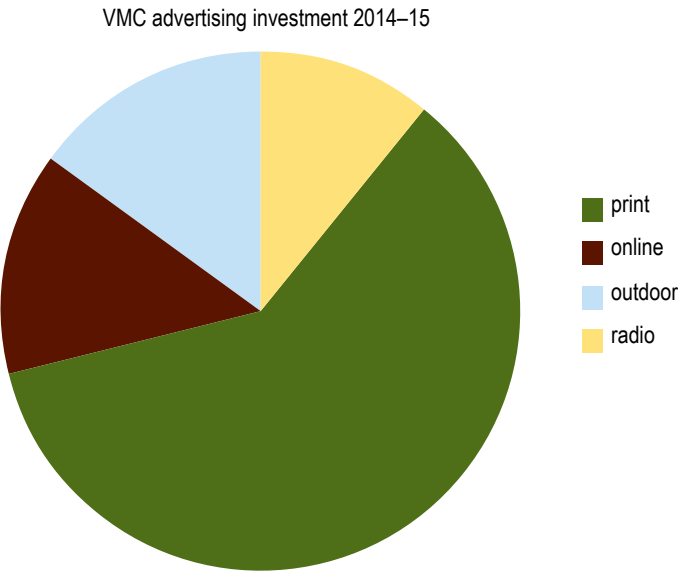
## KPI (key performance indicators)

Drive traffic to new website through targeted paid online advertising, SEO, and viral sharing of editorial pieces

## outcomes

2014 saw a strategy change in VMC's approach to advertising. Working with Creative Concepts Media, VMC placed ads across the media spectrum, from print to outdoor billboards. The total investment was just under \$170,000 but added and promotions values brought the total campaign value to 1.4 times the investment, ie., \$240,212.

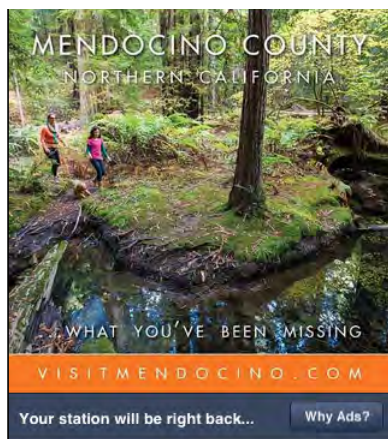
media	investment	added value	promotions value	total
print	\$18,808	\$0	\$0	\$18,808
online	\$102,501	\$12,646	N/A	\$115,147
outdoor	\$23,530	\$8,227	N/A	\$31,757
radio	\$25,000	N/A	\$49,500	\$74,500
total	\$169,839	\$20,873	\$49,500	\$240,212



- **PRINT ADVERTISING** focused on the California Visitor Guide, produced by Visit California. Distribution is 500,000 print copies plus online.
- **ONLINE OUTLETS** included Facebook, Google, TripAdvisor.com, SFGate.com, Sunset.com, Sojern Ad Network, Pandors, LonelyPlanet.com, Bay Area News Group, and Weekend Sherpa. The investment produced a total value of 1.1 percent. The six-week Facebook campaign produced over 10,000 likes bringing total fans to over 40,000.

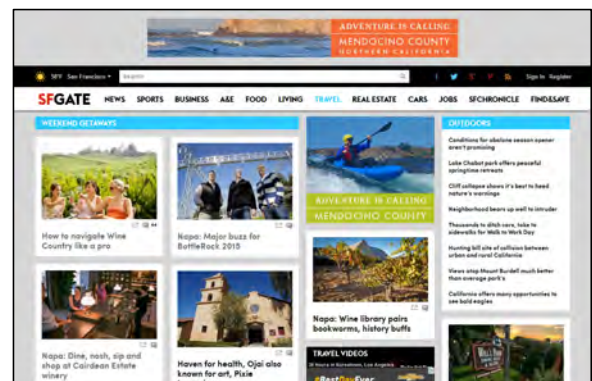


site/network	delivered impressions	clicks	investment	added value	total value
facebook	442,683	12,320	\$6,125	N/A	\$6,125
google	190,980	5,549	\$7,749	N/A	\$7,749
tripadvisor	524,354	811	\$14,253	\$678	\$14,931
sfgate	644,925	1,683	\$6,286	\$1,034	\$7,320
sunset	1,095,805	1,142	\$6,249	\$6,726	\$12,975
sojern	5,329,847	10,291	\$30,588	N/A	\$30,588
pandora	1,750,024	6,230	\$12,500	\$1,000	\$13,500
lonelyplanet	323,868	411	\$15,001	\$310	\$15,311
bay area news group	279,877	1002	\$3,750	N/A	\$3,750
weekend sherpa	43,332	67	\$2,888	N/A	\$2,888
<b>total</b>	<b>10,625,675</b>	<b>39,506</b>	<b>\$102,501</b>	<b>\$9749</b>	<b>\$112,250</b>



online screen shots

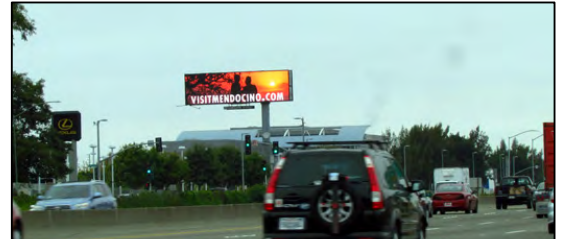
pandora (l); sfgate (r)



- **OUTDOOR ADVERTISING** caught the attention of drivers at the Bay Bridge toll plaza and on the Nimitz Freeway I-880 in two campaigns that ran from August to October, 2014 and April to June, 2015.
- VMC's investment was \$23,530 with an added value of \$8,227; total number of messages seen by drivers was 230,337.



billboard shots

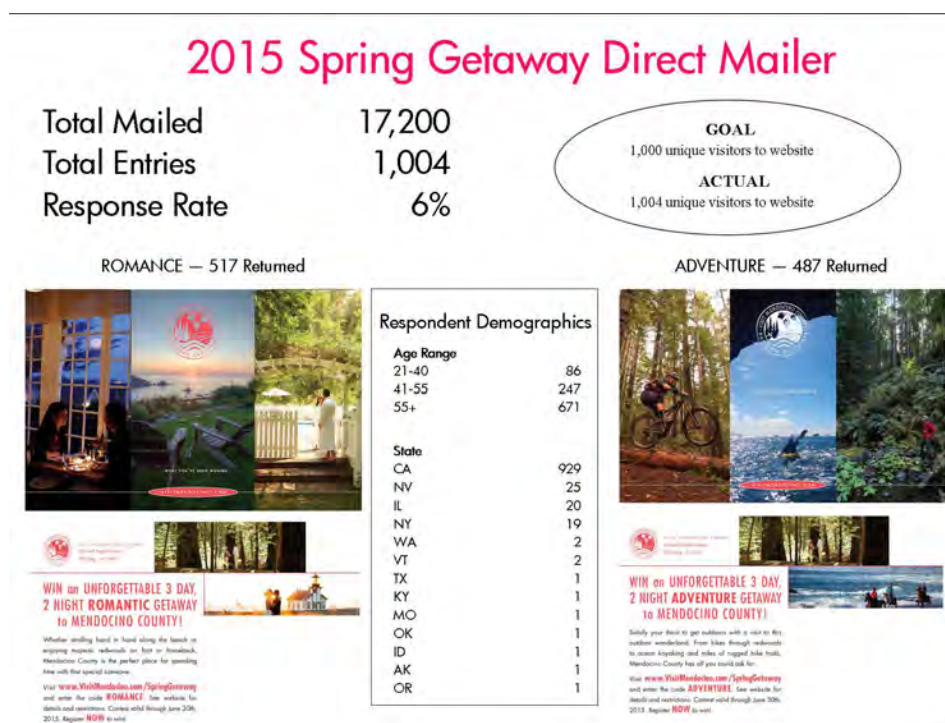


- **RADIO PROMOTIONS** with KOIT produced a \$74,500 value, almost three times the investment value of \$25,000.
- KOIT also ran a two week promotion in the fall asking listeners to text "Escape" to the station number to be entered for a chance to win a getaway in Mendocino.



In summary, the advertising campaign investment of \$169,839 + added value + promotions produced a total campaign value of \$240,212; 1.4 times investment with an average cost per click of \$2.08.

- In spring 2015, VMC sent out a Spring Getaway Direct Mailer to reach consumer leads with no email address and to drive visitation to the VMC website. The results are shown below.





# public relations

## goals

- Generate \$4.6 million in measured advertising equivalency
- Reach an estimated audience of 110 million
- Achieve 170 media placements in key outlets
- Pitch/secure 26 media to visit the destination on an individual basis
- Support VMC Marketing & Promotional objectives

## outcomes

	goal	achieved
<b>media placements</b>	170	352
<b>ad equivalency</b>	\$4.6 million	\$16.057 million
<b>circulation</b>	110 million	954 million
<b>media missions</b>	2	2
<b>media content (press releases)</b>	16	16
<b>event support</b>	3	3
<b>trade shows</b>	2	2
<b>FAM program</b>	26	30

- These figures represent a significant push forward on VMC's PR efforts to introduce the county to niche markets. The PR team scored 417 print and online features in publications such as:

*Sunset, VIA Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, Sacramento Bee, CNN Travel, Bay Area News Group, 7x7, Zagat, USA Today, Alaska Airlines, Boston Globe, Forbes, KGO Radio, Coastal Living Magazine, and many other creditable newspapers, magazines, and online media.*

- In April 2015, PR worked with First Take Features (Colorado-based) to produce three two-minute "slices of the county." The finished products capture a slice of time along the Redwood Corridor, the North Coast, and Anderson Valley. View the videos on YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/visitmendocino/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/visitmendocino/videos).



- PR completed two media missions to Los Angeles (fall 2014) and the Portland/Seattle area (spring 2015).
- Directly recruited 30 members of the media (editors, producers, bloggers and freelancers) to visit Mendocino County and distributed 16 press releases and hot sheets on various topics to local, regional, national, and international press, resulting in dozens of media placements.
- Recruited two groups to serve on the judging panel at the 2014 Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival and the 2015 Crab, Wine & Beer Festival.
- Generated media awareness and coverage for the fifth annual "Taste of Mendocino" event in San Francisco.
- Live radio broadcasts from the county by multiple Emmy-winning investigative reporter and producer, Peter Greenberg; Rudy Maxa, host of the country's most widely syndicated travel radio show (to support the Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival), and Liam Mayclem, KCBS' "foodie chap."

## Uncorking the Perfect Long Weekend in California's Anderson Valley

The wineries, restaurants and unspoiled landscapes of the pocket-size valley are a sip away from San Francisco



1 of 13  
**GREEN ACRES** | The 15 miles along State Route 128 between Boonville and Navarro, in northern California's Mendocino County, is ...

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
**WSJ**  
WEEK END



## The Boston Globe

### Travel

Get to Mendocino before anyone else, then slow down

By Walter V. Robinson

16 GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 26, 2014



The sunset on Main Street in Mendocino, Calif.

MENDOCINO — Too often along much of California's rugged coastline, visitors must choose between solitude and beauty. You want both? Take a direct flight to Seattle. A quiet table for two in Monterey? That's an oxymoron. Call home if you find an ocean view in Santa Barbara that comes without an offshore oil derrick.

There is so, so much to love about California, but sometimes so much to lament: Too many beaches overrun, too much coastline overdeveloped. Even traffic jams competing with memorable vistas in Yosemite Valley, for goodness sake.



# website & social media

## KPI

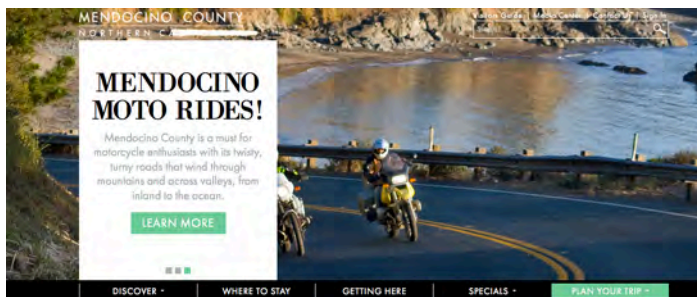
- Increase visitor time on site and average pages visited
- Reduce bounce rate
- Increase SEO
- Continue to grow and engage with VMC social media and database of consumers
- Make use of targeted Facebook advertising to support partner events and promotions

## outcomes

- The website Data Dashboard shows a steady rise in unique visitors during the fiscal year, with June 2015 showing **14,490 unique visits** for the month.
- While the website has provided some significant challenges with back-end loading problems and database crashes, the website continues to be a strong tool VMC uses to inspire visitors to stay longer and spend more money. The VMC team continues to enhance our web presence and will soon launch an upgraded, optimized, highly functional site.

	July	August	September	October	November	December
Site Performance						
Unique Visitors	7,535	8,782	9,183	10,258	8,176	7,062
Time on Site	0:03:26:00	0:02:57	0:02:40	0:02:15	0:02:34	0:02:36
Bounce Rate	47.55%	51.87%	54.24%	58.77%	57.06%	54.50%
	January	February	March	April	May	June
	7,886	6,837	9,029	11,267	14,017	14,940
	0:03:03	0:03:16	0:03:07	0:02:27	0:02:45	0:02:27
	50.15%	49.76%	51.27%	58.52%	53.38%	58.27%

- Social media reach via Facebook showed steady gain with over 41,000 fans by the end of June. The spring Adventure Giveaway gained over 8,000 fans!
- The consumer database grew to 31,421 with an average engagement of over 17%.





# sales

## KPI

- Acquire 7,000 consumer leads
- Sell 1,000 room nights as a result of VMC sales efforts

## outcomes

- Sales for 2014–15 were strong, with **6,745 NEW LEADS** added to the consumer database and at least **1,200 ROOM NIGHTS** directly attributed to sales efforts. Sales staff obtained contracts for local hotels with domestic and international tour operators.
- Branding initiatives benefit the entire economy of the county as more hotel stays translate into increased restaurant, tasting room, and retail visits. Branding is a continuous effort and included participation by VMC staff at trade shows such as Bay Area Travel Show in Santa Clara, *Sunset* magazine Celebration Weekend in Menlo Park, and the YOLO Outdoor Expo in Woodland.
- VMC sales hosted several Visit California FAM groups, including French and Chinese tour operators.
- VMC continues to administer and lead the joint efforts of the NCTC. A partnership of county marketing organizations from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Oregon border, NCTC capitalizes on the efforts of not only its partner counties, but the efforts of Visit California—our state's destination marketing organization. NCTC received \$30,000 from Visit California last year to focus on sales and marketing to key international markets. NCTC consists of a board of directors with each member county having a seat, and a say, on how it promotes the region.
- Key markets include Canada, Mexico, UK, Germany, Japan and France. In partnering with the Shasta Cascade, NCTC attends travel shows, sales missions and media missions throughout the year. These collaborative efforts significantly increase international visitors to Mendocino county year round.



# visitor services

## festivals: KPI

- Increase and lengthen overnight stays in Mendocino County
- Develop new events that both highlight the unique aspects of the County and utilize value partnerships
- Increase partner participation and visitor attendance for focal events
- Produce and distribute a countywide event calendar
- Continue to build on the established foundation for the Party for the Planet festival

## outcomes

- The Event & Partner Relations Manager had a busy year gathering events for VMC's three countywide shoulder season festivals: Crab, Wine & Beer in January, Party for the Planet in April, and November's Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival. The level of participation in the festivals was comparable to previous years with new businesses participating with events and specials.
- Staff worked closely with the Festival Committee on the festivals and presented new opportunities for discussion.
- Staff posts events and festivals on the VMC website and that data is used to compile the bi-monthly calendars distributed to county businesses to keep visitors updated on events. Staff also submits events to outlets such as the Visit California website, *VIA Magazine*, and other regional publications and websites.
- Staff successfully contacted multiple businesses about ad placements in the Visitor Guide.
- In an effort to foster cross-promotional partnerships, VMC's Event & Partner Relations Manager joined the Greater Ukiah Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, and partnered with Mendocino Winegrowers Inc. on the 5th Annual Taste of Mendocino event.
- Completed the Mendocino County Annual Event Calendar with 10,000 copies distributed throughout the county and California Visitor Centers.
- To complete VMC's promotional video projects for the year, staff worked with Bay Area Media Masters to capture footage of the county.





# signage & wayfinding: KPI

- Increase visitor satisfaction with improved wayfinding signage

## outcomes

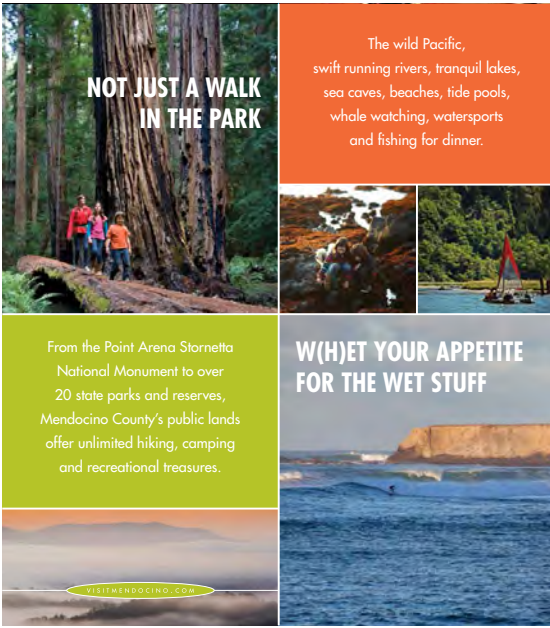
- Planning continues for the installation of a gateway sign along Highway 1 in Gualala.
- Distributed over 100,000 county materials including tear off maps, wine maps, event calendars, pet-friendly guides, Visitor Guides, and mini-Visitor Guides.

# marketplace: KPI

- Attract 3,500 Marketplace visitors.
- Track annual sales of \$10,000 in local products.

## outcomes

- A “Thank You” to all the artists who joined VMC in Fort Bragg for the very successful monthly First Friday event: Jo Anne Abreu, Jerry Murphy, Jeanne Kennedy, Alan Ahtow, Bruce Blondin, Jim Colling, Nicole Paisley Martensen, Maureen O’Hara, Marcia Plancon, Marcia Riwney, Katie Gibbs, and Sev Ickes.



	Goal	Achieved
visitors to office/retail space	3,500	4,821
visitor sales	\$10,000	\$8,253
visitor guides (web & phone only)	N/A	3,698
toll-free calls	N/A	569
green bags at trade shows & events	N/A	6,000+

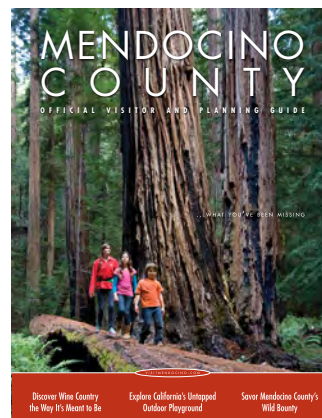
# operations

## KPI

Operations is the engine that keeps VMC and its sister organizations running

## outcomes

- Finalized the 2015/16 Marketing Plan & Budget, which gained approval from all Boards of Directors.
- With the BID Ad Hoc Committee, VMC helped finalize the MCLA BID Advisory Board 2105/16 Annual Report, which was presented to the County Board of Supervisors. In addition, staff attended numerous public meetings and forums about the BID.
- Staff attended a number of events that provide valuable networking opportunities: the quarterly Cal Travel Association board meeting and annual Rally Day at the State Capitol in Sacramento, the Destination Marketing Association International CEO Summit in Monterey, and the California Travel Summit, also in Monterey. Scott Schneider completed his Chairmanship of California Travel Association.
- Worked on annual VMC non-profit audit and MCLA/MCPA financial reviews and assisted with annual MCLA election of new board members. Administered monthly VMC Board of Directors meetings.
- VMC met with the State Parks to explore how to increase visitation and to brainstorm marketing programs/partnerships.
- Sent out Visitor Guides in response to ongoing requests and captured contact information for VMC's consumer mailing list.





# staffing

## KPI

- Destination and executive Destination Marketing Accreditation status
- Maintain a qualified, engaged and enthusiastic team of staff and contractors to carry out the programs and initiatives of VMC
- Continue to successfully administer the Mendocino County Lodging Association, Mendocino County Promotional Foundation, Mendocino County Promotional Alliance and the North Coast Tourism Council

## outcomes

- In August 2014, VMC attained its goal of achieving both destination and executive Destination Marketing Accreditation status. This achievement serves as a visible industry distinction that defines quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management.
- The BID Ad Hoc Committee reviewed the current BID structure and made a number of recommendations for change including a single board to oversee VMC's activities and budget. By January 2016 the transition will be complete and the new Mendocino County Tourism Commission (MCTC) will be the official tourism promotion entity for the county. MCLA and MCPA will remain as advisory bodies.
- Sales Associate, Evan Qualtrough, left the VMC team in May 2015 to pursue opportunities in the Pacific Northwest.
- In July 2015, VMC will hire Donna Hannaford as its Interactive Media Manager. Donna's main focus will be on raising VMC's social media profile and monitoring our vital online conversations.
- VMC continues to administer its sister organizations and NCTC.



# board of directors

- Chair: Hal Wagenet (Mendocino County Promotional Alliance/Arts Council of Mendocino County)
- Vice Chair: John Dixon (Mendocino County Lodging Association)
- Secretary: Eric Cogdill (Mendocino County Lodging Association)
- Treasurer: John Kuhry (Mendocino County Promotional Alliance/Anderson Valley Chamber of Commerce)
- Cally Dym (Mendocino County Promotional Alliance/Culinary)
- Roger Martin (Mendocino County Lodging Association)
- Jennifer Seward (Mendocino County Promotional Alliance/At-Large)
- Kevin Gallagher (Mendocino County Lodging Association)
- Marcus Magdaleno (Mendocino County Lodging Association)
- Tom Rodrigues (Mendocino County Promotional Alliance/Wine)

# staff & contractors

- Executive Director: Scott Schneider
- Communications Coordinator: Alison de Grassi
- Operations Manager: Erin Placido
- Director of Tourism: Richard Strom
- Events & Partner Relations Manager: Gracia Brown
- Interactive Media Manager: Donna Hannaford
- Administrative Assistant: Susan Peakall
- Public Relations: Koli/Cinch
- Website Management: Brandhound Marketing







visit  
**mendocino county**

345 N. Franklin Street  
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

**phone** 707.964.9010  
**toll free** 1.866.466.3636

**[www.visitmendocino.com](http://www.visitmendocino.com)**